The Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP): Shaping Recommendations Roundtables and Discussions

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1. Introduction

This report summarises the sessions held as part of the Timms Review's Shaping Recommendations Roundtables and stakeholder discussions. These were held during September and October 2026, alongside the Shaping Recommendations Workshops, in order to test and refine the Steering Group's emerging recommendations with organisations representing disabled people, as well as those with expertise in welfare and social security.

The contributions from the roundtables and stakeholder discussions supplement the findings from the Shaping Recommendations Workshops held with members of the public through September and October 2026.

To ensure we heard from a wide range of contributors, participants were invited to provide constructive challenge, identify gaps, highlight potential unintended consequences, and offer perspectives on both short-term improvements to PIP and the longer-term vision for a reformed benefit rather than examining individual recommendations in detail as was done in the Shaping Recommendation Workshops. As a result, this report offers qualitative findings that reflect the structure of the Roundtables and discussions.

A total of five roundtable sessions were held, each lasting two hours, with 40 stakeholders participating in total. As well as this, nine discussions with individuals were held. Attendees brought a broad range of expertise

and experience, including representation from disability organisations, advocacy groups, academia, and organisations supporting disabled people and people with long-term health conditions. Elected representatives also participated. A list of those attendees who wished to be named publicly can be found in the annex. All sessions were chaired by a Steering Group member and designed to provide a space for open, candid discussion of the emerging recommendations.

Participants approached issues from different perspectives, and the discussions provided insight into areas of broad support, points of concern and issues that stakeholders felt required further consideration.

To support the timely production of this report, Microsoft Copilot (Generative AI) was used to assist with the analysis of session notes and initial drafting of this report. Human reviewers retained responsibility for editing, fact-checking, quality-assurance, formatting, and exercising final judgement of the content throughout.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 General Themes

Contributors consistently emphasised the importance of dignity, trust and claimant experience, often describing interactions with the current system as stressful, difficult to navigate and, at times, adversarial. Across discussions, trust was closely linked to fairness, transparency, consistency and whether people felt understood and believed. Contributors generally viewed dignity not as a standalone principle, but as something that should be reflected throughout decisions, processes and service delivery.

Accessibility, individualisation and support were recurring themes. Contributors argued that accessibility extends beyond digital access and should encompass communication needs, specialist support, claimant choice and flexibility in how people engage with the system. While there was broad support for more personalised approaches, questions were raised about consistency, scalability and operational delivery.

Many contributors highlighted the complexity of claims, reviews and challenge processes and supported greater access to advocacy and supported navigation. Advocacy was viewed as a means of improving accessibility, reducing barriers and promoting fairness, although contributors differed on the most appropriate delivery model. Concerns were also raised about ensuring

services are visible, accessible, independent and appropriately resourced.

A further theme concerned how fluctuating conditions, cumulative impacts and day-to-day functioning are understood. Contributors frequently questioned approaches that assess capability at a single point in time, arguing for greater recognition of fatigue, recovery periods, changing circumstances and longer-term impacts. There was less consensus on the specific mechanisms required to achieve this.

Discussions around evidence, transparency and accountability focused on improving confidence in decision-making. Contributors supported clearer evidential processes, improved explanations of decisions and stronger organisational learning from complaints, challenges and appeals. There was also interest in making better use of existing information and digital services to reduce repetition and administrative burden, provided this is accompanied by safeguards around accessibility, privacy, governance and claimant choice.

Across multiple themes, contributors emphasised that disability benefits should support independent living and wider participation without creating employment-related conditions. Many also stressed the importance of involving disabled people and representative organisations in future reform design.

Contributors consistently highlighted that successful reform depends not only on policy intent but also on implementation. Delivery capacity, specialist expertise,

assessor capability, governance and operational feasibility were widely regarded as critical factors in determining whether proposed improvements achieve their intended outcomes.

2.2 Improvements to the Current Benefit

Contributors identified a number of areas where the current system could be improved, with discussions focusing on claimant experience, accessibility, decision-making, support and delivery. While views differed on specific reforms, several consistent themes emerged.

There was broad support for reducing unnecessary reviews and reassessments for people with lifelong, progressive or stable conditions. Contributors frequently described reviews as a source of stress and uncertainty, while emphasising that any move towards lighter-touch review arrangements should be accompanied by clear and accessible routes for people to report changing circumstances and seek reassessment where appropriate.

Communications, forms and guidance were also seen as important influences on claimant experience. Contributors argued that people can find it difficult to understand requirements, explain the impact of their conditions and navigate the process. Many emphasised that improvements to communications should be accompanied by wider changes that strengthen trust, transparency and understanding.

Reasonable adjustments, advocacy and personalised support received significant support across contributor groups. Advocacy was often viewed as a means of improving accessibility, helping people navigate complex processes and promoting fairness. Contributors also emphasised the need for specialist support, particularly for groups with specific communication or accessibility requirements.

Assessment approaches attracted considerable attention. Contributors questioned whether current processes adequately capture fluctuating conditions, cumulative impacts and day-to-day functioning, and many supported greater flexibility in assessment methods. Support for reform was often accompanied by calls for clear guidance, consistency and claimant choice.

Discussions about evidence, decision-making and appeals reflected a strong interest in improving transparency, accountability and confidence in decisions. Contributors supported better use of existing information, clearer evidential processes and stronger organisational learning from complaints, challenges and appeals.

Many contributors also supported greater use of digital services and information-sharing to reduce administrative burden, provided accessibility, privacy, governance and claimant choice remain central considerations.

Across all themes, implementation was a major consideration. Contributors consistently stressed that the success of any reform would depend not only on policy intent, but on delivery capability, specialist expertise,

governance, timeliness and operational practicality. Overall, discussions highlighted a desire for a system that is more accessible, proportionate, transparent and responsive to individual circumstances, while remaining fair and deliverable in practice.

2.3 A Reformed Benefit

Contributors expressed substantial support for the broad principles underpinning a reformed disability benefit, particularly those relating to independent living, dignity, choice, control and participation. Across discussions, there was widespread agreement that disability benefits should support autonomy, financial security and inclusion, enabling disabled people to live independently and participate in society on their own terms. Contributors often differed on how these objectives should be reflected in future system design.

A recurring theme was the importance of retaining cash payments as the foundation of support. Many contributors viewed financial flexibility as essential because disability-related costs vary significantly between individuals and over time. While some participants were open to complementary services or alternative models of support, such approaches were generally supported only where they remained voluntary, enhanced claimant choice and did not replace cash entitlement.

Contributors consistently argued that a future system should be more person-centred, accessible and responsive to individual circumstances. There was support for greater flexibility in assessment routes,

stronger recognition of fluctuating conditions and cumulative impacts, and better use of evidence and information already held across government. Many also emphasised the importance of advocacy, reasonable adjustments and specialist support to ensure equitable access to the system.

Participation was widely regarded as an important outcome of disability benefits, but contributors frequently stressed that participation should be understood broadly and not be treated as synonymous with paid employment.

Across many themes, support for reform was conditional. Contributors frequently attached safeguards relating to claimant choice, accessibility, fairness, transparency, consent and accountability. Discussions highlighted a number of tensions requiring careful policy consideration, including the balance between cash and services, personalisation and consistency, information sharing and privacy, and flexibility and operational practicality.

Co-design emerged as a particularly strong theme. Contributors emphasised that disabled people and representative organisations should be involved throughout design, testing, implementation and evaluation. More broadly, many participants argued that the success of any future model will depend not only on its principles but also on how effectively it is implemented, governed and integrated with wider systems and services.

3. General Themes

3.1 Dignity, Trust and Claimant Experience

A recurring theme across the sessions was the importance of dignity, trust and claimant experience. Contributors described concerns not only about individual processes within the current system but also about how claimants experienced their interactions with it more broadly.

D/deaf and disabled people's organisations (DDPOs), civil society organisations and academics, alongside elected representatives, described claimant experiences of the system as stressful, adversarial or difficult to navigate. Their contributions linked these experiences to assessments, reviews, communications, evidential processes, and whether claimants felt understood and believed.

Academics frequently linked trust to perceptions of fairness, transparency and institutional behaviour. DDPOs often emphasised the importance of the social model of disability, claimant autonomy, and avoiding processes that appeared to focus on disproving need. Civil society organisations commonly highlighted experiences of stress, anxiety and uncertainty associated with assessments, reviews and decision-making. Elected representatives also drew attention to stigma, public narratives and wider perceptions of disability benefits.

Some contributors argued that improvements to communications alone would not be sufficient to rebuild trust. Contributions from across the sessions suggested that there was a distinction between courteous language and deeper issues such as transparency, consistency, perceived fairness and confidence that the system was acting in good faith. Dignity was generally discussed not as a standalone principle, but as something that should be reflected consistently throughout processes, decision-making and service delivery.

3.2 Accessibility, Individualisation and Support

Contributions across the sessions consistently highlighted the importance of processes that can respond appropriately to individual circumstances while remaining accessible to a diverse range of claimants.

DDPOs, civil society organisations, individuals with lived experience and elected representatives all raised issues relating to accessibility, although their priorities varied. Across the sessions, contributors highlighted communication barriers, the provision of reasonable adjustments, alternative application routes, the accessibility of forms, requirements for specialist support, and the need for greater flexibility within the claims process.

Several contributors argued that accessibility should not be understood solely in digital terms. Instead, contributions pointed to a broader conception of

accessibility that encompasses communication preferences, language needs, disability-specific requirements, specialist support, assessment methods and claimant choice.

Some participants added further nuance to this theme, noting that deaf and deafblind people may require different forms of support and communication, including specialist advocacy, face-to-face provision and communication methods beyond standard written formats. This reflected a wider theme across the sessions: approaches that improve accessibility for one group may not be suitable for another. At the same time, some contributors acknowledged the practical challenges involved in delivering highly personalised support at scale. They stressed the need to balance person-centred approaches with the practical requirement to deliver timely decisions and payments.

Taken together, contributions across the sessions suggested broad support for greater flexibility and individualisation within the system, while also highlighting recurring questions around implementation, consistency and operational delivery.

3.3 Advocacy and Supported Navigation

Advocacy and support to help people navigate the system were raised across multiple sessions. Contributors discussed the role of support in navigating claims, evidential requirements, reviews and challenge

processes. While contributors often highlighted similar issues, they did not express a single preferred model for how support should be delivered.

Advocacy was a recurring theme across the sessions. Participants frequently argued that claims processes, evidential requirements, reviews and challenge mechanisms can be complex, and that access to support may have a significant impact on claimant experiences and outcomes.

While support for advocacy was widespread, contributors often emphasised different reasons for its importance.

Civil society organisations frequently focused on practical barriers, complexity and claimant stress. DDPOs often linked advocacy to accessibility, equality of access and claimant empowerment.

Contributors also highlighted a number of important considerations. Advocacy services would need to be visible, accessible, appropriately funded and well connected to wider sources of support. Several contributors cautioned that poorly designed advocacy arrangements could create additional complexity rather than reduce barriers.

Overall, contributions across the sessions indicated broad support for advocacy and supported navigation. Contributors also highlighted the importance of decisions around delivery models, independence, accessibility and availability in determining how effective such support would be in practice.

3.4 Fluctuation, Cumulative Impact and Real-World Function

Contributions across the sessions repeatedly highlighted concerns about how fluctuating conditions, cumulative impacts and long-term effects on day-to-day functioning are understood and assessed.

Although contributors approached the issue from different perspectives, a common concern was the challenge of understanding need through isolated activities or a snapshot in time. Contributors frequently referred to fatigue, pain, recovery periods, cumulative impacts, changing circumstances, and the difference between being able to complete a task occasionally and being able to do so reliably and sustainably.

Civil society organisations often focused on practical experiences of assessment. DDPOs frequently highlighted the interaction between health conditions, barriers and wider social circumstances. Elected representatives emphasised the importance of improving assessment approaches and reducing the stress associated with reviews and reassessments. Concerns about how fluctuating conditions, neurodivergence and mental health conditions would be reflected within future approaches were also raised in the discussions.

Contributors also highlighted practical challenges. Some noted that recognising greater complexity and individual circumstances could place additional demands on assessment processes and decision-making.

3.5 Evidence, Transparency, Correction and Accountability

Questions about evidence, decision quality, transparency and accountability were raised throughout the sessions.

Contributors from a range of backgrounds highlighted concerns about how evidence is gathered, weighted, interpreted and challenged. These issues were discussed across many of the sessions.

Different contributors emphasised different aspects of the issue. Civil society organisations frequently focused on claimant experiences of evidential processes and concerns that relevant evidence may not always be given appropriate weight. DDPOs often highlighted the importance of transparency, clear explanations and consistency in decision-making. Other participants focused on governance, incentives, process design, inequalities in access to evidence and implementation risks. Contributors also stressed the importance of clear guidance on how different forms of evidence should be considered, particularly where evidence may be conflicting.

Contributors also expressed interest in how complaints, challenge processes and appeals could be used to support learning and improvement. Views differed on the extent to which these mechanisms should be seen as tools for improving performance, or as indicators of wider structural issues within the system.

Several contributors argued that drawing on a broader range of evidence could help build a more complete understanding of claimants' circumstances. At the same time, some noted that a wider evidential base could create additional challenges around consistency, weighting, governance and transparency. Contributors expressed a strong interest in improving confidence in decision-making through clearer evidential processes, stronger accountability and more visible learning from errors, complaints and challenges.

3.6 Digital Access, Data and Choice

Contributions across the sessions suggested broad recognition that digital services could reduce administrative burden and offer greater flexibility. However, contributors consistently attached important conditions to any increased use of digital systems, data sharing and information reuse.

Support for digital services was generally linked to reducing repetition, improving access to information and simplifying interactions with the system. Contributors frequently saw value in reducing the need for claimants to repeatedly provide information that is already held elsewhere.

At the same time, contributors raised concerns about exclusion, accessibility, privacy, consent, governance, accuracy and ownership of information. These issues were particularly prominent among DDPOs and disability stakeholder advisory bodies

Overall, contributors supported the use of digital approaches to reduce administrative burden, while emphasising the importance of strong safeguards around accessibility, inclusion, privacy and claimant choice.

3.7 Participation and Independent Living

A recurring theme across the sessions concerned the relationship between disability benefits, independent living and wider participation in society.

Contributors from a wide range of backgrounds discussed participation, although they did not always define the concept in the same way. Across the sessions, participation was associated with independent living, social inclusion, community life, education, caring responsibilities, volunteering, family life and employment.

DDPOs, civil society organisations, academics, individuals with lived experience and elected representatives emphasised that disability benefits should support participation without creating employment-related conditions.

One session provided a distinct perspective on participation beyond employment, highlighting volunteering, caring responsibilities, community involvement, learning and social engagement. These contributions reflected the views expressed in that discussion rather than a model consistently advanced across all sessions.

Contributors also linked participation to independent living and the additional costs associated with disability. Many argued that financial support enables people to participate more fully in society. Others highlighted the influence of wider systems, including housing, health services, social care, transport and employment support.

While contributors emphasised different aspects of participation, there was broad agreement that supporting participation is an important outcome of disability benefits.

3.8 Co-Design, Governance and Implementation

Contributions consistently demonstrated that stakeholders were interested not only in the substance of potential reforms, but also in how change would be designed, governed and implemented.

Across the sessions, contributors emphasised the importance of involving disabled people and representative organisations in the development of future reforms.

While there was broad support for continued engagement, contributors expressed differing views on what meaningful involvement should look like. Some emphasised the importance of co-design, while others focused on testing and piloting proposed changes, or on maintaining involvement through ongoing evaluation and governance arrangements.

Several contributors also emphasised that reforms should not be judged solely on their intended outcomes. They argued that implementation, service design, operational processes and accountability arrangements would play a significant role in determining whether reform objectives were realised in practice.

Contributors further highlighted the risk of unintended consequences, noting that reforms seen as positive in principle may not achieve their intended aims if implementation, funding, governance or delivery arrangements are not carefully considered.

3.9 Cross-System and Jurisdictional Considerations

Discussions frequently highlighted the extent to which disability benefits interact with a wide range of other systems and services.

Contributors referred to interactions with health services, social care, employment support, housing, transport, local authority services, devolved benefit systems, passported entitlements and other parts of the social security system.

Several contributors argued that disability benefits are increasingly being used to compensate for gaps in other services and forms of support. Others emphasised the importance of understanding how any future reforms would interact with wider systems before implementation.

Jurisdictional considerations were particularly prominent in discussions relating to Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Contributors highlighted differences in policy environments, administrative arrangements, service provision and devolved responsibilities. Provider Capability, Specialist Expertise and Delivery Capacity

Across the sessions, contributors frequently distinguished between policy intent and the practical realities of delivery.

Participants raised issues relating to assessor capability, specialist expertise, provider incentives, consistency and organisational capacity.

Contributors focused on different aspects of capability. Some emphasised the importance of training, empathy and a strong understanding of specific conditions and impairments. Others highlighted governance, quality assurance, incentives and consistency in decision-making. Some participants focused on the need for expertise relating to particular claimant groups, including deaf and deafblind people.

Practical questions about capacity and delivery were also raised. Contributors noted the challenge of balancing person-centred services with the need to deliver timely decisions for large numbers of claimants. Other contributors questioned whether increasingly personalised approaches could be delivered consistently and sustained over time.

Many contributors viewed capability and implementation as critical to the success of any future reforms. While

there was often support for proposed improvements in principle, this was frequently linked to questions about delivery, specialist expertise, consistency and operational feasibility.

4. Improvements to the Current Benefit

4.1 Reviews, Award Stability and Changed Circumstances

Reviews and reassessments were discussed across multiple sessions and by a wide range of contributors. Discussions frequently distinguished between two related but separate issues: reducing unnecessary reviews for people whose circumstances are unlikely to improve and ensuring that people can easily seek a reassessment when their needs change. Although these issues were often considered together, contributors generally viewed both as equally important.

Contributors raised concerns about the burden associated with repeated reviews for people with lifelong, progressive or otherwise stable conditions. However, the reasons for those concerns varied.

Civil society organisations commonly described reviews as a source of stress, uncertainty and administrative burden. Several linked repeated reassessments to negative experiences of the system, concerns about losing support and reluctance to engage with assessment processes. DDPOs more frequently framed the issue in terms of trust, proportionality and the need to appropriately recognise stable or progressive conditions. Academics highlighted a related concern: that fear

of reassessment may discourage some people from reporting a deterioration in their condition, even where additional support may be warranted.

Contributors did not generally argue for reviews to be removed altogether. Instead, discussions focused on creating more proportionate arrangements. Many contributors argued that any move towards lighter-touch review processes should be accompanied by clear and accessible routes for people to report changes in their circumstances and seek a reassessment where appropriate. While contributors arrived at this position from different perspectives, there was a shared recognition that conditions, support needs and personal circumstances can change over time.

Across the sessions, there was clear support for reducing unnecessary reviews where they offer limited value. At the same time, contributors consistently emphasised that any reforms should avoid creating barriers for people whose circumstances change and who may require additional support.

4.2 Forms, Guidance, Communications and Claimant Understanding

Contributions across the sessions consistently indicated that communication, understanding and the ability to navigate the system influence claimant experiences in ways that extend beyond the wording of individual forms or letters.

Across the sessions, contributors raised concerns about communications, terminology, the accessibility of information, the clarity of decisions, and whether claimants are able to understand what is required of them throughout the process. These discussions included both direct consideration of forms and correspondence, and broader concerns relating to trust, understanding and transparency.

DDPOs frequently focused on whether existing forms and guidance allow people to explain their circumstances effectively. Several argued that current approaches can make it difficult to describe fluctuating conditions, cumulative impacts and the wider barriers people face in their daily lives. Civil society organisations raised similar concerns, often linking them to practical claimant experiences, including anxiety, misunderstanding and difficulties demonstrating the impact of a condition.

Some participants highlighted examples of review communications arriving unexpectedly and concerns that people were not adequately supported to understand the implications of decisions or changes to entitlement.

Some participants reinforced the importance of accessibility, arguing for example that accessibility should include communication in formats that work for deaf and deafblind people, and emphasised that information is not necessarily accessible simply because it has been translated from written English. While many contributors supported improvements to communications, discussions across the sessions suggested that communication changes alone would not address wider concerns.

Contributors frequently linked communications to broader questions of trust, transparency, decision-making and how people are treated throughout the process. Communications were often viewed as one part of a wider claimant experience challenge rather than a solution in themselves.

4.3 Reasonable Adjustments, Advocacy and Additional Support

Across the sessions, contributors discussed the importance of reasonable adjustments, advocacy and personalised support.

Support for improvements in these areas was expressed by a diverse range of contributors. While contributors often supported similar overall objectives, they frequently arrived at those positions from different perspectives.

DDPOs commonly framed reasonable adjustments as a fundamental accessibility issue. They emphasised the importance of communication support, flexibility in process design and recognition of a wide range of claimant needs. Civil society organisations often focused on practical barriers that can arise during applications, assessments and reviews, arguing that adjustments should be embedded throughout the claimant journey rather than treated as isolated interventions.

Advocacy generated particularly extensive discussion. Civil society organisations frequently described advocacy

as a means of helping people navigate a complex system, access support and communicate evidence effectively. Other contributors framed advocacy as a way of addressing inequalities in confidence, resources and the ability to engage with evidential processes. Across several sessions, contributors argued that outcomes can be influenced by whether people are able to access informed and trusted support. As a result, some viewed advocacy as an important mechanism for promoting fairness rather than simply an additional service.

Some contributors distinguished the existing support landscape from independent advocacy and highlighted practical considerations relating to delivery, consistency and scalability.

Many contributors supported stronger provision of reasonable adjustments, advocacy and personalised support. Discussions also highlighted questions around availability, independence, specialist expertise, coverage, funding and implementation. While there was considerable support for the overall direction of travel, contributors expressed a range of views on how these changes should be delivered in practice.

4.4 Assessment Methods, Fluctuating Conditions and Real-World Function

Across the sessions, assessment approaches, fluctuating conditions and the impact of disability and health conditions on daily life emerged as closely linked themes.

Contributors questioned whether existing processes adequately capture how people's circumstances change over time and affect their ability to function in real-world settings.

Contributors frequently argued that assessments can place too much emphasis on what a person is able to do at a single point in time, rather than considering cumulative impacts, fatigue, recovery periods, fluctuations in functioning and the broader effects of living with a condition.

While contributors often reached similar conclusions, they did so from different perspectives. Civil society organisations commonly focused on claimant experiences and the practical implications of fluctuating conditions. DDPOs emphasised the interaction between health conditions, barriers and wider social circumstances, and raised concerns that current approaches do not always reflect lived experience. Academics highlighted research pointing to the importance of fairness, consistency and understanding in shaping claimant experiences. Elected representatives frequently emphasised the importance of trauma-informed approaches and ensuring that decision-makers understand circumstances that may not be immediately visible.

Support for greater flexibility in assessment methods was also a recurring theme. Contributors across the sessions argued that claimant choice should be maintained and that no single assessment format should automatically be regarded as the most reliable.

This was particularly evident in discussions about remote, paper-based and face-to-face assessments. While some contributors supported expanding access to face-to-face assessments, others cautioned against creating assumptions that one format is inherently more credible than another. Many emphasised that the most appropriate approach will depend on individual circumstances.

Contributors also identified a number of practical challenges. Questions were raised about how people would be allocated to different pathways, how consistency could be maintained between assessors, and how more personalised approaches could be delivered in practice.

Many contributors supported changes aimed at improving how fluctuating conditions, cumulative impacts and day-to-day functioning are reflected within assessments. They also consistently emphasised that any reforms should maintain transparency, consistency and claimant choice, while remaining practical to deliver.

4.5 Evidence Gathering, Weighting and Decision Quality

Across the sessions, contributors frequently discussed how evidence is gathered, considered and used in decision-making. These discussions were closely connected to wider themes relating to trust, decision quality, reviews, appeals and claimant experience. Contributors argued that improvements to evidential

processes could help deliver better outcomes for claimants.

Civil society organisations frequently focused on situations where claimants felt that relevant evidence had not been adequately considered. Several argued that the current system can place unnecessary evidential burdens on individuals and that responsibility for obtaining and considering information should be shared more effectively across the system. DDPOs often linked evidential issues to broader concerns around transparency, accountability and confidence in decision-making. Academics and think tanks raised related questions about evidence quality, consistency and administrative practicality.

A recurring issue concerned the balance between making use of a wider range of information and maintaining consistency in decision-making. Many contributors supported greater use of existing evidence, information already held by public services, and insights from people who know a claimant's circumstances well. At the same time, contributors highlighted challenges relating to the weighting of evidence, conflicting information, governance and fairness.

Contributors noted that greater reliance on evidence can create unintended inequalities where some groups have better access to diagnoses, specialist services or supporting documentation than others. Similar concerns were raised by civil society organisations and disability stakeholder advisory bodies, who highlighted that some conditions may be poorly documented, inconsistently

recorded or associated with barriers to accessing healthcare and support.

Many contributors supported improvements to how information is gathered, considered and applied within the system. These discussions consistently highlighted the link between evidential processes, accountability, consistency and confidence in decision-making.

4.6 Correction, Mandatory Reconsiderations and Appeals Learning

Across the sessions, contributors discussed how decisions are reviewed, how mistakes are identified and corrected, and how the system can learn and improve over time.

For many contributors, the key concern was not simply the existence of mechanisms to challenge decisions, but what the outcomes of those challenges reveal about the performance of the wider system. Several argued that appeals, reconsiderations and corrections should be used as opportunities for learning and improvement, rather than being viewed solely as the resolution of individual cases. Civil society organisations frequently linked this issue to claimant hardship, highlighting the strain that incorrect decisions can place on individuals and families before challenges are resolved.

Several contributors argued that improvement efforts should focus not only on whether processes have

been followed correctly, but also on understanding why decisions are later disputed or overturned. Discussions also placed emphasis on governance, oversight and mechanisms for organisational learning.

Across the discussions, there was a common interest in strengthening the system's ability to learn from mistakes and improve decision-making. Contributors were generally more focused on the principles and outcomes that should be achieved than on any single model for implementation.

4.7 Digital Services, Information-Sharing and Data Use

Contributors expressed significant interest in how digital services and improved information-sharing could reduce claimant burden and simplify interactions with the system. However, support for these approaches was consistently accompanied by concerns about accessibility, inclusion, transparency and control over personal information. Discussions covered online services, claimant portals, information reuse, "Tell Us Once" approaches and wider data-sharing arrangements.

Many contributors identified reducing repetition as a key opportunity. Participants frequently described repeated requests for information as burdensome and unnecessarily stressful for claimants as well as repeated requests for information already held by public bodies as a common source of frustration and supported greater information reuse where appropriate.

Support for digital services was rarely unconditional. DDPOs consistently raised questions about access, consent, privacy, governance and control over personal information. Several contributors argued that greater information sharing would improve claimant experiences only if individuals could be confident about how their information would be used and who would be able to access it.

Contributors also highlighted different accessibility considerations, for example the flawed assumption that standard digital solutions will work equally well for deaf and deafblind people. Other contributors focused on the needs of neurodivergent claimants, non-verbal claimants and people supported through appointee arrangements.

Some participants cautioned against assuming that collecting and sharing more information will always lead to better outcomes. They noted that some groups may face barriers relating to access to healthcare, differences in recording practices, or variation in how information is collected and maintained. As a result, discussions about data use were often closely linked to broader questions of fairness, confidence and the quality of information available to support decision-making.

4.8 Hospitalisation and Other Specific Operational Rules

Only a small number of issues relating to the current system generated detailed discussion among multiple groups of contributors. One of the most prominent

concerned the 28-day hospitalisation rule and how it interacts with wider support arrangements.

Civil society organisations commonly focused on the practical implications of hospitalisation for claimants and carers. Several argued that support needs often continue during hospital stays, particularly where family members or carers remain actively involved in providing assistance, coordinating care or facilitating communication. Contributors also raised concerns about the interaction between disability benefits and carers' support arrangements, suggesting that current rules may not fully reflect people's experiences during extended periods in hospital.

One group highlighted a further consideration, linking the rule to mobility support and the potential implications for people who rely on adapted vehicles and related support arrangements. Contributors also connected the issue to wider concerns about anxiety, uncertainty and the interaction between disability benefits and other systems of support.

Contributors who discussed the 28-day hospitalisation rule were generally interested in whether its operation could be improved. Their comments also highlighted broader considerations relating to carers, ongoing disability-related costs, mobility support and the interaction between different forms of assistance.

4.9 Implementation Capability, Accountability and Timeliness

A recurring finding was that contributors frequently judged proposals not only by their intended outcomes, but also by how effectively they could be delivered in practice. Although contributors often focused on different issues, many emphasised the importance of ensuring that proposed reforms could be implemented consistently and sustainably.

Civil society organisations frequently focused on whether proposed changes would lead to tangible improvements in claimant experiences. Several argued that previous reforms had not always translated into consistent practice and questioned how proposed changes would operate in practice. DDPOs often linked implementation concerns to trust, accountability, quality assurance and confidence in the system. Other contributors focused on scalability, incentives, feasibility and the risk of unintended consequences.

Capability within assessment and decision-making services was a recurring area of discussion. Contributors raised issues relating to training, specialist knowledge, organisational culture, incentives, quality assurance and consistency.

Timeliness was another important consideration. Contributors supported greater personalisation and enhanced support but cautioned that reforms should not introduce unnecessary delays or create additional

administrative burdens that affect overall service delivery. Similar concerns were raised in discussions about evidence gathering, advocacy, pathway design and more personalised approaches to support.

Participants also highlighted the need for particular expertise within delivery arrangements, for example it was argued that knowledge of the needs of deaf and deafblind people should be embedded throughout service delivery rather than added as a supplementary consideration.

Many contributors viewed implementation capability as inseparable from policy design.

4.10 Current-Benefit Evidence in the Round

Contributions relating to improvements to the current system were generally focused on making processes easier to navigate, more accessible, more transparent and more responsive to individual circumstances.

While contributors expressed a range of views on how improvements should be achieved in specific areas, several common themes emerged. These included reducing avoidable burden, increasing confidence in decisions, improving accessibility, and ensuring that day-to-day delivery reflects principles of fairness, dignity, consistency and transparency.

Views were often less aligned when discussions turned to implementation. Contributors raised a variety

of perspectives on assessment design, evidential processes, service delivery models and operational arrangements.

5. A Reformed Benefit

5.1 Purpose, Independent Living, Dignity, Choice and Control

Contributions on the overall purpose of a reformed benefit were among the most widely discussed topics in the sessions. These contributions were closely linked to principles such as independent living, person-centred support, trust, dignity, and greater choice and control.

Contributions consistently highlighted the importance of independent living, dignity, choice and control. Some participants framed them as rights that should underpin the design of the system, while others emphasised participation, practical autonomy, financial security and the day-to-day experience of claiming support. DDPOs frequently described independent living as a rights-based concept, arguing that support should enable disabled people to direct their own lives rather than adapt to the requirements of the system. Civil society organisations often focused on the practical role of support in enabling participation, autonomy, financial security and everyday decision-making. Academic contributors commonly linked dignity and choice to fairness, trust and claimant experience.

A recurring theme was the concern that reforms which appear similar in principle could lead to very different experiences in practice, depending on the extent to which individuals retain genuine autonomy. Several participants

distinguished between reforms that expand choice and those that effectively dictate how support should be used. This distinction was particularly evident in discussions about services, support packages and the future design of benefits.

Although there was substantial support for principles relating to dignity, choice and control, contributors did not put forward a single agreed approach to how these principles should be put into practice. Contributions therefore support these principles at a high level, while leaving significant questions about implementation unresolved.

5.2 Participation and Opportunity

Contributions relating to participation were associated primarily with this principle and were closely connected to wider discussions about independent living, social inclusion, community life and employment.

Contributors widely supported participation as an important outcome of a reformed benefit. However, the sessions demonstrated that participation was understood in different ways by different contributors.

Participants highlighted a broad understanding of participation that extended beyond paid employment, including volunteering, caring responsibilities, involvement in local communities, learning and social engagement.

Several contributors argued that disability benefits should support opportunities for participation while remaining distinct from conditionality.

Contributions from civil society organisations frequently highlighted barriers that sit beyond the benefit system itself. Participants pointed to housing, transport, labour market practices, health services, social care and wider accessibility issues as significant factors influencing participation. As a result, many argued that while a reformed benefit could support participation, it would not by itself remove all barriers people face.

Overall, there was substantial support for the principle that a reformed benefit should help enable participation and opportunity. However, this support was generally contingent on participation being understood in a broad and voluntary sense.

5.3 Additional Costs and Non-Means-Testing

Contributions relating to the additional costs of disability and the non-means-tested nature of support were raised consistently throughout the sessions.

Contributors from a wide range of backgrounds emphasised the continuing importance of recognising the additional costs associated with disability and long-term health conditions.

Civil society organisations frequently highlighted the practical costs that can arise across many aspects

of everyday life, including transport, communication, equipment, energy use, support arrangements and participation. Academic contributors often linked additional costs to broader issues such as poverty, social inclusion and financial resilience.

Contributors broadly supported maintaining a non-means-tested approach. Many argued that disability-related costs can arise regardless of income, while holding different views on how those costs should be recognised or assessed.

Contributions did not point to a single agreed approach for how additional costs should be reflected in the design of a future system. Several contributors expressed concern that attempts to define costs more explicitly could unintentionally narrow entitlement, fail to capture less visible impacts, or create additional administrative burdens. As a result, support for recognising additional costs did not necessarily translate into support for all possible approaches to assessing or categorising those costs.

Overall, contributions showed strong support for the principle that a reformed benefit should continue to recognise disability-related costs and remain non-means-tested. Views were more varied on how these principles should be implemented in practice.

5.4 Cash as the Foundation and the Role of Services

The relationship between cash support and services was one of the most frequently discussed areas of future benefit design across the sessions. Discussions in this area reflected principles relating to meeting disability-related needs, choice and control, and the potential role of wider support and services.

Contributors consistently supported retaining cash payments as a core element of disability-related support. Views differed on whether services or other forms of non-cash support should also play a role alongside financial assistance.

DDPOs were generally the most cautious about any move away from cash-based support. Many argued that direct financial support remains important because it allows disabled people to respond to individual circumstances and changing needs. Several contributors expressed concern that poorly designed service-based approaches could reduce flexibility.

Civil society organisations often reached similar conclusions, highlighting that disability-related costs can vary significantly between individuals and argued that financial flexibility remains important because support needs cannot always be easily predicted or defined. Some contributors expressed interest in exploring whether additional services, equipment provision or alternative delivery models could complement cash

support in certain circumstances. However, where potential benefits were identified, support was typically conditional rather than unconditional. Contributors often emphasised that any services should be voluntary, provide a clear benefit to individuals, and complement rather than replace cash support.

Overall, contributions highlighted a clear tension in relation to future design choices. While there was broad agreement that support should help address disability-related needs, views differed on the most effective way to deliver that support. Contributions more consistently supported retaining cash as the foundation of the system than they did any particular service-based model. Interest in additional services was generally contingent on them being voluntary, accessible, beneficial to claimants and implemented alongside, rather than instead of, cash support.

5.5 Fair, Person-Centred and Supportive Processes

Contributions relating to fairness, person-centred support and responsiveness consistently indicated that contributors wanted a future system to be experienced as fair, understandable, supportive and responsive to individual circumstances, rather than as a standardised administrative process.

Across the sessions, contributors frequently argued that a reformed benefit should adapt to the individual rather than requiring individuals to adapt to the system.

Contributors often attached different meanings to this objective.

DDPOs commonly emphasised person-centred design, recognition of individual circumstances and greater responsiveness to social and environmental barriers. Civil society organisations frequently focused on the practical experience of claiming support and the need for processes that reduce stress, confusion and the need to repeatedly provide information. Academic contributors often linked person-centred approaches to perceptions of fairness, trust and confidence in the system.

Contributions showed substantial support for the principle that future arrangements should be more person-centred. However, contributors attached different conditions to that support. Several emphasised the importance of flexibility and individual choice, while others highlighted the need to maintain consistency and avoid creating additional complexity. Other contributors highlighted the challenge of providing highly personalised support while maintaining operational consistency and timely decision-making.

Overall, contributions supported the broad principle of a more person-centred approach with questions about how flexibility, fairness, consistency and operational practicality should be balanced in the design and delivery of a future system.

5.6 Assessment Routes, Flexibility and Individual Circumstances

Contributions relating to different routes through the system and the extent to which processes should reflect individual circumstances were commonly raised in discussions about the future design of benefits.

Many contributors supported the principle that future arrangements could be tailored to reflect different circumstances and needs. However, this support was typically conditional rather than unconditional.

Several contributors discussed differentiated approaches in some form. Support was often based on the view that disabled people do not have identical experiences or support needs, and that some groups may benefit from different forms of interaction with the system.

At the same time, contributors frequently highlighted potential risks associated with this approach, for example the risk that people with similar circumstances could receive different treatment depending on how they are directed through the system; or that approaches based on impairment categories may not adequately reflect multiple conditions or more complex circumstances.

Overall, contributions indicated broad support for more tailored and flexible approaches where these could reduce burden and improve the claimant experience. Contributors also identified potential risks relating to consistency, fairness and decision-making, which would

need to be carefully addressed in the design of any future system.

5.7 Fluctuation, Cumulative Impact and Sustainable Function

Fluctuation and cumulative impact were recurring themes throughout the sessions. Contributors consistently questioned whether disability and health conditions can be understood accurately through observations made at a single point in time.

While there was broad support for greater recognition of fluctuation and cumulative impact, contributors often focused on different aspects of the issue.

Contributors frequently highlighted the effects of fatigue, pain, recovery periods and changes in a person's condition over time. Additionally, cumulative impacts, environmental barriers and the interaction between multiple conditions were commonly discussed. Other contributions focused on assessment practices, the importance of professional judgement and the need to develop a fuller understanding of individual circumstances.

Several contributors argued that future arrangements should place greater emphasis on what people can do on a sustained basis, rather than focusing on isolated examples of capability. At the same time, contributors acknowledged the practical challenges involved. Questions were raised about consistency, information requirements, guidance, assessor capability and how

fluctuation and cumulative impact could be reflected within decision-making processes.

Overall, contributions showed strong support for the principle that fluctuation and cumulative impact should be recognised more effectively within the system. There was considerably less agreement on the specific mechanisms through which this should be achieved in practice.

5.8 Evidence Architecture and “Tell Us Once”

Contributions relating to information sharing, the use of existing information and interactions between claimants and government generated extensive discussion throughout the sessions.

A recurring theme was the burden created when individuals are repeatedly asked to provide information that may already be held elsewhere. Several contributors identified potential benefits in reducing duplication and making more effective use of existing information.

Some participants expressed particularly strong support for reducing repeated requests for information already available within the system, highlighting the potential to reduce claimant burden and improve administrative efficiency.

Concerns were raised about information becoming outdated or inaccurate over time. DDPOs frequently highlighted issues relating to governance, ownership, access, consent and transparency. Some contributors

also argued that greater reliance on existing information could disadvantage people whose records are incomplete, inconsistent, or affected by barriers to accessing support, healthcare or diagnosis.

Other contributors focused primarily on data sharing, highlighting the repeated failure of existing systems to make effective use of information that had already been provided. This illustrates how contributors often supported the broader objective of reducing repetition while differing in their assessment of the main barriers to achieving it.

Overall, contributions indicated broad support for reducing duplication and administrative burden through better use of existing information. Contributors generally attached important conditions relating to consent, governance, transparency, accessibility, the ability to correct information and maintaining trust in the system.

5.9 Advocacy, Reasonable Adjustments and Specialist Support

Contributions relating to advocacy, reasonable adjustments and specialist support indicated that many contributors viewed these as integral features of a reformed benefit system, rather than as additional or optional services.

Across the sessions, contributors frequently argued that fair access depends not only on entitlement rules, but

also on whether people are able to understand, navigate and participate in the process on an equal basis.

Contributors showed the strongest support for the principle that support should be available throughout the claimant journey, rather than being limited to specific stages of the process. However, contributors explained this need in different ways. Civil society organisations frequently described advocacy as helping people understand requirements, provide relevant information and navigate complex processes.

Several contributors also linked advocacy and support to the quality of information available to decision-makers, arguing that access to support can affect a person's ability to explain their circumstances, provide relevant information and challenge decisions where necessary. At the same time, contributors raised questions about independence, funding, capacity and delivery models. While support for these principles was generally strong, many contributors emphasised that implementation would be critical to their effectiveness.

Overall, contributions demonstrated strong support for the principle that future arrangements should incorporate advocacy, support and reasonable adjustments. Contributors frequently attached conditions relating to specialist expertise, independence, accessibility and consistent availability.

5.10 Cost Categories, Additional Costs and Linked Support

Discussions relating to the potential use of cost categories and cost-based approaches revealed some of the most significant areas of debate across the sessions.

While contributors broadly agreed that disability and long-term health conditions can result in additional costs, there was considerably less agreement about whether future systems should organise support around explicit cost categories or cost-focused approaches.

DDPOs were generally the most sceptical about cost-category models. Several argued that disability-related costs are often complex, highly individual and difficult to categorise consistently. These contributors frequently expressed concern that category-based approaches could increase administrative burden, encourage more rigid decision-making, or fail to reflect the reality of fluctuating needs and differing circumstances.

At the same time other contributors expressed greater openness to exploring cost-based approaches, particularly where these might support more tailored awards or provide clearer links between an individual's circumstances and the support they receive. Contributors frequently indicated that substantially more detail would be needed before firm conclusions could be reached and emphasised the importance of maintaining flexibility and claimant choice.

Overall, contributions demonstrated broad agreement that disability-related costs are an important feature of any future system. Contributors expressed differing views on whether categorising those costs would improve the design of support or risk oversimplifying circumstances that are often complex, varied and highly individual.

5.11 Co-Design, Testing and Implementation

Co-design and testing were recurring themes across the sessions.

Contributors from a wide range of backgrounds argued that future reforms should be developed, tested and refined through ongoing involvement of disabled people and organisations representing those affected by the system.

Although there was broad support for co-design, contributors did not always define it in the same way. DDPOs often emphasised meaningful involvement in decision-making and the design of future systems. Civil society organisations commonly focused on ensuring that policy development is informed by practical experience and lived realities. Participants highlighted the importance of evaluating outcomes and understanding how reforms affect people’s lives in practice. Some contributors emphasised the need to ensure that future systems properly reflect communication, accessibility and support requirements.

Contributors also attached important qualifications to this support. Some argued that consultation alone should not be regarded as co-design. Others emphasised that engagement should continue throughout implementation, testing and evaluation, rather than ending once design decisions have been taken. Several contributors highlighted concerns that reforms which appear positive in principle can produce unintended consequences unless they are thoroughly tested before being implemented more widely.

Overall, contributions demonstrated strong support for co-design and ongoing engagement. Contributors consistently emphasised that meaningful involvement should continue throughout the development, implementation and evaluation of future reforms, helping to ensure that changes work as intended and reflect the experiences of those most affected.

5.12 Jurisdictional and System-Boundary Considerations

Contributions relating to trust, information sharing and wider implementation issues repeatedly highlighted the importance of understanding how a reformed benefit would interact with devolved responsibilities and other parts of the support system.

Contributors from Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland frequently emphasised that reforms cannot be considered solely within a single administrative context.

Contributions from Scotland frequently focused on interoperability, passported entitlements, devolved delivery arrangements and the interaction between future reforms and existing Scottish benefits. Contributions from Wales highlighted issues relating to digital exclusion, co-production and the importance of understanding local circumstances and pressures on services. Contributions from Northern Ireland often focused on implementation considerations, governance arrangements and the practical implications of introducing reforms within a different legislative and administrative framework.

Several contributors also highlighted the interaction between disability benefits and a range of wider systems and services, including health services, social care, employment support, transport, housing support, Access to Work, Carer's Allowance and passported entitlements. Contributors generally agreed that future arrangements should not be designed in isolation from these wider relationships. Views differed on the significance of these interactions and the implications they should have for future reform.

Overall, contributions demonstrated broad support for recognising the wider systems and devolved contexts within which disability benefits operate. Many contributors also highlighted that the practical implications of these issues would depend on future policy choices, legislation and delivery decisions, rather than matters that could be resolved through the sessions alone.

5.13 Reformed Benefit Evidence in the Round

Across the sessions, contributions relating to a reformed benefit generally focused on three interconnected questions.

The first concerned purpose: what a reformed system should seek to achieve, and how principles such as independent living, dignity, participation, choice and control should be reflected in the design of a future system.

The second concerned delivery: how a reformed system might make use of information, advocacy, support, different routes through the system, information sharing and services, while remaining fair, accessible and trusted.

The third concerned implementation: how a reformed system could balance personalisation with consistency, flexibility with accountability, a broader understanding of individual circumstances with clear decision-making, and innovation with accessibility and operational practicality.

Contributions demonstrated substantial support for the broad direction of many of the proposed principles. However, that support was often conditional rather than unconditional. Contributors frequently agreed with the intended objectives while also highlighting safeguards, qualifications and design considerations that they believed would be necessary for successful implementation.

Several recurring tensions remained evident throughout the discussions, including the relationship between cash support and services, participation and conditionality, flexibility and consistency, information sharing and consent, and personalisation and operational scalability. These did not necessarily reflect direct disagreement. In many cases, these important trade-offs were seen as key to the design and delivery of a reformed benefit.

6. Annex Session Information

6.1 Questions Asked to Attendees

Attendees were asked the following questions on the Review's emerging recommendations for improvements to the current benefit:

- Which of the proposed improvements would make the biggest difference to claimants' experiences and outcomes?
- Are there any important gaps?
- What unintended consequences could result from these proposals, especially in consideration to different types of claimants, conditions or protected characteristics?
- Is there anything else you would like to mention? This could include, for example, what might need to be in place for these proposals to work effectively in practice.

Attendees were asked the following questions on the Review's emerging recommendations for a reformed benefit:

- Overall, would this vision make things better for disabled people and people with long-term health conditions? Are there elements of it that might make it worse?

- What does this vision mean for people's choice, control and dignity over their lives? What is missing?
- Would this vision better enable disabled people and people with long-term health conditions to participate in everyday life? What barriers would remain?
- Is there anything else you would like to mention?

6.2 Stakeholder Attendees

Please note, not all attendees wished to be named, and therefore some do not appear on this list.

Roundtables

- Angela Matthews (Business Disability Forum)
- Benjamin Gregg (Centre for Social Justice)
- Citizens Advice
- Cory Berman (Re:State)
- Dr Jed Meers (Co-Director, The Administrative Fairness Lab)
- Dr Kate Summers (London School of Economics and Political Science)
- Dr Mark Randall (Society of Occupational Medicine / Ingeus)
- Eduin Latimer (Institute for Fiscal Studies)
- Evan John (Policy and Public Affairs Advisor, Sense)
- Eve Mair (Mind)

- Frankie Bowyer (Lead Policy Advisor, Scope)
- George Appleton (Social Care Institute for Social Care Excellence)
- Geoff Fimister (Disability Benefits Consortium)
- Iain Porter (Joseph Rowntree Foundation)
- Katy Styles (We Care Campaign)
- Kevin Higgins (Advice NI)
- Louisa Dollimore (The Good Growth Foundation)
- Louise Murphy (The Resolution Foundation)
- Lucy Bannister (Trussell)
- Maddy Rose (Mencap)
- MS Society
- National Autistic Society
- Nic Murray (Leonard Cheshire)
- Nuala Toman (Disability Action)
- Parkinson’s UK
- Professor Kirstein Rummery (University of Stirling)
- Rhian Davies (Disability Wales)
- Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)
- Samuel Thomas (Z2K)
- Sophia Kleanthous (Disability Rights UK)
- Trades Union Congress (TUC)

- Zeenat Jeewa (CEO, Asian Peoples Disability Alliance (APDA))

Discussions

- British Sign Language (BSL) Advisory Board
- Disability Unit Regional Stakeholder Network (RSN) Chairs
- Independent Disability Advisory Panel (IDAP)
- Officials from the Department of Communities, Northern Ireland Executive
- Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Scottish Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice and Housing
- Sioned Williams MS, Deputy First Minister of Wales and Cabinet Minister for Social Justice and Equality
- Sir Charlie Mayfield, Keep Britain Working Review
- Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC)
- Steve Darling MP, Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Work and Pensions