

Frequently asked questions

Q: I've just received a letter from the DWP saying that I'm not entitled to PIP (Personal Independence Payment). I'm not happy about this decision. How do I go about appealing?

A: In brief, if you get a letter about a benefit decision from the DWP (Department of Work and Pensions) that you are not happy with - keep a copy of the letter and:

- Write to the DWP to ask for a reconsideration.
- Wait for a 'reconsideration letter' from the DWP. This will be called a 'Mandatory Reconsideration Notice letter'. Keep this letter - you will need it to appeal.
- Appeal if you are not happy with the decision. You need to do this in writing within one month of the date on the Mandatory Reconsideration Notice.

This can be quite a daunting prospect but there are organisations that can assist you with an appeal. Carers Outreach Service staff can sign post or refer you to local organisations that may help you.

PIP renewal forms

Carers have told us they are worried because their renewal forms have to be returned by a certain date but there is a waiting list for someone to help to fill in the forms.

You can telephone the Department of Work and Pensions and ask for an extension on the date by which the forms have to be returned.

Q: My neighbour and friend of many years, Wil, is struggling to manage his affairs. He has memory problems and is awaiting an appointment at the memory clinic. He has asked me to help more with things like managing his benefits. But I'm not sure of how to proceed legally. I want to make sure everything is above board.

A: You can apply to become an appointee for Wil; an appointee is someone who has been authorised to act on someone's behalf to deal with benefit affairs, generally due to mental incapacity.

To become an appointee you should make a request to the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). You, and Wil, will then be interviewed to ensure you are suitable, and if so, you will be formally appointed to act on Wil's behalf.

Your responsibilities as an appointee:

- Signing the claim form
- Notifying the benefits office of any changes in circumstances
- Claiming all benefits due
- Ensuring the benefit is spent in the best interest of the customer
- Responsibility for any overpayments if you knowingly provide wrong information

The phone number to ring will vary depending on which benefits the customer is receiving. E.g. if it is Attendance Allowance, you need to ring the Attendance Allowance helpline.

It is important to note that an appointee has no role beyond welfare benefits.

Q: I have recently stopped working to care for my elderly father. I'm worried about how this will affect my future state pension.

A: Carer's credit is a national insurance credit that helps with gaps in your national insurance record. It pays class 3 contributions that help protect state pension and bereavement benefits. You could get Carer's Credit if you're caring for someone for at least 20 hours a week. Your income, savings or investments won't affect eligibility for Carer's Credit. Carers who don't qualify for Carer's Allowance may qualify for Carer's Credit.

A freedom of information request showed that, in December 2018 only 17,388 out of a possible 200,000 people that the Department of Work & Pensions estimated could be eligible to claim Carers Credit, were in receipt of it!

This poor take-up could be explained by the fact that carers just don't know about Carer's credit; it is not a typical benefit, as you don't receive any money for it.

You can apply by downloading a form from gov.uk. Or for more information you can contact your local carers' hub. We have a specialist Financial Information Officer who oversees and deals with more complex financial queries.

Q: I've had a letter from the Local Authority that says I have to pay more towards my care package. Is this right?

A: The charging framework is set by the Welsh Government and seeks to ensure that people have enough money to meet their daily living requirements.

This charging policy applies to all adults who receive a care package in some shape or form. However, Local Authorities have a discretion in which services they charge for, so some services may be free where you live. Also, there are some instances where, for example, if the individual concerned is on an extremely low income, the charges can be waived.

Currently all children's care services are not charged for.

It is important to ensure that the Local Authority has your up to date financial details. It is possible to authorise the Department of Work and Pensions to provide the Local Authority with details of your income.

If you feel the decision about how much you must pay towards your care package is unfair then it is important to note that there is an appeal process.

You can contact your Local Authority to request a copy of its charging policy. Or contact Carers Outreach for more details.