

Dear Department for Communities (Northern Ireland),

1. Please provide statistics on the weighting given with regards the various elements in PIP when making decisions on a claimant's award, for example, the weighting given to the claimant information given on the form, the information provided by the assessor, the GP or other medical report etc.

2. If weighting does not take place, how does the Department ensure that the information provided by the claimant, who best knows how their conditions affect them, is given equal or more weight than the opinion of the Capita assessor who has a one hour telephone conversation with said claimant?

3. Again, if weighting does not take place, how does the Department ensure that the information provided by the GP, who often is the second best authority on how the conditions affect the claimant, is given equal or more weight than the Capita assessor who has a one hour telephone conversation with the claimant?

4. It has been recently stated by Capita in recent weeks at Council committee meetings and Assembly committee meetings that Department for Communities are the decision makers not Capita. Why does the assessors report then show the sub-criteria selected under each descriptor which, when added together, amounts to the decision itself? What is left for the DfC decision maker to decide?



**Our reference:** DfC/2021-0217

**Date:** 1 December 2021

Dear

**Freedom of Information Act 2000**

Thank you for your email of 4 November 2021.

You specifically requested under FOI legislation:

**1. Please provide statistics on the weighting given with regards the various elements in PIP when making decisions on a claimant's award, for example, the weighting given to the claimant information given on the form, the information provided by the assessor, the GP or other medical report etc.**

There is no practice of allocating weighting to various types of evidence when making a decision on a PIP claim hence the Department does not hold this information.

**2. If weighting does not take place, how does the Department ensure that the information provided by the claimant, who best knows how their conditions affect them, is given equal or more weight than the opinion of the Capita assessor who has a one-hour telephone conversation with said claimant?**

When making a decision the PIP Case Manager will consider all the information in the PIP application form (PIP2), the assessment report provided by Capita, and any supporting evidence provided by the claimant or gathered by Capita during the assessment process.

**3. Again, if weighting does not take place, how does the Department ensure that the information provided by the GP, who often is the second best authority on how the conditions affect the claimant, is given equal or more weight than the Capita assessor who has a one-hour telephone conversation with the claimant?**

Please see response to 2 above.

**4. It has been recently stated by Capita in recent weeks at Council committee meetings and Assembly committee meetings that Department for**

**Communities are the decision makers not Capita. Why does the assessors report then show the subcriteria selected under each descriptor which, when added together, amounts to the decision itself? What is left for the DfC decision maker to decide?**

Entitlement to PIP is dependent on the functional effects of a health condition or impairment. The Assessment Provider's Health Professionals provide advice on which descriptor choices they consider appropriate to a claimant's circumstances. Case Managers will then decide whether this advice is supported by the evidence held on a claimant's case. They do so in line with guidance contained in the Advice for Decision Making Guide (ADMG), which provides advice on the principles of decision making and consideration of evidence. The ADMG contains specific guidance for Case Managers on how to treat advice from Health Professionals. Paragraphs A1522 and A1541 in the following link refer:

[Advice for Decision Making - A: Decision Making and Appeals | Department for Communities \(communities-ni.gov.uk\)](https://www.communities-ni.gov.uk/advice-for-decision-making-a-decision-making-and-appeals)

If you are dissatisfied with this response and wish to request a review of our response or make a complaint about how your request has been handled, you may ask for an internal review within two calendar months of the date of this letter. You should write to the Information Access Manager, Department for Communities, Level 5, Nine Lanyon Place, BELFAST, BT1 3LP, or send an email to [foi@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:foi@communities-ni.gov.uk).

If you are not content with the outcome of the internal review, you have the right to apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a review of our original decision. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:

Information Commissioner's Office  
Wycliffe House  
Water Lane  
Wilmslow  
Cheshire  
SK9 5AF

If you have any queries about this letter please contact me. Please remember to quote the reference number above in any future communications.

Yours sincerely