



# Benefit Bulletin

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# PIP Processes and support for vulnerable claimants.

Helen Oliver, our Welfare Rights Team Leader, recently met with Ken Lawson from the Disability Advocacy team at the DWP;

## New Claims

When a customer makes a new claim to PIP, the questionnaire and any supportive or medical evidence is scanned on and sent to our assessment providers.

All new claims will go through the assessment provider and have an assessment, this could be:

- A paper-based review – where there is enough evidence to make a decision without an assessment with the customer.
- Video assessment
- Face to face assessment
- Telephone assessment

There may be very rare exceptional circumstances for instance, a customer is in jail and we have no questionnaire or evidence, where the assessment provider cannot make a decision that we will in PIP make a decision based on probability

## LATE PIP2

If PIP2 form is received late but within a month of the return date, then they are automatically treated as a Mandatory Reconsideration Request.

## PIP 'ADDITIONAL SUPPORT MARKERS'

PIP claimants with a severe mental health or behavioral condition, learning difficulty, developmental disorder or memory problems, with no Personal Acting Body (PAB), may have difficulty interacting and understanding communication and requirements. These requirements are set by DWP throughout the life cycle of the benefit claim. Claimants who find it difficult to engage with the process are described as having Additional Support (AS) needs. An AS marker is usually added at the start of the claim but can be added throughout at any point and is even recommended on the functional assessment report. The AS marker is a red water mark on the case and it prevents the claim being closed for failing to send back questionnaires/information requested or failing to comply or attend assessments.

You can advise PIP if you think your client comes under the above and request this marker be applied to account, you could do this in covering letter to PIP when sending the application form. Please only use this for those that genuinely need it.

### **PIP Reviews**

PIP award reviews or change of circumstances reviews have an extra step in the process. Unlike a new claim a case manager will see the review claim before it's sent for an assessment.

If there is enough evidence a case manager can make the decision without sending it for a new assessment.

A case manager can contact those listed in the forms to gather any further evidence and also look at ESA and UC work capability reports to give a clearer picture of the customer's functional abilities. PIP are averaging 60-65 % of claims in this way

### **Access to Work Grants**

Clients with disabilities who are looking to move into work or are already in work can make an application for an Access to Work Grant to assist them. They don't need a diagnosed illness or to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit. It was mentioned that lots of clients in work have had an ATWG and have a copy of their assessment, which can be helpful when deciding on claims.

Please consider this for clients who are working;

[Access to Work: get support if you have a disability or health condition: What Access to Work is - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/get-support-if-you-have-a-disability-or-health-condition-what-access-to-work-is)

### **Health Adjustment Passport**

Like the above, this allows clients to document their needs in a passport style document that they can show people/employers. They can be useful as supporting evidence with Disability Benefits.

[Health Adjustment Passport - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/health-adjustment-passport)

# Case Study

## Client A – Welfare Benefits Team

### Client situation

Client was at last stage before being taken to court by her landlord over rent arrears on her account and Housing Allowance was not covering her full rent.

### How did we help?

We completed a benefit check for her and confirmed that her Housing Allowance should cover her full rent, all her rooms were occupied and there shouldn't be any non-dependant charges on the claim.

Spoke to UC to find out the reasons for the shortfall, they had the 3<sup>rd</sup> room as being unoccupied. Spoke to the client about this and she said she'd been trying to let UC know her friend was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> room, but with no success.

On reviewing her UC Journal, it turned out instead of notifying them on the change of circumstances section of the online account, she had instead been informing them by sending notes to her work coach instead. We submitted the change of circumstances in the correct place on the account and requested a Mandatory Reconsideration and an any time revision of the date that the Bedroom Tax is removed.

We requested this on the basis that client had informed them numerous times that her friend was staying in the 3<sup>rd</sup> room. It was very clear that the claimant was struggling to understand how to properly manage her journal and she should have been offered more help to get the claim amended.

### What were the results?

The anytime revision was successful and the Bedroom Tax reduction was removed going back as far Jan 2020. The rent was paid to her landlord which removed arrears on her rent account and put her into credit.

## Client B – Debt Team

### Client Situation

Our client is a 62 year old lady who lost her husband several years ago. She was living alone in a three bedroom house, with her adult son staying with her occasionally. At the time of the initial referral, the client was bedbound after suffering a serious fall. She also has an incurable cyst on the brain which affects her daily life and mental wellbeing.

The client had been out of work for a period of time but unable to claim benefits due to occupational pension and annuity from late husband. She had therefore accrued mortgage arrears (£90,000 outstanding on mortgage, including £10,000 arrears). The client had been threatened with possession action and Santander's litigation team were due to have a meeting within the next few days. The client was extremely distressed and needed to stay in her home due to the support network she has around her, having lived there for decades.

### How did we help?

We entered the client into Breathing Space to protect her from enforcement action. We also applied to the RAF Association for financial assistance on the client's behalf, as her late husband was in the RAF.

This gave us time to negotiate with Santander. During the Breathing Space, the client started a full-time job and had received her first wages. This allowed us to review the budget and make an offer to Santander (CMI plus contribution towards arrears). Our offer was affordable for the client while still allowing the mortgage to be paid off before the end of the mortgage term. We also informed Santander that there was a possibility of a lump sum from RAFA to persuade them to accept our reduced offer.

### What were the results?

RAFA agreed to pay £2000 (their maximum grant) towards the client's mortgage arrears, reducing them down to £8000. Santander then agreed to accept our reduced offer towards the arrears. The client was extremely relieved and grateful for our support.



# Raise Achievements and Successes

## Welfare Benefits Team

highest individual client gain £22,966 

highest advisor gains £91,898 



**Total Gains Welfare £298,713**

My clients were 2 sisters living at property as joint tenants. We supported them both to apply for Attendance Allowance and both claims were successful. This entitled each client to the severe disability premium with Pension Credit and an increase in the Housing Benefit for one sister. We also assisted with a fuel grant. One of the sisters did not receive her Cost of Living payment. We enquired about this and it has now been paid.

**(Mike Summers – Welfare Benefits Adviser)**

Our client was autistic and after us submitting a detailed Mandatory Reconsideration last year, he was awarded High Rate Care Component of Child DLA. This was backdated and awarded for the next 7 years. The parents also received backdated Disabled Child and Carer Elements in their Universal Credit about **£1900**.

Pensioner's PIP reinstated and backdated by a superseding decision from the DWP. Following this award, client now gets extra money in his Pension Credit, a Severe Disability Premium.

**(Ernie Jamarudi– Welfare Benefits Claims worker)**

## Debt Team

Highest individual client gain £30,353 

Highest advisor gains £167.610 



**Total gains Money Advice £247,507**



## News from Rightsnet

### **DWP confirms that it is conducting small-scale test of online applications for PIP**

DWP Minister Tom Pursglove

'The programme is transforming the entire PIP service, including introducing a digital PIP service with the option to apply online. We are currently operating a small-scale test of this new apply service, taking a small number of claims to begin with, before we gradually and carefully increase the number of people who can use it.'



[Read more here](#)

## News from CPAG

### **UC Administrative Earnings Threshold**

From 30th January the Administrative Earnings Threshold is increasing (again - it was previously increased in Sept 2022). The new rules are expected to affect 130,000 UC claimants who are working part-time.

In a subsequent development, as part of the 'Growth Plan 2022' announced on 23 September, the Chancellor said that from January 2023 the administrative earnings threshold would be further increased, to equate to 15 hours a week at national minimum wage level for single claimant, and 24 hours a week at that level for a couple. Also, the government would be 'strengthening' the UC sanctions regime.



[Read more here](#)

## News from Housing system

### **The Court of Appeal rejected the appeal against the DWP's decision not to apply the £20 uplift to 'legacy' benefits.**

The Court of appeal ruled that as the purpose of the £20 uplift was to support individuals who lost their jobs due to the pandemic, it was not a legal requirement to extend this to legacy benefits - even though these claimants will have suffered financial hardship.



[Read more here](#)

## Raise Website & Social Media

Have you check-out the Raise website?? You can find us at [www.raiseadvice.org.uk](http://www.raiseadvice.org.uk) where you can find all the relevant information about Raise. We also publish our monthly bulletin on our website, however if you prefer a PDF copy, let us know and we can arrange it.

Raise on social media. Give us a “follow” and share on the links below:

[Raise Advice | LinkedIn](#)

[@RaiseAdvice | Instagram](#)

[@RaiseAdvice | Twitter](#)

<https://www.facebook.com/RaiseAdvice>



## Further support, information and training

Find all **Raise Benefit Bulletins** on our website <https://www.raiseadvice.org.uk/>

**CPAG** produce useful updates for professional in [Welfare Rights Bulletin](#). You can also sign up to receive the paper version at a cost.

The **DWP** produce useful items for professionals in [Touchbase](#): DWP news about work, working-age benefits, pensions and services.

**Newcastle Welfare Rights** provide [benefit bulletins](#) for professionals.

**Housing systems** also provide an [newsletters](#) for Housing Association professionals.

**Citizens Advice** produce useful updates via [Advisor](#).

## About Raise Advice

We are a charity covering Liverpool and the surrounding areas. We receive funding from Registered Social Landlords to provide welfare rights, debt and financial capability advice to their tenants. To make a referral please visit our [Referral Portal](#)

## About Raise Training

We have provided Welfare Rights training to Housing Associations since 2008. Please see our [website](#) for a list of training available. Our training is written with Housing Association tenants in mind and we use our clients to inform the content of all our training material. All of our training can be tailored to meet the learning requirements of your staff. If you wish to speak to us about bespoke training, please email us at [training@raiseadvice.org.uk](mailto:training@raiseadvice.org.uk)