

Adult Disability Payment

Scottish Government

March 2021

A joint submission prepared by Age Scotland and About Dementia to the Scottish Government's consultation on their draft regulations for the Adult Disability Payment. This is the name for the new Scottish benefit which will replace Personal Independence Payment (PIP) for disabled people of working age in Scotland beginning from spring 2022.

Replacing assessment with consultations

We welcome the move away from assessments which we know has been the source of great anxiety and stress for many disabled people. We welcome Social Security Scotland's approach which will use existing supporting information to make a decision about whether or not to award Adult Disability Payment. This will help to make the application process smoother and hopefully less onerous. We note that the Scottish Parliament's Welfare Reform Committee (2012 to 2016) recorded concerns that benefit assessment procedures too often placed greater emphasis on medical evidence provided by health professionals who had irregular contact with benefit claimants. The Committee noted that information provided by applicants and carers on the day to day lived experience of the applicant was not given the same degree of importance. We agree with the Committee that there should be no hierarchy of information in the consultation process and that medical information should not be treated as more important than the personal information provided by claimants.

When further information is required to make a decision, Social Security Scotland will carry out a 'Consultation' with the applicant. We believe further clarity is necessary to demonstrate how the newly proposed 'Consultations' will be different to the current assessments that happen now. In order to improve the process of applying for disability benefits it is essential that consultations are carried out by people who are suitably qualified to do so and fully understand the condition of the person who is applying. We would ask the Scottish Government to provide assurance that there will be a person-centred approach to consultations and that specialised dementia training be provided to all assessors to ensure that all consultations are handled appropriately and sensitively.

The questions asked during consultation interviews must be designed to prevent confusion and avoid increased stress for people living with dementia. Good practice developed with people living with dementia by the Alzheimer's Society UK on how to conduct one-to-one interviews indicates that structured interviews may not be well-suited to gaining insights to individual experience and perceptions of living with dementia. The Alzheimer's Society's

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guidance suggests that the use of a range of question types is required to gather information, that questions should be adapted to the needs of the person being interviewed and that asking complicated questions may be confusing for the interviewee (Alzheimer's Society UK). We would welcome a commitment from the Scottish Government to include such advice when devising the consultation process.

The Social Security (Scotland) Act 2018 recognised the requirement for independent advocates to speak on behalf of people who, for a variety of reasons are unable to do so for themselves. Independent advocacy can empower individuals living with dementia to communicate their needs and wishes in order to be fully involved in decisions that directly impact their lives. We believe that having access to independent advocacy is fundamental to the effectiveness of the Adult Disability Payment consultation process and would welcome confirmation from the Scottish Government that specialised independent advocacy will be available to people living with dementia.

20 metre test

Age Scotland supports the MS Society, Inclusion Scotland, and other disability organisations in their call to remove the 20 metre walking test as part of the assessment criteria for Adult Disability Payment.

Whilst we understand the Scottish Government's priority is to ensure the safe and secure transition of current claimants to the new system we believe this is not a fair test and are disappointed it is included within the regulations. Using the 20 metre walking test resulted in nearly half of those (47%) who had the Higher Rate Mobility component for Disability Living Allowance losing this when re-assessed for Personal Independence Payments.¹ This test fails to take into account fluctuating conditions where someone may be able to walk 20 metres one day, but not the next. We encourage the Scottish Government to remove this test from the regulations as soon as it is possible to do so.

Award periods

We welcome the extended award period of 5-10 years that the Scottish Government is proposing, recognising the fact that in many cases people who receive Adult Disability Payment are unlikely to see an improvement in their condition, such as a people living with dementia.

We also welcome the fact the Scottish Government is considering the introduction of indefinite awards for people whose needs are very unlikely to ever change. This is a much

¹ <https://inclusionScotland.org/adult-disability-payment-briefing/>

more person-centred approach that will help to reduce stress and anxiety around re-applying for social security that also treats people with dignity and respect.

Want to find out more?

As Scotland's national charity supporting people over the age of 50, Age Scotland works to improve older people's lives and promote their rights and interests. We aim to help people love later life, whatever their circumstances. We want Scotland to be the best place in the world to grow older.

Our Policy, Communications and Campaigns team research, analyse and comment on a wide range of public policy issues affecting older people in Scotland.

Further information

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About Dementia: Shaping Our Worlds Together, launched in April 2019 and is Scotland's forum for improving lives. It is hosted by Age Scotland and funded by the Life Changes Trust.

We bring together people affected by dementia, and organisations who are interested in working for change, to look at how we can improve policy and practice across many different areas of life.

About Dementia believes that people affected by dementia, including people living with dementia and unpaid carers, are in the best position to say what is and isn't working and how to do it better.