



WELFARE RIGHTS ADVICE IN NORTH AYRSHIRE

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Health & Social Care Partnership

Money Matters Update No 64 18/12/20

DWP re-introduces 'Failure to Attend' process for PIP claimants who miss their telephone assessment

The DWP has re-introduced the 'Failure to Attend' (FTA) process for personal independence payment (PIP) claimants who miss their telephone assessment without good reason.

At the start of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic in March 2020, the DWP introduced telephone (as opposed to face-to-face) health assessments and, at the same time, made a change to the FTA process whereby claimants who missed an assessment did not need to show good reason for not attending and their case was instead returned to the Assessment Provider for another telephone assessment.

The DWP has now advised that -

'Now that telephone assessments are more established, we are re-introducing FTA. From week commencing 14 December 2020, letters inviting claimants for an assessment will make it clear that it is necessary to attend a telephone assessment. PIP claimants who fail to attend a consultation with an Assessment Provider without good reason will have their claim disallowed. A disallowance decision is subject to the usual process of mandatory reconsideration and appeal. Claimants can also submit a new claim if they wish.'

Pointing out that this 'return to business-as-usual' policy will align PIP with other benefits, including employment support allowance and universal credit, the DWP adds -



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"I can assure you that we will always contact anyone who does not attend a telephone assessment and that people's support will continue wherever there is a good reason for not attending."

If your Personal Independence Payment (PIP) has been stopped this may also affect your entitlement to other benefits. **For advice regarding this or assistance to dispute the decision to stop your PIP please contact the Money Matters Advice Line on 01294 -310456.**

Extension of Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme to the end of April 2021

The government has announced that the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS) is to be extended to the end of April 2021.

The government will continue to pay 80 per cent of the salary of employees for hours not worked until the end of April. Employers will only be required to pay wages, National Insurance Contributions (NICS) and pensions for hours worked; and NICS and pensions for hours not worked.

The eligibility criteria for the UK-wide scheme will remain unchanged and these changes will continue to apply to all Devolved Administrations.

In addition, the government has advised that the Budget will take place on 3 March 2021 when it will set out the next phase of support for the economy and businesses. As this is more than 45 days ahead of the new end date of the furlough scheme, the government says that businesses will have certainty about the ongoing support on offer



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from the government before deciding whether to trigger the 45 day consultation period required where redundancies of 100 employees or more are proposed.

NB - Mr Sunak also confirmed today that he will be extending the government-guaranteed COVID-19 business loan schemes until the end of March 2021

For more information, see [Chancellor extends furlough and loan schemes](#) from gov.uk

More than 50,000 calls per day being blocked to DWP Debt Management in November 2020

A 'significant increase' in the number of calls to DWP debt management in November 2020 led to more than 50,000 calls per day being blocked, Work and Pensions Minister Will Quince has confirmed.

Work and Pensions Minister Will Quince has confirmed 'The Debt Management queueing system allows only so many calls into the telephony system, matching volumes to the number of telephony agents available. The percentage of calls answered therefore underestimates the number of attempted calls.

There were, however, large numbers of callers who could not make it into the system and are therefore not included in the proportion of calls answered.'



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As a result, at the height of the issue, an average of more than 51,000 calls were blocked each day.

In order to address the problem, Mr Quince continued, DWP Debt Management have put a number of steps in place -

'A limit to the number of notifications issued has been set to ensure the resulting contact is manageable. Improvements have been made to the messages customers hear when they call; this will ensure they are made aware of any high call volumes and are also directed to the right place, to help reduce the time spent waiting. This includes directing customers to gov.uk if they want to make a payment by bank transfer. Debt Management are also recruiting more telephony agents - 90 additional agents have now joined Debt Management and are being trained, and a further 100 will join early in the New Year.'

[Mr Quince's written answer](#) is available from [parliament.uk](#)

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