

Check when your PIP award is ending!



It is important for recipients of Personal Independence Payments (PIP) to clarify when their award will end, as the system for 'renewal' is different from the old Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Under DLA, 6 months before an award is due to end, claimants are sent a 'renewal form.' This gives the Department time to assess new awards and make a decision before current awards end. PIP is different, how you 'renew' your claim depends on the 'type' of award you receive which will be one of the following:

- 1.** A short term award of PIP is where no review date is set by the Department as there is a likelihood of improvement in the condition. **These clients will not be sent a PIP renewal form.** Instead, 14 weeks before the current PIP award is due to expire they will receive a letter notifying their award is coming to an end and advising them that they can make a new claim if they wish. It is then up to the client to make a new telephone claim for PIP. A new PIP2 form will be issued for the claimant to complete and it is likely they will have to undergo a medical assessment. It is extremely important to make the telephone claim as soon as you receive the letter, because it will take up to 3 months to process your new claim. If you wait until your PIP award ends, you have to wait for the processing of your claim, your payments will stop and this could affect extra premiums on other benefits. There is no guarantee you will receive PIP again. You can make a new claim sooner than 14 weeks – up to 6 months in advance of your claim ending. However, the decision on the new claim for PIP could impact the remainder of your current award decreasing; increasing or stopping it altogether depending on the decision.
- 2.** The second type of award has a review date set as it is expected that the claimant may need future support on consideration of the following factors: the chronic nature of the condition, medication, history of the condition. These cases can be identified by checking page 2 of the PIP award letter under *"Making sure the PIP you get is right,"* and will state that the award will be reviewed 1 year before the end of the award. 1 year- 6 months before the expiry of the award, claimants will automatically be sent a shortened version of the PIP2 form to complete. They may or may not have to undergo another medical assessment. If the form is not completed, a reminder letter to return it will be issued.

It is important to check which of the two types of PIP award you have and act promptly to ensure that payments are not disrupted where you continue to meet the criteria for an award. Please note: If your condition improves before the review date and you require less care and/or mobility assistance you must report this; otherwise you could be overpaid and prosecuted.

Public consultation on 'Injured Pension'

Following years of lobbying by the Injured Group at WAVE Trauma Centre, the Northern Ireland Office have released a public consultation on a legal framework for a 'Troubles related incident Victims Payment Scheme. We would encourage victims/survivors to have their say on this important issue before the **deadline of 25th November 2019.**

>>>>> PTO

Many of our clients will ask - are the bereaved eligible? The answer is possible under 'psychological injury' however there are a number of conditions that are being proposed. This is your opportunity to have your say on the issues around this payment including who should get the payment. When the Consultation process is complete, the Government will draw up the regulations to implement the scheme. This won't be until spring 2020.

The Government would welcome feedback from anyone with an interest or view on the proposed shape of this reform, addressing the specific questions listed throughout the consultation document. You can provide your feedback on the proposal by completing an online survey at:

<https://consultations.nidirect.gov.uk/nio-implementation-team/vpconsultation-1/consultation/intro/>

If you provide your response online you can give your answer straight away, pause and return to your response later (as long as you reply within the deadline set) and you needn't respond to all of the questions to submit your response. You can also submit your response anonymously. Alternatively, you may complete the response form found alongside the consultation document. If possible, the NIO would like this form to be returned electronically as an email attachment. The email address for responses or queries is: vpconsultation@nio.gov.uk

A hard copy of the consultation document, and the corresponding response form is available on request, using the email address above. Postal responses can be sent to: **Victims Payments consultation, Northern Ireland Office, Stormont House, Stormont Estate, Belfast BT4 3SH**



Welfare Reform

WAVE Trauma Centre has joined a broad coalition of organisations concerned about the cessation of the current welfare reform mitigations in Northern Ireland. The '*Cliff Edge NI Coalition*,' is calling on the government to extend welfare reform mitigation payments which are set to run out in March 2020. The welfare reform mitigations package was agreed at the NI Assembly in 2015 to protect Northern Ireland benefit claimants from the full impact of extensive welfare reforms such as the effects of migrating from DLA to PIP, and the effects of the Bedroom tax when it was introduced to Northern Ireland on 20th February 2017. However, this protection is set to end from April 2020 when over 34000 NI tenants will have to pay the bedroom tax unless further mitigations are put in place by the government.

What is the bedroom tax? The bedroom tax is a reduction in Housing Benefit for people who live in a property that is owned by NIHE or a Housing Association that is too large for their household. Its proper name is the "social sector size criteria", but most people call it the "bedroom tax". It will only affect those under pension age. The Welfare Advice Team at WAVE Trauma Centre are particularly concerned about the effect of the Bedroom tax at a time when the government is intending to migrate those on income based benefits under pension age onto Universal Credit between 2020 and 2023. The design and payment delays in the Universal credit system, combined with the bedroom tax mean that many people will struggle financially and face rent arrears. The effect of Brexit on food and utility prices is another uncertainty.

Our advice in the run up to Christmas is to be realistic about what you can afford to spend, and try to avoid getting into debt which has to be repaid next year. Repaying debt will be really difficult if housing benefit or Universal credit is cut. Now is the time to try and put some money aside, however small each week due to the pending uncertainty, although we recognise that this will be extremely difficult if not impossible for low income households.