Department for Work & Pensions

Minister for Work and Pensions (Lords)
4th Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9DA

0207 340 4000

www.gov.uk/dwp

ministers@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Baroness Meacher
House of Lords

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Dear

In the House, on 22 February as part of a debate on the Benefit Cap, you raised a question on whether it is reasonable to reassess repeatedly people with brain injuries, and life-long disabilities that will prevent them ever returning to work.

Reassessments are designed to ensure that claimants receive appropriate financial support, and take account of changes in how health conditions and disabilities affect people over time. We want to ensure claimants who can work are supported to do so, and reassessments are an important part of ensuring that happens.

However I agree that it is of no benefit to repeatedly assess claimants with the most severe health conditions who are unlikely to ever move closer to the labour market and into work. As announced by the Secretary of State on 1 October 2016, we will stop requiring people with the most severe, lifetime conditions to be repeatedly assessed for Employment and Support Allowance and the Universal Credit equivalent by the end of this year.

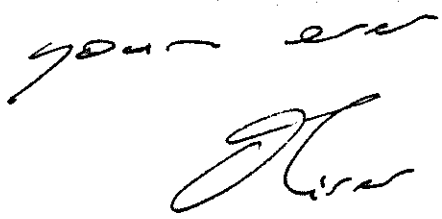
We are now working with our health assessment provider, medical professionals and other stakeholders to develop a set of criteria to switch off re-assessments for people with the most severe health conditions or disabilities, for whom reassessments can be stopped, unless there is a change of circumstances.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) does already recognise that for the most severely disabled claimants, the award review process can seem unnecessarily intrusive. The length of a PIP award is based on an individual's circumstances and can vary from nine months to an on-going award with a light touch review at the 10 year point. As such, existing PIP claimants with the most severe, lifetime disabilities, whose functional ability has remained the same, are more likely to have their evidence reviewed by

a DWP Decision-Maker and will not need to have another face-to-face assessment with a healthcare professional.

In addition the Work, Health and Disability Green Paper, launched on 31 October 2016 explores a range of options, and points to long-term reform, including how we might simplify and improve the assessment process.

I am sending this to all Peers who took part in the debate, and a copy will be placed in the House library.



Lord Henley
Minister for Work and Pensions (Lords)