

Face-to-face health assessments for benefits suspended amid coronavirus outbreak

Face-to-face assessments for all sickness and disability benefits will be suspended for the next 3 months, the government announced today (16 March 2020).

The temporary move, effective on Tuesday 17 March 2020, is being taken as a precautionary measure to protect vulnerable people from unnecessary risk of exposure to coronavirus as the country's response ramps up in the 'delay' phase. We will ensure those who are entitled to a benefit continue to receive support, and that new claimants are able to access the safety net.

It affects claimants of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), those on Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and some on Universal Credit, and recipients of Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit.

The suspension of face-to-face assessments also covers new claims to those benefits.

Work and Pensions Secretary Thérèse Coffey said:

As we move into the next phase of our response to coronavirus, it is right we take steps to protect those with health problems.

Temporarily suspending face-to-face assessments for sickness and disability benefits will allow us to ensure we continue to provide a safety net for those in need, while removing unnecessary risk of exposure to this disease.

Anyone who has a face-to-face assessment appointment scheduled from Tuesday 17 March onwards does not need to attend and will be contacted to discuss next steps and alternative arrangements, which could involve either telephone or paper-based assessments. We expect this measure will be in effect for the next 3 months but we will be regularly reviewing the position in line with Public Health advice.

No further action is required by any claimant as a result of this change. They will be contacted with advice on next steps.

DWP continues to accept new claims for all benefits. Anyone already receiving PIP, ESA, Universal Credit or Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, will continue to receive their current payments as normal while alternative arrangements are put in place to review or reassess their claim.

Suspending face-to-face health assessments is a precautionary measure which

reflects the Prime Minister's decision to trigger the 'delay' phase. It is important to note that this change does not affect or change any existing public health advice.

Read the current [NHS guidelines on coronavirus, including advice on those who should stay at home](#).

The department will continue to work with its providers through this period and pay them in accordance with its contracts.

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