

More than one in eight rejected PIP claims are overturned, DWP figures reveal - 9 Jan 2018

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More than one in eight of all decisions to reject claims for personal independence payment (PIP) are eventually being overturned, new figures obtained by Disability News Service (DNS) have revealed.

The figures* show that, of all the PIP claims rejected by Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) decision-makers in the year to June 2017, 13 per cent were eventually overturned because the decisions were found to have been wrong.

The statistics raise fresh concerns about the performance of outsourcing companies Atos and Capita, which [are set to be paid](#) more than £700 million between them over the first five years of their contracts to assess PIP claimants in England, Scotland and Wales.

[Last month](#), MPs on the Commons work and pensions select committee heard that neither company had ever met contractual quality standards on the assessment reports their staff have written for DWP.

The new statistics were obtained by DNS through a freedom of information request, and have not previously been published.

They show that, between July 2016 and June 2017, eight per cent of rejected PIP claims were overturned at the mandatory reconsideration (MR) stage – where DWP civil servants review decisions, if requested – while another five per cent were not changed at MR but were overturned at a tribunal appeal.

They also show that the proportion of overturned decisions has risen substantially over the last two years, from eight per cent in July 2014-June 2015 (of which three per cent were overturned at MR), to 12 per cent in July 2015-June 2016 (of which five per cent were overturned at MR), and then to 13 per cent in the latest figures.

[Previous figures have suggested](#) that about one in every 14 PIP decisions (about seven per cent) was eventually overturned in the claimant's favour, but the new figures are much higher because they refer only to those PIP claims which were originally rejected by DWP, following an Atos or Capita assessment report.

The true proportion of incorrect decisions is likely to be even higher, because many rejected PIP claimants do not challenge those results, [with anecdotal evidence suggesting](#) that many such claimants are discouraged from seeking an MR by civil servants.

The figures were released as the Liberal Democrats' work and pensions spokesman, Stephen Lloyd, called for an immediate end to private sector involvement in disability benefit assessments.

He said that Atos, Capita, and Maximus – which carries out work capability assessments (WCA) – had “consistently failed to meet the standards set by the government”.

Lloyd told DNS: “These figures are absolutely shocking.

“In any other environment such a constant inability to get assessments right would involve a cancellation of contracts, yet these conglomerates just keep getting too many assessments wrong

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whilst still being paid hundreds of millions of pounds from the tax-payer.

“I believe it is time for disability assessments to be brought in-house as part of our public services, and also the whole approach needs to be changed.

“It’s clear they bring a considerable amount of unnecessary suffering to many disabled people and, frankly, the figures show they’re not fit for purpose.”

The party already had a policy to scrap WCAs completely and replace them with “a more humane system devolved to local authorities”.

Lloyd said: “While I am a strong believer in the benefits of a market economy, the profit motive has absolutely no place in determining the safety net for the most vulnerable.

“Enough is enough. Private firms should play no further role in deciding whether sick and disabled people are eligible for benefits.

“Both the work capability assessment and PIP tests should be brought in-house immediately, with a ban on further private sector involvement.”

When asked whether the figures raised any concerns about the assessment process, and the role of outsourcing companies within it, a DWP spokesman said: “Since PIP was introduced, 2.9 million decisions have been made, and of these only eight per cent have been appealed** and four per cent have been overturned.

“The majority of successful appeals are overturned because people have submitted more written or oral evidence.”

The [latest social security tribunal service figures](#) show that, of those PIP claims that reach the appeal stage, 68 per cent are successful.

The new PIP figures should make it harder for ministers to defend the PIP assessment system, at a time when the work and pensions committee is completing its inquiry into the PIP assessment system and the WCA.

The inquiry has produced more online evidence from the public than any other investigation ever held by a Commons select committee.

DNS has been carrying out a year-long investigation into claims of dishonesty at the heart of the PIP assessment system, [and has revealed](#) that complaints about the process rose by nearly 900 per cent in 2016.

**DWP says the figures are “taken from internal DWP management information and should be viewed as estimates”, “should be used with caution”, and “may be subject to future revision”.*

***DWP says this figure refers only to appeals to tribunal and does not include requests for a mandatory reconsideration, the first stage of the appeal process*

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