

Press release: Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessment guidance updated

The PIP guidance now reflects a recent legal decision on the interpretation of people's needs for supervision in order to carry out activities safely.

This change will lead to approximately 10,000 claimants receiving an extra £70 to £90 a week by 2022/2023.

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, Penny Mordaunt, said:

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) contributes to the additional costs which disabled people face and provides greater opportunities for them to lead full, active and independent lives. Twenty nine per cent of people on PIP receive the highest level of support, compared to 15 per cent under Disability Living Allowance.

We regularly review the guidance that case managers use to make decisions about someone's eligibility for PIP. These updates will help us continue to ensure people with the highest costs associated with their disability or health condition are receiving the most support.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) will be going through all existing cases to identify anyone who may be entitled to a higher rate of PIP as a result of the judgment, which was handed down on 9 March 2017. Anyone who is affected will be contacted by DWP, and their payments will be backdated to the judgment.

In addition, a number of affected individuals will benefit from the following:

- clarifications to the assessment criteria for activities 7 (communicating verbally) and 9 (engaging with people face to face) under the daily living component of PIP so that claimants can score points for both activities
- changes to the criteria for activity 1 under the mobility component of PIP to reflect the challenges that may be faced by people with sensory difficulties if they experience disruptions to a journey

The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work has made a [written ministerial statement on the PIP changes](#).

Follow DWP on:

Independent report: Pesticide residues in food: quarterly monitoring results for 2017

Updated: Quarter 4 2017 report on pesticide residues in food monitoring is now available.

Quarterly results from the government's monitoring programme to check UK grown and imported food for any pesticide residues.

The data from the monitoring programme is published on data.gov.uk.

Press release: HS2 reveals bidders in race for £2.75 billion trains contract

Operating at speeds of up to 225mph (360kph), the new fleet will deliver unparalleled levels of reliability, speed and comfort as well as providing much-needed extra capacity between the UK's major cities and giving a boost to high tech skills and expertise in the UK.

The shortlisted bidders are: Alstom Transport; Bombardier Transportation UK Ltd; Hitachi Rail Europe; Patentes Talgo S.L.U and Siemens PLC. They will all be invited to tender for the contracts, which will cover the design, build and maintenance of at least 54 trains coming into service from 2026.

Following on from the opening of the new National College for High Speed Rail in Birmingham and Doncaster, this is the latest milestone passed as High Speed Two (HS2) becomes a reality. In total, HS2 will create around 25,000 jobs and 2,000 apprenticeships both directly in construction and also across the UK-wide supply chain.

The first trains will begin to roll off the production line in the early 2020s. The investment is expected to create hundreds of jobs and boost Britain's skills and expertise in the high speed rail sector.

Welcoming the shortlist, HS2 Minister Paul Maynard said:

Thousands of skilled British jobs and apprenticeships will be

created by HS2, which gets a step closer as we reveal the companies shortlisted to build the high speed trains.

HS2 will see some of the world's fastest trains connecting our great cities across the north and Midlands, creating an economy that works for everyone. But announcements like this show how the benefits of HS2 will resonate far beyond the opening of the new railway. HS2's legacy of jobs and skills is already being created.

Chris Rayner, HS2 Ltd Managing Director – Railway Operations, said:

It's great to see such a strong line up of experienced high-tech manufacturing and design talent. Together with the successful bidder, HS2 will deliver some of the world's most advanced rolling stock, engineered to provide seamless, accessible, fast and reliable journeys.

Starting from 2026, our trains will be used by tens of thousands of people every day, transforming links across the Midlands and the North and providing much-needed extra capacity between Britain's major cities.

Providing a world class passenger experience is at the heart of the requirements for the £2.75 billion contract. The new trains will also serve destinations beyond the core HS2 network, including York, Newcastle, Liverpool, the North West, Glasgow and Edinburgh.

The new trains will be required to meet HS2's design and performance needs and the highest standards internationally for passenger experience, noise reduction, and environmental sustainability, while maximising skills, employment and growth opportunities.

All 5 bidders will be invited to tender in spring 2018, with contracts awarded in 2019.

The successful bidder will also maintain the fleet from the dedicated rolling stock depot planned for Washwood Heath in Birmingham. The area will also be home to the HS2 Network Control Centre, which will together create hundreds of skilled jobs.

**[Press release: UK Aid opens
refurbished hospital laboratory in](#)**

Sierra Leone

Today the UK Government and the Sierra Leone Ministry of Health and Sanitation (MoHS) will formally open a newly refurbished diagnostic laboratory at Connaught hospital in Freetown.

This is the third and final laboratory built with UK Aid that will be handed over to ministry leadership alongside 2 additional facilities in Makeni and Bo. A cohort of 15 Sierra-Leonean hospital staff has also been fully trained as technicians to work in the laboratories.

Funded by UK Aid and implemented by Public Health England (PHE) in partnership with MoHS, the project supports the country's public health capacity to detect and control the spread of high consequence infectious diseases like Ebola and Yellow Fever, using the latest diagnostic techniques.

In the same week, the newly trained technicians will graduate following completion of a PHE-led molecular virology training programme. Sierra Leone has a very limited number of doctors and nurses, and Ebola had a tragic impact on that already stretched capacity. The process of training new staff is an essential part of efforts to rebuild that capacity.

Several of the graduates have also undergone additional training which will allow them to train future cohorts in molecular diagnostic techniques to ensure this knowledge and skill-set is passed on, helping to sustain this critical capability for the long-term.

The laboratories are part of a broader UK programme of support which is helping to strengthen the Government of Sierra Leone's own capacity to better deal with serious future health outbreaks following the devastation caused by Ebola in 2014.

The premises include a fully equipped molecular facility which will allow the MoHS to test for a range of high consequence pathogens, with Ebola testing being specifically supported by the UK Aid-funded Resilient Zero programme.

A ceremony is being held at the Connaught Hospital in Freetown to mark the handing over of the completed building works from the UK Government to the ministry. The laboratories will be opened by HE Dr Abu Bakarr Fofanah, Minister of Health and Sanitation, Dr Brima Kargbo, Sierra Leone's Chief Medical Officer and HE Guy Warrington, British High Commissioner in Sierra Leone and Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of PHE.

The refurbishment will create an environment where high-risk samples (such as those from suspected Ebola cases) can be tested safely, and will also allow the Government of Sierra Leone to further expand diagnostic capacity in other areas for both infectious and non-infectious diseases, and thereby strengthening the public health system in Sierra Leone in the long-term.

Chief Medical Officer of Sierra Leone, Dr Brima Kargbo said:

The recognition of diseases through the laboratory system is the foundation of disease control and prevention. Therefore, accurate and timely laboratory services has become the bedrock upon which current disease treatment, prevention and control programmes are based. The reliance on laboratory-derived information has, for several years, been in line with the development of modern medicine and public health. At this stage we are grateful to the UK Government for their invaluable support in this direction.

British High Commissioner, Guy Warrington, who spoke at the launch, said:

I want to congratulate the Ministry of Health and Sanitation for the progress that has been made to renovate these facilities under their leadership. I also want to recognise the newly trained molecular lab technicians for their vital work in running these labs. On behalf of the UK Government I am proud that we were able to support this important work through UK Aid funding and with the valuable expertise provided by our colleagues at Public Health England. I look forward to these labs continuing to serve the people of Sierra Leone and helping keep them safe from infectious diseases for many years to come.

Duncan Selbie, Chief Executive of Public Health England said:

The people of Sierra Leone are hugely resilient and have coped with a huge amount of destruction and disease in recent years. I am proud of the part that PHE has played in working with the Sierra Leone government to help strengthen Sierra Leone's health system and grow the country's ability to protect itself against potentially devastating diseases.

In Sierra Leone alone, the Ebola outbreak killed around 4,000 people, with more than 8,700 cases confirmed. The recovery costs for the country have been estimated at \$844 million. Recently the country has also been tragically hit by mudslides, which killed over 500 people. The UK Public Health Rapid Support Team was deployed to tackle the prevention of potential cholera outbreaks following the mudslides.

The new public health capability, as well as the establishment of a national public health institute in Sierra Leone itself, are both positive results of the national and international learnings from the Ebola outbreak.

From January 2018 PHE begins a two-year ODA funded programme of supporting MoHS in developing public health infrastructure to meet International Health Regulations (IHR). The focus of the Sierra Leone element of the programme will be on long term sustainability of laboratories, and IHR capacity building integrated within health system strengthening.

- in Sierra Leone, the average lifespan is roughly half that of western nations and malnutrition ranks among the world's highest – poverty remains pervasive, particularly in the Eastern and Northern regions with more than 6 out of 10 people living on less than a euro a day
 - in recent years, although Sierra Leone had a population of 7 million, there were only around 100 doctors and between 200 to 300 nurses in employment to respond to illness and disease
 - as part of the Resilient Zero programme, over 300 local staff have been trained in emergency planning
 - since the beginning of the year, 15 Sierra Leone MoHS laboratory technicians have been trained in molecular diagnostics at Bo and Makeni – all have completed a 6-week molecular virology practical courses which was followed by supervised working at PHE operated molecular laboratories.
 - introduction into concepts of virology was provided through a short course held early 2017, and tutorials on broader concepts of infections accompanied the practical training
 - PHE has had a presence in Sierra Leone since 2012, initially to assist with a cholera outbreak, but also played a vital role in working with DfID, WHO and the Sierra Leone MOHS to manage the Ebola outbreak; the UK Public Health Rapid Support team has also recently been deployed to Sierra Leone to assist with disease surveillance and help prevent outbreaks of infection following the tragic mudslides
 - the UK has committed a £427 million package of support to help contain, control, treat, and ultimately prevent Ebola.
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Press release: Disability Confident one year on: over 5,000 organisations now signed up

To celebrate this milestone Disability Confident companies, including major employer Sainsbury's, are highlighting the benefits that disabled employees bring to their business.

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, Penny Mordaunt, said:

Disability Confident status sends a powerful message to potential employees that they will get the support they need to thrive in the workplace. One year on from the launch of the scheme, we're already helping more than 5,000 companies to create a more inclusive workforce.

By demonstrating the benefits these employers have seen, simply by recognising disabled people for their skills and talents, we can

help transform attitudes among businesses across the country.

Almost a fifth of the working age population is disabled, which represents a large proportion of the potential workforce.

Tim Fallowfield, Sainsbury's Corporate Services Director, said:

We are delighted that 5,000 businesses have signed up to the scheme so far, but this is just the first step. We will continue to encourage employers to sign up and work with the government to give them the tools they need to recruit and retain disabled people.

Andrew, who has a mental health condition, works for Sainsbury's in Ellesmere Port, Cheshire. Stories like Andrew's demonstrate the wide reaching benefits of having the right job.

Andrew said:

Sainsbury's are the first employer I have worked for where I have felt I could say anything. In my previous jobs it would be a case of get on with it; stress was considered a daily part of the job. As a Disability Confident employer, there is a clear signposted process, making it simple to reach out and simply start a conversation.

Sainsbury's is the largest of 170 businesses in the retail sector to become Disability Confident. The voluntary, charity and social enterprise sector is leading the way with 1,233 Disability Confident organisations.

Twenty four FTSE 100 companies have already signed up to the scheme, including Diageo, ITV and BT. On the first anniversary, the minister has written to the remaining companies, reinforcing her [recent challenge](#) to them to sign up to the scheme and to encourage more influential businesses to set the standard on Disability Confident status.

As of today, all ministerial government departments have achieved Disability Confident Leader status.

Last week an expert led review into [mental health in the workplace](#), commissioned by the government, recommended that employers adopt 6 'mental health core standards' that lay the basic foundations for an approach to workplace mental health.

Disability Confident offers employers a simple first step to creating a more supportive workplace. The government's full response will be published this autumn as part of the next steps following the [Work, health and disability green paper](#).

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