Reintroduction of some Face to Face PIP Assessments

Introduction

1. PIP telephone assessments were introduced in response to Covid-19 in order to safeguard claimant and staff health. In light of the latest public health guidance (for example the cessation of blanket shielding advice and the use of public transport now being permissible), some face to face (F2F) PIP assessments are being reintroduced. This document provides guidance to help inform Providers as to which claimants should be invited to PIP F2F assessments and the process providers will need to take in identifying these claimants.

2. It is important to note that while the Department provides this guidance, Assessment Providers will need to make decisions on a case by case basis. In doing so, they should take account of this guidance as well as the individual circumstances of the specific claimant in question, similar to what would previously have happened in determining whether a PBR, Home Visit or Assessment Centre consultation was most appropriate.

Claimants who are unable to participate in a Telephone Assessment

3. F2F assessment should be offered to claimants who are unable to undertake a telephone assessment because they:
    - have no access to a phone;
    - encounter persistent phone connection issues which makes completing a telephone assessment impossible; or
    - have a condition/disability which means they cannot undertake a telephone assessment such as those with conditions such as speech problems or hearing problems where they cannot use the text/video relay service or phobias relating to communicating via telephone.

Identification of claimants who should have a Face to Face Assessment

4. Initially, HPs should consider whether a PBR can be undertaken then, where an assessment is needed the HP should consider on a case by case basis whether this should be undertaken by a telephone or face to face assessment.

5. Identification that a claimant should have a F2F assessment may happen at various points in the assessment process and HPs will need to able to adjust their approach accordingly. Identification of the need for F2F could occur:

- at initial triage, based on the information provided in a claimants' PIP2 and supporting evidence, or
- following failure to be able to conduct a successful telephone assessment, where a F2F assessment would resolve any issues e.g. where there are persistent telephone connection issues or the claimant had an unreported medical condition which could only be accurately assessed in a F2F environment.

6. Home Consultation activity is not currently being resumed. This is due to the challenges in ensuring an unknown environment is Covid safe for both the health professional and claimant. Those claimants who would, in BAU, have required a Home Visit (as per the PIPAG guidance for Home Consultations, 1.6.70-1.6.74) should be invited to a telephone assessment where possible.

7. Whilst Providers will consider the assessment channel for a claimant on a case by case basis, claimants should not have a face to face assessment where:
    - they live in an area where face to face assessments are not taking place eg Tier 2 and 3 areas in England
    - there is no Assessment Centre available within a 90 minute journey by public transport (or a 60 minute drive – applies to IAS only)
    - the claimant relies on lip reading, clear sound or facial expressions to communicate as HPs will be wearing a face mask.

Where both a Face to Face and a Telephone Assessment cannot be undertaken

8. There may be limited occasions where both a F2F and a telephone assessment cannot be undertaken. Examples could include:
    - where a claimant would have required a home consultation in BAU as they are unable to travel into an assessment centre, but they have persistent telephone signal issues meaning that it is not possible to successfully conduct a telephone assessment
    - where there is no Assessment Centre open within a 60 minute drive time/90 minute public transport journey and the claimant has telephone signal issues meaning that it is not possible to successfully conduct a telephone assessment.
    - Where the claimant needs to lip read and does not have a phone to enable a telephone assessment to take place.

    This list is not exhaustive.

9. In these circumstances we would expect the guidance 'Claimants Unable to Undertake a Telephone Assessment' to be followed and, when all other

options for completing an assessment have been exhausted, a Best Endeavours recommendation could be made.