



DfC

Department
for Communities

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A wide-angle, high-angle photograph of a rural landscape. In the foreground, there are green fields and a small cluster of houses. In the middle ground, a larger village or town is visible, surrounded by more fields and trees. In the background, there are rolling hills and a body of water under a clear sky.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment: Personal Independence Payment

Introduction

1. Rural Proofing should be introduced at an early stage when developing or reviewing a policy which affects a geographical area or region.
2. The lead role in the rural proofing of a policy should be taken by the policy decision-maker who has the authority to make changes to that policy and should involve in the proofing process:
 - Other relevant team members;
 - Those who implement the policy;
 - Staff members from other relevant work areas; and
 - Key stakeholders.
3. Rural proofing is the process by which all major policies and strategies are assessed to determine whether they have a differential impact on rural areas and, where appropriate, adjustments are made to take account of particular rural circumstances. It is important that policy makers set out to develop a policy instrument considering its potential impact on rural areas and rural dwellers. This must be done in the context of considering both intended and unintended outcomes.
4. Effective rural proofing ensures that rural communities can receive maximum benefit from government policies.
5. Rural areas will differ from urban areas due to their greater geographical isolation, population dispersal, longer distances from key services like health, education or leisure facilities and limited local employment opportunities. The following guidance has been taken from Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (DAERA) 'Essential Guide to Rural proofing'.

What is rural proofing?

6. Rural proofing is part of the policy making process and rigorously scrutinises proposed policies. It should ensure fair and equitable treatment of rural communities and that a policy does not indirectly have a detrimental impact on rural dwellers and rural communities.
 - b. making a proper assessment of those impacts if they are likely to be significant; and
 - c. adjusting that policy (where appropriate) to ensure that it meets the needs of rural areas.
7. Another way of describing it is:
 - a: identifying the potential direct or indirect impacts a new or revised policy might have on a rural area (This may require data analysis on a rural-urban basis).
8. Rural proofing must consider policy implementation so that services will be delivered to rural areas in an equitable manner. The process should also involve monitoring the implementation of the policy to ensure that this is achieved.

About this Policy

9. Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a benefit for people with a long-term health condition or impairment, whether physical, sensory, mental, cognitive, intellectual, or any combination of these. It is paid to make a contribution to the extra costs that disabled people may face, to help them lead full, active and independent lives.
10. The benefit is not means tested and is non-taxable and non-contributory. This means that entitlement to the benefit is not dependent on a person's financial status or on whether they have paid National Insurance contributions. PIP can be paid to those who are in full or part-time work as well as those out of work.
11. PIP was introduced in Northern Ireland on 20 June 2016 to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people aged 16 to 64, as part of the welfare changes in Northern Ireland.
12. From 20 June 2016 new claimants, aged 16 to 64, have been able to make a claim to PIP and we are gradually inviting existing DLA claimants, aged 16 to 64 years, to claim PIP when they report a change in their health condition or disability or when their fixed period DLA award expires. For existing DLA claimants (i.e. those who have an indefinite / lifetime award), they have been randomly selected, and advised to claim PIP, between December 2016 and December 2018. Random selection of these claimants is being done automatically by the computer system. The selection has no regard to the age of the claimant within the working age band (16-64), the rate of DLA in payment or the geographical location of the claimant
13. The legislation stipulates that there is no option to remain on DLA, and because there are different eligibility criteria for PIP, all existing DLA claimants are required to claim and be reassessed for PIP, irrespective of their disability. In Northern Ireland this equates to approximately 125,000 claimants being impacted by this change.
14. All claims to PIP are referred to the Assessment Provider (Capita Health and Wellbeing were awarded the contract for carrying out the Assessment Service in Northern Ireland). Upon receipt of the referral from the Department,

an initial review will be carried out to determine whether the claim can be cleared by paper based review or of the claimant needs to attend a face-to-face consultation. If a face-to-face consultation is required a decision will be made as to whether this needs to take place in the claimants home or in one of the consultation centres.

15. The Department have been writing to claimants to let them know when they are required to make a claim to PIP and they are being fully supported throughout this process. Claims to PIP are made by phoning a Freephone number where the claimant has to provide limited personal information, such as name, address, National Insurance number etc, in order to commence their PIP journey.

16. During the reassessment process claimants will continue to receive their DLA payments at the normal rate and time until their eligibility for PIP is determined, provided that they make a claim to PIP when requested to do so and fully engage with the process. These payments will continue for four weeks after the PIP decision takes effect and this is intended to provide limited protection to support those who experience a change in benefit entitlement.

Location of Consultation Centres

17. Given the number of existing DLA working age claimants (age 16 – 64) who have to be reassessed for PIP and also factoring in that there will always be people claiming PIP for the first time, a decision needed to be made, based on the location of existing DLA working age claimants, where the location of the consultation centres for PIP would be located. The location of the Consultation Centres was therefore determined by analysing travel times with the aim of ensuring that no claimant is expected to travel more than 90 minutes (by public transport) in a single journey to attend their consultation - this was part of the service specification for the contract which was awarded to the Assessment Provider. Taking this requirement into account it was determined that, when PIP went live on 20 June 2016 the consultation centres should be located in Belfast, Coleraine, Derry~Londonderry, Enniskillen, Dungannon and Newry. However once the reassessment of existing DLA claimants who had a definite award commenced in December 2016, the following consultation centres were opened to facilitate the increase in demand - Omagh, Portadown and Ballymena.

The postal address and catchment areas for each of the consultation centres can be found at **Annex A**.
18. Any claimant who lives outside the 90 minute travel limit by public transport will be offered a home consultation. If it is determined that a claimant needs to attend a face-to-face consultation in one of the centres, Capita case management system contains postcode files which are configured to ensure that scheduled appointments are within the 90 minute travel time (by public transport). This configuration is tested on an ongoing basis using Google Maps by utilising the support of companies including iGeolise and Monumental The travel time between the claimants home address and the public transport location is included in the overall 90 minute travel limit i.e. travel from the home address to the consultation centre.
19. There is no specified maximum distance for the return journey between the consultation centre to public transport location. However travel time between consultation centre and public transport location is included in the overall allocated 90 minute limit for travel from

consultations centre to the claimant's home address. The definition of public transport is buses, trains that are available to the public, charge set fares and run on fixed routes.

(such as parking) when they attend a consultation centre in line with the conditions set out in the appointment confirmation letter issued to them.

20. For those claimants who have to travel to a consultation centre they are able to claim any travel and related expenses

Impact of PIP on claimants living in a rural area

21. The following definition of rural was developed by the Inter-Departmental Urban Rural Definition Group “those settlements with fewer than 5,000 residents as well as those living in the open countryside as rural dwellers” the way of classifying a rural area is the drive time from a town centre of a settlement with a population of 10,000 or more.
22. The primary objective of PIP is to ensure that the Department for Communities provides an effective, responsive and resilient, quality service to those who claim Personal Independence Payment that meets their needs and is able to support a new delivery model resulting from the changes to the welfare system. In addition, there is a need to ensure that service provision is efficient, maximising the delivery of value for money taking into account the pressure on public finances.
23. Taking into account the information contained at para 14 above the only impact that PIP has on those living in a rural area is if they are asked to attend a face-to-face consultation in a consultation centre.
24. Statistics available indicate that during the period 20 June 2016 to 31 January 2018 there have been almost 100,000 referrals to Capita and just over 50% of these have resulted in the claimant requiring a face to face consultation in one of the consultation centres – it has not been possible to split this percentage further to ascertain the percentage which related to claimants living in a rural area. During the above period there have been less than 10 complaints relating to the location of the consultation centres.
25. As at May 2017 just over 30% of existing DLA working age claimants were classified as living in a rural area. Maps have been produced, for each consultation centre, outlining the relevant catchment area and postcodes of the existing DLA claimants classified and living in a rural area within the catchment area. It has not been possible to include the public transport timeline for each consultation

centre as this dataset is not available.
Maps for each consultation centre
can be found at **Annex B**.

Personal Independence Payment has
had no detrimental impact on those
claimants who live in a rural area.

26. Based on the information contained
within this document the Department's
view is that the introduction or

Rural Needs Impact Assessment undertaken by:	Barbara Brady
Position:	Deputy Manager – PIP Centre
Signature:	B Brady
Date completed:	12 June 2018

Annexes

Annex A

CENTRE	CATCHMENT AREA
Belfast 24 Linenhall Street Belfast BT2 8GD	Belfast Lisburn and Castlereagh Ards and North Down Antrim and Newtownabbey (south) Mid and East Antrim
Coleraine 5 Stable Lane Coleraine BT52 1DQ	Causeway Coast and Glens Magherafelt (north)
Derry~Londonderry Unit 6 Timber Quay 100 Strand Road Londonderry BT48 7NR	Derry City and Strabane
Enniskillen 1 Broadmeadow Place Shore Road Enniskillen BT74 7EE	Fermanagh
Dungannon Unit 2 40 Circular Road Dungannon BT71 6BE	Mid Ulster including Magherafelt (south)
Newry The Foundry Quays Shopping Centre Newry BT35 8QS	Newry, Mourne and Down Armagh (south), Banbridge (south)
Omagh Unit D2 Omagh Business Complex Gortrush Industrial Estate Great Northern Road Omagh BT78 5LU	Omagh
Portadown CIDO Innovation Centre 73 Charlestown Road Portadown BT63 5PP	Armagh (north), Banbridge (north), Craigavon
Ballymena Ballymena Business Centre 62 Fenaghy Park Ballymena BT42 1FL	Mid and East Antrim Antrim and Newtownabbey (north)

Annex B





















