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Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about disability benefit assessments.

I firmly believe that the welfare system should protect the most vulnerable in society. The Personal Independence Payment is assessed on the basis of the needs arising from a health condition or disability, rather than the health condition or disability itself.

PIP assessments look at an individual's ability to carry out a series of key everyday activities which are fundamental to living an independent life, such as their ability to prepare, cook and eat food, dress and undress and make budgeting decisions. This ensures that the greatest level of support goes to those least able to carry out such activities in order to contribute towards the increased costs they are likely to incur.

The health professionals carrying out PIP assessments have training in multiple and complex conditions and have specific guidance available to them on the effects of a range of conditions.

The most common form of evidence used for people receiving UC or ESA at the start of their claim is a fit note. This is evidence, usually from a person's GP, which shows that a person has a health condition which means that the person cannot work or carry out their usual duties.

I welcome that the Government is working with PIP assessment providers to deliver an audio recording service for face to face assessments that removes the requirement for the claimant to provide the equipment. I am aware that work is also ongoing to introduce an audio recording facility for video assessments. This will bring the audio recording of face to face and video assessments in line with the recording of telephone assessments and I look forward to the completion of this work in due course.

The Health and Disability Green Paper considers how to improve the DWP's current services so they are better and easier to use, explore how extra support can help people navigate the system as well as what can be done to better support disabled people into employment. I look forward to the Government's response to the subsequent consultation in due course.

I welcome the DWP's ambition to go further, to listen and deliver reforms that are developed through close collaboration with disabled people.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY

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