

Part 2

Lisa: I have the form now, so what evidence do I need to include in the form?

Simon: The evidence that you need to include is:

- A letter from your GP which evidences your diagnosis as deaf. You may have to pay for that letter because it is deemed as private work. It doesn't come under the NHS. Some GP surgeries compile the letter for free while others request payment.
- An audiogram. You need to include an audiogram that's been done in the last two years. It cannot be an old one that you've had for 20 or 30 years! It must be a recent.
- Social services registration – this is your personal reference that is used to grant you a freedom pass. There needs to be proof that you have a social services registration, so include a copy of that.
- A copy of your disabled rail card.

You can also include,

- Any prescriptions or details of your medication
- Letters from the hospital
- Access To Work details

So compile copies of all the documents I mentioned, and please *please* ensure you only include the photocopies. Make sure to keep the originals separate. You only need to post the photocopies off to DWP.

Lisa: Right you post them.

Simon: Do **not** post the original documents DWP.

Lisa: Oh why's that?

Simon: If the original documents are lost in the post then you have no backup copies! That will be problematic. It's vital any documents you send are photocopies.

Lisa: If I think I need help filling out the form where can I go?

Simon: If you want help to fill out the form there are 3 options. You can go to your local CAB – Citizen's Advice Bureau. Another alternative is to go to a deaf organisation in your locality, or you can approach an expert advisor.

If you choose the first option, going to the CAB remember because they have no funding they cannot provide an interpreter. The advisors there may be used to filling out the forms but they may not be so aware of the particularities of what a deaf person would need,

issues they face or deaf culture. You may find a few advisors dotted about are in the know but there are no guarantees. It's entirely up to you which of the three places you opt for.

Lisa: Okay. Thank you.

I need to get an audiogram done but I don't have the time to go to the GP etc what shall I do?

Simon: I know the process can be quite labourious because the GP has to refer you to the hospital and all of that can take up to 6 months. However, there is a quicker way.

If you go to a Specsavers or Boots superstore - make sure it's one of the bigger stores not a small one – you can ask to get an audiogram done. They can easily do it, some do it for free while others charge £10. It really is value for money because DWP want to see a recent audiogram that has been done in the last two years. They don't want an age old audiogram from 40 odd years ago! So getting a recent one done and making a copy of it is worth your while. Does that answer your question?

Lisa: Yes it does – thanks.

Once I have finished filling out the form, how long should I expect to wait before I hear back from DWP?

Simon: The first golden rule is: make sure you take a photocopy of **everything**. Photocopy the forms and all the evidence that you send the DWP. Also make sure you take a photocopy of the form itself. You should then have two sets of photocopies. Secondly, only post the photocopies to DWP. Keep the originals separate and safe. It could be that you post it off and it gets lost in transit, so you can rest assured if you have the originals.

Please ensure you send your documents as recorded delivery. The DWP receive 20,000 of these forms per day!

Lisa: Oh wow.

Simon: It is very easy for one or two of them to slip thru the net. Sending your form etc as recorded delivery only costs £1.85. Once it has been labelled and posted off it can be tracked electronically all the way to delivery. On receipt at the other end, it'll be signed for at which point you can relax confident that the DWP has it.

It's definitely worth the expense. You may feel that the deadline to send everything back gives you plenty of time. But it could be that it is taking you some time to collate and get hold of everything. If you think time is running out for the deadline you can give DWP a call and ask for a 2 week extension. However, that extension can only be granted once, you cannot continually extend it by 2 weeks! The extension is given once for two weeks and you have to complete everything.

Lisa: How long do I have to wait before I get a reply?

Simon: Well that's a very good question! It depends on your region, some places get quicker responses than others – it varies. Generally speaking, it's about a 4 – 6 week turnaround. Please bear in mind that you need to post your documents off 10 days before the deadline.

When your documents arrive at DWP they go to the sorting office first. The documents then are all sent to be scanned, after that they have to be inputted to the computer system and then passed on to an advisor. That transfer process takes 10 days. So you need to get your documents ready in good time and plan well in advance of when the forms etc need to be sent. All make sense?

Yes – perfect thanks.