

### Part 3

I have been told I need to have a face to face assessment with a health professional what will happen?

There are three companies that facilitate the assessments. Two of them are big enterprises. One is called AtoS, they have recently changed their name to IAS – Independent Assessment Services. The second organisation is called Capita and there is a third, much smaller company called Maximus. We will just focus on the first two I mentioned. The IAS cover the whole of England. Capita cover Northern Ireland, Wales, the Midlands and the Anglesey coast. The IAS do the surrounding areas. Maximus cover the South East of the country. So those are the three companies and the areas that they cover.

Lisa: Is the assessment conducted by one person?

Simon: Yes

Lisa: So who organises or the interpreter for it?

Simon: When you get your letter it will say something like, 'Dear Lisa, You have been invited for an assessment..' It will list the date and time for your assessment. The letter will not contain any information about an interpreter. It's your responsibility to let them know whether you'd like an BSL interpreter, lip speaker, speech to text reporter or a deaf blind hands on interpreter. You have to contact them with the request and they'll arrange it ahead of your appointment.

Lisa: If I arrive on the assessment day and there is no interpreter – what do I do? I don't want to risk losing out if I cancel or postpone it.

Simon: If no interpreter is at your appointment it's your right to refuse to go ahead with it on the day. The DWP have a duty to provide an interpreter or whichever communication preference you have requested. If there is no communication support then you should not go any further with the appointment. The advisor may indicate to you they write down information as a substitute, or they may ask if you can lipread instead. Make it clear by your refusal that those are not acceptable options. Explain to the advisor that you will attend at another time when the correct provisions are in place. I would strongly advise against bringing a family member to come along and 'interpret' for you. The best way is to have impartial communication support for your appointment. Any interpreter who attends your appointment must hold a yellow badge as seen here. A yellow badge is proof that the interpreter is qualified to the acceptable standard. If the interpreter presents a blue or purple badge it means they are a trainee interpreter which is not suitable. However, if the trainee interpreter is accompanied by a fully qualified interpreter then that would be acceptable. A trainee interpreter who attends PIP appointments on their own would not be appropriate at all.

Lisa: Thanks. What should I expect on the day? Apparently, they ask details about my background, education, etc?

Simon: I've heard many different versions of events. The assessment covers the same information in the 40 page form. All the questions asked will be from the form and they are verifying the information tallies up. Perhaps they will ask you various questions about your background and education. They want to build a picture unique to you. It could be if you went to a deaf school or a mainstream one so they can get an idea of your background. The questions are just too see if the information in the form matches up.

Lisa: That's clear – thank you.