

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**24 June 2019**

### **Ombudsman commences investigation into handling of Personal Independence Payments (PIPs)**

The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman has informed the Department for Communities that she is launching an investigation into the way the Department administers Personal Independence Payments (PIPs). The welfare benefit replaced Disability Living Allowance in June 2016.

The decision follows a proposal sent to the Department earlier this year, in which Ombudsman Marie Anderson stated that after an initial assessment of the Department's procedures she was considering an investigation.

Following detailed consideration of the information available and the views of the Department for Communities, other Oversight bodies, MLAs and other members of civil society, the Ombudsman remains satisfied that the criteria for launching an 'own initiative' investigation have been met.

The Public Service Ombudsman Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 allows the Ombudsman to initiate an investigation if she has a reasonable suspicion of systemic maladministration, or if systemic injustice has been sustained as a result of the exercise of professional judgement.

The investigation will look in particular at the availability and application of further evidence (such as GP records, Occupational Therapist assessments, carer's reports etc.) in the decision making, mandatory re-consideration and complaints processes.

The full Terms of Reference are available [here](#).

The final investigation report will be laid before the Assembly.

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