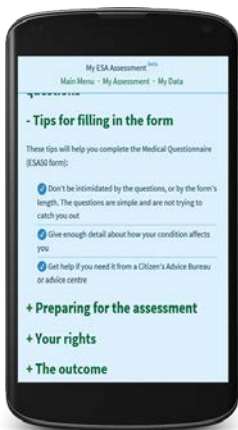

HELP IS HERE FOR DISABLED PEOPLE TO PREPARE FOR BENEFITS ASSESSMENTS

seAp Advocacy is delighted to announce that 100,000 people have used the c-App (www.c-app.org.uk) since its launch in January 2016. c-App is an innovative digital service to help people going through the process of medical assessment for disability related benefits.

The cutting edge tools at the heart of the web-apps take users through the relevant assessment processes, allowing them to answer the sorts of questions they will be asked in a face-to-face benefit assessment.



“I'D HAVE BEEN MORE CONFIDENT GOING IN
TO THE ASSESSMENT IF I'D BEEN ABLE TO USE
THE SITE AND KNOWN I STOOD A GOOD
CHANCE OF GETTING THROUGH”

seAp User Tester

The web-apps gives users all of the basic information they need to know about the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) such as; help understanding what PIP/ESA are and how to apply for them, guidance around the assessment process, advice on how to answer the questions in the assessment to accurately portray conditions and information on being clear about a person's rights in the assessment.

Memory Prompt

When a person uses the question bank to try the sort of questions they might expect during an assessment, the apps identify and save a list of the key issues that the user should identify as important at the face to face assessment. For people in a stressful situation, many who have physical, mental health or neurological conditions, this memory prompt can be vital to getting a fair result.

The site has been produced for seAp by Norwich-based developers Neotribe, and with funding from the Legal Education Foundation and Comic Relief's 'Tech for Good' Fund.

seAp, one of the leading advocacy providers in the UK, has seen increasing numbers of clients seeking help with benefit assessments, and has faced a significant challenge in responding to even part of the demand. Clients going through the assessment have often been very distressed, and unable to focus on other aspects of their life.

seAp employs advocates to help local claimants prepare for assessments, communicate to assessors about their situation and provide them with moral and psychological support before, during and after their assessment. The service, funded by Hastings Borough Council, helps claimants receive an appropriate outcome on their claim, and reduces the stress they face during the process. It was out of this service that the C-Apps were realised. seAp wanted to deliver the successful service not just to the people of Hastings in East Sussex but to all the people who need it.

“SADLY NOT EVERY PERSON GOING THROUGH ASSESSMENTS FOR THESE BENEFITS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO ADVOCACY. WHERE THAT’S THE CASE, WE HOPE THAT THIS SITE CAN STILL MAKE A DIFFERENCE BY EMPOWERING CLAIMANTS”

Marie Casey, Chief Executive, seAp

User Led Design

Development of the website involved an intensive process of user engagement, with prototypes being tested by seAp clients who have been through the assessment process.

The site is mobile responsive, designed with the view that it would be accessed more frequently on smartphone or tablet than PC or laptop.

“IT’S NICE AND CLEAN. THERE’S NO FUSS, IT TELLS YOU WHAT YOU NEED”

seAp User Tester

The site’s main page is at:

www.c-app.org.uk

and the pages for the specific benefits can be found at:

www.esa-assessment.support

and

www.pip-assessment.support

or visit www.seap.org.uk/services/c-app for more on the apps background and to watch our videos.

Background Notes

1. Further information on the site, and the process of its design can be obtained from seAp's Liz Fenton, liz.fenton@seap.org.uk or on 0330 440 9000 ext 2043
2. Personal Independence Payment is the new benefit introduced by the Coalition Government to replace Disability Living Allowance, DLA. It aims to help claimants meet some of the extra costs that result from living with a disability or long-term condition.

All new applications have been for PIP since 2013, and the process of transferring people from DLA to PIP has now begun across Great Britain. About 1.75m people will ultimately attempt to make the transition.

About a quarter of those claiming DLA or PIP have musculo-skeletal conditions such as arthritis, and slightly fewer have mental health problems. Significant proportions of claimants have learning disabilities, neurological conditions, or cardio respiratory conditions.

3. Employment and Support Allowance has now fully replaced Incapacity Benefit as the source of support for people who are unable to work because they have a disability or a long term condition.

ESA is currently claimed by about 2.34m people, some of whom will also be claiming PIP. Just under half of claimants are claiming the benefit because of mental health problems, nearly 14% claim because of musculo-skeletal conditions, with the remainder having neurological conditions, circulatory or respiratory problems, living with the consequences of injury or accident or belonging to a general 'other' category.

The Work Capability Assessment, through which people have to pass to access ESA has been subject to significant criticism from claimants, the voluntary sector and MPs. Despite efforts to improve the assessment, there remain concerns that it deals badly with situations where people have fluctuating conditions or mental health problems. Research continues to find that claimants undergo considerable stress as they pass through the assessment process.

ESA can be paid as both an income related and contributory benefit. ESA claimants in the Work Related Activity Group are required to engage in some form of activity to prepare for work, those in the Support Group are not.

ESA is currently paid at a higher rate than JSA once an award has been made. Changes proposed in the Welfare Reform and Work Bill would mean this is no longer the case for people in the Work Related Activity Group. See <http://www.seap.org.uk/blog/> for our concerns around this issue.