Advocacy in Action – The Value of Advice in PIP Appeals

How welfare rights support reduces stress, improves health outcomes, and addresses a major driver of health inequality in Hart.

Financial insecurity is one of the wider determinants of health. When a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim is wrongly refused, someone can lose their main source of extra income for a health condition or disability - often for well over a year while an appeal is resolved. That prolonged uncertainty and hardship worsens both mental and physical health, and drives avoidable pressure onto GPs, mental health services and emergency care. Citizens Advice Hart's PIP appeals service exists to shorten that harm window and get people the entitlement they are due.

The scale of the problem

45% of PIP applications nationally result in no award	**61,000+** PIP appeals waiting to be heard nationally	**37 weeks** average wait for a tribunal hearing	**2,833** people claiming PIP in Hart (Jan 2026)

What our support achieves

85% appeal success rate since 2022	**£7,562** average income gain per client, incl. backdated pay	**86%** of Benefits & Tax Credits clients felt less stressed, depressed or anxious — and reported improved physical health	**81%** of our PIP clients have a disability, health condition or access need; 68% have multiple impairments

Why this matters for health

- **Prolonged financial hardship worsens the underlying condition.** Delayed or wrongly refused PIP awards remove income intended to manage the impact of a health condition — for daily living support, mobility, heating, and care. The resulting hardship compounds existing conditions, particularly for the mental health and chronic-condition patients who make up the majority of our PIP caseload.
- **The wait itself is a risk period.** The average 37-week wait for a tribunal is a period during which people often present repeatedly to primary care or crisis services for issues rooted in financial and housing insecurity rather than new clinical need.
- **Most appeals succeed.** Two-thirds of PIP appeal outcomes at national tribunal level go the claimant's way - meaning most of these refusals were wrong. Early, expert advice shortens the time people spend without the support they are entitled to.

Working with health services

We already work closely with local health colleagues: around 30 referrals came directly from health partners in the last year. We do not receive any statutory funding for our work in this area. We would like to build on the service we provide so more people can access early support and better outcomes. GPs, practice nurses, social prescribers, mental health teams and hospital discharge teams are often the first to see the effects of a PIP refusal - worsening mobility, deteriorating mental health, or someone struggling to afford essentials. A quick referral to us at that point can prevent months of escalating hardship.

When to refer someone to us

- Their PIP claim has been refused, reduced, or is under Mandatory Reconsideration or appeal.
- Their health appears to be deteriorating alongside financial or housing stress.
- They are struggling to manage without help they previously had (aids, adaptations, care) after a PIP award ended.
- Discharge planning identifies someone who may be newly eligible for PIP due to a change in condition.

In their own words

"Despite deteriorating health, our client received no PIP payment for over 18 months while her appeal progressed. The support helped her secure the award she was owed - but the delay caused significant financial hardship and stress along the way." - adapted from a Citizens Advice Hart case study, 2026

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We would especially encourage health colleagues, commissioners and funders to get in touch to discuss how this work could be developed or supported further.