Frank Field  
Work and Pensions Select Committee  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA  

16th October 2019

Dear Frank,

I apologise for the lengthy delay in sending this response.

Independent Audit is one of the department’s tools to measure quality for performance management purposes, whilst the department’s quality teams look at the quality of the decision making process delivered internally by the department. Independent Audit is primarily used as a mechanism to determine quality performance against contractual requirements and also provides feedback to providers on the quality of audited reports.

This is an assessment assurance process which is independent of the provider, not the department. It is undertaken within the department by a separate team to that which manages provider performance. It was put in place to give the department better assurance around the quality of assessments.

For Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessments and Work Capability Assessments, a staged process is in place for Health Professionals to achieve and maintain their approval which includes written tests, practical training, assessment of performance under supervised conditions, and assessment of the quality of work produced through an internal audit process. On-going approval is dependent on the Health Professionals continuing to demonstrate satisfactory standards.

When an independent auditor reviews a PIP case, they have access to the assessment report, as well as all of the evidence provided by the claimant that is available on PIP Computer System. This is the evidence available to the Health Professional when conducting the assessment. In respect of the Work
Capability Assessment audits, the auditors also have access to the assessment report along with all the other evidence used for the assessment.

The providers fully understand the audit standards and can challenge the auditors on audit outcomes. The department expects its assessment providers to consider and use feedback on all grades of reports from a learning and performance improvement perspective.

Kind Regards,

Justin Tomlinson MP
Minister for Disabled People, Health & Work