



understand the paperwork that they have been sent, and also to understand the process involved and any deadlines that have to be met.

### **The appeal bundle**

If we need to (and this is something we decide after our conversations with you) and if we have available appointments, we can arrange a face to face conversation to go through your paperwork. We would expect to do this once you have received what is known as the appeal bundle, which is a collection of all of the evidence that has been used to make the decision you are appealing. It should have, for example, a copy of your claim or questionnaire, your assessment report, and any medical letters of evidence.

From this appeal bundle we can discuss your case, help you understand what your eligibility might be, and see if there is any other helpful evidence you could try and get before the hearing.

### **Appeal submission**

We can show you how to prepare a basic submission to send to the appeal tribunal, which needs to outline the reason you are appealing the decision.

There are template documents on our website which you can download and use as a basis for a submission for either ESA or PIP appeals. Look at the download list on this page: <https://equallives.org.uk/info-and-advice/welfare-and-benefits/challenging-decisions-when-youre-unhappy/>. It is possible for you to send or email us a copy of what you have written, for us to check that you have done everything you need to before you send it to the appeal tribunal. We can also check it if you read it out over the phone.



For anyone unable to understand or manage this process by themselves (for example due to physical or mental health problems, or language, literacy or learning difficulties), we may be able to write the submission and send it on their behalf.

There will also be times when a written submission will not be needed, particularly if we have agreed to attend a hearing.

### **Attending the hearing**

We will not attend every hearing. We will only do this on the basis of need – not just because you might want reassurance, or because we have done it in the past.

One of the things we will ask you is whether you have a friend, relative or support worker who might go with you, as a companion. If you do, we would suggest that you ask them to come. You can just ask them to get you to the venue, and wait for you in the waiting room if you don't want them to come into the hearing. It helps to stop nerves if you have someone sitting with you.

Your companion may be able to speak to the tribunal if they have useful additional evidence – but only after you have done your best to answer all of the questions you are asked. They shouldn't try and speak for you.

If you have to go alone, we will make sure you are given a full explanation of what to expect. There is also a guide to what happens at a tribunal hearing on our website at <https://equallives.org.uk/info-and-advice/welfare-and-benefits/what-happens-at-a-tribunal-hearing/>



Even if we have agreed to attend a hearing, there may still be rare occasions when we might find that we can't go. Your representative may be ill, or the date of your hearing may take place when we have no-one available. We can give you advice about how to ask for a postponement – which means you will have to wait longer, but hopefully we can still come.

If we haven't attended your hearing, please call and speak to us afterwards, because we will be happy to give you further advice about what your next steps might be. It is possible that you might be eligible for other benefits, or if you have been unsuccessful, that we can support you to ask for a Statement of Reasons.

If you require further information or would like this Factsheet in an alternative format you can contact us by calling: 01508 491210, by emailing: [info@equallives.org.uk](mailto:info@equallives.org.uk), or by writing to: Equal Lives, 15 Manor Farm Barns, Fox Road, Framingham Pigot, Norfolk, NR14 7PZ.

