

**Rt Hon Mel Stride MP
Secretary of State
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House, Tothill St
London
SW1H 9NA**

Dear Secretary of State,

The Work Capability Assessment consultation

We are writing to you as organisations that represent or are comprised of disabled people and people with serious health conditions, anti-poverty organisations, and advice agencies, to express our deep concern about the announcement in today's Autumn Statement regarding the outcome of the consultation on the Work Capability Assessment (WCA).

The announcement of the consultation came as a surprise, particularly given the inclusion in the Health and Disability White Paper earlier this year of the intention to abolish the WCA, as did the unusually short eight-week deadline. There was also a disappointing lack of clarity in the consultation documents themselves, including the accessible versions.

As organisations we gathered evidence and submitted responses that set out our opposition to these proposals. Many of us also attended consultation events held by the Department, at which the overwhelming consensus was that these changes would be highly damaging.

We were therefore dismayed to hear the Chancellor announce that the government would be going ahead with proposals to restrict eligibility for the Limited Capability for Work (LCW) and Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA) categories within Universal Credit and the Work-Related Activity Group and Support Group within Employment and Support Allowance (ESA).

While we recognise that the Department does not intend to take forward all of the most extreme measures proposed in the consultation, those it is now proposing to implement are also unacceptable.

And the decision that this will apply only to claimants newly undergoing a Work Capability Assessment is of no comfort to people who will develop severe difficulties with mobilising or getting about in the future, nor those who, in the future, are at substantial risk of self-harm, suicide, or harm to those around them but are nonetheless forced to undertake work-related activity.

We, and the people we work with, support, and represent, are also concerned that the Department could in the future seek to apply these changes to current claimants. As you will be aware, trust between the Department and disabled people and people with serious health conditions is extremely low, and this exercise will do nothing to rectify that.

Given the weight of opposition to these proposals that was evident during the consultation period, it is unfortunately hard to avoid the conclusion that in part its outcome was already determined.

We urge you to:

- Reverse this decision immediately, or hold a new 12-week consultation with accessible material that makes clear the impact of the proposed changes;
- Publish any internal research or analysis relied upon in the production of the consultation paper;

- Publish any analysis of consultation responses and consultation roundtables or other relevant meetings held during the consultation period; and
- Publish an Equality Impact Assessment on the impact of these changes on disabled people and people with other protected characteristics.

We have copied this letter to Tom Pursglove MP, Minister of State for Disabled People, and Sir Stephen Timms MP, Chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Anela Anwar, Chief Executive, Z2K

Alison Garnham, CEO, Child Poverty Action Group

Dan Paskins, Director of UK Impact, Save the Children UK

Dan Scorer, Head of Policy, Public Affairs, Information & Advice, Mencap

Tim Nicholls, Head of Influencing and Research, National Autistic Society

Sarah White, Head of Policy, Public Affairs and Research, Sense

Chilli Reid, Executive Director, Advice UK

Svetlana Kotova, Director of Campaigns and Justice, Inclusion London

Juliet Tizzard, Director of External Relations, Parkinson's UK

Kamran Mallick, CEO, Disability Rights UK

Alan Markey, Chair, National Association of Welfare Rights Advisers

Vivienne Francis, Chief Social Change Officer, RNIB

Ceri Smith, Head of Policy and Evidence, MS Society

Rob Geaney, Policy and Campaigns Lead, RNID

Amy Little, Head of Advocacy, Leonard Cheshire

Lisa Pearce, Interim CEO, Christians Against Poverty