

Liz Kendall
Secretary of State
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
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5 July 2024

Dear Secretary of State

Plans to tighten the Work Capability Assessment from 2025

Congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. We are writing to you today, as leading organisations that represent or are comprised of disabled people and people with serious health conditions; and anti-poverty organisations to ask for your urgent commitment to abandon what we understand to be imminent plans to tighten the Work Capability Assessment.

The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates that the planned changes to the Work Capability Assessment from 2025 would mean that by 2028/29, 424,000 people with serious mobility or mental health problems would be denied both extra Universal Credit worth over £400 a month and protection from sanctions. They estimate that just 3% of these people would be expected to move into work in the subsequent four years. We do not believe the reforms, therefore, would achieve their stated objective of reducing economic inactivity. Instead, they would condemn seriously ill and disabled people to a life of poverty and the threat of sanctions.

Disabled people are already more likely to live in poverty, and recent research has shown that two thirds of people currently living in destitution are disabled or have a long-term health condition. We believe these plans would serve to exacerbate this inequity. Particularly as, in recent years, the real-terms value of the basic rate of benefits has hit a 40-year low, meaning that people losing 'Limited Capability for Work or Work Related Activity' status are likely to find themselves unable to afford essentials.

The potential impact of this on the health of people with serious mobility or mental health problems is clear. There is also a growing body of evidence that suggests inadequate social security can in fact make it harder to get a job – whether because of being unable to meet costs associated with job-seeking, or because your time is taken up with trying to manage on a very low income.

In addition, you will be aware that there is an ongoing Judicial Review challenging the Government's consultation process on which these planned changes are based.

As you know, the previous Government had planned for the regulations to bring in these plans to be put before Parliament in June, once scrutinised by the Social

Security Advisory Committee. This was prevented, however, by the calling of the General Election. As a new incoming government, we ask that you think again before proceeding with these plans.

Instead, we ask that disabled people themselves are put at the heart of future policymaking, that these regulations are dropped, and that longer term plans set out in the Health and Disability White Paper to scrap the Work Capability Assessment, and proposals for the future of PIP, are redesigned with disabled people at the centre.

We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

Anela Anwar, Chief Executive, Z2K

Alfie Stirling, Director of Insight and Policy, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Alison Garnham, CEO, Child Poverty Action Group

Nil Guzelgun, Head of Policy and Campaigns, Mind

Kamran Malik, CEO, Disability Rights UK

Geoff Fimister, Co-chair, Disability Benefits Consortium

Mark Winstanley, Chief Executive, Rethink Mental Illness

Thomas Lawson, Chief Executive, Turn2us

Richard Kramer, Chief Executive, Sense

Dan Paskins, Director of UK Impact, Save the Children