



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Maria Miller MP
Minister for Disabled People
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9DA

Our ref MK7002

22 April 2012

We recently met with members of the Physically Disabled & Sensory Impaired Consultative Group (PDSICG) and Bucks Vision in Milton Keynes as part of our ongoing engagement with various community groups

They expressed strong concerns about how the ongoing welfare reforms would affect their members. Specifically, their concerns appeared to revolve around the assessment criteria and its adequacy to capture the individuals of the disabled community

We have enclosed a document, which outlines their points of concerns

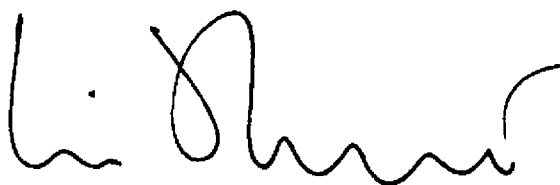
In addition to the questions in the attached documents, specific concerns were raised on behalf of British Sign Language (BSL) users. They made the point that under the proposed criteria, a BSL user who is able to read lips is deemed ineligible for State support. Consequently, such a person would also be excluded from receiving assistance from the Access to Work funding

Furthermore, questions were raised about what support would be available under the Personal Independent Payment (PIP) for BSL users in the 16-25 age range who currently benefit from the lower rate of mobility under Disability Living Allowance (DLA) which they need to overcome communication barriers

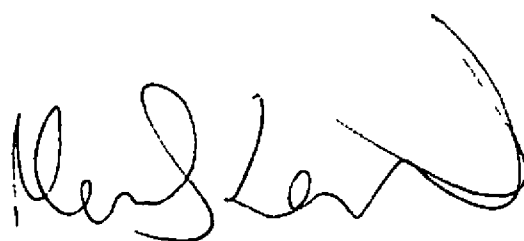
Members of PDSICG and Bucks Vision would want all these concerns and issues fed into the consultation that ends on 30 April

As ever, we are assured that you will consider these concerns and provide us with a detailed response to pass on to members of PDSICG

We look forward to hearing from you in due course

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Iain Stewart', with a large loop at the end.

Iain Stewart MP
Member for Milton Keynes South

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mark Lancaster', with a large loop at the end.

Mark Lancaster TD MP
Member for Milton Keynes North

QUESTIONS FOR MP's VISIT TO PDSICG 27 APRIL 2012

Ros to lead opening question:

1. Why isn't the Government listening to what disabled people have been saying about PIP?

Paula to lead on Visual Impairment Question

2. The assessment point award system is biased against people with visual impairment. Visually impaired people should be assessed away from their familiar surroundings. ***What is your view on this?***

Ros to lead on question 3 followed by Elaine Wooding

3. People with long term hearing loss are being disadvantaged as no provision is made for them within the DLA/PIP assessment. These people have hidden disabilities and are vulnerable. They have difficulties communicating and travelling and in their day to day life. There is no provision made for their costly but essential special aids required in daily living . They even have to pay for their own lip reading classes. ***Can you give any assurances that they will be included in future assessments?***

Elaine to follow

Culturally deaf young people aged 16-25 should be entitled to a mobility component to cover their travel costs. Some support costs would help younger people to develop independence so that they are not so dependent in the future. ***What is your response to this?***

Steve McNay to lead

4. Mental Health users are very vulnerable and the process is extremely stressful for them. The very nature of their disability means that they have "good" days and "bad" days. They are disadvantaged by the current PIP assessment, together with other areas of disability. ***Can you give any reassurance that mental health users will not be disadvantaged by the assessment process?***

5. Chris to lead on physical disabilities

No provision is made in PIP for the higher levels of heating required by disabled people, costs for laundry for people with incontinence difficulties, higher costs through battery charging etc.

At the recent meeting with Minister Chris Grayling and MP Ian Stewart, Chris intimated that wheelchair bound people with physical disabilities will be exempt from the Assessment. The DWP Minister contradicted this at the 24 April meeting by saying

that everybody currently on DLA would have to undergo the assessment. ***Who is right?***

Annette to lead on this question

6. People in part time employment with a range of disabilities (i.e. dyspraxia, Asperger's, Downs syndrome, Learning Difficulties, Physical disability, visual impairment, deaf and hearing loss, mental health, Tourettes etc) are often on low wages and could lose their low rate mobility and tax credits under the PIP system. If this happens, they will not be able to afford to live independently and feed themselves properly. ***Can you give assurance that this will not happen.***

Ros to lead

Concern is expressed that the 15 questions on the assessment can be interpreted in many ways, causing disabled people to be disadvantaged by nil or low scores. It is also very important that the assessor has a knowledge of the disability they are assessing. Assessors should also have a knowledge of any secondary issues brought about by a disability. Could there be different categories of assessment to allow for different types of disability? For example, people on the autism spectrum need to have everything explained to them carefully, and therefore extra time will need to be allowed. Can vulnerable people be accompanied at assessments by family members or representatives from their respective disability

organisations. Can GPs/Consultants with current knowledge of person's disabilities be allowed to feed into the assessment process.

Can you give any assurances that these will be included in the assessment process?

Chris to lead

We wish to add that there is still a huge level of fear across all disabilities regarding the change from DLA to PIP. Not least because the DWP's own assessment was that 500,000 people would lose their right to the new benefit. Concern is also expressed about the limitations on aids that were considered allowable in the PIP assessment. Concern is also expressed about the restrictive nature of the descriptors proposed to be used during PIP assessments. Finally, there was a lot of concern around the assessment of pain, particularly with people with fluctuating conditions.

Concern is also expressed by disabled people that Group 4 Security and other conglomerates have appeared on the list of providers to take over the assessments currently undertaken by ATOS for the Work Capability Assessment which removes the entitlement to Employment Support Allowance, whilst not fit for employment.