

DLA Reform Team  
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Friday, 21 January 2011

Dear Sir/Madam

I have read the DLA reform consultation document and wish to contribute my thoughts anonymously as a disabled person currently in receipt of the DLA higher rate mobility component which pays for a Motability vehicle.

I work in a professional setting. I have received DLA for a number of years and have always been very thankful of the state's support and having a new and reliable vehicle.

The benefit was awarded "for life" by the Disability Living Allowance Unit following completion of a complex application form and assessment by a GP.

There has always been a requirement to inform the state about any changes which might affect entitlement and implicit in the life award is the recognition that for many disabled people their disability remains static.

It feels as though the government is changing the goalposts mainly to cut the numbers of people who would qualify and this seems morally indefensible.

My feelings when I heard about what changes the government were proposing to save money were anger, then disbelief and resentment and lastly anxiety that I would be subject to assessment and that the government could take away my car. This seemed grossly unjust and morally wrong.

The consultation document states (Ch 2, 24) "we remain committed to the Social Model of Disability". The proposals however contradict this.

There will be a requirement for a medical assessment which is not about the removal of barriers but a focus on the 'individual's capacity' to carry out 'key activities'. The assessment will involve an 'in depth analysis' which will be mandatory.

The individual will be made subject to unnecessary and intrusive investigations by health care practitioners who will make an assessment of need.

Placing disability under the auspices of the medical profession clearly is the 'Medical Model of Disability'. This is contra to the spirit of DDA Act and the Social Model and contra to the state's duty to promote the rights of disabled people and promote equality of opportunity and promote independence.

I began working as a self-employed professional as this allows me to work the hours which suit my disability as I found that employers were not always sympathetic to adjustments to accommodate my disability.

Having access to a Motability vehicle has helped me in accessing higher education and later on securing work and in removing mobility barriers. I have been able to be a productive member of society and make a modest income and pay my taxes.

The consultation document I feel makes discriminatory assumptions that all disabled people are not in work, are reliant on benefits and need state interference and programmes to get them back in work.

Personally I feel very strongly that the government's attempt to make all disabled people on benefits, whatever their circumstances, subject to regular, intrusive and unwelcome medical assessment and analysis is wrong and is degrading treatment. The government by its actions could be in breach of the DDA and Human Rights Act. The Human Rights Act outlaws degrading treatment.

I would argue that the mobility component needs to be retained and that assessment should not be mandatory, that life awards should be honoured and that the state should provide access to support for disabled people when they need it and not have it imposed on them.

Has the government done any research to find out how many of the 510,000 people in receipt of the higher rate mobility component are in work and may be adversely affected without access to a vehicle.

How many people does it believe would be able to afford a car and motor insurance (as they will not be able to get cheap insurance as they will not have a 'no claims reduction' as the car is insured and not the person).

The government's target is to cut the numbers of people receiving the benefit by 20 per cent. How much will it cost to implement the changes and employ the health care professionals and others involved. What will be the impact on the motor industry? The whole process feels rushed and not properly thought out.

The time scales for consultation have been reduced and this leads one to suspect that the changes are going to be introduced regardless of this consultation process. I felt compelled however to express my views as one of the many disabled people who have already been affected as it is depressing to think that you may lose your vehicle and with it your independence and will to work.

I have chosen to represent my views anonymously due to concerns about how the government has chosen to target disabled people in its cost cutting measures although these are the group who are most likely to be adversely affected by the changes. I am concerned that if I identify myself it could leave me open to further victimisation. I give my consent however for my views to be used or represented as part of the consultation process.