**Setting the Record Straight – response to inaccuracies in Labour MP position on disability benefit cuts**

Disabled constituents have complained of misleading and inaccurate information in letters they have received from Labour MPs in response to concerns they have raised about the planned disability benefits cuts.

Below we set the record straight on the information received.

UNTRUE STATEMENTS

Untrue statement one: *“There will always be some people who cannot work, and I assure you they will be protected.”*

**The green paper does NOT specify any protections for those who cannot work. Instead, a number of proposals specifically target those unable to work for cuts to essential income from disability benefits.**

**There will be no protections for those who cannot work under the proposed cuts to Personal Independence Payment (PIP).** PIP is not means-tested and the current PIP assessment is legally not allowed to take into account a person’s capability for work when deciding eligibility. The on-paper cuts to PIP are between £7.9 billion and over £9 billion and will remove eligibility to PIP for 1.325 million existing claimants. Those who will be affected by the cuts will include both those in and out of work. Losing PIP will also mean losing other entitlements and benefits that PIP passports to. This includes 150,000 carers losing either Carer’s Allowance or the care component of Universal Credit.

**Out of work disability benefits will be reduced to £50 for new claimants and frozen for four years.** This will negatively impact 730,000 claimants with average losses of £3000 per year. This is the opposite of a protection – this is a deliberate targeting for cuts of those who have been found unfit for work due to disablement and their families.

**Out of work disability benefits for existing claimants will be frozen for four years at the 2025/2026 rate.** This will negatively impact 2.25 families. The average loss will be £500 per year. The reduction will be partially off-set by the proposed increase in the standard rate of Universal Credit (UC). Nevertheless, this measure targets some of the poorest families in the country where the removal of any income is significant.

**Claimants who are unable to work but not eligible for PIP will lose any entitlement to out of work disability benefits through the proposed abolition of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA).** Instead, eligibility will be made dependent upon eligibility for PIP. PIP is an extra costs benefit and does not test capability for work. Those who are unable to work and are not eligible for PIP will therefore lose out.

**As estimated 230,000 existing claimants will lose over £96,000 per year through both the cuts to PIP and the abolition of the WCA.** There are currently 600,000 claimants in receipt of the Limited Capability for Work and Work-related Activity (LCWRA) component of Universal and not all of these will be eligible for PIP. This will take them from living just above the poverty line to total destitution. The green paper proposes no protections whatsoever for people in this situation.

**Deaf and Disabled people under the age of 22 will lose eligibility for out of work disability benefits.** This will obviously negatively impact on Deaf and Disabled young people unable to work and their families. It is estimated this will impact 3,500 Disabled young care leavers, denying them nearly £5000 in disability benefits per year. All young out of work benefit claimants will be forced to engage in education, work, work search or training with only some small exemptions. We do not have the detail on who will be exempted or how these exemptions will work but they will very likely exclude some of the most disadvantaged Disabled young people in society.

**Claimants of contributions-based Employment and Support Allowance will lose out when it is time-limited following merger with contributions-based Job Seekers Allowance.** This will impact on the 444,599 existing claimants of contributions-based ESA. Some of these will not be eligible for Universal Credit, for example if they exceed the savings threshold or after their partner’s income is taken into account.

Untrue statement two: *“The Government is looking at ways to ensure that those who will never be able to work are afforded confidence and dignity by never having to go through reassessments, and it is proposing that those people continue to receive additional support through Universal Credit (UC).”*

**The Government is looking at ways to ensure that only SOME of those who will never be able to work do not have to go through reassessments.** We do not yet have the detail on which groups of people these will be.

Untrue statement three: *“Around 1 in 10 of those who will be claiming Personal Independence Payment (PIP) at the point when the changes come into force will be affected by 2029/30.”*

**A total of 1.325 million current PIP claimants will lose benefits according to the Government’s planned cuts.** Of those currently in receipt of the daily living component of PIP who failed to score four points in any category of the assessment are:

* 87% of the 1,283,000 claimants in receipt of the daily living component at the standard rate
* 13% of the 1,608,000 claimants receiving the daily living component at the enhanced rate

Combined, this makes 46% of all PIP claimants in receipt of the daily living component at either rate or 5 out of 10.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) suggested that around half of those hit by the rule change would adapt their PIP applications, or appeal rejections, in order to meet the new requirements, but the OBR itself described this forecast as a “highly uncertain judgement”.

Untrue statement four: *“This Government is committed to funding our welfare system to protect the people who need it most,”*.

**The proposed changes to the disability benefit system offer no protections to those most in need while a number of them are actually targeted at reducing income from those most in need.** At least 350,000 – 400,000 households will be pushed into poverty as a result. Increases in the standard allowance of Universal Credit are welcome and much needed. But these are alongside halving the additional component for those who are unable to work.

MISLEADING STATEMENTS

Misleading statement one: *“the reforms announced by the Government will not result in any immediate changes to anyone’s benefits.”*

Cuts to PIP for existing claimants will come into effect through reassessment from 2026 onwards. This is sufficiently close to justifiably cause extreme anxiety and distress. The legislative changes required to take this forward could be introduced in Parliament through negative statutory instrument as soon as May 2025. It is therefore of urgent important to make sure MPs understand the implications of the proposed changes.

Misleading statement two: *“anyone currently in receipt of the Universal Credit component will see their benefits remain steady in cash terms while they benefit from a higher standard of allowance.”*

As above, three million families will lose X per X. This is a significant amount for families living close to, at or below the poverty level.

Misleading statement three: *“A public consultation has been launched on many of the Government’s proposals,”*

The public consultation does NOT include the changes to PIP. The Government is NOT consulting on these despite their great importance to a considerable number of people. The PIP cuts will directly impact 1.325 million existing claimants and their families. These are claimants who currently receive the daily component of PIP and who did not score four points in any descriptor. Many more claimants are potentially impacted. The PIP assessment is notorious for inaccuracies and inconsistency in how assessors award points and claimants generally expect to have to go to appeal before being found eligible. This means that claimants in receipt of the daily living component who did score four points in at least one descriptor are also at risk of cuts upon reassessment even before the changes have come into force. The changes are therefore feared by many more than just 1.325 existing claimants with very good evidence-based reasoning.

Deaf and Disabled people have been consistently clear for decades now that what helps us most to get into and stay in work is good support from the Access to Work (AtW) scheme. None of the measures relating to AtW in the green paper reflect the messages we have communicated loudly to Ministers and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Misleading statement four: *“£1 billion investment in tailored employment support for disabled people.”*

Not mentioned is how the Office for Budget Responsibility has been unable to say how many Deaf and Disabled people whose benefits are cut through the planned measures will be able to find work. Of those who would have been impacted by previous proposals supported by this Government to make interim changes to the Work Capability Assessment, only 3% of those set to lose benefits would have been able to find work according to official figures. It is also not made clear that this investment is targeted at engagement with Deaf and Disabled people who have been found unfit for work under the current system. At best this is a questionable use of public funds. At worst it has the potential to harm Deaf and Disabled people if forced to engage in unsuitable ways.

Misleading statement five: *“This comes alongside efforts to break down barriers to work and create healthier, more inclusive workplaces. Disabled people deserve the same opportunities as anybody else.”*

None of these measures go anywhere near being able to create suitable jobs for all of the Deaf and Disabled people who will be pushed into poverty by the green paper plans, let alone all those who will lose essential income.

The government employment support scheme, Access to Work, has a proven track record of evening the playing field for Deaf and Disabled people in employment. The green paper has no mention of additional investment in the scheme not measures to tackle the backlog that is currently pushing Deaf and Disabled people out of employment, losing us work and leaving struggling Deaf and Disabled workers owed thousands from their own pockets by the scheme. As of the end of 2024 there were a reported 55,500+ outstanding cases. The OBR has not scored how many additional jobs for Deaf and Disabled people will result from the measures they have included in the green paper relating to Access to Work.

Misleading statement six: *“The plan will also tackle the perverse incentives of our welfare system.”*

Out of work disability benefits do not act as an incentive not to work. A single person in receipt of out of work disability benefits has an income that is just 30% of the minimum income standard. People who can work do work. The current system allows Universal Credit claimants in the Limited Capability for Work and Work-related Activity (LCWRA) group to earn monthly income without coming out of the LCWRA group. Rising numbers of Deaf and Disabled people out of work can be explained by numerous factors including intensification of labour narrowing the field for workers able to meet performance standards, Long Covid, NHS waiting lists and inadequate support from the mental health and adult social care systems.

Misleading statement seven: *“The broken Work Capability Assessment,… will be scrapped. This will… end binary categorisations of can and cannot work, helping people who can work to access support to do so.”*

The proposed abolition of the WCA will do absolutely nothing to end these binary categorisations. They will simply drastically reduce the numbers Deaf and Disabled people unable to work who are receive social security protections from poverty, destitution and entrenched inequality.

CONCLUSION

Cuts to social security announced in the Summer of 2015 left the UK with one of the weakest safety nets in the OECD. In November 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of Disabled People found the UK guilty of grave and systematic violations of Deaf and Disabled people’s rights due to austerity and welfare reform. In March 2024, the Committee followed up on their 2016 special investigation and found that no significant progress has been made, in fact there had been regression in a number of areas. One of those areas was social security.

Labour’s plans for social security for Deaf and Disabled people consciously ignore the findings and recommendations by the United Nations on a breath-taking scale and will severely weaken the social safety net yet further.

The adverse impact of their plans – obscured by deliberate misinformation and misleading statements – not only on Deaf and Disabled people in the most need of a safety net but more widely, on our public services and communities as a whole, cannot be over-estimated.