

## Welfare Reform Bill

Before passing a Legislative Consent Motion, the Scottish Parliament should insist upon assurances that, at the very least, the UK Government will:

Allow those living in residential care to claim the Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

The mobility component is used to cover the cost of getting around, including things like public transport, the Motability scheme or the cost of electric wheelchairs. In many cases it is also used to subsidise transport provided by the residential care home. As a result, much of the burden of this cut will fall on local authorities and the NHS wheelchair service.

Research has also found that the measure will deprive thousands of people of basic human rights. A relative of one of our services users says:

“These changes will turn home into a prison and lead to frustration, depression and potential aggression – a permanent state of cabin fever.”



Remove the time limit on contribution based Employment Support Allowance.

The Government plans to limit eligibility for contributory Employment Support Allowance (ESA) to 12 months for those people who fail to find work. This means that disabled people will have their income slashed for failing to find jobs – despite the fact that suitable jobs often don't exist and that disabled people are discriminated against in the workplace.

By time limiting ESA, the Government will also be pushing disabled people further from work, denying them the funds needed to cover the costs of finding employment such as additional transport costs, support and training.

**Exempt those with sufficient supporting evidence from independent medical assessments.**

The Government proposed that everyone should have to go through an independent medical assessment. This is stressful, expensive and largely un-necessary. Where there is written evidence of severe impairments, it is common sense to accept that evidence and avoid putting people through a face to face interview. If someone is Deaf-blind for instance, an interview to establish that they have mobility needs is wasteful. If someone is blind or has no legs, no further assessment is needed to confirm that they have high level mobility needs.

**Reverse its decision to reduce the disability premiums that families with disabled children receive by 50%.**

The UK Government plans to change disability premiums within Child Tax Credits or Income Support under the Universal Credit. This means that disability premiums for thousands of families with disabled children will be reduced by up to £1358.76 per year.

These benefit premiums are provided to help meet the extra costs of raising a disabled child, including buying additional clothing for their child and meeting their specific dietary requirements. Many parents will be forced to rely more and more on local authority and NHS services as a result.

**Reverse changes to Housing Benefit which will disproportionately affect disabled people.**

From April 2013 housing benefit for working age people in social rented homes will be linked to the size of their property. If the Government decides that someone is in a home that is bigger than they need, then they will have their income cut by an average of £13 per week. This change will have a disproportionate impact on disabled people who are more likely to live in the social rented sector and less able to find a suitable alternative home. The DWP's own Impact Assessment shows that across the UK of a total of 670,000 households affected by this change about 450,000 (66%) will contain a disabled person.