

LIFTING EVERYONE UP STARTS WITH LISTENING

As Green MPs, we consider that a good social security system lifts everyone up and supports their wellbeing. This makes sound economic sense, and it aligns with the kinds of values shared across British society – including equality, empathy and compassion. But it can only be achieved if the voices of users are lifted up too and, crucially, if users co-design the social security system.

We have therefore been actively seeking out opportunities to engage with and listen to our constituents about how the Government's proposed reforms to disability benefits, as outlined in the 'Pathways to Work Green Paper'¹, will impact on the lives of Disabled people.

Some very clear messages have emerged:

- The process of bringing forward proposals for change has been marked by chaos
- Decision making has been irresponsible
- Disabled people have been left with feelings of uncertainty, anxiety and even terror
- The voices of Disabled people have not been front and centre of the debate about how to build a better social security system
- The proposed changes represent a serious threat to Disabled people's quality of life, dignity and equality
- Change can be done right if it's done with Disabled people.

Everything we have heard also makes it clear that the Government must abandon these proposals in favour of developing a co-produced social security system - one that is deliberately designed to give people dignity, to be accessible and to promote wellbeing.

If the Government continue to pursue an approach that's focussed on making cuts, and continue not to listen to Disabled people, it will miss the opportunity to instead lift everyone up.

This report sets out our findings and represents the Green Party MPs' submission to the 'Pathways to Work Green Paper' consultation.

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IRRESPONSIBLE DECISION MAKING

The Government's political and practical mishandling of its plans for reforming benefits and support into work have had dire impacts for our constituents.

A CATALOGUE OF CHAOS

Changes to the benefits and support available for Disabled people were leaked in early May 2025. The media reporting of the Government's plans led to fear that support could be cut at any second. Yet it was over two weeks before the Secretary of State made a statement to the House of Commons and provide further information. Even then, there were no proper plans in place for engagement with those affected – and an accessible version of the 'Pathways to Work' Green Paper consultation document was not made available in the first instance.

The Government's delay, prevarication and lack of preparedness created real terror amongst Disabled people. This was further compounded by the DWP's failure to give immediate clarity about the next stages in the process, time frame or whether changes would be subject to parliamentary scrutiny and votes.

RUSHED AND RECKLESS

The political backlash against cutting support for Disabled people has been significant, adding further to levels of uncertainty and anxiety.

Rather than pausing to listen, Ministers have doubled down, with the effect that Disabled people have little faith in the consultation process that does exist or in the Government's willingness to codesign a welfare system that reflects either

their experiences or the evidence.

The Government's determination to rush through planned changes has seen legislation published before the results of the 'Pathways to Work' Green Paper consultation have even been considered. Some changes, such as a four-point rule in Personal Independence Payment and freezing the Universal Credit (UC) health element for existing recipients up to 2029-30, have not even been subjected to consultation.

It seems especially reckless that the Office for Budget Responsibility's assessment of the likely impact of changes on getting people back into work is not expected until the autumn – after the publication of the Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment Bill.

All of this adds up to deeply irresponsible decision making.

The government must run a full consultation process on all proposed changes to health and disability benefits.

Citizens Advice, MP briefing

There's a lot of fear and misinformation going around... People don't feel clear on what the impacts will be on them and that's frightening.

Disabled person, Bristol Central

The consultation is long so even the accessible version is impossible for many people affected by the proposals to fill out.

Disabled person, Brighton Pavilion

BENEFITS TERROR

The feedback Green MPs have received from our constituents paints a picture of real terror.

The existing welfare system is difficult enough for Disabled people to navigate and the support woefully inadequate. Changing the process will be deeply disruptive and Disabled people face losing benefits that are literally life changing.

EXPERT OVERVIEW

Citizens Advice and the local support agencies we listened to are clear that the Government's plans to cut benefits will push Disabled people into poverty and away from work.

They outline how people's complex needs are unmet by the current social security system – and express grave concern about the proposed changes, amongst support staff, as well as the people they support.

On top of the very personal impacts for Disabled people, services are warning us that job centres are not adequately resourced for what's coming.

For example, appointments of five minutes per person won't be enough to give the help and advice that's needed when trying to navigate new rules and deal with the knock-on effects of people losing access to essential benefits.

The disabled people we help with debt are more likely to be in a negative budget if they don't receive PIP.

Citizens Advice, MP briefing

The support services we met also highlight that

the main advice givers are charities. No statutory authority supports people to claim benefits – that role is no longer played by job centres. These charities are stretched already and not getting any extra resources.

They point as well to the delays people are already facing with applications and appeals, and the complex nature of the challenges many Disabled service users face – encompassing, for example, poor mental health, homelessness or poor-quality housing, poor public transport links, high energy bills.

People are using their non-means tested benefit to pay the shortfall in their rent and become more socially isolated.

View from Waveney Valley

The ability of the social security system to act as a safety net is already severely compromised. The proposals in the 'Pathways to Work Green Paper' will place it under further significant strain.

Disabled people know this and it's adding to the extreme levels of fear and anxiety they are experiencing – with some describing feeling real terror.

PIP IS A LIFELINE

PIP and other benefits are essential to those constituents who rely on them heavily to meet the unavoidable costs of managing health conditions and accessibility needs.

In particular, we heard that people are frightened by the following:

- The tightening of PIP eligibility
- Cuts to the UC health element of PIP
 - Using PIP daily living as the sole gateway to UC health.

The Disabled people we listened to in our constituencies use their PIP for things such as:

- Accessible transport (car, taxi, etc) to get to work
- Help with cleaning the house
- The costs of a carer
- Saving up for one off large payments like having a ramp installed in the house.

We heard how, for people with complex mental health issues and physical disabilities that affect them daily and for long periods of time, PIP helps them overcome some limitations to their mobility, social interactions and personal daily care.

Having to be repeatedly assessed causes undue stress and damage to Disabled people's physical and mental wellbeing. For people with recurring conditions, it's a particular indignity. Our constituents fear these assessments already, and in a system where it's more difficult for them to get Disabled benefits, they will approach them with even greater anxiety.

Service users and residents in receipt of disability benefits feel attacked and incredibly anxious.

View from Brighton Pavilion

One 62-year-old constituent with a prosthetic leg, damage to spinal cord as a result of a rare infection, and PTSD is concerned that he will lose his PIP entitlement and might be asked to look for work. He said he would struggle to find an

employer who would accommodate his disabilities.

Another, a Disabled sixty year old man, explained how PIP gives him a bit of dignity - the financial award is so helpful with the extra costs in trying to maintain a reasonable standard of personal hygiene, a safe and clean home and the means to travel where and when necessary to be included in normal daily activities.

We heard too about Disabled people living in cars or tents, working and showering at the leisure centre because they can't afford temporary accommodation, and having to use PIP to maintain daily life.

Some groups will be more impacted than others...for cultural reasons some people won't identify as Disabled, or won't feel comfortable with that language and so won't access support available.

View from Bristol Central

Listening to our constituents also underscored that cutting PIP will further marginalise people who are already struggling.

They spoke about the importance of PIP and UC for Disabled women and gender non-conforming people in escaping abusive relationships. Without this financial independence there's a risk that Disabled people may get trapped in abusive relationships.

Across different constituencies and people's different experiences, it couldn't be clearer: even the existing low rate of PIP is literally a lifeline – not just financially, but from a wider wellbeing perspective too.

“My name is Angela Alway. I am a 56-year-old woman with significant physical and mental health issues... from over 35 years working in the health sector. I now live in temporary accommodation in Bristol and rely on PIP and Universal Credit to survive. The stress and fear of future cuts or sanctions are overwhelming. These benefits are not a luxury — they are essential for people like me to live with dignity, security, and hope.”

Angela Alway, Bristol Central

“Service users and residents already in receipt of disability benefits feel attacked and incredibly anxious. The cuts will result in social isolation and push more people below the poverty line.”

Welfare support workers, Brighton Pavilion

“My specific concern is that within this policy, limited capability for work is disappearing as a concept. Needing to go to bed for hours or days after any activity is not a PIP descriptor. Not being able to work enough to support oneself financially is not a PIP descriptor. All the things that give me and many others with so-called invisible disabilities extremely limited capability for work related activity are not PIP descriptors. Limited capability for work is disappearing as a concept... with huge real-world consequences.”

Anonymous, Bristol Central

“People who receive housing benefit are discouraged to seek employment as that means their housing benefit stops. Disabled people want to work but can't afford their temporary accommodation if they do. Without the temporary accommodation, they'll never get social housing.”

Welfare support workers, Waveney Valley

C is carer for his wife (68) who currently receives PIP. She receives enhanced rate daily living and low-rate mobility. She has twice had surgery for degeneration of her spine which was only partly successful. Under the new system she would lose her daily living component as, despite scoring over 12 points to receive enhanced rate daily living, the highest score she receives for one activity is 3 points. C would lose any carer's premiums applied to their means tested benefits.

Case study, North Herefordshire

“Even those who are Disabled... are still a valuable part of society. Personally I am scared with the plans for PIP... not only is it valuable for financial support it allows me to access the Motability scheme which pays for my electric wheelchair. If I lose PIP I lose my chair and my freedom to get about. I will then have to purchase a manual chair which will put me in more pain and make my health worse increase my isolation and making it harder to do all the amazing things that I do.”

Anonymous, Bristol Central

“Personally I'm liable to lose £1300 a month next year if these changes go ahead. My question is, how would I live? I'd retain £100 per week to live on. But if I were to try to use this as a base and work a few hours a week from home to supplement it, I'd lose it. The only way to have even a small amount of support from Universal Credit would be to earn over approximately £900 pcm, which is not possible for me due to my limited capability. This is a benefits trap ten times worse than any before.”

Anonymous, Bristol Central

LIFTING UP DISABLED PEOPLE'S VOICES

Throughout this report we have featured the voices and views of Disabled people. Many of them have told us they haven't been able to submit their own responses to the 'Pathways to Work' Green Paper consultation. It is therefore intended to help ensure their voices are represented in the next stages of the Government's decision-making process.

YOUNG PEOPLE AND WOMEN

Young Disabled people in particular are often overlooked and marginalised, and these proposals are no different.

The staggered introduction of some changes (including the last-minute compromise proposals by the Government) and the focus on placing the harshest reductions on new claimants, will mean the worse impact of these changes will be felt first by young adults.

"A very high proportion of the people visiting my surgery in Brighton since these proposals were announced have been under 25, and their worries have been particularly acute. As relatively recent new claimants, many have found claiming their entitlements traumatic already, particularly if they are neurodiverse or have mental health difficulties impacting their ability to live or work without support. The content and process of these proposals has been especially hard for them to handle."

Sian Berry MP, Brighton Pavilion

The Women's Budget Group has also highlighted the severe gender imbalance in the proposals, with its research highlighting in particular the disproportionate effect the proposed PIP qualification changes will have on Disabled women. It finds that²:

- 52 per cent of female PIP claimants don't score four points in any one activity compared to 39 per cent of male claimants
- Certain impairments like arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions are more common in women, and are less likely to meet the new eligibility rules
- PIP is a gateway for other benefits: like Council Tax Reduction or Carer's Allowance. A huge 72 per cent of Carer's Allowance claimants are women.

'PATHWAYS TO WORK' CONSULTATION

Response to Chapter Two

Chapter Two is about reforming the structure of the health and disability benefits system.

We do not think that any of the proposals in the Green Paper will result in a social security system that lifts everyone up and supports their wellbeing.

Disabled people told us that improved pathways to work needs to come first, before cutting benefits.

Response to Chapter Three

Chapter Three is about supporting people to thrive.

Disabled people can do amazing, incredible things with the right support in place.

View from Bristol Central

We also heard concern that the proposals are reinforcing or perpetuating stereotypes of Disabled people. And that some of the rhetoric used by Ministers has given other people a confidence to speak about Disabled people in a discriminatory way.

The Government needs to reframe its approach to one that is rights based and promotes equality.

Response to Chapter Four

Chapter Four is about supporting employers and making work accessible

Disabled people told us they think employers are very unlikely to be making the necessary investments to make employment more accessible. This means there could be even less opportunity for Disabled people to work.

They also reported that the Access to Work scheme is so slow they lose jobs.

The Government should be engaging with Disabled people to better understand what's required and with Disabled employers too.

GETTING CHANGE RIGHT

The health and disability benefits system needs to change. But the proposals in the 'Pathways to Work' Green Paper are lacking in evidential basis when it comes to helping those people who can work into the right work.

The OBR's assessment on the likely impact won't be published until the autumn and experts such as The Resolution Foundation question how many people will end up in work. Given PIP supports people in employment, subjecting it to cuts will inevitably have an impact on recipient's ability to work – and on the aim of increasing employment among Disabled people

At the same time, there is a strong evidence base for the proposals perpetuating inequality, disadvantage and social exclusion.

The Government's own impact assessment estimates that a fifth of all families containing a Disabled person in the UK will be financially worse off as a result of the proposals³.

The Government has made ending child poverty one of its priorities, yet the negative effect here is stark too: an additional fifty thousand children will be in relative poverty after housing costs by 2029-30, according to official estimates, if the planned cuts to PIP and Universal Credit go ahead. The likely ultimate number is predicted by Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) to be far higher.⁴

The case for delaying these proposed changes in order to get change right is compelling.

We therefore recommend:

- Withdrawing the Universal Credit and

Personal Independence Payment Bill

- Abandoning the damaging changes proposed in the 'Pathways to Work' Green Paper
- Increasing all disability benefits by 5 per cent and Universal Credit and legacy benefits by £40 a week
- Fully restoring Winter Fuel Payments.
- Abolishing the two-child benefit cap
- Consult on all the proposals in the 'Pathways to Work' Green Paper – only eight out of nineteen are currently open to consultation
- Working with Disabled people to co-produce a social security system that is fair, humane and accessible – and which joins up the support for Disabled people to help with additional costs
- Developing interventions that are genuinely good value, lift people up and take an evidence-based approach to supporting people into work
- Learning from the OBR's assessment and equality impact assessments so any changes deliver on the stated objectives and do not push people into deeper poverty.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Get in touch

We are listening to local residents, charities, support groups and other organisations in our constituencies, and meeting with a range of national campaign groups, researchers, charities and unions in Parliament too. Please get in touch if you have more of your own experiences to share, or evidence we should see.



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³ Spring Statement 2025 health and disability benefit reforms – Equality Analysis. Department for Work and Pensions, Jun 2025 <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/pathways-to-work-reforming-benefits-and-support-to-get-britain-working-green-paper/spring-statement-2025-health-and-disability-benefit-reforms-equality-analysis>

⁴ The Disproportionate Impact of Poverty and Inequality on Disabled People. APPG on Poverty and Inequality. June 2025, <https://appgpovertyinequality.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/APPGDisabilityGreenPaper-2.pdf>