

16 January 2012

Joint Statement

We are calling on the Government to pause the Welfare Reform Bill and carefully consider its reform of Disability Living Allowance (DLA). The Welfare Reform Bill which will implement these proposed reforms is now in the final stages of its Parliamentary passage but the details of how the reform would affect disabled people has not been fully investigated.

Last week a Responsible Reform report (known as the Spartacus report) revealed strong opposition from disabled people, charities and other interested groups to the Coalition Government's proposed changes to DLA. The report showed worrying evidence that the Government's decision to reduce DLA expenditure by 20% may have been based on incomplete or misleading data about the reasons for growth in DLA. It has also been revealed today that the proposed changes will lead to 500,000 disabled people no longer being eligible for this benefit.

Independent surveys carried out by some of the signatories to this letter have shown that cuts to DLA will force more disabled people into poverty, which is likely to increase the burden on the NHS and social care system in the long run. Such a potentially risky change in policy should not be taken forward without a robust and accurate evidence base and the support of disabled people and the experts in this field.

Last year the Government took the bold decision to pause and reflect on its reorganisation of the NHS after similar levels of concern and anxiety from medical groups and patients. Today Papworth Trust, Action on Hearing Loss, Brandon Trust, Campaign for a Fair Society, Disability Rights UK, Disability Wales, Ekklesia, Leonard Cheshire Disability, MS Society, the National Autistic Society, Rethink Mental Illness, RNIB, Sense, Three Cs, United Response and the Westminster Society are asking the Government to show similar foresight and pause the Welfare Reform Bill to investigate the strong concerns raised above. We ask Peers to support amendments to pause the legislation that will affect so many people's lives.

