



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

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See Notes  
POS (5) 11133/0131

Maria Miller MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Department for Work and Pensions  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9DA



10 April 2012

Dear Ms. Miller

I have been visited in my office today by Mr Smith who is totally blind and is very concerned about the proposed changes to his DLA, which he tells me, he receives at the higher rate, but with the proposed changes, this is going to be replaced by Personal Independence Payments (PIP).

Mr Smith made a compelling argument that it is the mobility component of his DLA which he receives at the higher rate, which allows him to live a more normal life, as he can live more independently, like a sighted person. I enclose his copy correspondence which shows that Mr Smith is concerned that current assessment criteria indicates, intentionally or not, that blind people will lose the Enhanced Mobility Component (only awarded by this Government 12 months ago) and that some blind people alongside partially sighted people are likely to fall outside DLA altogether.

I understand that the closing date for making representations on PIP Descriptors and assessment processes is 30<sup>th</sup> April 2012, so please take Mr Smith's arguments into account. I look forward to hearing from you as to how you feel Mr Smith will be affected by the proposed changes.

Yours sincerely

*PP. Sarah Liddiard*

Chloe Smith  
Member of Parliament for Norwich North

Dictated by signed in absence by Office Manager, Sarah Liddiard

Encs

Please respond to Chloe Smith MP, 1GF Diamond House, Vulcan Road North, Norwich, NR6 6AQ  
Telephone: 01603 414756  
Email: [chloe@chloesmith.org.uk](mailto:chloe@chloesmith.org.uk)

**NATIONAL FEDERATION OF THE BLIND  
OF THE UNITED KINGDOM**

**"SUPPORT THE VOICE OF BLIND PEOPLE"**

*Registered Charity Number: 236629 (England & Wales)*

*Registered Charity Number: SC040134 (Scotland)*



**11 Penn Grove**

**Norwich**

**NR3 3JZ Tel: 01603 440084**

**12 April 2012**

**Dear Chloe**

**I would like to meet with you to discuss how I will be affected by the Government's plans to replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) with Personal Independence Payment (PIP).**

**I am totally blind and currently rely on DLA to meet the extra costs that I face every day as a result of my sight loss. I am extremely concerned that the draft assessment criteria and thresholds outlined by the DWP for Personal Independence Payments fail to recognise that my "blindness" is a serious disability, potentially leaving me without the vital financial support that I need.**

**The help I get from DLA is not a luxury; it means that I can live independently. Without it I would be unable to do everyday things that people with sight take for granted. DLA enables me to living independently at home, socialise, stay physically and mentally active and play an active part in my community. I fear that the current proposals will put me at a very serious disadvantage and lead to my social exclusion from so many activities.**

**Registered Office: Sir John Wilson House, 215 Kirkgate, Wakefield, West Yorkshire, WF1 1JG  
Telephone: 01924 291313 Fax: 01924 200244 Email: [nfbuk@nfbuk.org](mailto:nfbuk@nfbuk.org)**

## **Key Points for your meeting:**

**The current draft of the PIP assessment criteria fails to recognise the impact of sight loss properly. Blind and partially sighted people would be among those who lose essential benefits under PIP.**

- **Ask your MP to write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Iain Duncan Smith MP, to raise your concerns that the current draft PIP regulations fail to recognise the needs of blind and partially sighted people.**

- **Outline the additional barriers and costs that your sight condition presents to travelling independently and getting around your home.**

**"The minimum cost of a taxi is £6 in Norwich, so any journey I take there and back costs me £12. I often have to use taxis to carry heavy shopping, as one hand is always taken up with using my long white cane. Going somewhere for the first time is not possible without any sight, so I have to use a taxi, and often buses take a long time and bus drivers are unavailable to help me find entrances to buildings etc."**

- **Describe the continuing challenges and costs that living with sight loss presents to you and explain to your MP that the impact of your sight condition has not diminished over time.**

**"I am now totally blind, with two false eyes, having just had my last eye removed on 5 January 2012 at the Norfolk and Norwich University Hospital. Due to this I have no useful navigational vision and am reliant upon either visual memory or sighted assistance. This has effected my overall confidence, self esteem, and I am reliant upon regular mobility services from Norfolk County Council Social Services Sensory Support (whose budget has recently been cut)"**

- **Describe the ways that your DLA has allowed you to live an active and independent life.**

**"I take part in a lot of activities in my local community, using taxis to attend meetings at City Hall for the Norwich Leaseholders Association, social functions at the Norwich Social Centre for the Blind, going to the cinema, Theatre, gardening on our allotment, and catching occasional trains.**

From: "Low, Colin (by way of Christopher Maule-Oatway  
<c.maule@ntlworld.com>)" <colin.low@rnib.org.uk>

To: <chrismaule-oatway@nnab.org.uk>

Sent: Saturday, February 25, 2012 10:05 PM

Subject: RE: [ncwfsa] P I P

It is true that the latest draft of the criteria appear to give priority to someone who needs to use a guide dog over someone who, say, uses a cane or a taxi. The points scores under the "planning and following a journey" descriptor are as follows, with 8 provisionally required for the standard rate of PIP Mobility and 12 for the enhanced rate:

Can plan and follow a journey unaided: 0 points

Needs prompting for all journeys to avoid overwhelming psychological distress: 4 points

Needs either

-

(i)

Supervision, prompting or a support dog to follow a journey to an unfamiliar destination; or

(ii) a journey to an unfamiliar destination to have been entirely planned by another person: 8 points

Cannot follow any journey because it would cause overwhelming psychological distress: 10 points

Needs either -

(i) supervision, prompting or a support dog to follow a journey to a familiar destination; or

(ii) a journey to a familiar destination to have been planned entirely by another person.

Of course it may not be that needing to use a stick or a taxi don't count - it may just be that the criteria are silent on the point. I have to confess that I'm not that well up on the criteria, preferring usually to leave such painstaking work to others, but I'll certainly make a point of getting myself up to speed on them now. The latest draft of the criteria is out for consultation until 30 April, and I would suggest that people get hold of the consultation document and respond. It can be found on the DWP website at <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2012/pip.shtml>.

Whatever you think of the criteria as far as I have described them, a worrying feature is that, from the illustrative case studies which are included, it would appear that someone who has fairly recently lost their sight later in life would qualify for the higher rate of the Mobility Component, but someone who has been blind for a long time, say from a young age, and has had more time to get used to it would not. Efforts are under way to take this up with ministers, citing Tory pledges to maintain it at the time that eligibility for the higher rate of Mobility Component was extended to blind people, but they have not immediately met with a concessive response. It's early days, but we may need to be getting on the case of our MP's about this.