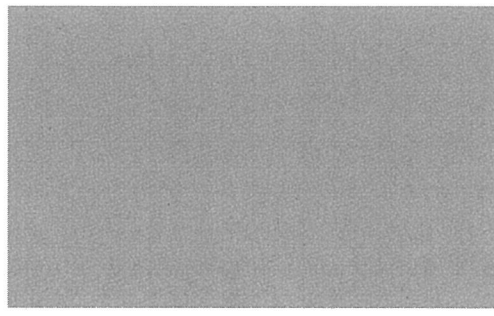


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February 11th. 2011



Dear Minister,

I am responding to this consultation as an individual and not on behalf of any organisation that I am a member of.

I was appointed as a member of the DLA. board when it was set up in 1991 and served as a member for six years.

I was the only blind member and as far as I know I was never replaced by another blind person.

I was also appointed to the Appeal service by the Lord Chancellor in 1991 and still serve now under the Ministry of Justice.

I was partially sighted only having restricted vision in one eye and a artificial eye until the age of 24. I have been totally blind with no light perception since 1964.

I have been active for the past 40 years as a campaigner working voluntarily for the National Federation of the Blind, the Royal National Institute of the Blind, Guide dogs, and Disability Alliance .

I therefore have had years of experiance understanding the needs of blind and disabled people.

I also produce a National Tape magazine for the charity LIVING WITHOUT Sight ltd. which is a monthly tape that goes out to about 800 blind people each month. It is called Mobility Matters. I therefor in touch with many blind people and hear their problems.

My response to your questions are as a result of my wide range of experiences.



CHAPTER 1.

I do not think that the DLA benefit is no longer fit for purpose. It has been the poor administration system that has caused the problems.

The claims packs have been too long and complicated and have not been available in alternative formats.

There has not been sufficient training of decision makers in the needs of disabled people.

There has been so much money wasted in this process by awarding benefits to people that do not meet the regulation requirements.

There are ways of checking awards, that is when a renewal is referred to Appeal service.

I and others campaigned on the grounds of the extra cost that we have as blind people.

I think that it is very unfair that a partially sighted person can receive the same amount of benefit as myself who is totally blind.

As a partially sighted person I did not have any extra cost but as a totally blind person I have many.

Just a couple of examples, as a partially sighted person I could use a pencil and a piece of paper to write a message, and of shopping list. As a blind person I have to pay for expensive equipment like a tape recorder, braille machine now costing £500. or a computer mine cost £2,000.

As a partially sighted person I could ride a bike as a totally blind person I have to pay for expensive taxis. Although I have a free bus pass, I have no bus service to my railway station.

I think blind people should have received the higher rate of the mobility allowance since 1992. as we are less mobile than many disabled people who can drive their own cars.

their urine which was a symptom of cancer.

I have to pay for decorating, cleaning and gardening. All jobs I could do when I had some vision.

Out of doors Pavements are broken and cluttered and makes walking very dangerous and the continue obstruction by cars and moving silent cycles is a daily nightmare as seen in our GET STREETWISE video by the N.F.B. 1992. The environment is more dangerous today than it was then.

Buses are less frequent taxis are far more expensive. Although I have campaigned to improve access for blind people and guide dog owners which I was awarded the M.B.E. for in 1983 and the O.B.E. this year I still am refused access by some taxi drivers.

Traveling by air is stressful and expenses having to pay for Rabies vaccinations etc. I have to pay for this myself.

Rail travel is more difficult with many stations unstaffed at off peak times and at some stations all the time.

In snow pavements are not gritted and this year i could not go out for three weeks because of the ice.

To go clothes shopping and for special events I like to have a sighted person with me who I know well. I do not want a shop assistant who does not know me.

I cannot afford to go to the theater very often as we have no bus and the taxi is an extra cost for me and my husband who is also blind.

Although my Church is only 3 minutes walk away I had to change my Church as the roads and crossings got so dangerous it was taking me a long time for the journey.

question 2 I think the dla levels should stay the same except i think all blind people should be entitled to the higher rate of the mobility allowance. Especially those of us who have had the lower rate since 1992.

question 5

I think all registered blind people should automatically receive the higher rate mobility and the middle rate care.

question 6

Most people need help to ensure they can cope with the every day activities that able bodied people take for granted. Like getting out of bed, washing, dressing going to the toilet and cooking.

A blind person does need help with reading and writhing as well.

I have already referred to the extra cost of travel.

question 7

Monitor with a telephone call or questionnaire to the customer.

question 8

Yes take in to account the aids used but do not refuse the benefit just because someone has a aid. I have had to pay for all my aids myself. Even a white stick.

I have a guide dog but I still have to pay for taxis and sighted help.

question9

The claim form short be a lot shorter and available in all formates.

It should be available from Post Offices and libraries.

question 10

Friends and family. Consultants and organizations of disabled.

This will give employment to disabled people.

question 12

I do not think reviews need to be given to people who have life long disabilities like total blindness.

question 13

I do not think reporting will be any different under PIP than DLA. Your letters should be sent in alternative formats. This does not happen at present.

question 14

Advice and information must be given to blind people by telephone or letter but you must find out which is the best form of communication for each blind person.

In 19 years I have only been sent print.

question 15

Trained benefits advisers based with GP's and hospitals. They should be on hand at all times.

question 16

I have had to pay for all my own aids out of my DLA. Before I had DLA I had to rely on my family and friends to buy them for me as birthday and Christmas presents. Items such as watches either braille or talking, tape recorders, braille machines, kitchen weighing scales, mobile telephone color buttons, light detector, so I know when it is dark, white sticks, all of these have to be replaced or renewed frequently so a one off payment would be useless.

question 17

For children they would need similar equipment as for adults but would need all books and equipment for school work. They would also need extra help with mobility.

A detailed school report should be obtained when first accessed not wait for appeal stage.

question 19

This would limit the person in their quality of life and prevent them taking part in the life of their community.

question 20

This information should only be shared with the persons permission.

question 21

If you reduce the benefit at present given you will cause great distress and prevent people from taking part in their communities and most of all giving them the practical help and support they need from another person in their homes.

question 22 Many people have been put off to appeal when they have been turned down for various reasons.

Some venues are to far from your home, most people do not know how the appeal will work until they arrive. I know blind people that where put on the lower rate of care and felt to nervous to go to appeal. It would be so much cheaper if you just passport registered blind people on to the new benefit.

For people with other disabilities I think you should collect all supporting documents and medical records before making an award in the first place. This is why the present administration costs are so high.

I do not think the benefit should be given to anyone who has obtained their disability through smoking, taken drugs and alcohol.

High care and high mob is given to such people and this is where the money is being wasted, as the benefit is just spent on more cigarettes, drugs and alcohol.

I would be willing to discuss any of my answers in more detail.