



DLA Reform Team  
1st Floor Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London  
SW1H 9NA

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11/2/10*

9 February 2010

## RESPONSE TO THE CONSULTATION PAPER ON DISABILITY LIVING ALLOWANCE REFORM

I am writing this response as the parent of a severely learning disabled daughter of 29 years.

██████ has Down's Syndrome and lives in an excellent residential home, having made her choice for community living clear when applying to Northamptonshire, our local council, for funding. Her outgoing and sociable personality makes her extremely vulnerable, so that she cannot use public transport independently and needs to be accompanied whenever she is out.

We think she and all her learning disabled fellow residents will be badly disadvantaged by the removal of the Mobility Allowance and the introduction of the new Personal Independence Payment as we understand it, unless arrangements are made to allow them to qualify for it and, where appropriate, to receive it.

You ask for disabled people to respond themselves. But ██████ and her friends are not able to do this. It is probably inevitable that most responses from disabled people will be from those who have the ability to live independently and may already do so. So it is likely that your response from them will not be representative of the more severely learning disabled.

It is true that residential homes are responsible for meeting the travel requirements of their residents. Their funding comes from the various local authorities of the residents. In ██████ home, the main transport provision is by three, almost constantly used, minibuses. The annual cost of these minibuses, including depreciation, maintenance to a high standard, driver training and other Health and Safety requirements, is very high and is paid for out of the residents' local authority grants.

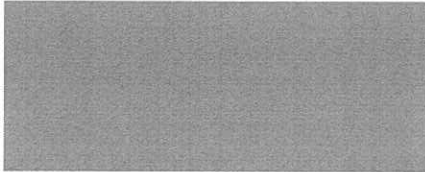
Mobility allowances, on the other hand, are paid direct to the residents' personal bank accounts and fund their more individual transport expenses, such as outings on public transport or in staff cars taking them shopping, on holiday or to evening and weekend activities.

If these allowances are taken away from them, they will not be able to afford these individual activities, which are already at a very modest level and cannot be afforded out of the existing level of local authority funding.

Perhaps it is assumed that the local authorities will step up to make good the loss by increasing their annual residents' grants. Yet already some counties, including ours, have on occasions been unable to pay the residential home any annual inflationary increase in residents' annual grants, or only a reduced one. Will they be given additional resources to enable them to make good this new reduction in the community's overall income?

I would be grateful for assurance that this question will be both asked and answered, publicly.

If the funding authorities are not put in a position to replace the lost benefits, it will be yet another indication of an apparent constant pressure to force residential homes for the disabled to close because they do not fit the current focus on independent living in the community.



ANDREW BANKS