

DLA Reform Team
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Rec'd
16/2/11

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Dear sir, madam,

I am writing this letter after reading your consultation regarding D.L.A. I do not see much different than present system I have been carer for some time I do not see much clarifications about people with mental illness there are only consideration about physical side of illnesses, mental illness is something which is unpredictable, if you look at their physical side you will think that they are well but you don't know what he/she is going to do next, Those disable people who has been awarded indefinite time for benefit do not get first time when they apply, they have to go thru lot of checks by different people who were concern about that particular illness, there for re assessing those potions who has been awarded indefinite we will be repeating same work again. Coasting lot of money. I do not think Ministers know how hard it is to cope with mental illness (schophenic) I had a good job but I had to give up to look after my partner and children other wise I would have lost my children. I was told by concerned government departments that you have choice between your job and your family. and they wanted to put my children in care. because of her illness some time I have to be awake most of the night. many of the things will not be picked up by people who are going ton assesses some one for few minutes. If you want to put every one back to work why not those who are able to do so rather than disable peoples. Carers need to be taken in to consideration if you decide to go ahead with this new system. As a long time carer I know how difficult it is to understand people with mental illness ,there foe I would suggest that if government wants to introduce new system than its better to start with new claimants than existing claimants being reassessed because its vary costly and they all had been assessed regularly at some point of there illness. Pls read one example below.

I was struck by your post on cost-saving at the DWP, particularly because I am a disabled person in receipt of Disability Living Allowance. In common with several disabled friends, I have grave concerns about Mr Osborne's plans to medically re-assess all claimants of DLA. I don't feel any of us are putting the reasons for our concerns across very well at the moment.

My own situation is this: I'm in my thirties and have cerebral palsy. Unlike several others with the same impairment, I can walk and I can talk, though I have severe problems with pain and stamina levels. According to current criteria, I qualify pretty squarely for IB / ESA but I do not claim it. Instead, I work. I work in the media, mostly on a freelance basis. This allows me to work hard when I am able to do so, and rest when I am not. My income fluctuates accordingly, but I have always been able to support myself. In good years, I've been a higher rate tax payer, though I am not always this lucky.

I receive DLA at higher rate for the mobility component – confirming I am 'virtually unable' to walk, and lower rate for care, which reflects the fact I find preparing meals for myself problematic. I do not tick the DWP boxes in a straightforward way, but I am very much a 'genuine claimant'.

Currently the two components of my DLA combined cost the taxpayer about £270 a month. This I spend on paying for a cleaner to clean my flat - I do not have the physical capacity to do my own housework – and on taxis, which enable me to get places without expending extra energy on struggling with public transport. I also buy takeaways and ready meals when I am too exhausted to cook, and an absurd number of shoes. (My freestyle walking style destroys shoes and I go through about a pair a month.)

I am telling you this because I do not think disabled people have been open enough about how much DLA they receive or what they spend it on. I realise £270 a month is a lot of money, and I do not expect to be able to draw from the state in this manner without the state wishing to check in with me from time to time.

What I would say is that, in my case, the money I receive in DLA enables me to work. Without it, I would live in qualor, would be exhausted and would eat unhealthily. I certainly would not be able to get up quite so easily every morning and hold down a job.

The only other benefit I receive is a small Access to Work grant which makes it easier for me to do my job. AtW is protected in the coalition agreement because they recognise its importance in enabling disabled

people to work.

For me, the cost of DLA and AtW combined is much less than the average amount of income tax I pay each year. George Osborne currently profits from paying me DLA. Other than this, I make few demands on the state. I take medication regularly but – because I am in work – I pay prescription charges. The drug I take is a cheap one so the NHS profits as a result. I am glad. I see a consultant occasionally to keep as well as possible, but am generally very healthy and almost never see my GP. My own DLA expenditure supports a local cleaning firm and several local taxi drivers, something of which I am sure Mr Osborne would heartily approve.

As I mentioned, I am concerned about the push towards medical assessments for DLA. One thing that has not been made entirely clear in the commentary about welfare reform is that everyone who is in receipt of DLA has been medically assessed at one point or another. There is no longer a compulsory medical examination but claimants must provide a great deal of medical evidence before their claim is accepted. Personally, I now have an indefinite award – recognising that I will never become less disabled than I am at the moment, and will probably only decline in future.

However, I have only had an indefinite award for 10 years or so. Before that, I was called for medicals regularly. Every time I have had a medical for DLA (or its predecessor) I have been thrown off the benefit and forced to appeal to get it back again. Luckily I am articulate enough and well enough to appeal, but it is a struggle. The reason I tend to get declined benefit in an initial medical is because they are extremely basic and my impairment affects me in very complex ways. The medic – who will never have met me before and will have no specialty in the complexities of neurological disability – can see that I can walk and I can talk and pick a paper clip off a desk (I remember this part of the assessments well). That is pretty much all anyone can tell in a twenty minute medical, so I end up with my benefit declined, even though I have reports from senior medical professionals who know me well, and who state that appearances are deceptive and I am actually pretty seriously disabled.

This has happened every single time I have undergone a DWP medical, and my experience is reflected by that of several others who have complex impairments. Recently my health has declined and I have considered asking for a reassessment of my DLA, in the hope that I might now be entitled to middle rate care. I am not certain I will qualify and am so fearful that, if I ask, I will be re-assessed and kicked off the benefit as a result, that I have decided not to make the request.

You will know that medical assessments are not cheap for the taxpayer, and neither are appeals when benefits are wrongly declined. Were I to find my DLA declined after my medical assessment in 2013, my energy is so limited I would expect to have to give up work while I appealed. Meanwhile, if I was no longer deemed disabled enough to receive DLA, it is possible I would also lose my Access to Work grant, making it almost impossible for me to work during the appeal process, whether I had enough energy or do so or not. Mr Osborne would find me significantly less profitable during this time.

I am not arrogant enough to believe I should receive DLA without the state taking an interest in my health. If they wished to check in regularly with my own consultant – an NHS employee, so surely someone whose judgement they trust – I would find it slightly tedious, but entirely justifiable. Putting me in front of a non-specialist medical professional to whom I am a complete stranger, will likely have never come across anyone with my type of CP, and who will see me pick up a paper clip and conclude that I am extremely physically able is the stuff of nightmares. I don't think my fears are unjustified – it's happened to me before.

Forgive my arrogance, but I do believe I am this government's ideal disabled person: I draw a little from the state and give back large amounts of tax in return. I could give up work tomorrow and claim even more from the state, but instead I have found a way of making working life work for me, which is what this government wants for as many disabled people as possible. It is therefore a little confusing that it is people in my position who stand to lose out from Mr Osborne's announcement.

Forgive this lengthy email but I do not feel anyone has picked up on the fact that Mr Osborne's DLA announcement will put many working disabled people with complex impairments in this nightmarish position. I enjoy your analysis and thought you might like to know.

Thank you

Name not been provided due to boomerang from from government dep-