

How the Government's Department for Work and Pensions listens to disabled people



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Introduction



We are the **Social Security** Advisory Committee (SSAC). We are an independent group that gives advice to the Government.



Social security is money paid by the Government to help people afford the things they need to live. This money is often called ‘benefits’.

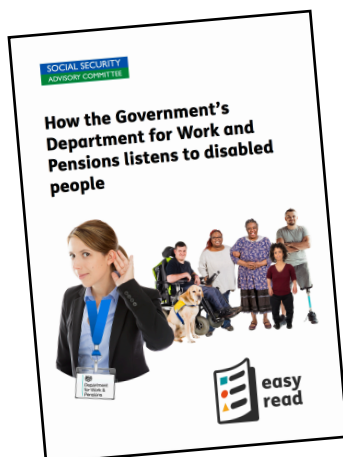


Department
for Work &
Pensions

The part of the Government that is responsible for social security is called the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).



We wanted to know what DWP does to listen to disabled people.



This information explains:

- what we did to find out how DWP listens to disabled people
- what we are suggesting DWP should do to improve.

What we wanted to find out



We wanted to know how DWP listens, speaks to and learns from disabled people.



These are the things we wanted to find out:

- does DWP ask disabled people:

- what's working well?



- what's working badly?



- what could be improved?



- how would disabled people like to be involved by DWP?



- how can DWP listen to disabled people better?

What we did



We talked to a lot of people from organisations who work with disabled people.



Some of these organisations:

- are run by disabled people
- work with learning disabled people.



We asked disabled people what they thought.



We asked people in DWP what they were doing to listen to disabled people.



We talked to people in the NHS and other organisations and asked them how they listened to disabled people.

What people said



DWP

DWP told us about the different ways they listen to disability organisations and disabled people.



DWP told us that some disabled people didn't trust them.



DWP wants to get much better at listening to disabled people and working with them.



DWP listened to autistic people to help them understand how they could improve Jobcentres.



DWP want to improve how benefits work for disabled people.

They are asking disability organisations about this.



They have been holding ‘listening events’ around the country to hear from disabled people.



Soon they are going to write some suggestions about how benefits could be organised better.



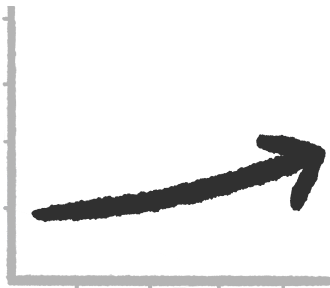
They will ask people what they think about these ideas. It will be called a Green Paper.

Disabled people and disability organisations



Disabled people and disability organisations told us:

- some good things about DWP
- how DWP could improve.





The good things

DWP are getting better. They have more meetings with disability organisations and with disabled people, and they ask people's views more.



Some people in DWP are very helpful.



They're getting better at asking people with learning disabilities to test new documents and letters to make sure they are accessible.

The things they need to improve

DWP could improve by:



- making sure all their staff are good at listening



- telling people when they have given DWP good advice that they are going to use, and explain how they will use it



- listening to everything that disabled people have to say when they ask for their views



- giving disabled people enough time to arrange meetings and to work out what they think



- being clear about how involved people were when they say something has been co-produced with disabled people



- doing more work with smaller organisations that are run by disabled people, not just the big charities.



Other organisations

We asked other organisations how they listened to disabled people.



NHS

The law says that the NHS has to involve people in decisions about things that affect them.



The NHS has guidance and rules for its staff about how to involve people.



Department for Transport

The Department for Transport has its own committee of disabled people for advice on how to make transport better and more accessible.



Local councils

Some local councils are very good at listening to local people and giving them a say.



The Scottish Government

The Scottish Government is going to have its own disability benefits.



They've asked 2,400 people who have been getting benefits, how the Scottish benefits system should work.

What we think



We think DWP really wants to listen more to disabled people, and listen better.



These are things we think it is most important to get better at:

- listening to black and minority ethnic groups
- being in contact with people who are often not listened to, like homeless disabled people
- listening to disabled people themselves, not just the organisations
- telling people about how their advice is being used
- giving people more time.



What we recommend



A **recommendation** is a suggestion about the best way to do something to make it better.



We have 7 recommendations for DWP:

1. Agree a plan with disabled people about how it will listen to them.



The plan should cover:

- how and when it listens to disabled people



- when DWP can give disabled people an equal say



- how DWP will make changes so that disabled people with different impairments or illnesses can be heard fairly



- how DWP will work with different sorts of organisations



- how it will hear from lots of different groups of disabled people, including black and ethnic minority people.



2. Give more information about how it is listening to disabled people and disability organisations, and what they are saying.



3. Ask lots of disabled people to form a very large group to give advice.



4. Use computers, phones and online meetings more so it can listen to disabled people without them having to travel.



5. Expect the organisations who work for DWP to listen more to disabled people too.



6. Look at whether its benefits are accessible, and make improvements quickly when they are not.



7. Choose a special person to speak up for this plan. They should write a yearly report about how it is working.

For more information



If you need more information, please contact us by:

Email: **ssac@ssac.gov.uk**



Phone: Denise Whitehead, Committee Secretary **07827 823176**



Post:

**Social Security Advisory Committee
7th Floor Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA
United Kingdom**