



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Listening to disabled people

Department for Work and Pensions' reply to
the Social Security Advisory Committee's
report into how we listen to disabled people



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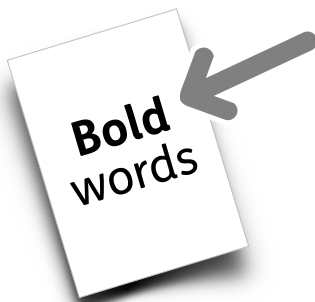
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In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after they have been used.



Some words are [blue and underlined](#). These are links which will go to another website which has more information.

Introduction



The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is the government department that is responsible for paying benefits and pensions.



We have written this reply to a report that was written by the **Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC)** about how we listen to disabled people.



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

Listening to disabled people



It is important that we listen to the people who use our services. This includes disabled people.



We have several groups where people who use our services meet with our staff to look at ways to improve our services.

These include:



- The Operational Stakeholder Engagement Forum (OSEF). This group is made up of 17 organisations who speak for customers with health and disability issues.



- The Health and Disability Forum - this looks at changes to the way benefits work.



- The PIP Policy Forum. This looks at the Personal Independent Payment (PIP).



- Access to Work forums. This looks at the Access to Work scheme.



Disability Confident Scheme

This scheme is about giving jobs to disabled people.



We involve and listen to the Disability Confident Professional Advisers Group. There are disabled people in this group.



We also have a Disability Confident Business Leaders Group. There are disabled people in this group.

The Regional Stakeholder Network

This is a network of groups around the country that meet and tell us how our work affects them.



There are over 200 disabled people in this network.

The Health and Disability Green Paper



The Health and Disability Green Paper is a document about ways the Government should improve how it helps disabled people and people with health conditions.



We asked many disabled people to tell us what they thought about the ideas in this document.

Our reply to the SSAC



The Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) has told us the things they think we should do. These are called recommendations.



Recommendation 1:

The DWP should set up clear rules for how it involves and listens to disabled people.



Disabled people should be involved in writing these rules.



The rules should be used by all parts of the DWP.



Our reply to recommendation 1:

We do not accept this recommendation.



We think that setting up rules will make it harder to involve and listen to disabled people.



We think that the way that we involve and listen to disabled people should be flexible.

We want to be able to use the best way to involve and listen for each separate occasion.



Recommendation 2:

The DWP should give information about the meetings that include disabled people.



Our reply to recommendation 2:

We do not accept this recommendation.



We give information about meetings that people have with Government ministers.

But we don't give information about meetings that people have with staff.



We want people to be able to talk openly without worrying who might find out what they said.



We do write reports after we have asked people what they think about a certain issue.



In these reports we often explain how we have involved and listened to disabled people.



Recommendation 3:

The DWP should have a large group of disabled people that they can involve and listen to regularly.



Our reply to recommendation 3:

We do not accept this recommendation.



We don't think that we should only involve and listen to 1 group of people.



It is better if we can choose how many people to involve and listen to for each occasion.



For example:

- In 2020 we asked 2,000 people about doing **assessments** by telephone because of COVID-19.

An **assessment** is when you have a meeting to work out how much benefit you should have.



- We regularly ask about 6,000 people what they think about the way they get their benefits.



Recommendation 4:

The DWP should use new ways to contact disabled people - like online video meetings.



Our reply to recommendation 4:

We accept this recommendation.



We are working to use new ways of having meetings. These new ways of having meetings can be more accessible to disabled people.



We are testing out ways of making online video meetings more accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.



Recommendation 5:

When the DWP decides which companies or organisations we pay to do work for us, we should involve disabled people.



Our reply to recommendation 5:

We do not accept this recommendation.



It is difficult for us to involve disabled people when we make these decisions.



This is because when we choose who to involve, we may give one company or organisation an unfair advantage.



But we will continue to involve disabled people when we make and set up new services.



Recommendation 6:

DWP should look at making services more accessible to disabled people.



Our reply to recommendation 6:

We accept this recommendation.



We want to make our services more accessible to disabled people.

We have already made many changes.



These include:

- Setting up a way that people can use sign language to talk to us on the telephone.



- Making all the **forms** accessible. A **form** is the questionnaire you have to fill in to get a benefit.



- Keeping a record when anyone asks for some accessible information, so they don't have to ask again and again.



- Telling people that they can have accessible letters if they want.



- Training our staff in ways to work with disabled people.



- Asking people if they need any changes to the way we work when they are in contact with our staff.

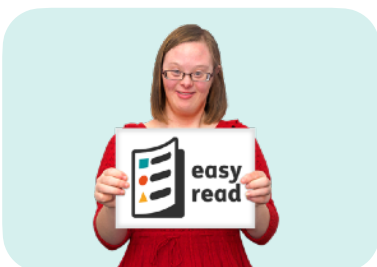


- Better ways of helping people get the information they need.



- Supporting **Citizens Advice** to help people to claim their benefits.

Citizens Advice is a charity that gives free advice and help to people who need it.



- Working with organisations of people with a learning disabilities to write Easy Read guides to benefits and services.

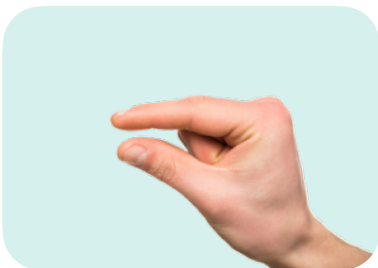


Recommendation 7:

The senior managers at the DWP should show that involving disabled people is most important to the department.



1 of the DWP's directors should be responsible for this. They should tell the board of directors of the DWP how staff are involving and listening to disabled people.



Our reply to recommendation 7:

We accept part of this recommendation.



We agree that senior managers should make all staff understand about involving and listening to disabled people.



We don't agree with the idea that 1 director should be responsible for this.

The people who are responsible for this are:



- The Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work.



- The team of senior managers at DWP.



Directors are already involved in looking at how we involve and listen to people outside the DWP.

This work includes:



- The External Engagement Board. This is a committee which includes directors that look in how we work with other organisations.



- The Serious Case Panel. This is a committee that deals with serious issues. Senior managers are part of this group.



- A group that looks at how we include people from all different backgrounds when we choose new staff.



All our directors and senior managers have to show that they understand about how to be fair to everyone in all the organisations work.

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