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Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart MP

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Fiona

Thank you for your email of 22 January on behalf of a number of your constituents about the consultation on aids and appliances and the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment.

The purpose of Personal Independence Payment is to help those whose disability or health condition leads to extra costs and to ensure that the available support goes to the people who need it most. The intention was to create a modern benefit that focused support on those with the greatest need by assessing the functional impact of claimants' health conditions or disability, rather than the condition or disability itself, as a proxy for additional costs. In line with this, it was expected that most claimants would have at least moderate on-going additional costs. However, we have concerns that the current policy on aids and appliances and the daily living component may not be working to achieve this.

The fact that this particular aspect of Personal Independence Payment policy may not be working as intended was highlighted by the first independent review by Paul Gray. Following this, Departmental doctors reviewed a sample of 105 cases where claimants scored all, or the majority, of their points due to aids and appliances.

The results of this review suggested that significant numbers of people who are likely to have low or minimal additional costs are being awarded the daily living component of the benefit solely because they may benefit from aids and appliances across a number of the activities, despite the relatively low point score awarded for them.

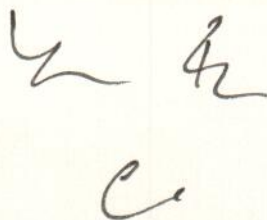
Given the strength of the pattern that emerged from the review of the 105 cases, with over 90 per cent likely to have only low or minimal additional costs, the cases provide an important indication of how the assessment is working and we believe it was important to include these findings in the consultation document. In addition to this, recent judicial decisions, based on the current legislation, have broadened the scope of aids and appliances to include articles, such as beds and chairs, which are unlikely to be a reliable indicator of extra costs.

These developments are inconsistent with the original policy intent of awarding the benefit to claimants with the greatest need. As you know, we therefore launched a consultation to seek views on how support can best be provided to help meet the costs of disability faced by people who are currently awarded points due to aids and appliances.

No decision has yet been made as to whether any change should be made to the current system and the Department does not have any preference between the five options presented in the consultation. We have also invited additional suggestions for change.

In order to help us make a decision, we have actively engaged with a range of organisations and individuals throughout the consultation, holding one-to-one meetings with a number of disability organisations and running five public consultation events across the UK, including one in Edinburgh.

I thank you for your comments. These are being considered, along with the other responses we have received from a range of interested parties, including disabled people and disability organisations, and the Department will publish its response in due course. Please be assured that if we decide that change is required a full equality analysis will be conducted and considered prior to a final decision being made in line with the Department's obligations under the Equality Act 2010.



The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS