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Rt Hon George Howarth MP  
House of Commons

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*Dear George,*

Thank you for your email of 15 March on behalf of constituents who contacted you regarding Personal Independence Payment.

We are committed to supporting disabled people by ensuring our welfare system is a strong safety net for those who need it. That is why we spend around £50 billion a year supporting people with disabilities and health conditions, which is approximately 2.5 per cent of GDP and over 6 per cent of all Government spending.

Recent legal cases have broadened the way the Personal Independence Payment assessment criteria are interpreted. We need to clarify the criteria to restore the original aim of the policy and make sure we are giving the greatest support to those who need it most.

Spending on disability benefits (Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance) is at a record high – up by over £3 billion since 2010 and higher every year to 2020 than in 2010. Support is not limited to just money. As part of our reforms, we are offering more assistance to move into work, for example, through access to training courses. We are committed to helping all those who can work into meaningful employment, whilst protecting those who cannot.


We have helped get almost 600,000 more disabled people in work than three years ago – meaning that there are now almost 3.5 million disabled people with the dignity of a job. Many areas also have local welfare provision and community nursing teams offering a range of services and local welfare provision, as well as arrangements to help with the cost of prescriptions for people with certain conditions.

Personal Independence Payment is a better benefit than its predecessor, Disability Living Allowance. It is more modern, dynamic and fair, focusing support on those experiencing the greatest barriers to living independently. Personal Independence Payment contributes to the additional costs which disabled people face providing them with greater opportunities to lead full, active and independent lives. Over a quarter of those on Personal Independence Payment receive the highest level of support, compared to 15 per cent of Disability Living Allowance's working-age claimants.

Personal Independence Payment has the needs of the individual at its very core. We introduced criteria specifically designed to capture the needs of those with both physical and non-physical conditions. The Personal Independence Payment assessment criteria were developed in collaboration with disabled people and independent specialists in health, social care and disability. These changes are working and there are more people with mental health conditions receiving the higher rates of both Personal Independence Payment components than the Disability Living Allowance equivalents.

The judgment in relation to mobility activity 1 held that someone who cannot make a journey without assistance due to psychological distress should be scored in the same way as a person who needs assistance because they have difficulties navigating. By way of example, the first group might include some people with isolated social phobia or anxiety, whereas the second group might include some people who are blind. Until this ruling, the assessment made a distinction between these two groups on the basis that people who cannot navigate, due to a visual or cognitive impairment, are likely to have higher levels of need generally and higher costs associated with their disability.

As a consequence of this judgment we are making changes to restore the original intention of the benefit and clarify the criteria used to decide how much benefit claimants receive. I can assure your constituents that nobody will see a reduction in the amount of Personal Independence Payment previously awarded by the Department, as this is not a change to the policy nor is it intended to make new savings. It should also be noted that many people experiencing psychological distress still qualify for Personal Independence Payment through other assessment criteria. In fact, 27 per cent of Personal Independence Payment recipients with a mental health condition get the enhanced rate mobility component, compared to 9 per cent receiving the higher rate Disability Living Allowance mobility component.

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**The Rt Hon Damian Green MP**

SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS