

**WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE**  
**WOMEN AND WELFARE INQUIRY**  
**ANONYMOUS WRITTEN SUBMISSION**

**1. What is the impact of welfare reform on women?**

I am a retired teacher who was granted early retirement on health grounds - I have Multiple Sclerosis. At all points of contact I was always open about my SSPA. I had been receiving Incapacity Benefit. When this was changed to Employment Support Allowance I was automatically transferred from Incapacity Benefit to Employment Support Allowance.

**2. What is your (or your clients) experience of being on benefits or employment support?**

I went through a Work Capability Assessment which was extremely stressful. The first assessment was cancelled and rescheduled. The actual assessment was extremely worrying and caused me extreme distress. The assessor appeared to have no understanding of Multiple Sclerosis and despite having recognised problems with incontinence, dropped foot and fatigue - all recognised problems associated with Multiple Sclerosis, I was deemed fit to work. I appealed - another equally stressful experience and was then told I had won my appeal and would not be reassessed within two years.

**3. How has your (or your clients) experience with the benefit system changed in recent years since the introduction of the welfare reforms?**

As a result of this I was then told I had been paid Employment Support Allowance in error and had to repay nearly £2000.

**4. Are there any challenges involved in being in receipt of your (your clients) particular benefits?**

I now no longer receive any benefits. I now have the worry about the change from Disability Living Allowance to Personal Independence Payment. My original DLA was classed as indefinite and having a car really has been a tremendous help in keeping me as independent as possible.

**5. What would be your priorities for change when certain benefits / elements of employment support are devolved to Scotland?**

I believe that welfare reform is necessary but the new system has to be understanding of lifelong conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis. Much as I would like there is no cure and the unpredictability of it is difficult enough without worrying about financial pressures or loss of independence.

**6. Do you have any suggestions of practical improvements that you would like to see when certain benefits / elements of employment support are under Scottish control?**

I would like to see a better understanding of how conditions such as Multiple Sclerosis impact on the daily lived of those who are affected.