

SUBMISSION FROM PAT ONIONS

The effect of the Welfare Reform Act in Scotland.

Throughout the UK the Welfare Reform Act is falling disproportionately on disabled people, their carers and families.

People in Scotland face even harsher cuts. My hope is that the Scottish government will not allow this to happen.

The one aim of the WRA is to cut costs at the expense of all disabled people. The Coalition tries to promote 'Work is good for you.' This may be so if you are fit and healthy but to those who aren't it only instils fear and huge uncertainty of how they will survive.

There is a huge shortage of jobs and the promises of support for those in need of that support just isn't happening. This has been shown time and again in recent months. Disabled people cannot be beaten with big sticks into non-existent jobs at the expense of their health, sanity and wellbeing.

Scotland must not allow this appalling barbaric practice to happen to those of us who live here.

Social works are cutting services due to their own funding being dramatically reduced. They are already running a very reduced 'care service' often relying on agency staff. At the moment remote places get very little, if any, services.

This situation is only going to get worse as the WRA hits the most vulnerable.

There is no care support for those disabled of working age.

The Sutherland report showed there was not enough money to support those disabled of working age as well as those over 65. As the law stands it only looks at providing care for those over 65. It was left to individual Local Authorities as to whether they supported other groups. They were given no encouragement by the Scottish government to do so.

Those 16 - 64 were left with no services or support.

As a result that group rely heavily on DLA (PIP) to pay for their own care, equipment and extra needs that go with their disability. As DLA is both an in and out of work allowance many will not be able to work anymore. They will be left isolated in their own homes with no chance of independent living.

In the small print of the new WRA - come 2017 - people will not receive PIP as an out of work benefit anymore.

The National Eligibility Criteria is denying huge numbers of disabled people their right to services from social works.

The eligibility for services has been set so high that even those with complex needs are not getting the care they need.

To qualify for hospital transport you must be in receipt of the highest rate of DLA care. Those who lose this allowance will be left to struggle, often long distances, to appointments.

In the small print of the new regulations - those whose stay in hospital is more than 29 days stand to lose their Motability lease car. Paid for out of a person's higher rate DLA Mobility component.

The climate in Scotland is approximately 5 degrees colder than the average in England. Heating bills are high. Many villages do not have mains gas and 'bottle' gas/oil commands a higher premium. We had no choice and cannot 'shop around' for better deals.

The huge burden of the unpaid carer is unacceptable. Their own health and wellbeing is suffering and many cannot continue with their caring role.

There are around 650,000 unpaid carers in Scotland saving the government £10.3bn per year and yet the Carers Allowance is the lowest of all allowances.

Many day centres are closing putting further strain on already over worked unpaid carers. Many of those being cared for will end up in hospital putting increased pressure on overstretched NHS services.

Carers are not getting the respite they desperately need in spite of promises this will happen.

ADDITIONAL SUBMISSION FROM PAT ONIONS

This is submitted by Pat's Petition. An on line Disabled People's Organisation and member of UKDPC.

The aim is to bring together all those who feel strongly about the Welfare Reform changes. They are asked to sign the petition which registers their 'signature.'

As of 3rd April 2012 over 34,450 people have signed.

Pat's Petition says:

"Stop and review the cuts to benefits and services which are falling disproportionately on disabled people, their carers and families."

"The government were embarking on wholesale reform of the benefit system when the economic crisis struck. These welfare reforms had not been piloted and the plan was to monitor and assess the impact of the new untried approach as it was introduced in a buoyant economy."

Unfortunately since then the economy has gone in to crisis and the government has simultaneously embarked on a massive programme of cuts. This has created a perfect storm and left disabled people/those with ill health, and their carers reeling, confused and afraid.

We ask the government to stop this massive programme of piecemeal change until they can review the impact of all these changes, taken together, on disabled people and their carers. We ask the government to stand by its duty of care to disabled people and their carers. At the moment the covenant seems to be broken and they do not feel safe .

Illness or disability could affect any one of us at any time, while many more of us are potential carers.

Pat's Petition 4th April 2012