

A Parliamentary Review into the impact of reducing the Employment and Support Allowance Work-Related Activity Group payment on disabled claimants and their readiness for work

A consultation for charities, think tanks, specialist employment providers and other interested organisations

About

In July the Government introduced the Welfare Reform and Work Bill which proposes a number of changes to working age benefits.

One of the measures is to reduce payments for new claimants in the Employment and Support Allowance Work Related Activity Group (ESA-WRAG) from £102.15 a week to £73.10. This would take effect from 2017.

ESA-WRAG is a benefit for people found 'unfit for work' although able to do 'work related activity' such as training and move into work at some point in the future.

The Government has stated that it wants to get 1 million more disabled people into work and that the reduction in ESA-WRAG will incentivise disabled people to look for work. The Government has said it will also improve specialist support for disabled people to do so.

We welcome the Government's aspiration to support more disabled people into work but are concerned about the impact the reduction in payment can have. Therefore we are supporting an independent review to aid the development of the legislation.

The Parliamentary Review

The review led by the Independent Peer Lord Low of Dalston is being supported by disability charities including; **Leonard Cheshire Disability, Mind, MS Society, National Autistic Society, RNIB, Royal Mencap Society and Scope**. A report will be published in December containing the findings and presented to the Government.

This review will explore in more detail the concerns raised, to ensure that Parliament has sufficient information about the impact of this policy.

The Government's Impact Assessment of July 2015, suggested that removing the ESA WRAG payment would '*further improve work incentives for those [claimants affected]*'.

Given the Government's aim of halving the disability employment gap, the Review will explore what evidence there is to support this view.

Context

Disabled people are significantly less likely to be in employment than non-disabled people. This is despite the fact that the majority of disabled wish to work.

In 2012, 46% of working-age disabled people were in employment compared to 76% of working-age non-disabled people.² As a result, job outcomes for disabled people on the Work Programme, for example, are still low at only 8.7 percent for new ESA claimants, and 4.3 percent for other ESA/Incapacity Benefit claimants.

Halving the disability employment gap

The Government has stated that it wishes to halve the disability employment gap which equates to an additional 1 million people in work. This commitment was widely welcomed by the disability sector and it is hoped this will drive innovation and attract funding to ensure disabled people get the appropriate support.

Questions

1. What is your evaluation of the support people receive on ESA WRAG? For example the payment they receive and/ or the support that they are offered, such as training or work skills, and whether this helps them move closer towards employment.
2. What would be the impact of the Government's proposal to reduce the ESA-WRAG payment on claimants/families?
3. Would there be an impact on people's ability to look for work if the amount of money was reduced? What do you think this impact, if any, would be?
4. What further support should be made available to help people in the ESA-WRAG move towards employment that isn't currently available?

Please send your response, of no more than 500 words per question, campaigns@macmillan.org.uk using the subject line 'Review of reduction to ESA WRAG payment'. **The consultation will be open until 15 November 2015, midnight.**