



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Ministerial
Correspondence
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9DA

0207 340 4000

www.gov.uk

ministers@dwp.gov.uk

Mr Dan White
dan.white@disabilityrightsuk.org

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8 November 2022

Dear Mr White,

As you may know, your letter of 21 September to the Prime Minister on behalf of the Disability Poverty Campaign Group, and the Disability Benefits Consortium, has been forwarded to this department. You wrote about support for disabled people with the rise in the cost of living. I am replying as the Minister of State for Disabled People, Health and Work. I apologise for the delay.

The Secretary of State undertakes an annual review of benefits and pensions. The legislation that governs the review, the Social Security Administration Act 1992, envisages one review each year. The 2023/24 review is due to commence shortly, and the Secretary of State's decision will be announced to Parliament in the normal way later this year.

The Department of Health and Social Care has said that a review of the baseline level of the Minimum Income Guarantee is undertaken annually and there are no plans to change that position in 2023. Following the last review, the Guarantee rose by 3 percent from 6 April 2022. Funding has been allocated to local authorities to enable them to make this uplift.

In October 2023, the Government is introducing an £86,000 cap on personal care costs. This will provide financial protection from unlimited care costs and give people peace of mind from knowing that they will keep more of their assets when paying for their care. In addition, the means-test will also be significantly expanded so that people with low income and less than £100,000 in assets are likely to receive state support, and everyone will keep at least £20,000 of assets.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy has said that, from this winter, the Warm Home Discount scheme has been reformed in England and Wales. The previous application-based Broader Group has been replaced with a new cohort, Core Group 2, of low-income households in properties with high energy costs. They will be identified through data matching, which means the majority of rebates can be awarded automatically. The reforms will lead to more rebates going to fuel-poor households compared to the previous scheme. Additionally, analysis shows that 160,000 more households where someone has a disability or a long-term illness will receive a rebate.

Under the previous scheme, eligibility varied between energy suppliers and households were not guaranteed a rebate every year, even if they met the criteria. We recognise that some households which received rebates under the scheme to date, including some in receipt of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP), will no longer receive a rebate. However, DLA and PIP are not means-tested, which means the incomes of recipients can be higher than of the intended beneficiaries of the reformed Warm Home Discount scheme.

Introducing non-means-tested benefits into the eligibility criteria would mean that households on lower incomes would lose out. However, 29 percent more fuel-poor households with a disability or long-term illness will receive a rebate compared to under the current scheme. The proportion of rebates received by households with a disability or long-term illness will also remain higher than the proportion of the fuel-poor population with a disability, or overall population with a disability.

Where overpayments occur, Section 105 of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 states that any overpayment of Universal Credit, new style Jobseeker's Allowance, or Employment and Support Allowance, in excess of entitlement is recoverable. We have no plan to change this. However, we are committed to recovering benefit overpayments without causing undue financial hardship. Therefore, claimants who have difficulty managing debt can speak to their Work Coach for advice. In exceptional circumstances, the department has discretion to waive recovery of benefit debt on the grounds of severe financial hardship and/or ill health.

Further information relating to waivers and the various circumstances in which a waiver may be appropriate, can be found on the Government site at: www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-overpayment-

[recovery-staff-guide/benefit-overpayment-recovery-guide#chapter-8--write-off-and-waiver](#).

Should an individual wish to pursue a waiver or discuss a repayment plan, Debt Management can be contacted on 0800 916 0647, or by writing to: Debt Management (C), Mail Handling Site A, Wolverhampton, WV98 2DF.

Claimants who contact the Debt Management team are referred to the Money Advisor Network, which works in partnership with the department to offer free independent and impartial money and debt advice. Citizens' Advice may also be able to offer advice and information about debt.

Universal Credit provides more generous support for disabled people than it does for people in similar circumstances who are not disabled. Based on the outcome of a Work Capability Assessment, a claimant who is determined to have limited capability for work and work-related activity (LCWRA) may be awarded an extra amount, currently £354.28 per calendar month (2022-23 rates). Additionally, claimants determined to have limited capability for work (LCW) or LCWRA are eligible for a Work Allowance and in couple claims, access to help with childcare.

The department does all it can to make information about benefits such as Carer's Allowance widely available, including online through the gov.uk website. Organisations supporting carers and other stakeholders and partners, also make information available on carer's benefits, including Carer's Allowance.

As well as hard copy, people can apply for Carer's Allowance online. Since this option was made available in October 2013, over 1.5 million people have applied that way. Since April 2020, over 90 percent of applications have been made online and over 90 percent of those claimants have said they are happy with the online service.

We announced in the 'Shaping Future Support: Health and Disability Green Paper' that we want to make changes to the assessment process so that people with the most severe health conditions and disabilities can claim the benefits they are entitled to through a simpler process. We are exploring how to test a new Severe Disability Group so that those with severe and lifelong conditions can benefit from a simplified process to access Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment without ever needing to complete a detailed application form or go through a face-to-face assessment. We are now considering the responses. These will inform a White Paper, to

be published later this year, setting out how we can better enable people to live more independently and take up work, where possible.

In the meantime, the department will continue to work with disabled people, people with health conditions, charities and organisations, to ensure we focus on the best solutions that will make a real difference to disabled people across the country.

On 26 May, we announced a range of cost of living measures to provide financial assistance to millions of households across the UK, including over £15 billion of additional support, targeted at those with the greatest need. This builds on the over £22 billion previously announced.

The £650 one-off Cost of Living Payment will target support at low-income households on means-tested benefits. It will be paid to people who get payments of any of the qualifying income related benefits.

Contributory and new-style benefits were not included because people claiming these benefits may have other financial resources available. However, anyone on a low-income can also claim an eligible means-tested benefit such as, for example, Universal Credit.

We are also providing additional support to help disabled people with the extra costs they will face. Those eligible will receive a one-off disability Cost of Living Payment of £150 from 20 September if they are getting any of the qualifying disability benefits.

Over 8 million households have already received the first Cost of Living Payment, worth £326, which was sent out from 14 July this year. People will be eligible for the second Cost of Living Payment of £324 if they were entitled, or are later found to be entitled, to a payment of:

- Universal Credit for an assessment period that ended in the period 26 August 2022 to 25 September 2022; or
- income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, or Pension Credit for any day in the period 26 August 2022 to 25 September 2022.

We have deliberately kept the rules for these payments as simple as possible. This is the only way we could ensure that we could quickly develop the systems and processes required to make these payments.


The Energy Price Guarantee is supporting millions of households with rising energy costs, and the Chancellor made clear it will continue to do so from now until April next year. This is in addition to the help we are making available to most domestic electricity customers in Great Britain with a £400 non-repayable discount to eligible households provided through the expansion of the Energy Bills Support Scheme. If anyone is off grid then they may be able to access the Household Support Fund.

For those that are not eligible for the means-tested Cost of Living Payment, or for families that still need additional support, the Government is providing an additional £500 million to help households with the cost of essentials, bringing the total funding for this support to £1.5 billion. In England, this will take the form of an extension to the Household Support Fund backed by £421 million.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to write and I hope your constituent will find this reply helpful.

With best wishes,

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove', is centered within a white rectangular box. The signature is written in a cursive style.

Tom Pursglove MP
Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work