

12th August 2022

Dear Chancellor

Calls for Urgent Action to Support and Protect Disabled People

On behalf of the Disability Poverty Campaign Group (DPCG), I am writing to ask that the Government take urgent action to better protect Disabled people from the cost-of-living crisis—including catastrophic predicted increases in energy costs, which are set to increase with the October 2022 and January 2023 price cap rises.

Millions of Disabled people now live in poverty. They simply do not have the means to survive this national crisis. Disabled people commonly have extra costs that relate to our impairments and health conditions. These extra costs typically come from necessary outgoings on food, residential and domiciliary care and support services, specialist medical equipment, accessibility devices, energy, fuel and travel costs.

The Bank of England predicts further rises in inflation in 2022¹. We have legitimate cause to believe that, without urgent Government action, energy costs and wider inflationary pressures will result in avoidable loss of life over the winter months. It is in the national interest that Government act now to save Disabled people's lives.

We call on the Treasury to put in place the following measures by 1 October 2022:

- Benefits—including the 'extra-costs benefits' (PIP, DLA and AA)—must receive an emergency uprating. The uprating must at least match the latest Bank of England predicted inflation rate of 13%.
- Act to ban all arrears-related deductions from benefits.
- Revise the eligibility criteria for the Warm Home Discount to reinstate eligibility for the 300,000 Disabled benefit claimants whose entitlement to the rebate has, in our view, been wrongfully removed.
- Put in place further targeted, non-repayable welfare support to Disabled people in vulnerable circumstances—we refer the Treasury to the relevant provisions of the Equality Act.

Further, we ask for the Treasury to support our calls for the following wider actions from Government:

- Statutory social care service provision must become free at the point of use. We call for a ban on care charge debt-recovery actions against Disabled and pension-age statutory social care service users.

¹ CPI inflation is now expected by the Bank of England to rise more than forecast in their May 2022 report, from 9.4% in June to just over 13% in 2022 Q4. Bank of England Monetary Policy Report (August 2022); retrieved on 8 August 2022 from: <https://www.bankofengland.co.uk/-/media/boe/files/monetary-policy-report/2022/august/monetary-policy-report-august-2022.pdf>

- Require the tariff for pre-payment meters to be the same as tariffs paid by standard meter customers.
- Disabled people must have better protections in place to ensure continuous energy supply this winter—we draw the Government’s attention to the high risk to Disabled people on low income and with neurological, cognitive and psychosocial impairments of ‘self-disconnection’.²

Chancellor, you will be aware of the wealth of recent evidence showing the impact of the current financial crisis on Disabled people. Citizens Advice (CA) has published new data on the impact of energy price rises showing unprecedented numbers of people are now unable to afford to top-up pre-payment meters.³ We note CA’s particular concern about Disabled citizens with higher energy needs, who are struggling with inadequate levels of Personal Independence Payment (PIP),⁴ and delays in the processing of PIP. CA’s research shows that the value of energy debt is now almost twice 2019 levels.⁵

New data published by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) on 5 August⁶ show that “Disabled people [are] more likely than non-disabled people to have reduced their spending on food and essentials because of their increased costs of living (42%, compared with 31%).” This research also shows the precarious nature of Disabled people’s finances. 49% of Disabled people could meet an unexpected additional cost of £850, as opposed to 64% of non-disabled people.

We would welcome an early meeting to discuss these concerns and the measures that we are keen to assist the Government in taking to support and protect Disabled people this winter.

Yours Sincerely



Kamran Mallick
On behalf of the DPCG

Dan White, Disability Rights UK
Julia Modern, Inclusion London
Caroline Collier, Inclusion Barnet
Helen Rowlands, Cheshire Disabled People's Panel
Lynne Turnbull, Cheshire Disabled People's Panel

The Disability Poverty Campaign Group (DPCG) Steering Committee, on behalf of the DPCG

cc. Fazilet Hadi, Head of Policy, Disability Rights UK; Svetlana Kotova, Director of Campaigns and Justice, Inclusion London; Baroness Jane Campbell.

² The industry term ‘self-disconnection’ places the responsibility for loss of supply upon the consumer unfairly, and we highlight Citizens Advice’s research from 2014, which identified the three reasons for self-disconnection as a) forgetting to top the meter up in time, b) not realising the meter was low on credit, and c) insufficient money to top-up. We ask Ofgem to be aware that consumers with neurological or cognitive impairment are likely to be at higher risk of experiencing scenarios a) and b). Citizens Advice: Topping up or dropping out: self-disconnection amongst prepayment meter users (2014); retrieved on 8 August 2022 from:

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/Global/CitizensAdvice/Energy/PPM%20self-disconnection%20short%20report.pdf>

³ Citizens Advice: Cost of Living Dashboard data; retrieved 7 August 2022 from: <https://public.flourish.studio/story/1634399/> (screen 3)

⁴ *ibid.* (screen 10)

⁵ *ibid.* (screen 14)

⁶ ONS: Around 4 in 10 disabled people experiencing rising cost of living cut back on food and essentials; retrieved 8 August 2022 from:

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/personalandhouseholdfinances/expenditure/articles/whatactionsarepeopletakingbecauseoftherisingcostofliving/2022-08-05>

Disability Campaign Group Member Organisations

Action on Disability Kensington and Chelsea
Being the Boss
Bristol Reclaiming Independent Living (BRIL)
Bromley Experts By Experience
Cheshire Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC)
Cheshire Disabled People's Panel
Choices and Rights Disability Coalition
Chronic Illness Inclusion
Disability Positive
Disability Rights UK
Disability Union
Disabled People Against Cuts Cambridgeshire and Essex (DPAC)
Greenwich Disabled People Against Cuts (DPAC)
Harrow Association of Disabled People
Inclusion Barnet
Inclusion London
#MEaction
Merton Centre for Independent Living
WinVisible: Women with Visible and Invisible Disabilities

Disability Campaign Group Supporter Organisations

Adult Social Care Warriors
Bringing Us Together
Citizens Advice Newcastle
Contact: the Charity for Families with Disabled Children
DABD Charity
Disability Benefits Consortium
End Fuel Poverty Coalition
The Food Foundation
Joseph Rowntree Foundation
Learning Disability England
Leonard Cheshire Disability
Mencap
NaCSILS (Campaign for a National Care Support and Independent Living Service)
Northern Lights
The Trussell Trust
Women's Budget Group