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22<sup>n</sup><sup>d</sup> March 2024

Dear Secretary of State for Work and Pensions

### **Extending the Household Support Fund**

We are writing on behalf of the Disability Poverty Campaign Group (DPCG), which is a coalition led by Disabled people's organisations and includes a growing number of disability and anti-poverty organisations. Our purpose is to highlight the dire financial circumstances faced by millions of Disabled people and to ask you to take urgent action.

Prior to the budget, rumours circulated that the Household Support Fund (HSF) would end. As you are aware the HSF is delivered via local councils. It is designed to help people in dire financial situations pay for the essentials of life such as energy, water, food and vital equipment and household items. It has provided food vouchers to families during school holidays and has supported many thousands of Disabled people since its inception.

Whilst the Chancellor announced that the Fund would continue, its life was only extended by six months, which given that all cost-of-living support payments have ended, leaves Disabled people and others in poverty, with nowhere to turn to, when faced with utterly desperate situations.

For context, millions of Disabled people have had their lives decimated by the cost-of-living crisis, the evidence is undeniable and the casualty list long and depressing. Indeed, at the recent UN inspection of the UK Government in Geneva, the UN reiterated that under this Government, Disabled people are experiencing suffering due to Government apathy and cruel policies. The closure of the HSF prior to next winter, takes away the only remaining source of financial help for those in crisis, pushing them into deepening poverty.

In November 2022, the Chancellor promised an energy social tariff, to help those in poverty to meet energy costs and to support Disabled people with high energy use due to impairments or health conditions. However, we understand that these plans have been silently shelved.

The Government seems intent on stripping away financial support from the poorest in society, refusing to review inadequate benefit levels, ending cost-of-living payments, closing the HSF before winter, and failing to introduce support to meet energy costs and or high energy usage.

The DPCG asks that the Government considers all its citizens when making financial decisions including Disabled people and families with Disabled children.



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At the absolute minimum, we ask that The Household Support Fund be extended for the coming year. Poverty has not gone away. Millions of People, especially Disabled people need extra support because our incomes are low and our expenditure on heat, food, housing, travel, and medication is high.

We urge you to reconsider the proposed six-month extension of the HSF and instead institute the Fund for the full year.

We also ask that the Government undertakes a comprehensive review of its policies on supporting the poorest in society. People will only flourish when they receive the income and support needed to lead full lives. Policies that penalise and crush those in poverty will continue to leave millions in despair and destitution.

The DPCG would welcome a meeting to discuss the issues raised in this letter.

For further reading and information please visit the [Disabled peoples manifesto](#) website.

Yours Faithfully

On behalf of The Disability Poverty Campaign Group:

Dan White (Disability Rights UK)  
Svetlana Kotova (Inclusion London)  
Helen Rowlands (Inclusion London)