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11TH July 2024

Dear Prime Minister

May we firstly congratulate you on the election of your party to government.

We write on behalf of the Disability Poverty Campaign Group (DPCG)

The DPCG is convened by **Disability Rights UK** and **Inclusion London** and is led entirely by Disabled people and our organisations. Our members include disability and anti-poverty organisations and allies from wider civil society and academia.

We welcomed your party's manifesto commitment to listen to and work with Disabled people and we are encouraged by Labour's clearly stated pledge to honour this country's commitments to the UNCRPD and to ensure "its principles are reflected across government." We expect to see progress from your government on three key CRPD articles within your current term: Article 19 (independent living); Article 27 (work and employment) and Article 28 (adequate standard of living and social protection).

Our purpose is to highlight Disabled people's lived experience of poverty, including debt. We launched in 2021 in response to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis and its impacts on Disabled people and our households; we campaign for local and central government action to alleviate the financial hardship Disabled people disproportionately experience. We are keen to work collaboratively with your new government, building on our existing and valued alliances with the many Labour MPs who have outstanding track records as allies of the disabled people's rights movement, and expect to continue our regular contact with the Disability Unit civil servants.

The DPCG has been instrumental, alongside many allies, including DPCG members the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Trussell Trust, the Disability Benefits Consortium and poverty experts from the Bristol Poverty Institute, in raising the profile of disability poverty in the national media. Our co-lead Dan White appeared on [Newsnight](#) as part of our campaigning on the scandal of Department for Work and Pensions recovery of Carer's Allowance overpayments. Our campaigning to end social care charging has been covered by BBC News, ITV, and The Guardian.

Yet despite our efforts, the previous government resisted Disabled people's calls for justice on disability poverty. They refused to back our national campaigning on disabled people's fuel poverty and social care debts. We met with Ofgem and BEIS. We called on ministers to legislate for an energy social tariff. We met with the Cabinet Office and with a succession of ministers for Disabled people. It made no difference. Neither did the actions of the United Nations this March, in condemning the UK government's failures since 2017 to address the UK's systemic violations of CRPD.

Prime Minister, we hope that we can forge a productive relationship with your new government, and that ministers will meet with us before the summer recess for initial discussions on the structural economic and societal drivers of disability poverty, which force Disabled people and their households into making choices between essential needs—including food, heating, social care, medication and health care e.g. optometry and dentistry. Such choices are wholly unacceptable in this country. The policies that give rise to Disabled people's deprivation create UNCRPD breaches. We look to you now to end this. Disability poverty in our country is a political choice.

The Labour Party's general election manifesto stated a commitment to **"championing the rights of Disabled people"**. Vicky Foxcroft MP has assured us **that our views and voices will be at the heart of all your government does**. Our members stand ready to support you in making this pledge a reality. The political status quo must change for Disabled people. Our input, ideas and experiences must inform and shape government policy in this new political era.

Our principal recommendations are summarised below:

- The previous government falsified the reality of this country's punitive and inadequate welfare system with its claims of ["sick-note culture"](#). The Labour government must act to ensure necessary DWP, and welfare reforms are expedited, and informed by disabled expertise, compassion and Labour's commitment to honour UNCRPD. The previous government's PIP reforms consultation must be scrapped. We need to see immediate action to uplift what are the lowest benefit rates in Europe, to ensure Disabled people can afford the essentials.
- We welcome Labour's Warm Homes Plan manifesto pledge, and its guarantee of grants and low-interest loans to support investment in insulation and other improvements to cut bills, such as solar panels, batteries and low carbon heating. Disabled people often live in unsuitable housing. Energy bills can be unaffordable due to poorly insulated homes, or because we require higher than average energy use to maintain our body temperature, or for running and charging essential equipment. We need the new government to announce a consultation on an energy social tariff. We need action from central government to lift Disabled people out of fuel poverty before the start of this winter.
- The Conservative government ended cost-of-living welfare payments – yet the cost-of-living crisis continued. They were forced to announce the extension of the Household Support Fund, but without government action this will end in September. We urge you to acknowledge the need for the HSF to continue. The DPCG have concerns over its discretionary nature and the lack of pathways to challenge decisions on applications, but on balance HSF is a vital means of emergency local support for Disabled and financially vulnerable households. We ask for a guarantee it will continue, with a continuation of the statutory requirement for local authorities to record data on the allocation to disabled individuals and households.
- The DPCG are at the forefront of campaigning for justice for carers overpaid by the DWP and facing punitive debt recovery actions. We thank the former MP for Wirral West, Margaret Greenwood, for her work to bring this to national attention. The overpayments commonly result from DWP administrative failures, with errors in claims not being spotted quickly enough due to system errors and staff shortages. Carers want justice and the country stands with them. We call on you to announce an immediate debt amnesty for overpaid carers allowance recipients, and to meet the growing calls for an increase in carers allowance to redress the injustice of historically low payment rates.



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- We are seeking clarification on the ways in which the Labour government will act to honour its commitment to UNCRPD in respect to the Care Act and the statutory guidance on adult social care charging. We ask the Department of Health and Social Care to mandate local authorities to collect data on care package reduction and withdrawal, so that a national dataset can be built and analysed to inform the government's national policies on care charging. Local government must receive from central government the funding it needs to design and deliver rights-based social care, drawing on the co-produced best practice model for home care at Hammersmith and Fulham Council, developed by disabled residents in partnership with Cllr Stephen Cowan and your newly elected colleague, Ben Coleman MP. We are calling for the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care to commission a national impact assessment on the effects of social care charging and associated debt recovery on the health and wellbeing of disabled people with statutory care and support needs. We need to see all local authorities end the use of external civil enforcement agents to collect care charge arrears. We will continue to build the case for all benefit income to be exempt from social care charges, on the path to universal provision of social care on NHS terms.
- Debt advice is in crisis. Disabled people need central and local government to invest in a national network of fully accessible, disability-informed, local, uncharged independent debt advice.

These first steps will create a foundation for your legacy as Prime Minister. They will signal your clear commitment to Human Rights, our UNCRPD obligations and justice for disabled members of society.

Let us work in partnership to bring into being a radical, right-based mission to dismantle decades of disablist policies and systemic oppression and injustice, drawing on the [Disabled People's Manifesto](#).

We await your early response.

Yours Faithfully,

On behalf of The Disability Poverty Campaign Group:

Dan White (Co-lead for Disability Rights UK)
Helen Rowlands (Co-lead for Inclusion London)