

HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Our ref: Domb1131

12 January 2011

Dear Mr Domb,

Thank you for contacting me about EDM 1231 on the matter of the closure of the Independent Living Fund, and Disability Living Allowance (DLA). Unfortunately, as Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, I am unable to sign EDMs. I shall set out my views on DLA below, however.

I believe that the Government owe a duty to disabled people to promote their independence and equality and I also believe that it has a duty to ensure that it has the right governance in place to deliver this support efficiently and sensibly.

The Government is already undertaking large-scale reform of the welfare system, for example the Universal Credit and its flagship Work programme. These welfare reforms are designed to protect people in the most vulnerable situations, including disabled people. The Government has made clear that it is steadfast in its support for the principles of DLA, as a non-means-tested cash benefit contributing to the extra costs incurred by disabled people.

However, DLA is currently a poorly targeted and unsustainable benefit. Almost three million people receive this benefit at a forecast cost of £12 billion per year. We now have a disability benefit which is confusing for individuals to understand, based on unclear criteria and often results in inconsistent awards, and since 1992, both the case load and the cost of DLA have grown to a level that is unsustainable. Changes to DLA are long overdue and must address questions of fairness and value, while supporting disabled people to lead independent lives. We must ensure DLA better reflects the needs of disabled people today, rather than in the 1990s, and that it enables support to be targeted to those with the greatest need.

As you know, the Government wants to bring disability benefits into the 21st century by replacing DLA with a new Personal Independence Payment. This is an opportunity to improve the support for disabled people and enable them to lead full, active and independent lives. The Personal Independence Payment will maintain the key principles of DLA, but it will be delivered in a fairer, more consistent and sustainable manner. It is only right that support should be targeted at those disabled people who face the greatest challenges to leading independent lives and this reform is required to enable that, along with a clearer assessment process.



The Government has launched a formal public consultation on DLA and wants the views of disabled people to be fully reflected in any change it makes to DLA and has asked disabled people and their organisations to join the debate on reforming DLA. You may wish to make your views known and you can contribute to the Consultation by visiting the website: <http://dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2010/dla-reform.shtml>

I want to assure you that those who are genuinely sick, disabled or retired have nothing to fear. This Government does not regard caring for the needy as a burden, but as a proud duty.

I hope that this reassures you and thank you again for taking the time to contact me on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Greg Hands MP
Member of Parliament for Chelsea and Fulham