



Department for
Work & Pensions

The Rt Hon Mel Stride MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
4th Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9DA

Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms MP
Chair of the Work and Pensions Select Committee
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

15th March 2023

Dear Stephen,

PUBLICATION OF THE *HEALTH AND DISABILITY WHITE PAPER*

I am writing to inform you of the publication today of *Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper*.

This White Paper is a significant milestone demonstrating this Government's commitment to ensuring disabled people and people with health conditions can lead independent lives and fulfil their potential. It sets out an ambitious policy reform package that will transform the health and disability benefits system and help disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work. This will help to deliver the Prime Minister's priority of growing the economy, creating better-paid jobs and opportunity right across the country.

Responding to the Green Paper

We set out our case for reform in *Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper*, published in July 2021. During the consultation, we heard from more than 4,500 people and organisations on which proposals we should take forward. From the responses, we know many disabled people want to work and could work, with the right support. Our White Paper responds to those views.

Disability Employment

We are proud of our record on disability employment and support. Last year, we surpassed our 2017 manifesto goal to see one million more disabled people in work – delivering our manifesto commitment five years earlier than expected. Our ambition remains to close the disability employment gap, and I will set a new disability employment goal.

The White Paper reforms

The measures set out in this White Paper will build upon our achievements, unlock new opportunities, and support people most in need. With low unemployment and more than a million vacancies, we are focused on ensuring more people are

supported into the workforce so that they can seize the opportunities of work and employers can access the skills they need to grow their businesses.

We know that the current health and disability benefits system can be a barrier to employment because it focuses on what people cannot do, instead of what they can do, and can incentivise people to become economically inactive rather than join the labour market. We also know how important it is that our health assessments treat people with respect and that they work efficiently.

We will deliver action in these areas in three ways:

1. Transforming the future benefits system

We will transform the future benefits system so it focuses on what people can do, rather than on what they cannot, including removing the Work Capability Assessment. This will ensure that those who are able to, can work, without the worry of being reassessed and losing their benefits. In our new system, there will be no need to be found to have limited capability for work, or limited capability for work-related activity, to receive additional income-related support for a disability or health condition. We will introduce a new Universal Credit health element that people receiving both Personal Independence Payment and Universal Credit will be entitled to, which will enable people to try work without the fear of losing their benefits. We will also introduce a new personalised approach to employment support and engagement, with the aim of helping people to reach their potential and live a more independent life. We will give people confidence that they will receive support, for as long as it is needed, regardless of whether they are working.

2. Helping disabled people and people with health conditions to start, stay and succeed in work

We will invest in our employment offer to help more disabled people and people with health conditions start, stay and succeed in work and contribute to a growing economy. Our research shows that 20% of people with limited capability for work-related activity on Universal Credit, or who are in the Employment and Support Allowance Support Group, would like to work at some point in the future. We are therefore investing in additional work coach time and tailored support to help disabled people to get the support they need to start work. We will continue to work with employers and the occupational health sector to help more people remain in work and reduce health-related job loss.

3. Improving our services to support our customers

We will ensure people can access the right support at the right time and have a better overall experience when applying for and receiving health and disability benefits. We are doing this by testing new initiatives to make it easier to apply for and receive health and disability benefits. This includes extending the Enhanced Support Service, which offers support for those who find it hardest to navigate the benefits system. We are also testing a Severe Disability Group which means people with the most severe health conditions can benefit from a simplified process without needing to complete a detailed application form or go through an assessment.

Timing of reform

Our benefit reform proposals will take time to implement. They will require primary legislation, which we would aim to take forward in the next Parliament. These reforms would then be rolled out, for new claims only, on a staged, geographical basis from no earlier than 2026/27. We would expect the new claims roll-out to be completed within three years (so by 2029 at the earliest), when we would then begin to move the existing caseload on to the new system. It is important that we take our time to get this right.

We will ensure that no one experiences financial loss at the point at which reforms are enacted. When these changes do come into effect, people who receive the Universal Credit limited capability for work-related activity element, who are not also in receipt of Personal Independence Payment at the point that they move to the new system and whose circumstances remain unchanged, will receive transitional protection.

Next steps

This publication is just the beginning. Throughout and beyond the work of this White Paper, we will continue to listen to, and work with, disabled people, organisations, charities, and experts, to ensure the voices of disabled people remain at the heart of delivering action. The changes we are proposing will help people to lead more independent lives, be more resilient to changes in the cost of living and be able to share in, contribute to, and benefit from, our drive for economic growth.

I am certain that our White Paper reforms will support more people to reach their full potential and reap the health and wellbeing advantages of work.

With best wishes,



THE RT HON MEL STRIDE MP
SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WORK AND PENSIONS