



Merton Centre for Independent Living
Vestry Hall
336 London Road
Mitcham
CR4 3UD

31st July 2024

Dear Siobhain McDonagh,

'Modernising Support for Independent Living' Green Paper

Merton Centre for Independent Living (Merton CIL) is a Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation (DDPO) in the London Borough of Merton. Our Information and Advice Service supports Deaf and Disabled people, and people with long-term health issues, in a variety of ways. Our work is underpinned by the aim of increasing independence and inclusion.

Amongst the range of welfare benefits, our understanding of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is especially strong. We have helped many service users to navigate not only the application process and award reviews, but also challenges to the Department for Work of Pensions (DWP) in the form of the Mandatory Reconsideration process and first-tier tribunals.

As I am sure you are aware, April saw the DWP launch a consultation off the back of a Green Paper called 'Modernising Support for Independent Living'. It stated that the then government was worried about the increasing number of people claiming PIP. It highlighted the growing cost of providing PIP. And it contained several suggestions as to how PIP could be changed.

A number of people have contacted us to express their anxiety about these suggestions, as the Green Paper contains some deeply worrying proposals concerning the assessment process and eligibility criteria for PIP, and the type of support provided by PIP. There is a fear that it will become even more complicated to claim PIP, resulting in fewer people receiving the support that they need. Moreover, the idea that cash payments could be replaced by either vouchers, access to a shop/catalogue, access to certain types of treatment/support, or a receipt-based system, is causing great consternation, as this would severely compromise people's choice and control over how they live their lives, essentially removing the 'Independence' part of 'Personal Independence Payment'!

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We were hoping that the Labour government would simply scrap the consultation before the deadline on 22 July. However, they have chosen not to do so – hence this letter.

We ask you to read our response to the DWP's consultation and use your platform as an MP to ensure that any review of PIP that takes place is focused on improving the application process and helping Disabled people to live independently.

We would be happy to meet with you in person/online or have a phone call to answer any questions that you have and/or discuss the matter at hand. Please contact our Policy and Campaigns Manager, Pippa Maslin, to set this up. Her email address is pippa@mertoncil.org.uk and her phone number is 07884 232391.

Thank you, in advance, for your help. We wish you a good summer recess, and look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Merton Centre for Independent Living