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UK Government Pathways to Work Green Paper: Summary of views from people with lived experience and expertise, provided to the Welsh Government

Welfare Reforms in Wales – Impact on Disabled People

We have listened to Disabled People in Wales, who have told us of their many concerns about Welfare Reform proposals.

- **Health and Wellbeing**

Disabled people, other stakeholders and organisations have raised significant concerns that cuts to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) would reduce access to crucial treatments and support systems, worsening emotional, physical, and mental health, and increasing the risk of depression, self-harm, and suicide.

Some disabled people have said they use PIP to purchase additional medication and therapies, such as counselling and physiotherapy, which supports their health. Others told us they use PIP to support their day-to-day well-being, such as having groceries delivered to their home, support with additional heating needs, and assistance with cleaning, or for aids and adaptations.

These purchases would no longer be affordable without PIP, leading to a deterioration in their health, wellbeing, and employment status. Additionally, we heard from disabled people who under current proposals would lose entitlement to PIP support despite having long-term, complex, and intersecting health conditions.

- **Employment**

Disabled people, other stakeholders and organisations have highlighted that PIP is crucial in helping disabled people to find and stay in work. The higher costs of life administration for disabled people, such as employing a personal assistant or having to take taxis to manage equipment is supported, in part, by PIP.

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Delays with the Access to Work application process have been reported, with applications sometimes taking many months and twice as long as stipulated. Lengthy delays have impacted on both the employer and the employee, leading to the risk of losing an employment position.

Additionally, delays in payments to support workers by Access to Work have been reported, resulting in the loss of skilled and experienced support for disabled people. These departures negatively impact disabled people, having to establish new relationships, explain their circumstances, causing frustration and anxiety.

People with learning disabilities, as well as those with intersecting impairments such as deaf/blind people, have reported experiencing enduring challenges in accessing work already. Deaf BSL signers, hard-of-hearing people, and blind and partially sighted people report to already facing significant barriers to employment. PIP provides essential support for disabled people, including access to transport, counselling, and other therapies, which are vital for accessing and maintaining employment.

Financial instability has been a strong theme in Welfare Reform discussions where stakeholders have expressed fears of being unable to afford essential bills such as rent, food, heating, and transport, and having to resort to selling personal items and deplete any savings to pay bills. The impact would not only be on claimants but would extend to their wider families.

- **Housing**

Maintaining accommodation was also highlighted as a concern, with stakeholders reporting barely surviving on current incomes. Cuts would worsen their situation, potentially leading to homelessness. The increased cost of living has already impacted disabled people, more cuts would leave people at risk of losing tenancies. Some people highlighted

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particular rental conditions which need to be satisfied, such as garden maintenance and decoration, which are maintained through use of PIP.

- **Discrimination and Hate Crime**

Disabled people felt that some parts of Wales would be disproportionately and unfairly impacted by welfare reforms and were concerned about an increase in discrimination and disability hate crime due to the messages conveyed in the UK Government's welfare reform narrative.

- **Survey**

A survey conducted by a Disabled People's Organisation in Wales indicated that feelings associated with welfare reform included anger, anxiety, terror, worry, fear, suicidal thoughts, and a sense of being a burden.

- **Consultation**

Disabled people in Wales report a lack of proper consultation and engagement on Welfare reforms, which will disproportionately impact them in every area of their daily living.