
SPECIAL MOTION NO. 5 – CALL FOR A SEA-CHANGE IN THE GOVERNMENT’S TREATMENT OF DISABLED PEOPLE

Standing in the names of:

- (i) Councillor Patricia Quigley
- (ii) Councillor Ben Coleman

This Council supports the Labour administration’s aspiration for Hammersmith & Fulham to be the most inclusive borough in the country.

The Council welcomes the Labour administration’s commitment to continuing to provide free home care and reduced prices for meals on wheels - a commitment matched by no other council.

The Council welcomes the report of Hammersmith & Fulham’s Independent Disabled People’s Commission and supports the administration’s commitment to the full implementation of the report’s recommendations - despite severe cuts in government funding. Those recommendations include:

Taking a human rights approach to policy and services, using the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as the framework for change.

Working in co-production with Disabled residents on the development, implementation and monitoring of policy.

The Council notes that:

- The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has identified the British government as failing to uphold disabled people’s human rights.
- Government estimates released in February 2019 suggests that as many as 210,000 disabled people were underpaid Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) over several years of government miscalculations. The DWP announced it had made the blunder in 2017.
- DWP Officials found some disabled people transferring to ESA from incapacity benefit during 2011 and 2014 were put on the wrong system for assessing their new payments, leaving 70,000 disabled people out of pocket.
- In 2018, the DWP announced 180,000 disabled people were owed an ESA payment, leaving those owed the payment during those three years short of cash.

- The government has now placed the figure closer to 210,000 disabled people - and will be investigating 540,000 cases in total.
- Disabled people are now required to complete a 45-page form to win back their ESA benefit due to this government's blunder.
- The government has revealed that thousands of claimants have died before they could receive the repayment.
- The Department for Work and Pensions has confirmed that more than 4,500 disabled people were wrongly stripped of their Personal Independence Payment in the switch from the previous Disability Living Allowance.
- The government has confirmed that almost 100,000 disabled people were forced last year to wait longer than two weeks for their benefit payments.
- The Ministry of Justice has confirmed that nearly three-quarters of PIP assessments by the private firms to which the government has wholly outsourced this task are now being overturned.
- The suggested financial estimate for the blunder by the DWP is £920 million in back payments. That is not including the monies paid to the private companies for carrying out checks on disabled people.

The government's approach to Disabled people has evidently created a cruel and hostile environment and caused Disabled people unnecessary stress, anxiety, depression and loss of independence.

This Council therefore calls on the government to change radically its approach to Disabled people and for all councillors to lobby the government to adopt the recommendations of Hammersmith & Fulham's Independent Disabled People's Commission.