

[Via email]

Dear Chair and Clerk of the Equality and Social Justice Committee,

As Chair of the Senedd's Cross-Party Group on Disability, I write in support of Disability Wales' attached letter sent to you, requesting that the Committee considers launching an urgent inquiry into the impact of the proposed welfare cuts on disabled people in Wales outlined in the UK Government's Pathways to Work green paper.

I would therefore be grateful if you could give this your attention and copy me on your response accordingly.

Thank you.

Regards

Mark
Chair, Cross-Party Group on Disability

Mark Isherwood MS Member of the Welsh Parliament for North Wales Welsh Conservative Party	Mark Isherwood AS Aelod Senedd Cymru dros Gogledd Cymru Plaid Geidwadol Cymru	
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[Attachment]

Dear Chair and Members of the Equality and Social Justice Committee,

On behalf of Disability Wales, we are writing to request that the Committee considers launching an urgent inquiry into the impact of the proposed welfare cuts on disabled people in Wales outlined in the UK Government's *Pathways to Work* green paper.

There are 275,000 people in receipt of PIP in Wales representing 11% of the working age population, compared with 7% in England. Furthermore 100,000 people in Wales receive the LWRCA element of Universal Credit. Therefore the proposed cuts will disproportionately affect disabled people as well as Carers and wider communities in Wales and pose a significant threat to their human rights and wellbeing. We are deeply disappointed that given the dire consequences for Wales, this was not adequately addressed either in the Impact Assessment published by the UK Government or the subsequent letter from the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions to the First Minister.

As you will know from your committee's recent Inquiry into the Disability Employment Gap there are persistent structural barriers facing disabled people in the job market which raises concerns about whether these cuts will make any material difference to their employment prospects. A lack of flexible working hours, limited remote opportunities, insufficient employer awareness, a mistrust in DWP and job centres, and long delays in Access to Work support all contribute to an inaccessible employment landscape. This is particularly the case for those with fluctuating or complex conditions, for whom traditional 9–5 roles are not viable. We must also be aware that half of the disabled population are already in work, for those who receive PIP, if they are no longer eligible for it, these proposals could hinder their ability to sustain work.

Until the labour market is meaningfully reformed to become inclusive of disabled people's needs alongside addressing other structural barriers in education, housing and transport, imposing further benefit cuts is not only ineffective but deeply unjust. As you know the Welsh Government's draft Disabled People's Action Plan is aimed at tackling these systemic barriers but could be seriously undermined if thousands of disabled people are pushed further into poverty.

We urge the Committee to launch an urgent inquiry to explore:

- the evidence of the impacts of welfare changes on poverty and employment in Wales;
- the experience of disabled people in Wales of the current welfare system and their views on the impacts the changes could have on them; and
- the potential impacts of the welfare changes on Welsh Government's policies and plans to tackle poverty and inequality among disabled people
- the feasibility of devolving responsibility for the policy and delivery of benefits such as PIP to Wales

Disability Wales and our members would be happy to provide further information or appear before the Committee, should that be helpful.

Yours sincerely,
Disability Wales