

# Position paper: Welfare Reform

This document provides an overview of the changes to the welfare system in the UK over the last six years, The Brain Tumour Charity's views on the impact on people affected by a brain tumour, and what we are doing to address the issues raised.

## *What is welfare reform?*

Since 2010, Conservative-led Governments at Westminster have made substantial reforms to the welfare system in the UK. When introduced, the Government said that these reforms are aimed at simplifying existing benefits, supporting the most vulnerable to lead independent lives and reducing spending so that the system is placed on a more sustainable footing.

The Welfare Reform Act 2012 sets out a number of changes to existing incapacity benefits. Among other changes, this legislation included measures to reform the [Employment and Support Allowance \(ESA\)](#), and announced the phasing out of the Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and its replacement with [Personal Independence Payments \(PIP\)](#).

The Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 proposed further changes to the eligibility criteria for a number of benefits, including the removal of the work-related activity component in Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and the limited capability for work element in [Universal Credit](#).

## *The Brain Tumour Charity's View*

Many people affected by brain tumours face disabilities that have an impact on their ability to work and function, and require additional support as a result of their condition.

Our [Losing Myself: The Reality of Life with a Brain Tumour](#) report found that 28% of those personally affected have had to give up work completely, and 1 in 2 experience financial difficulty.

Of those who said their working life or that of their partner had been affected by their brain tumour, 43% said they had to give up work entirely and a further 22% said they had reduced their working hours. (1)

In addition, respondents highlighted the impact of their tumour on their mobility and cognitive function, with 38% suffering from balance problems, 28% having visual problems and 1 in 4 experiencing seizures. All of these symptoms can have a significant impact on the ability of people to carry out the functions required in the workplace.

Examples of the financial support from the Government accessed by people affected by a brain tumour include Personal Independence Payments, the Attendance Allowance and the Employment and Support Allowance.

Over the last three years, The Brain Tumour Charity has expressed concerns about the assessment criteria used for Personal Independence Payments, and their impact on people affected by a brain tumour.

In 2014, we submitted a consultation response to the Independent Review on the Personal Independence Payment Assessment. As part of this response, we highlighted the issues raised by many

of our supporters about the amount of time it took for decisions to be made, and the need for a carer/advocate to be present during assessment.

We also called for brain tumours to be included in the list of health conditions listed as requiring additional support through PIP, because of the level of cognitive impairment that many brain tumour patients face.

Last year, a survey of 1,003 adults carried out for The Brain Tumour Charity by NFP Synergy found that 73% of respondents thought that people living with a disease that affects their mental capacity (for example, brain tumours) should be eligible for Personal Independence Payments. (2)

We are also concerned that contractors who carry out health and disability assessments are not required to employ doctors by the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

A recent Public Accounts Committee inquiry found that many contractors are overly reliant on healthcare practitioners who may lack an understanding of particular conditions, such as nurses and occupational therapists. Only MAXIMUS, with 186 doctors within its workforce of 1,251, recruits doctors to conduct assessments. (3)

We support the Committee's call on the Department, and its contractors to ensure that it has well-qualified healthcare professionals involved with the assessment process. Additionally, we believe that all contractors carrying out assessments should provide training about the symptoms and side effects of rarer cancers like brain tumours.

More recently, we [welcomed](#) the Government's decision to reverse the proposed changes in the 2016 Budget to the daily living component of Personal Independence Payments, which would have seen 370,000 people losing this benefit.

When it comes to in-work benefits, we are concerned that the transition to Universal Credit could see additional requirements being placed on people affected by a brain tumour in order that they can continue to receive tax credits.

In the case of a parent working more than 16 hours a week, Universal Credit could see that individual being placed into the new "in work conditionality" criteria, meaning that they would be expected to spend an additional 17 hours a week either applying for better paid work or jobs with longer hours. At present, the only requirement for people to receive tax credits is to work a minimum of 16 hours a week.

As part of their assessments, Job Centre Plus is required to take account of any limitations that a person would have in working additional hours due to disability or a health condition.

Universal Credit is due to be rolled out in 2017, and we call on Job Centre Plus to give consideration to the particular challenges that brain tumour patients face when it comes to balance work with the limitations of the disease.

### [What is The Brain Tumour Charity doing?](#)

Going forward, we will continue to monitor the implementation of welfare reforms, and will campaign on issues that impact on the ability of people affected by a brain tumour to access financial support.

In partnership with the Citizens Advice Rushmoor, we launched a clinic in April 2016 that provides benefits and financial advice to people affected by a brain tumour.

The clinic operates nationally and is accessible via phone and e-mail, and more information can be found on website [here](#).

Our [website](#) contains information about financial support you can access if you have, or had a brain tumour, the eligibility criteria for particular welfare benefits, and how you can make an application.

In the case of Personal Independence Payments, we have supported the appeals of a number of people affected by a brain tumour against decisions not to award payment.

If you have any further questions about accessing support, you can contact our Support and Information Line on **0808 800 0004**.

### References

1. The Brain Tumour Charity. Losing Myself: The reality of life with a Brain Tumour [Internet]. 2015. Available from: <https://www.thebraintumourcharity.org/about-us/our-publications/losing-myself-reality-life-brain-tumour/>
2. nfpSynergy. Charity Awareness Monitor: The Brain Tumour Charity Report. 2015 Q3.
3. House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts. Contracted out health and disability assessments [Internet]. 2016 Mar. (Thirty-third Report of Session 2015-16). Available from: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmpubacc/727/727.pdf>