

Scotland is getting new social security powers including powers over disability benefits

This means we have a chance to make positive changes over the benefits that are being devolved, and tackle a lot of the hardship caused by years of Westminster's Welfare Reforms.

The Scottish Government wants to work with disabled people and our organisations to co-produce a fairer system, founded on Dignity, Respect, Fairness and advancing Equality.



Contribute your voice! Share your experiences and expertise.

GDA members have spoken out as Westminster's welfare cuts hit disabled people harder than any other group in society. From protest marches; to sharing our lived experience to show the impact the cuts have on our lives and our rights: GDA has always spoken out to defend our rights and entitlements.

Now is our chance to help build a fairer system for Scotland.

What do we mean by 'disability benefits'?



The Scottish Government is gaining powers over:

- **DLA – Disability Living Allowance**
Since 1992 DLA has helped disabled people cover the extra costs of living with an impairment or long-term condition. **Westminster is gradually replacing DLA with PIP, for over 16s - also devolved to Scotland.**
- **PIP – Personal Independence Payments**
Changes to criteria, reduced eligibility, no lifetime awards meaning regular reassessments
- **AA – Attendance Allowance** for people aged 65 or over who have personal care needs. This helps cover care costs but unlike DLA/PIP, it has no mobility aspect.

Also being devolved to Scotland:

- **Severe Disablement** – closed to new applicants
- **Industrial injuries disablement benefit**
- **Carers' Allowance** – increasing to same level as JSA
- **Discretionary housing payment**
- **Cold Weather and Winter fuel payments**
- **Some flexibility on Universal Credit** i.e. fortnightly payments, payments direct to social landlords.

All this adds up to only 15% of Scotland's welfare spend.



Other benefits affecting disabled people which are NOT being devolved:

- Universal Credit, replacing:
 - Job seekers Allowance (JSA)
 - Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
 - Working Tax Credits
 - Child Tax Credits
 - Housing Benefit
- State Pension
- Pension Credit
- Child Benefit
- Maternity and Paternity

These will **still be controlled by the UK government.**

We will build a system which works smoothly with this.

Social Security: the vision so far...

The Scottish Government has committed to a system which:

- Is founded on dignity and respect, and tackles stigma
- Listens to and works with the people of Scotland
- Is efficient and always improving
- Creates a fairer society and tackles inequality
- Gives people the best chances and opportunities in life
- Gives people confidence, security, choice and control
- Is person-centred and easy to access
- Helps people participate, aspire, and fulfill their potential
- Works well with other benefits and services, to support people's wellbeing, health and independence in their communities

Social Security is an investment in the people of Scotland

Doing things differently:

The Scottish Government has made these commitments for Scotland:

- ✓ End the degrading DWP approach to assessments
- ✓ No more cuts to disability benefits
- ✓ No more freezes
- ✓ No means testing
- ✓ Maximize uptake – make sure as many people as possible are claiming the benefits they are entitled to

Question 1...

...will ask your views and ideas about these VALUES, and how we can make them a reality

Why disability benefits are an investment for Scotland's future

Disability benefits aim to help cover the extra costs of living with an impairment or condition. Despite this, disabled people are far more likely to be living in poverty – adding to all the other barriers we face to participating, contributing and fulfilling our potential.

- **Half of all households living in poverty** in the UK have a disabled person in them.
- Even where claiming disability benefits there is still **a poverty gap**.
- As well as the additional costs of being disabled, disabled people face **barriers** to education, qualifications and paid work, which also add to the poverty gap.
- Disabled Scots face one of the biggest employment gaps - only **41% of disabled people are employed** compared to 80% of non-disabled people. We know from GDA members that many more than that want to work, but face so many barriers (such as negative attitudes and lack of access and support).
- On top of this, disabled people are **more likely to be isolated**, unable to travel and meet people, and this is known to make your health worse.
- **Sanctions** have hit disabled people unfairly. More than a quarter of people sanctioned in Scotland in 2015 were disabled people. Instead of sanctions, we need **proper support to tackle the barriers we face to finding and keeping work**.

Question 2...

Social Security Process: share your experiences and ideas

Question two in our discussion will ask you to share your experience under the current benefits system, so we can advise the Scottish Government on ways to improve the process in Scotland. **Any experiences you share will be held in total confidence.** The Scottish Government recognizes

many people have negative experiences of the current system.

Any experiences you share will be anonymous, and will only be used to help make a better system for Scotland. It will not be shared with DWP and your input to this consultation will not affect your claims, now or in the future.



Question 3...

Participation and equality for disabled people

Question three of our discussions will ask you to think about **how disability benefits can help you overcome barriers**, participate, fulfil your potential and live the life you want.

Tell us:

- **your ideas** about how disability benefits can help you **achieve your goals**: whether it's work, learning, volunteering, family, having your own home, being part of your community, or anything else you can dream of!
- how the social security system can work best with other services we rely on: housing, health, social care, transport, education, employability and any other services you use.

"Without DLA I would be housebound and isolated – I'm 20 minutes walk from the nearest bus stop – I can't manage that. DLA allows me to get out and volunteer, to have a life!"

Other concerns raised by GDA members so far:

Sanctions have hit disabled people unfairly. **To find and keep work we need support, and culture change – not sanctions!**

ESA and JSA are not being devolved but the **work programme** is - can the Scottish Government do something to stop sanctions or reduce the damage they cause?

What happens in the meantime?

Westminster is moving people off DLA and many are being refused PIP as criteria are reduced. For every Scot found 'ineligible' under Westminster's system, Scotland loses that money from our future system.

- Can we halt PIP assessments in Scotland?
- Can we increase the PIP rate?
- Can the Scottish Government mitigate the losses people are facing under the current, unfair, target-driven system?
- Will those who lose PIP under Westminster's regime be reassessed under Scotland's new fairer system?

GDA is supporting members to share their views, experiences and expertise through events and discussion forums.

This will help the Scottish Government build the best possible system for Social Security in Scotland.

This briefing focuses on topics which we know affect the majority of our members (disability benefits).

To take part in future discussions about our Social Security system, **please contact GDA.**

To share your views on any of the other devolved benefits, you can see the full consultation document, or a summary version, online at

consult.scotland.gov.uk/social-security/social-security-in-scotland

You can also request Easyread, Braille, BSL or other languages at 0131 244 7763 or emailing socialsecurityconsultation@gov.scot

The consultation closes on 29th October 2016.

If you need further support to participate, contact GDA on 0141 556 7103.