

Mike Amesbury MP  
100 River Walk Shopping City  
Runcorn  
WA7 2BX

18 May 2022

Dear Mike,

We are Disability Positive. We are a disabled people's organisation based in Cheshire. We provide services, opportunities, and a voice to people with lived experience of disability and long-term health conditions.

I am writing to ask you to help disabled people survive the cost-of-living crisis. Please would you write to the Chancellor to ask him to take the following urgent actions:

- An emergency uprating of benefits to at least match inflation, bringing the 2022 increase to 8% or higher. The uprating must apply to legacy benefits as well as Universal Credit, to ensure Disabled people are not disadvantaged.
- Amend the changes to the eligibility criteria for the Warm Home Discount, to retain support for Disabled people's higher energy usage needs.
- Provide additional targeted support for all Disabled people with high energy usage needs, regardless of immigration status.
- Remove the requirement to pay back the £200 repayable 'discount' (loan) proposed as part of the Energy Bill Support Scheme.



Sension House, Denton Dr,  
Northwich CW9 7LU

01606 331853

[www.disabilitypositive.org](http://www.disabilitypositive.org)  
[info@disabilitypositive.org](mailto:info@disabilitypositive.org)



Charity No: 1091744 / Company No: 4050994

VAT No: 182762291



Half of all people in poverty are either disabled themselves or have a disabled person in their household.<sup>1</sup> In early 2020, 62% of people using Trussell Trust food banks were Disabled.<sup>2</sup> 60% of people asking Citizens Advice for help with fuel bills in the 12 months to February 2022 were disabled.<sup>3</sup> Many disabled people have to

pay towards the care they need in their own homes, and charges are rapidly increasing.<sup>4</sup> Family carers are impoverished, because they receive little or no pay.<sup>5</sup>

We have heard from many of your constituents about the issues they face in respect of this. One example is James(not his real name). James receives a direct payment for his social care and is financially assessed as required to pay a contribution to his care. His only income is benefits. This year his assessed contribution has gone up by £137.54 per week. This represents an increase of 21%, whilst his income from benefits has gone up by only 3%.

As you can appreciate, this type of situation leaves people like James in a situation where they simply cannot afford to live well.

Now, the Bank of England is forecasting inflation of 8 per cent or higher this year. Energy bills have already increased by 54% in April and will increase again in October. Petrol costs hit an all-time high in March. Meanwhile, this year, benefits increased by just 3.1%. With inflation so much higher, this is a pay cut for millions of the poorest people in the UK and their children.

We are facing the biggest fall in the value of benefits for 50 years.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://socialmetricscommission.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Measuring-Poverty-2020-Web.pdf> Following the Social Model of disability, a 'Disabled person' is someone of any age living with a physical, sensory, or cognitive impairment, a long-term health condition, or mental distress, who faces socially created disabling barriers.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2021/06/28/the-state-of-hunger-its-not-right-that-disabled-people-are-being-forced-to-turn-to-food-banks/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/3430/pdf/>

<sup>4</sup> 54% of respondents to a survey by Social Care Future reported increased care charges during the pandemic, see <https://www.communitycare.co.uk/2021/04/13/social-care-cuts-increased-charges-causing-huge-distress-disabled-people/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://carers.org/downloads/resources-pdfs/pushed-to-the-edge.pdf>, <https://news.sky.com/story/more-than-a-million-unpaid-carers-in-uk-living-below-the-poverty-line-research-finds-12499079>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/main-out-work-benefit-sees-its-biggest-drop-value-fifty-years>



The increase in energy costs affects disabled people particularly badly because our energy costs are higher.<sup>7</sup> To ensure our health, mobility, and in some cases our survival, we must pay for increased heating and electricity for wheelchairs, lifts, hoists, and medical equipment such as ventilators, feeding pumps, and dialysis machines. With public transport inaccessible to many disabled people, higher petrol costs also pose a particular problem.

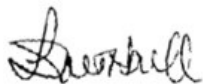
None of the government measures announced in response to the energy crisis are targeted or ringfenced for disabled people. Instead, the government is removing the only current support for disabled people's higher energy needs, by changing the eligibility criteria for the Warm Home Discount.

As a result, 290,000 people who receive the disability benefits PIP, DLA, and AA, will no longer be eligible. Instead of helping us, the government is actively reducing our support.

For over a decade, many older and disabled people have been forced to choose between heating their homes or putting food on the table. The situation is now even more dangerous, as many of us cannot afford to run life sustaining equipment such as ventilators and dialysis machines,<sup>8</sup> as well as being cold and hungry.

Thank you for your help and support in this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,



Lynne Turnbull  
Chief Executive  
Disability Positive

<sup>7</sup> See Scope's 'Out in the Cold' report <https://www.scope.org.uk/campaigns/extra-costs/out-in-the-cold/> and modelling by the New Economics Foundation, which shows Disabled people's bills will increase 23% more than the average due to the energy price cap increase: <https://neweconomics.org/2022/03/cold-homes-this-april>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-60820705>.

