

**April 2025**

**The Rt Hon Liz Kendall MP**
Minister for the Department for Work and Pensions
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London SW1H 9NA

Dear Liz Kendall,

**RE: Human Rights Failures Green Paper ‘Pathways to Work’ Consultation**

We are writing to you on behalf of the DPO Forum England, which represents a broad network of disabled people’s organisations across the country, with organisations which support our goals and aims as co-signatories to this letter.

The forum has previously written to you and your colleagues in January to express our significant concerns about cuts to disability benefits and the potential impacts these changes could have on disabled people’s lives. This letter continues in this vein, and we stand by our previous correspondence. **We believe that these cuts are incredibly dangerous for Disabled people.**

We are writing to underline our serious concerns with the human rights implications of the ‘Pathways to Work’ Consultation. In short, the consultation is essentially a sham – it removes our rights as Disabled people to take part in civic society.

**Three key areas of human rights violations**

There are three main concerns that we have collectively identified in the consultation launched **on the 18th of March 2025**, which continue the worrying pattern of limiting the human right to participation and ignoring good practice principles set out in the cabinet office guidance and in the Gunning principles (the legal principles guiding consultation). [[1]](#footnote-0)[[2]](#footnote-1)

1. **Limitation on the extent to which some changes are within scope for the consultation.**

The Green paper includes a total of 22 policy changes which will impact millions of people's lives. It is estimated that the totality of the changes will lead to over 400,000 people being forced into poverty, and disproportionately affecting women/disabled single mothers and children. Yet of these 22 changes, only 11 are being consulted on via the Pathways to Work Green paper.

The annex of the green paper makes clear **that arguably the most significant changes proposed have already been decided upon**; these changes include:

1. Ending the Work Capability Assessment (WCA).
2. Creating a single assessment for the Personal Independence Payment and the Universal Credit health element.
3. Freezing the value of the health element of UC until 2029/30.
4. Harsh changes to the PIP daily living assessment criteria scoring.
5. Restarting WCA reassessments until the WCA is scrapped.

These unconsulted on changes have been estimated to reduce the number of people getting PIP daily living by 1.5 million, with an average loss of almost £4,500 a year, with 2.25m current recipients of UC Health losing £500 per year, and 730,000 future recipients of UC health losing on average £3,000 per year.

This contradicts Gunning Principle 1, which states that proposals must still be at the formative stage when consulted upon. Yet it appears that these decisions have already been made or predetermined by the decision maker. Furthermore, this decision completely undermines Disabled people's rights to participate in decisions affecting our lives, with the government likely to swiftly bring a bill to the house, with the whipping process for MPs removing Disabled people's right to engage their local representatives.

In January 2025, the High Court found that a Conservative consultation on changes to the work capability assessment (WCA) was unlawful as the DWP had failed to explain the proposals adequately. *We note the striking similarities to this process in the green paper with serious concerns.*

1. **Failure to quickly publish easy read and other accessible version of the proposals in the green paper.**

*We believe this contradicts Gunning principle 2 – 'There is sufficient information for 'intelligent consultation.*  The Government should have published accessible versions of the Green Paper on 18 March, when the standard print version was issued, in line with the requirements of the Equality Act. Instead it waited till the start of April. The Green Paper primarily affects Disabled people, so denying tens of thousands of us the opportunity to read it, at the same time as everyone else, is totally unacceptable.

Although the government has said it intends to increase the 12-week timescale following the publication of accessible versions of the proposals, people with accessible information needs (highly likely to be disproportionately impacted by them) have been excluded from public debate and left with fears about their future.

Furthermore, it is unclear if the supplementary documents (impact assessment, equalities assessment) required to accurately respond to the green paper, due to the leading nature of the green paper's lines of questioning, will be provided, further excluding those of us who require accessible formats.

We ask that, in the context of the lack of accessible versions of the paper and limitations on the scope of changes being consulted upon, *what does the government intend to do to ensure that the gunning principles are better applied in this consultation?*

1. **Failure to publish adequate impact assessments alongside proposals**

In February 2025, the UN Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Right's concluding observations specifically called for the UK Government “To assess the impact of the welfare reforms introduced since 2010 on the most disadvantaged groups and to take corrective measures, including reversing such policies as the two-child limit, the benefit cap and the five-week delay for the first Universal Credit payment”

The government instead has chosen to publish a green paper setting out further austerity measures that limit the access to the right to social security of the most disadvantaged groups and to do so without a comprehensive impact assessment on the equality and human rights impact (including for the rights contained in the Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights). We are also concerned that the Office for Budget Responsibility and the DWP have been unable to produce assessments for the so called “positive impacts” of the proposed cuts. It is therefore impossible for anyone to make a considered response to the green paper, as its impacts have not been shared by the government.[[3]](#footnote-2)

We believe that this is contrary to the Gunning Principle 2: ‘There is sufficient information for ‘intelligent consultation’, in that the necessary information is not available to ensure that people (and indeed parliamentarians) can consider and give an informed decision, have already been made or predetermined by the decision maker. Furthermore, as previously noted, we are concerned that these documents will not be provided in accessible formats.

**What must the government do?**

1. Withdraw the consultation until sufficient information is given to allow for intelligent consideration.
2. Ensure that all proposals are open to consultation and public scrutiny, and reissue consultation questions which cover all policy proposals within the paper (not just those that DWP have chosen to include).
3. Commit to producing accessible formats for all relevant green paper documents, including impact assessments.

We trust you will consider the urgent concerns raised in this letter and look forward to your response. We hope that the government’s public commitments to human rights and your manifesto commitment of *“championing the rights of disabled people and to the principle of working with them, so that their views and voices will be at the heart of all we do”* steer you toward the right decision on this green paper.

Yours sincerely,

DISABILITY RIGHTS UK

GREATER MANCHESTER COALITION OF DISABLED PEOPLE

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

WECIL (WEST OF ENGLAND CENTRE FOR INCLUSIVE LIVING)

EQUAL LIVES

INCLUSION LONDON

DISABILITY POSITIVE

WINVISIBLE (WOMEN WITH VISIBLE & INVISIBLE DISABILITIES)

ACTION DISABILITY KENSINGTON AND CHELSEA

GREENWICH DPAC

WELL ADAPT

CHOICES AND RIGHTS (HULL AND THE EAST RIDING)

ROFA STEERING GROUP

MANCHESTER DISABLED PEOPLE AGAINST CUTS

ACTION ON DISABILITY

REAL

ALLFIE (ALLIANCE FOR INCLUSIVE EDUCATION)

DISABILITY NORTH

BROMLEY EXPERTS BY EXPERIENCE

DISABILITY CORNWALL

COALITION AGAINST BENEFIT CUTS

SPECTRUM

1. Cabinet Office, [Consultation Principles Guidance,](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance) 2018 [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. <https://www.local.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/The%20Gunning%20Principles.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. https://obr.uk/efo/economic-and-fiscal-outlook-march-2025/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)