

4 Use Scottish Social Security powers to help reduce the number of disabled people living in poverty.

What disabled people's lived experience tells us:

- “Have an application for PIP in that is not seeming to progress... I've read they are pushing these aside to prioritise new claims (to Universal Credit) which will leave me with no money for food after bills are paid.”
- “Disabled people already face additional daily living costs, but these have gone up even more due to things like having to pay for online deliveries for essentials and PPE and cleaning materials for our carers.”
- “There was a 40% reduction in claims for Personal Independence Payment during the first month of Covid-19 lockdown.”

What disabled people want:

- The Scottish Government to use devolved powers to top-up social security payments, similar to the child payment, for families with one or more disabled parent or disabled child.
- Child poverty reduced by increasing funding for the Scottish Welfare Fund and assisting families in priority groups, including families with disabled children.
- Campaigns to ensure everyone who should be in receipt of the new Scottish Disability Payments, Children's Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance is getting it.

Research and analysis by the disability charity Scope shows that on average disabled people across the UK face additional costs related to their impairment, or condition, of £583 a month. The costs vary geographically and in Scotland a disabled person faces additional costs that are about 10% higher than the UK average (of £641 a month).

Disabled people in Scotland are more likely to be living in poverty. 24% of families with a disabled member in Scotland live in relative poverty, compared to 17% of families with no disabled members. After excluding disability related benefits from household income, the relative poverty rate after housing costs in 2015-18 was 30% among households with a disabled member, compared to 16% among those without a disabled member.

Analysis by the TUC showed that disabled people in the UK on average earn 15.5% less than non-disabled people, which equates to £1.65 an hour or £3,003 less a year. In Scotland, the pay gap is 12.4%. For disabled women, the average pay gap compared to non-disabled men is 25.9%.

Impact of Covid-19:

Disabled people have faced additional costs because of Covid-19. This includes personal protective equipment (PPE) for themselves and carers, extra cleaning equipment and materials, having to use expensive convenience food or pay for deliveries, and having to rely on taxis to appointments to avoid public transport.

Research by the JRFT shows 24.6% of disabled people reported having less money available to spend on food compared with 12.2% of non-disabled people. 35.6% of disabled people believe their financial position will worsen over the next 12 months compared with 28.8% of non-disabled people.

Respondents to Inclusion Scotland's Covid-19 survey reported difficulty accessing social security benefits. This includes lack of access to advocacy and advice services to support applications for PIP contributing to the fall in new applications for PIP. On the other hand, disabled people have benefitted from extensions to existing PIP awards and from the £20 uplift to Universal Credit.

Rights and Renewal:

Once the safe and secure transition of the devolved disability payments is completed, there should be a full review to ensure that disability payments compensate people for the extra costs of having an impairment or health condition, to help them realise their right to participate equally in society and independent living.

Devolved social security powers, including the Scottish Welfare Fund, should be targeted at alleviating poverty, with households with disabled people seen as a priority group.

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