



**Inclusion  
Scotland**

## **Survey Findings Report.**

# **No Clear Path: Disabled People and the Barriers to Fair Work**

**August 2025**

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**“...another hoop of fire ...for the... disabled person to stumble over, to systematically force them out of the benefit. This is discrimination plain and simple.”**  
**(Survey respondent)**

## **Introduction & Context**

Inclusion Scotland is a ‘Disabled People’s Organisation’ (DPO), led by disabled people. Inclusion Scotland works to achieve positive changes to policy and practice, so that disabled people are fully included throughout all Scottish society as equal citizens.

We strongly oppose the UK Government’s proposed reforms to Personal Independence Payment (PIP) and Universal Credit (UC) in its Pathways to Work Green Paper <sup>1</sup>. We are not alone in our opposition. Other DPOs and disabled charities share our deep concerns, for example, UK disability charity, Scope notes that:

**“For the 400,000 disabled people set to lose their PIP benefits, we estimate the average loss of PIP income will be £520 per month, a total loss of £6,240 in the 2029 to 2030 financial year. In the 2029 to 2030 financial year, on average, these disabled households stand to face extra costs of £1,224 per month without any benefit support” <sup>2</sup>.**

<sup>1</sup> House of Commons, 2024/25. Work and Pensions Committee Get Britain Working: Pathways to Work Third Report of Session 2024–25. Available online at: [Get Britain Working: Pathways to work](#)

<sup>2</sup> Scope, 2025. Disability Price Tag: statistical summary. Available online at: [Disability Price Tag Report FINAL.docx](#)

The priority by UK and Scottish Governments should be centered around safeguarding, protecting and supporting the most needy in society instead of bringing forward draconian measures which only serve to further disadvantage people. We need a welfare system which sees our potential, listens to our voices and advocates for our requirements. We argue that the changes are ideologically driven cuts that will harm rather than help disabled people, pushing many into deeper poverty and worsening health inequalities.

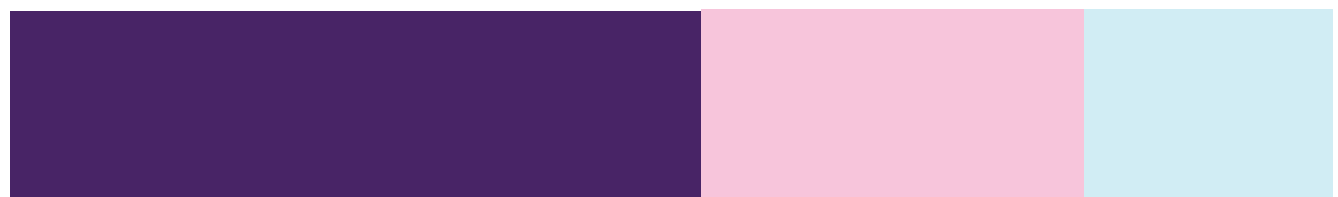
## Survey Methodology

In June 2024, Inclusion Scotland sought to understand what disabled people think about the UK Government's proposed 'Pathways to Work: Green Paper'<sup>3</sup> to inform our response from the viewpoint of lived experience rather than generalised assumptions.

We carried out an online survey with disabled people, which was completed over a two-week period in June 2025. This report considers the findings from the survey.

We received 22 responses which we recognise is a modest sample size.

As the survey was only open for a short period of time, due to the fast turnaround required to respond to the consultation, this potentially impacted on the numbers of responses received. Likewise, we also appreciate the issue of “consultation fatigue” which may be another factor with individuals repeatedly being asked to give evidence on welfare reforms without seeing meaningful change. These considerations may have reduced participation.



<sup>3</sup> House of Commons, 2024/25. Work and Pensions Committee Get Britain Working: Pathways to Work Third Report of Session 2024–25. Available online at, [Get Britain Working: Pathways to work](#)

While the sample size of 22 respondents may not be large enough on its own to be fully representative of the disabled community as a whole, we note from looking across other engagement work with our membership (for example, our Welfare Experiences – **Inclusion Scotland Report, 2024**<sup>4</sup> and engagement with our Poverty and Social Security Lived Experience Group) that these findings have identified issues of general relevance.

We would assert that the opportunity to capture a snapshot of the voices of disabled people is both meaningful and strengthens validity.

In summary, the online consultation feedback gathered from disabled people reveals widespread fear, anger, and mistrust. Respondents stressed that the reforms would create additional barriers, cause severe mental distress, and disproportionately harm disabled groups. Many noted that the proposed changes fail to address the real obstacles to employment, such as discrimination, inaccessible workplaces, and lack of adequate support, while removing essential financial assistance used to meet disability-related costs. We emphasise that the proposed punitive changes to the welfare system will drive people further from the labour market rather than towards it, undermining independence and participation.

The UK Government's<sup>5</sup> view is that,  
**"The new measures... (will open) up employment opportunities, boosting economic growth and tackle the spiralling benefits bill..."**



<sup>4</sup> Inclusion Scotland, 2024. Welfare Experiences Project. Available online at: [Welfare Experiences Project - Inclusion Scotland](#)

<sup>5</sup> UK Government, 2025. Biggest shake up to welfare system in a generation to get Britain working. Available online at, [Biggest shake up to welfare system in a generation to get Britain working - GOV.UK](#)

We cannot help but question this notion that the priorities should be focused on a cost saving exercise and a one size fits all approach to the detriment of individual need. Instead of cutting benefits, we are calling for co-produced welfare reforms grounded in dignity, fairness, and the social model of disability. We maintain, and the survey findings reinforce, the need for,

- greater investment in removing societal barriers
- improving Access to Work
- addressing systemic issues like inaccessible transport, housing, and healthcare.

As they stand, the UK Government proposals risk worsening the UK's already poor record on disability rights<sup>6</sup>. We therefore beseech the Government to change course before inflicting further harm on disabled people and their families.

<sup>6</sup> Disability Rights UK, 2025. A human catastrophe – New UN condemnation for UK human rights record | Disability Rights UK

# Qualitative data

The following is an analysis of the findings from disabled people's qualitative responses to the survey questions regarding the proposed benefit changes and how they will be affected. In general, this thematic analysis notes primarily negative responses based on existing and predicted lived experiences.

As a response to every question was not mandatory, the number of specific responses to each question are marked throughout this report.

## I. Question 1.

**The UK Government are proposing restricting the eligibility of Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Under these changes you would need at least 4 points in one of the daily living activities to be eligible for the daily living component.**

**How do you feel about the proposed changes to PIP? How might they affect you?**

21 (98%) of 22 respondents answered this question.

Respondents expressed profound anxiety regarding the proposed changes to PIP, Universal Credit, and the eligibility rules. The most dominant theme was acute anxiety about losing PIP or Adult Disability Payment (ADP) if similar rules were introduced in Scotland. Respondents described the benefit as a lifeline for covering core living costs, disability-related expenses, and supports (e.g. care, transport, and/or aids and adaptations). The prospect of losing it was linked to poverty, deteriorating health, and in some cases, the inability to continue working.

**"Without my daily living PIP/ADP it would be impossible to meet my basic living costs".**



Respondents overwhelmingly saw the new eligibility rule as arbitrary and discriminatory. Many argued that disability impacts multiple aspects of daily life in smaller ways, and requiring a high score in just one area ignores cumulative challenges. This was viewed as punishing those with complex but less concentrated impairments, as well as those with fluctuating conditions like MS.

**"Highly unfair... to get 4 points I would need to be even more less able than I am now".**

There was a strong sense that disabled people were being targeted as “easy” savings, feeding into a wider narrative of undeserving claimants. Some explicitly described the changes as “discrimination”.





## II. Question 2.

**The UK Government are scrapping the Work Capability Assessment. There will be one assessment for financial support related to health and disability benefits, rather than two. This will be based on the current PIP assessment.**

**How do you feel about the proposal to scrap the Work Capability Assessment?**

19 (86%) of the 22 respondents answered this question.

A number of respondents welcomed the idea of removing the Work Capability assessment, noting that having to undergo fewer assessments would reduce stress, bureaucracy, and the duplication of providing similar medical evidence. For some, it made sense that if someone already qualifies for PIP, that could indicate work limitations.

However, this support was often conditional on improvements to assessment quality and sensitivity, and on ensuring evidence from medical professionals could replace in-person assessments.

**"Evidence from doctors and carers should be enough,  
no need for assessments if evidence can be gathered sensitively."**

Even respondents who saw potential benefits suspected the change was a cost-cutting exercise rather than an improvement for disabled people. They feared that the reform was designed to push people into unsuitable work or remove benefits entirely, rather than to meaningfully support them.

**"A cynical cost-cutting exercise, without any moral reason".**

Many described current assessments as stressful, inaccurate, and disconnected from real-life impacts.

**"Being able to cook a meal has no bearing on whether someone can work all day".**

The tone was mixed but leaned towards scepticism and concern. While the stress of multiple assessments was acknowledged, most felt that the proposed replacement would be inadequate and potentially dangerous. The central issue was the mismatch between PIP's criteria and the realities of work capability, alongside fears of compounded loss of support.

### **III. Question 3.**

**The UK Government are making changes to Universal Credit for disabled people. They are reducing the amount of money disabled people can receive through the Health Element of Universal Credit and limiting eligibility to disabled people over 21.**

**How do you feel about the proposed changes to Universal Credit?**

19 (86%) respondents answered this question. Respondents emphasised that Universal Credit (UC) is already insufficient to meet essential costs. Consequently, cuts to the health element would make survival even harder.

**"It's already difficult to make ends meet... this will only make it worse."**

Likewise, there was strong disagreement with limiting the health element to those over 21. Respondents argued that disability can occur at any age, and that younger disabled people face the same (or higher) living costs as older claimants.

**"People under 21 don't have fewer bills, so why should they get less money?"**

Respondents stressed the risk of counterproductive outcomes as cuts could force people out of work rather than encourage employment given that many rely on UC to cover the extra costs of working with a disability. They also warned of increased pressure on the NHS, social care, and charities such as foodbanks, as people lose financial stability on top of an ever-increasing cost of living crisis.

**"Reducing this is likely to cause people who currently work to have to stop doing so, not the opposite".**

The responses were overwhelmingly negative, with strong emotional language such as "awful," "vile," and "inhumane." There was no indication in the data that respondents believed that the changes would achieve their stated aim of improving work outcomes. Instead, they were seen as deepening poverty and inequality.



## I. Question 4.

**In general, do you think these changes will help or hurt disabled people? Why?**

19 (86%) respondents answered this question.

In general, there was a sense from people answering these questions that the proposed changes were frightening, anxiety-inducing, and mentally exhausting. Several noted that cuts would directly worsen wellbeing, with some warning of heightened suicide risk.

**"Hurt is too mild a word. It will kill some disabled people."**

This fear was compounded by uncertainty over whether Scotland's Adult Disability Payment (ADP) might follow UK reforms.

Almost all respondents believed the proposals would harm disabled people. The changes were seen as removing lifelines and creating additional barriers to independence and participation.

**"These proposed changes will push people over the edge and suicide rates will increase".**

Respondents repeatedly stressed that reducing benefits would make it harder to pay for essentials.

Several noted that even if someone is deemed "able to work," that does not mean suitable jobs exist.

**"Where are these accessible opportunities?"**

They stressed that work outcomes depend on improving health services, accessibility, and employer attitudes, not cutting benefits.

The term "pro-work" was widely rejected as misleading, with several likening the approach to punitive control rather than supportive policy.

**"They want to push us into an early grave".**



## I. Question 5.

**The UK Government has called these changes a 'Pro-Work' approach. Do you think these changes will help more disabled people to work?**

19 (86%) respondents answered this question.

Respondents repeatedly stressed that the main barriers to employment are employer discrimination, inaccessible workplaces, lack of flexible roles, and slow or inadequate Access to Work (AtW) support. They argued that simply reducing benefits would not create jobs or remove these barriers, in fact, cuts would make it harder for people to prepare for or sustain employment.

**"The issue is not with us; it's with companies who are unwilling to hire or support disabled people."**

Participants viewed AtW as vital for employment but criticised long delays, poor communication, lack of disability expertise and limited scope. Several suggested it should be run or co-designed by third-sector organisations with lived experience. Calls were made for better promotion of the scheme, more funding, and simplified processes for both employers and disabled people. They also cited long delays in Access to Work (AtW) support as a major obstacle, making it harder for those who do find jobs to actually start or sustain them.



**"Waiting times for Access to Work help being put in place are too long."**

The cost cutting theme was prevalent throughout the findings from the survey. Many saw the "pro-work" label as political spin, masking cost-cutting priorities.

**"All they are concerned with is reducing benefits, not getting people into work."**

There was a clear feeling that the reforms were designed to produce statistics showing reduced benefit claims, rather than genuinely enabling sustainable employment.

Several respondents stressed the reality that some disabled people will never be fit for work, and reforms should respect this rather than punish and humiliate them.

**"There are many disabled and chronically ill people who will never be fit for work."**

## **VI. Question 6.**

**What role do you think the Department for Work and Pension's Access to Work Scheme should have for supporting the employment of disabled people in future?**

20 (91%) respondents answered this question.

Many respondents described Access to Work (AtW) as vital for enabling disabled people to start, sustain, and progress in employment. Without it, many said they would be unable to work at all.

**"Funding support workers, workplace adjustments, and awareness training for colleagues is crucial."**

Nevertheless, complaints about the current AtW system were noted, including,

- long delays
- poor communication
- lack of disability knowledge among caseworkers
- and unnecessarily complex processes that discourage both employees and employers from using the scheme.

**"The delays... are forcing disabled people out of jobs."**

Respondents emphasised that AtW should not just fund adjustments but also actively work to change employer attitudes, reduce stigma, and promote greater inclusion. This could include offering awareness training, sharing examples of reasonable adjustments, and incentivising employers to hire and retain disabled staff.

Streamlining and expanding the AtW scheme was an important theme from the survey. Respondents wanted a more flexible and accessible system that could adapt to individual personal circumstances.

**"Making support easy to access, not stressful and difficult".**

Overall, while respondents saw Access to Work as essential to employment, they were deeply dissatisfied with its current management. There was a strong call for reform,

- to make it faster,
- more knowledgeable,
- better funded, and
- more proactive in changing employer attitudes.



## VII. Question 7.

**Is there anything else from your experience that you would like us to include in our response to the UK Government's consultation?**

16 people (73%) answered this question.

Overall, similar themes came up under question 7 as highlighted elsewhere in this report:

- deep mistrust of government,
- strong opposition to benefit cuts,
- and calls for a more humane, participatory, and barrier-focused approach to reform.

Several respondents wanted welfare reform to be grounded in honesty, clarity, and meaningful engagement with disabled people.

**"Listen to disabled people before going ahead with these proposed changes".**

They criticised the current approach as target-driven, politically motivated, and disconnected from the lived realities of disability. Respondents recommended that no cuts should be made until adequate, properly funded alternatives are put in place. This included supported training, accessible employment programmes, and realistic pathways into work for those able to participate.

**"Scrap the cuts until properly funded and tested alternatives can be provided".**



Respondents highlighted that political rhetoric and media portrayals of disabled people as **“lazy”** were fuelling harassment and marginalisation. They stressed that most disabled people already face significant barriers and are not receiving **“money for nothing”**.

Several pointed out that even well-designed benefits cannot fix wider accessibility issues in transport, housing, healthcare, and employer practices. They called for investment in removing these barriers rather than cutting financial support.

Some respondents cited the Scottish Adult Disability Payment (ADP) system as more humane and fairer compared to the Westminster model. This was suggested as an example of how assessments and processes could be reformed to reduce stress and better reflect needs.

A number of participants used highly emotive and chilling language, expressing anger, despair, and a sense of betrayal by political parties they once trusted.

### **“What next for the ‘Final Solution?’”**

As an alternative proposal, respondents argued that it should fall to wealthy individuals and corporations to bear more of the cost.

**“Tax the super wealthy rather than keep hurting the working class”.**

There was strong consensus among respondents that any welfare reform should be transparent, co-designed with disabled people, and grounded in dignity, fairness, and the social model of disability. Suggestions included conducting Equality Impact Assessments, investing in accessibility, for example, transport, housing and health and shifting away from punitive conditionality.

**“Don't make disabled people's lives even harder. Invest in the things that are barriers to independent living, educate employers, make transport and housing accessible, cut waiting lists, recognise that social care is about living well, not just personal care.”**

## **Conclusion:**

It is clear from the findings that disabled people are striving to work, to improve their quality of life and are trying to maintain their dignity in the face of systemic challenges. However, this analysis also reveals a fundamental disconnect between the lived realities of disabled people and the proposed welfare changes.

The main themes from the survey include,

- Fear of financial loss and increased poverty
- Mistrust of Government motives and process
- Inadequacy and inaccuracy of assessment processes
- Societal barriers to work, not individual impediments
- Access to work: essential but broken
- Social stigma and hostility
- Calls for humane, co-produced reform.

For Government ministers and policymakers, these findings demand reflection, attention and action. The evidence calls for a shift in policy from compliance-driven enforcement to support recognising the economic, social, and emotional realities of living with a disability and/or medical condition.

Supporting disabled people is not only a matter of fairness but fundamentally it is a human right and a smart investment in creating healthier communities and the economy.

## Recommendations for the UK Government

1. Stop the proposed eligibility restrictions and reductions to the health element of Universal Credit, as they risk increasing poverty, harming health, and excluding people from the labour market.
2. Co-produce with disabled people welfare reforms: in their design, testing, and evaluation.
3. Replace repetitive, stressful, and inaccurate assessments with one simple process.
4. Ensure fluctuating conditions are fairly assessed.
5. Invest in removing employment barriers, such as workplace discrimination, inaccessible transport, housing, and healthcare.
6. Reform Access to Work (AtW) by reducing waiting times and bureaucracy and by increasing funding and staff training.
7. Commit to challenging stereotypes, avoid offensive language, and promote the voices of disabled people.

While the focus is on the UK Government, we are also calling on the Scottish Government to further mitigate the harms from the proposed welfare changes.

## Recommendations for the Scottish Government

1. Commit to protecting Adult Disability Payment (ADP) from the restrictive changes proposed in Westminster's PIP reforms, based on a human rights approach.
2. Strengthen employment support co-designed with DPOs, ensuring funding for skills training, supported employment, and employer incentives.
3. Work with the UK Government to devolve elements of AtW or develop a Scottish equivalent with faster processing, greater accessibility, and stronger employer engagement.
4. Prioritise accessible public services such as transport and adapted housing, to enable greater independent living and involvement in the labour market.
5. Lead by example by ensuring all Scottish Government roles are accessible, flexible, and inclusive.
6. Embed the social model of disability in policy and focus investment on barrier removal.
7. Promote positive representation by publicising disabled people's contributions, successes, and rights.

