

Rt Hon David Cameron MP  
Rt Hon Nick Clegg MP  
Houses of Parliament  
London  
SW1A 0AA

5<sup>th</sup> August 2013

Dear Mr Cameron and Mr Clegg

We strongly believe that the new 20 metre rule to qualify for the highest rate of the new benefit, Personal Independence Payment (PIP), will leave many of those with the greatest needs without vital support and trapped in their own homes. This is despite the government's stated intention that the support provided by the benefit should be targeted at "those who need it most".

We believe that the policy will lead to disabled people dropping out of work and education, increased poverty and isolation, and increased costs in other areas of government spending.

The 20 metre rule is replacing the qualifying distance of 50 metres used to assess people for Disability Living Allowance. It means that if disabled people can walk just 20 metres – even using aids such as sticks – they will no longer qualify for the enhanced rate of the mobility component of PIP. This is less than the length of two buses. Those that no longer qualify will lose at least £33.25 a week or, crucially, access to their Motability vehicle.

The government's own projections show that nearly half a million disabled people will lose out because of the tightened rules.

Many of the organisations signing up to this letter have been overwhelmed with the response from disabled people contacting them about the new rule, most of whom are fearful about the impact this policy will have on their daily lives. In particular, those who work or are in education, and those who are worried about how they will attend doctor or hospital appointments or, indeed, leave their house at all. The mobility needs of these people will not disappear, but are likely to be pushed to other areas of (potentially more expensive) government spending, such as unemployment benefits, the Access to Work Scheme, social care and the NHS.

No evidence has been provided as to why the distance of 20 metres is now being used as a way of gauging the additional costs individuals face. Indeed, the rule is inconsistent with well-embedded and researched government guidance which suggests that 50 metres is a more appropriate measure of significant mobility impairment.

The use of the 20 metre rule is flawed. In evidence gathered by organisations representing disabled people, many of those that can mobilise for more than 20 metres (but less than 50 metres) face the same 'extra cost' as those that can only mobilise for this distance. No longer qualifying for the enhanced rate of the mobility component of PIP will have a devastating impact on their lives.

We call on you to reinstate the use of a 50 metre qualifying distance for the enhanced rate of the mobility component of PIP.

Yours faithfully

The Disability Benefits Consortium