Social Security Briefing: Milburn and the Timms Review

With the publications of the Milburn Review and the Timms review imminent, we are looking at major negative consequences for the lives of Disabled people in the UK. This is a critical time for Disabled people and MPs are uniquely positioned to protect our dignity, equality and independence, in the coming months.

It is essential that Personal Independence Payment (PIP) must remain a fully cash benefit. Any cost categories or transference of cash for services, would prevent Disabled people from having the ability and autonomy to support their independent living. Equally important is that young Disabled people under the age of 25 also have their financial independence and support protected. Structural barriers to work and an inaccessible job market should not be responded to by removing the two main working-age health and disability benefits (PIP and UC Health element). Welfare support is already insufficient, and cuts to social security would lead to increased rates of poverty, social exclusion and deaths.

For questions that MPs can ask to scrutinise the reports, please go to the end of page 3.

Overview

The Milburn Review (formally 'From a Welfare State to a Working State: a new settlement for the next generation') is the Independent Review into young people not in employment, education, or training (NEETs). The Timms Review is an Independent Review on PIP, an extra cost benefit provided to people both in and out of work, that supports Disabled people with the extra cost of disability and barriers they face. Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) and anti-poverty charities are alarmed at the crude and overreaching cuts which are being proposed through the Milburn Review. These changes

would see £3.6 billion of support being removed from young Disabled people with half a million Disabled young people losing their PIP and 193,000 Disabled young people losing their Universal Credit Health component.

Additionally, comments from the Prime Minister that the "same philosophy" could be applied "right through the age range", would be catastrophic for all Disabled people of working- age receiving social security support. Previous social security reforms, forcing Disabled people into work, led to higher rates of poverty and over 590 suicides linked to the Work Capability Assessment, with an additional 279,000 "self-reported" cases of mental distress recorded between 2010 and 2013 link to the WCA, as reported by Disability News Service.

The Milburn Review: Key Concerns and impact

Young Disabled people will lose all disability-related financial support by losing their Universal Credit Health component and PIP. The impacts of being Disabled do not alter based on age. Social security for young Disabled people should specifically recognise extra costs, need, and what barriers Disabled people face. Conditionality is unacceptable, and support should be based on what an individual needs.

The severe complex needs insurance is unfair and unjust. Only those who are deemed to be the most severely disabled will be protected, with Milburn stating this will be a very small group. While we do not have the full details of the scheme, it appears to be that young people would need to prove they could not ever work because of a severe impairment or terminal illness, rather than unable to work for a significant period of time. Many young Disabled people cannot work currently given the inaccessible job market, poor health, and lack of access to support and services, but would not be eligible for the insurance under this strict criterion.

There are also clear negative knock-on effects which have not been properly explored. For anyone under 25 with a carer, that support person would lose access to Carers Allowance. PIP is also a passport to other benefits, which means they would also lose access to support like Motability which enables people to not only get adapted vehicles but powered wheelchairs.

You can read more expanded briefings about the Milburn Review here:

- DR UK; Toynbee Hall; Disabled People Against Cuts; Inclusion London

Timms Review: Key Concerns

The Timms Review is due to be published this afternoon and based on preliminary information we have some key concerns. Fast tracking for people with severe impairments risks creating similar problems to the Milburn Review – creating a safety net for only a small number of Disabled people. More detail is needed on how this would be understood and the impact of restricting guaranteed support to such a small group.

The new system also appears to potentially look at introducing a medical, rather than social, model of how Disabled people face additional costs. If there is a push for Disabled people to account for exact costs this would lead to people being worse off as many Disabled people wouldn't be able to identify what constitutes "additional costs." Such a process would also fail to cover those who receive unpaid support from carers, friends and family. The new process would narrow eligibility and could particularly impact neurodivergent people and those with mental distress. Cost categories such as equipment and aids; mobility and transport; clothing and bedding would create an impairment hierarchy and would be based on the government's perception of what constitutes disability-related costs vs lived experience of what services and aids can actually be supportive to an individual.

In addition, PIP must not be used as a passport to the health component of Universal Credit. PIP is not a benefit that assesses the potential to work. The Work Capability Assessment must be retained and reformed.

You can read our previous joint briefing about the Timms Review here.

Questions to Raise:

Parliamentary scrutiny of government reviews is essential. The questions below are intended to help MPs raise concerns about both of these key government reports:

- If the government accepts the Milburn Review's recommendation to replace PIP and the health element of Universal Credit with a youth allowance for under 25s and enforce conditionality on young Disabled people, would this not create a two-tier social security system in which young Disabled adults are treated differently from older Disabled adults?

- Why is age, rather than need, being the determining factor on whether someone receives support with the extra costs of disability? With the Milburn Review's proposal that young Disabled people will no longer receive PIP, how can the DWP justify a system in which a 24-year-old and a 26-year-old with the same health condition would receive radically different support for independent living?
- What safeguarding plan does the Department of Work and Pensions have for Disabled people who lose access to social security support, and how will impact assessment measure the harms they will experience? In the impact assessment, has the DWP assessed the potential of benefit deaths, and what action has it taken in response?
- What eligibility conditions are proposed for the "Severe and Complex Needs Insurance", who will decide whether someone has qualified and will there be an appeal process?
- What calculations have been done to ensure that young Disabled people can live without PIP and the health element of UC?
- Should PIP awards based on strict cost categories, what process will the government use to determine what constitutes an additional cost and what constitutes a valid category? How will additional costs that do not fit into neatly into these categories be supported?
- Are cost categories for PIP eligibility designed to exclude particular impairment groups?

We will be sending a full briefing following the publication of the final Timms Review. To arrange a meeting or write to us to discuss these findings and our concerns please contact sophia.kleanthous@disabilityrightsuk.org

Contact Us

If you wish to speak to us about our work on social security, the Timms and Milburn Reviews or to learn more please email:

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Disability Rights UK are a national organisation led by Disabled people. Our vision is a world where Disabled people have equal rights, opportunities, and access to power. Our work is rooted in the lived experience of Disabled people. We are a membership organisation and work closely with organisations led by Disabled people across the UK.

Toynbee Hall is a charity working alongside people facing poverty, injustice and inequality since 1884 to build a fairer future for all. Our research and policy work supports Toynbee Hall's mission by using a co-production approach to drive systemic change and ensure everyone has an equal chance to thrive. One of our current projects is a participatory action research project with Disabled people receiving the health element of Universal Credit looking at how the benefit system can be fairer for those excluded from work.