



The Rt Hon Stephen Timms MP
Minister of State for Social Security and Disability
Department for Work and Pensions
By Email

22 January 2025

Dear Stephen,

I am writing to ask if you will ensure that any changes to the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) help create a more compassionate and supportive social security system, rather than one that pushes disadvantaged people further into hardship. Many of my constituents have raised concerns with me about the detrimental impact the proposed changes could have on those with disabilities and severe mental health conditions, and I share their worries about how this could further disadvantage these individuals.

The reforms, initially introduced by the previous Government, would restrict the eligibility criteria for those deemed to have limited capability for work and work-related activity. The Government's report on these changes' estimates that around 450,000 fewer people would qualify for support.¹ — a large proportion of whom are individuals with serious mental health conditions and disabilities, who already face significant barriers to employment and financial security.

I am concerned that any changes made are likely to push people who are already struggling deeper into hardship. For many, their ability to work can fluctuate greatly, and a stricter assessment may fail to capture the full extent of the difficulties they face, leaving them without the vital support they rely on to live independently and with dignity.

I fully support helping people back into work when appropriate, but I am apprehensive about the Government's approach to this issue. Furthermore, the recent suggestion that job coaches will be sent into psychiatric hospitals is particularly concerning.² Helping people find stable and fulfilling jobs is essential, but this must be done thoughtfully and compassionately, when the prospect of work is genuinely appropriate and will not be harmful to well-being.

I am asking if you will reconsider and explore ways to improve the assessment process by involving disabled people and people with poor mental health in the decision-making process. As the charity Mind has suggested, a commission led by individuals with this lived experience could help ensure that reforms are fair and compassionate.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your response.

Best wishes,
Siân Berry MP

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/work-capability-assessment>

² <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c98y09n8201o>



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