

Pathways to Work: Reforming Benefits and Support to Get Britain Working Green Paper

Response from Together Trust to the following consultation questions:

1. What further steps could the Department for Work and Pensions take to make sure the benefit system supports people to try work without the worry that it may affect their benefit entitlement?

We welcome the Government's stated commitment that "trying work" will not trigger a reassessment of disability benefits. However, this commitment will only be meaningful if it is **clearly communicated, effectively implemented, and widely trusted by those it affects**.

Without strong and visible safeguards in place, many disabled people, particularly young people, may continue to fear reassessment or the loss of support at a time of broader system reform. We are pleased to see recognition that individuals with lifelong disabilities should not face repeated assessments. This marks a positive step and aligns with our call to reduce reassessment pressures for those with enduring conditions.

A survey of the parent-carers of the young disabled people we support asked if **they believed** the **proposed changes** would help **protect people's benefits while they worked**. **36% of respondents disagreed, 36% felt this would be dependent on the individual, and 27% were unsure**. This data highlights the high level of uncertainty and the nuanced reality of people's lives, which must be reflected in any implementation of the new policy.

Our conversations with parent-carers, including those from Together Trust's Newbridge Day Service, reveal **widespread concern** about increased pressure to take up employment. Carers report that combining work with intensive caring responsibilities remains unrealistic without

meaningful change to the broader system. Many barriers remain unresolved, including **inaccessible transportation, a lack of funded support, poor workplace adaptations, and a limited understanding among employers, particularly in relation to invisible or fluctuating conditions.**

In several cases, people are only able to consider work because of the support provided by Personal Independence Payment (PIP). This benefit helps cover essentials such as transportation, therapy, and support with managing everyday responsibilities, including housing and finances. **The loss of PIP could remove any realistic opportunity to work, further entrenching inequality and poverty.**

Our respondents were clear: without structural reform to address these barriers, the proposed changes risk placing greater pressure on disabled people and their families while offering little in the way of tangible support. **Inflexible care options, a lack of personalised job opportunities, and insufficient communication from government bodies** all add to the existing strain.

The fear of being penalised for attempting independence by working or studying is deeply rooted. We heard concerns that reforms could worsen mental health, increase anxiety, and drive people away from engagement with the system altogether. **Without safeguards, trust will continue to erode.**

We urge the Government to prioritise dignity, lived experience, and tailored support in all future reforms. A move towards inclusive employment must start with the removal of systemic barriers, not with increased pressure to work. Reforms that fail to recognise the full realities of disabled people's lives will only serve to deepen existing inequalities.

Key recommendations:

- **Publish clear guidance** on how work trials will be protected from triggering reassessment and that this guidance is consistently followed.
- **Lifelong conditions are clearly defined**, with appropriate thresholds for reassessment exemption.
- **Carers and disabled people are meaningfully involved** in the co-design of assessment processes and employment support.
- **Additional investment is made in workplace adjustments, transport, and accessible care.** Support is tailored, realistic, and built on the principle of trust, not compliance.

2. What support do you think we could provide for those who will lose their Personal Independence Payment entitlement as a result of a new additional requirement to score at least four points on one daily living activity?

It is **deeply concerning** that such a significant number of people are expected to **lose their PIP** due to the new requirement to score at least four points on a single daily living activity. It is challenging to offer practical suggestions for mitigating this impact, as many individuals will be pushed into poverty as a direct result of these changes. The New Economics Foundation (2025) estimates that the likely cumulative impact will result in around 340,000 more people falling into poverty. Given this, it is reasonable to **anticipate severe consequences for social and mental health across the UK.**

The tightening of PIP eligibility is especially troubling in light of plans to replace the Work Capability Assessment in 2028, which means that those who are not eligible for PIP may also **lose access to other vital benefits**. Although this consultation does not focus directly on changes to PIP eligibility, we believe that the **Government should seek and listen to the views of disabled people about how these changes will vastly impact their lives**. These punitive reforms risk increasing poverty among disabled people and will **unfairly penalise** those unable to work.

Most concerning is that an individual must meet the stringent criteria of the Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity (LCWRA). **The rigour of this criteria makes it clear that many people who genuinely need support, particularly those with mental health**

conditions or who are neurodivergent, could easily fall through the cracks and be excluded.

To truly safeguard families who rely on welfare services, the Government must ensure its child poverty strategy addresses more than employment alone. Without increased financial support for families and meaningful investment in the wider social system, including healthcare and housing, the **strategy risks failing those in greatest need**. A narrow focus on getting parents into work overlooks the wider structural challenges that place **children at risk** in the first place.

We surveyed parents and carers of young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) who access our services. We asked, ***"What pressures do you believe people using our services are currently experiencing?"***.

SURVEY DATA: PARENT-CARERS

The **pressures** people using our services are currently experiencing:

The cost-of-living crisis

Contributions and charges for service provision

The broader negative impact on quality of life

The lack of care coordination by the NHS
including cancelled appointments and delays in assessments and treatments

There are very few practical mechanisms in place to support those who may lose their entitlements. These challenges are already having a significant impact on young people with SEND before any further benefit reductions are implemented. Therefore, any support for those losing benefits must start by addressing the existing issues they are facing.

The Government's Welfare Reform press release highlights a significant rise in PIP claims since the COVID-19 pandemic. Much of this increase is attributed to a rise in the number of people citing anxiety and depression as their primary condition. While these figures are indeed significant, **they should not be viewed solely as an increase in benefit dependency.**

Instead, they must prompt serious reflection on the **root causes of poor mental health in the UK.** The increase in PIP claims for anxiety and depression is a symptom of a deeper problem: the **widespread lack of access to early, effective and sustained mental health support.**

We are deeply concerned that those who are experiencing poor mental health to the extent of being unable to work now risk losing their PIP and UC Health Element awards altogether.

Removing financial support from those already experiencing poor mental health is not only unjust but also entirely counterproductive. As highlighted by the Mental Health Foundation (2016), **poverty** increases the risk of mental health problems and can be both a **cause and consequence of poor mental wellbeing.**

If PIP reforms result in individuals with anxiety or depression losing their entitlement to support, it is likely their conditions will worsen. **Not only will this harm individuals, but it will also place further pressure on an already overstretched and underfunded NHS mental health services.**

Furthermore, those claiming PIP for physical health conditions who lose their awards as a result of the reforms are at risk of **developing or worsening mental health conditions due to financial hardship, stress and poverty.**

The proposed changes risk perpetuating a harmful cycle in which people are pushed into poverty, mental illness increases, and health and care services are left to deal with the consequences.

The Government must address the root causes of poor mental health, including poverty, housing insecurity and limited access to care, as part of any welfare reform. Clear guidance and safeguards must be developed with urgency for those at risk of losing their PIP to prevent harm and mitigate the risk of increasing pressure on the NHS.

ROOT CAUSES OF POOR MENTAL HEALTH



**Poverty
and hardship**



**Limited access
to support/ care**



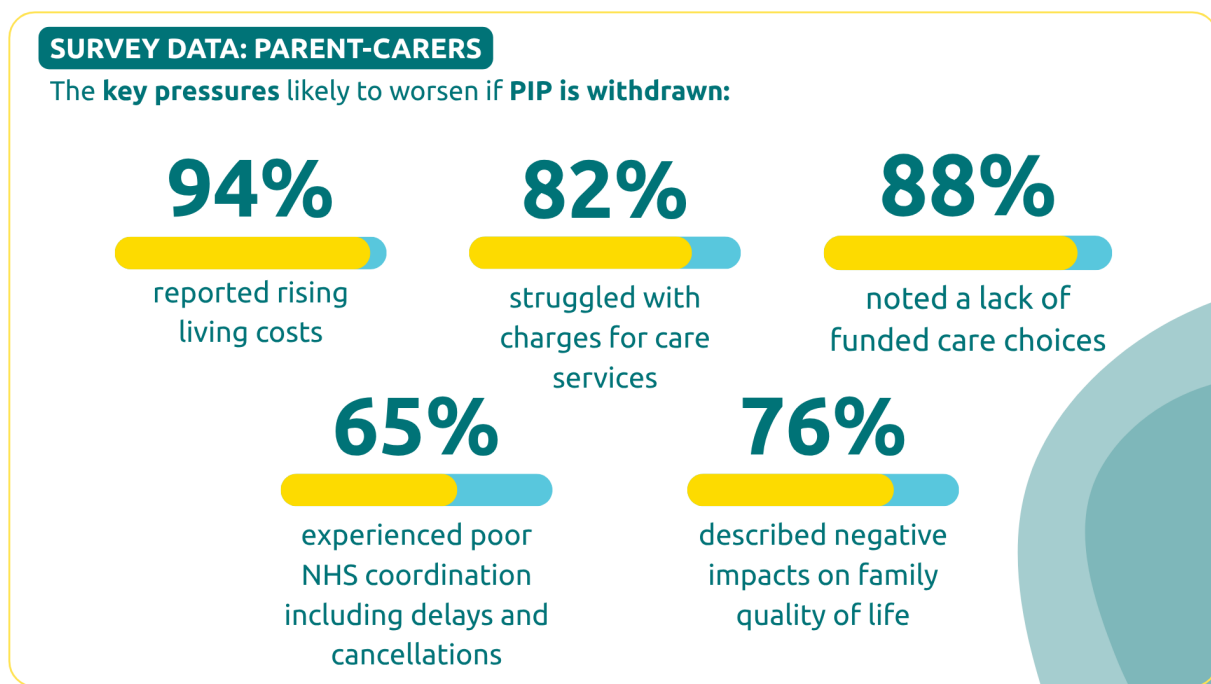
**Housing
insecurity**

Key recommendations:

- **Pause the proposed PIP changes** until a full impact assessment is completed, with a focus on poverty, mental health, and equity.
- **Provide an increase of £20 per week to Universal Credit and endorse the Essentials Guarantee**, which Action for Children (2023) estimate could lift 400,000 children out of poverty.
- **Provide urgent, holistic support for those affected**, including access to mental health services, housing support, and cost-of-living relief.
- **Ensure clear, consistent communication about any changes**, including rights during reassessment and protections for people trying work.
- **Introduce targeted cost-of-living support for disabled people and families with children and young people with SEND** to ensure they can meet essential needs such as food, heating, and transport.

3. How could we improve the experience of the health and care system for people who are claiming Personal Independence Payment who would lose entitlement?

Our recent survey of parent-carers highlighted key pressures likely to worsen if PIP is withdrawn.



These findings show that removing PIP support without strengthening the health and care system will **deepen financial strain and restrict access to essential services, worsening outcomes**. Improving the health and care system alongside any welfare reform is essential to **safeguard their independence, wellbeing, and inclusion**.

These concerns are compounded by the recent introduction of the **Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment Bill**, which proposes sweeping benefit cuts without adequate consultation or supporting evidence. If passed, this **Bill** will **restrict access to essential income for many disabled people and carers, further increasing pressure on already overstretched health and care services**.

Analysis from WPI Economics (2025) shows that **failure to address rising hardship already costs the government billions annually due to increased demand on the NHS, mental health services, and local authority support**. Cutting financial support through PIP while leaving gaps in care provision is not only a **false economy**, but **risks** also

deepening inequality, destabilising families, and undermining the Government's own health and employment goals.

Key recommendations:

- **Protect disability-related benefits like PIP** for those relying on them to meet daily living costs and maintain household stability.
- **Introduce national safeguards** to reduce or eliminate social care charges for low-income families supporting disabled young people.
- **Ringfence funding for local authorities** to expand personalised, meaningful care options.
- **Invest in NHS care coordination** through dedicated caseworkers and integrated service pathways to prevent delays in assessments, treatments, and follow-up care.
- **Prioritise mental health prevention and early intervention** by increasing funding, developing workforce plans to address shortages, commissioning reviews into rising mental health prevalence, expanding diverse counselling services, and addressing social determinants of health through an anti-racist approach.

Our joint research with National Star, [**What Comes After Education for Young Disabled People**](#), which collected nearly **500 responses from disabled young people and parent-carers**, highlights **that further system improvements are critical**.

Disabled young people face challenges including **lack of independent advocacy, insufficient transition planning, limited choice in support, and poor health and social care coordination**.

Additional recommendations include:

- **Provide an active offer of independent advocacy** that is proactively offered and sustained throughout key transitions (i.e., starting/leaving school, post-16 education, internships), including clear signposting to services such as SENDIASS and therapy, including for those without EHCPs.
- **Improve early, person-centred transition planning beginning well before age 18**, with coordinated working between children's and adult services and transparent pathways accessible to families and young people across England.

- **Design services with lived experience at their core** to reduce anxiety, promote independence, and secure better futures.
- **Increase flexible funding and real choice** to empower disabled young people and families to shape their care and support, whether local or out-of-area.
- **Expand access to meaningful, supported activities beyond employment**, promoting inclusion by funding regulated, user-led services that enhance social participation and wellbeing, which also benefits carers.
- **Enhance post-16 opportunities** by strengthening collaboration between specialist further education providers and universities, providing statutory transport up to age 25 aligned with EHCP support, and establishing cross-departmental initiatives to improve training, employment, and benefit support for disabled young people.

Without these reforms, **withdrawing PIP support will lead to poorer outcomes and increased hardship**. To support disabled people's independence and employment prospects, **the Government must invest in integrated, person-centred health, social care, education, and employment systems that work alongside any changes to disability benefits**.

5. What practical steps could we take to improve our current approach to safeguarding people who use our services?

Our survey with parent-carers of disabled people who use your services highlights key areas where **safeguarding could be significantly strengthened through** practical steps, particularly relating to **communication, assessment processes, employment and financial support**.

Improve communication with clear, accessible information

Parent-carers consistently stressed the need for communication that is simple, clear, and accessible to all audiences. Suggestions included:

- Using straightforward, jargon-free language.
- Providing regular updates via email.
- Offering community outreach programs and information sessions.
- Developing online resources such as easy-read documents and films to explain changes.

- Creating online calculators to help people understand the personal impact of reforms.

These communication improvements would help **reduce confusion and anxiety**, ensuring claimants feel informed and supported throughout the process, which is fundamental to safeguarding.

Review and adapt assessment procedures

Responses about the assessment experience with PIP were mixed, ranging from very negative to very positive, indicating **inconsistency in how assessments are carried out**. Our survey asked parent-carers whether completing these assessments through a single, unified process would be a good idea.

The majority of respondents (approximately two-thirds) supported the suggestion of a single assessment, indicating a preference for a more streamlined and less fragmented approach. This feedback suggests that a unified assessment could reduce confusion, lessen the administrative burden on vulnerable individuals, and improve consistency in identifying and addressing their safeguarding needs.

However, a minority expressed reservations or opposition. It is essential that any **new assessment process remains thorough, sensitive to individual circumstances**, and capable of capturing all relevant information **without oversimplification**. Survey responses showed a **generally positive attitude toward removing reassessments for individuals unable to work**.

Practical safeguarding steps should include:

- **Involving people who use your services** in the ongoing design and evaluation of the assessment system.
- **In adapting assessment procedures, it is essential to balance efficiency with thoroughness while maintaining robust safeguarding procedures**. Implementing a single assessment could improve safeguarding by providing a clearer, more coordinated understanding of service users' needs, but it must be carefully designed and regularly reviewed with input from users to avoid unintended risks.
- **Ensuring assessments are fair, timely, and sensitive to individual circumstances**.
- **Providing adequate support throughout the assessment process**.

- **Avoiding unnecessary reassessments** that cause stress and uncertainty.
- **Maintaining clear, transparent communication about eligibility and decision-making processes.**
- **Ensuring claimants retain the right to request reviews or appeals** if circumstances change.
- **Monitoring the impact of this policy on individuals over time** to identify any unintended safeguarding risks.

Address barriers to employment with focused support and employer accommodations

We asked parent-carers ***"What are the main barriers people using care services face in finding and maintaining employment?"***

SURVEY DATA: PARENT-CARERS

Respondents identified **major barriers** to **finding** and **sustaining** employment:

Lack of accessible transportation

Health-related challenges

Discrimination

Inadequate workplace accommodations

Lack of job opportunities

Poor understanding of disabilities by employers

Safeguarding requires the government to:

- **Work closely with employers** to promote reasonable accommodations and awareness of neurodiversity and disability needs.
- **Improve accessible transport options** and creating tailored employment support schemes will help protect disabled people from exploitation, exclusion, and poverty.

Target support to vulnerable groups at risk of being left behind
Parent-carers highlighted that **individuals with severe disabilities, complex needs, learning disabilities, and mental impairments** are **least likely to benefit from the proposed work-focused reforms**.

- Safeguarding must ensure that these groups, and their carers, receive **bespoke support to prevent marginalisation**, including **continued access to benefits and specialist assistance**.

Concerns raised by parent-carers emphasise that effective safeguarding must extend beyond employment-focused reforms.

Findings from our [research](#) project on child poverty and children entering care (Together Trust, 2024) reinforce the urgent need for a **cross-cutting safeguarding approach that addresses poverty, disability, and health inequalities**.

The research shows that **families living below the essentials guarantee face severe barriers to stable caregiving**, particularly those raising disabled children. These conditions **increase the likelihood of care entry and long-term disadvantage**.

To truly protect people who use welfare services, the Government's strategy must include:

- **Increased financial support for families to address poverty**, a key driver of safeguarding risks. This includes long-term reforms such as uprating benefits based on the Households Cost Index (8.2%), rather than the Consumer Price Index (6.7%).
- **An Essentials Guarantee in Universal Credit (UC)** to ensure all households have a basic minimum level of support.
- **Consistent application of the Equality Act 2010 definition of disability** across social care, education, and benefit systems. Disability must be recorded in all child protection and looked-after assessments, even where it is not the primary reason for intervention (Gledhill-Baker, 2022). This is essential for visibility, tailored support, and effective planning.
- **Cross-agency data sharing and workforce training** to ensure disabled children and families are not overlooked.
- **Investment in flexible, inclusive housing options** that enable disabled young people to live with friends or partners, fostering independence and wellbeing.

Safeguarding cannot be meaningfully improved without full transparency and engagement around major policy reforms.

We are **concerned** that the **Government has not consulted on significant proposals**, such as scrapping the Work Capability Assessment, rebalancing the UC standard and health elements, introducing a single PIP assessment to determine UC health entitlement, and applying a new 4-point eligibility threshold for PIP.

Excluding these changes from consultation **undermines safeguarding by increasing the risk of unintended harm, misclassification, and withdrawal of support from people with fluctuating, hidden, or moderate needs.**

To protect people who rely on these services, any reform must be:

- **Subject to full and transparent consultation.**
- **Co-designed and co-produced** with disabled people and experts.
 - **Independently reviewed**, with new assessment models tested to ensure they can recognise complexity and uphold access to support.

Safeguarding concerns around new legislation

Recent developments, such as the introduction of the **Universal Credit and Personal Independence Payment Bill**, raise urgent safeguarding concerns. The **Bill** proposes major changes to disability benefits **without sufficient consultation, evidence, or engagement with disabled people** and their families.

These **premature legislative changes risk embedding flawed assumptions into law**, increasing financial and emotional instability, and removing critical lifelines such as PIP and Carer's Allowance.

Tightened eligibility criteria and delays to the health element of Universal Credit could severely restrict access to support for those with complex, fluctuating, or hidden needs, including disabled people and carers. This creates **clear safeguarding risks**, especially if assessments are poorly designed, rushed, or fail to recognise individual circumstances.

We urge the Government to **pause the Bill until proper consultation and impact assessment are completed**. Safeguarding must be embedded at the heart of all welfare reforms, with a clear duty to prevent avoidable harm and support people to live safe, independent lives.

9. Should we require most people to participate in a support conversation as a condition of receipt of their full benefit award or of the health element in Universal Credit?

We do not support this proposal. Disabled people already face numerous barriers in their daily lives, including stigma, inaccessible systems, and a lack of tailored support. Requiring individuals to participate in a support conversation to access their full benefit risks adding further pressure and contributing to a harmful, penalising culture. **People should not be required to prove how disabled they are in order to access the support they need.**

We strongly discourage the use of rigid categories to determine eligibility for exemption from support conversations. **Feedback from our services and the experiences shared by parent carers and staff**, we know that even individuals with the same diagnosis can present in vastly different ways. For example, one young person with autism may thrive in a tailored, supportive workplace, while another may be non-verbal and unable to carry out basic daily tasks independently. Any decisions about eligibility or requirements must be made using a person-centred, holistic approach, which should be clearly communicated to individuals and families to prevent unnecessary confusion and stress.

While we welcome the Government's commitment to introducing new support options for people claiming PIP, we are concerned that the measures outlined in the recent press release for the Welfare Bill may fall short of delivering meaningful impact. The **proposed introduction of 1,000 Pathways to Work advisers across the UK** is intended to improve access to employment support. Yet this figure translates to **fewer than one adviser per town**. It is difficult to see how such limited provision could offer the intensive, tailored support that many disabled people would need to enter or re-enter into the workforce.

The press release also notes that all those affected by the reforms will be **contacted and offered a conversation about their support needs**, goals and aspirations, along with access to one-to-one follow-up and help with employment, health and skills. While this is a welcome intention in principle, it **misses the mark in practice**.

Support conversations must consider the whole person, not just their work-readiness. Many people face complex, **overlapping challenges** that **prevent** them from **securing or sustaining work**.

These include **unsuitable or unstable housing, unmet care needs, long waiting times for treatment or therapy, and the demands of unpaid caring responsibilities.**

A one-size-fits-all employment-focused model risks excluding or pressuring people whose challenges are not addressed by job-centred interventions. Conversations should be adapted to individual needs and preferences, especially for those with profound or complex needs. **No one should be made to feel that they are constantly having to justify their existence or the support they rely on.**

Our work with families and disabled young people highlights a consistent theme: **trust in the system is worryingly low.** Existing support services are often difficult to access and poorly coordinated, including long response times which make it difficult to access the necessary support. **What is needed is a simplified, compassionate system that prioritises dignity, choice, and quality of life.** Reforms must recognise that work is not always an option and that the appropriate support will look different for everyone.

Key recommendations:

- **Do not make participation in support conversations a condition for accessing** full benefit entitlements.
- **Ensure any support conversations are voluntary**, person-centred, and genuinely supportive.
- **Avoid using rigid diagnostic categories to determine eligibility** for benefits or exemptions.
- **Increase the number of advisers** to ensure individuals can receive consistent, localised, and meaningful support.
- **Provide clear, accessible guidance** on how eligibility and participation decisions are made.
- **Provide specialised training for advisers** so that they can engage with people with complex needs, including those with fluctuating or invisible disabilities.
- **Recognise that for many disabled people**, especially those with complex needs, **employment may not be appropriate**, and **support must reflect this reality.**

10. How should we determine which individuals or groups of individuals should be exempt from requirements?

To determine exemptions from employment-related requirements fairly and effectively, it is essential to **consider individuals' level of need, the nature of their disability**, and the **realities of their daily lives**.

Exemption criteria must be shaped through consultation with disabled people, carers, and those with lived experience. They should be grounded in evidence, applied consistently, and reviewed regularly to ensure that they respond to real-world needs rather than administrative convenience.

Evidence from our survey of parent-carers of disabled people indicates that a blanket approach would fail to account for the complex circumstances faced by many claimants. The survey revealed that individuals with special needs, severe mental health conditions, complex disabilities, learning disabilities, high-level support needs, often face huge barriers to employment. Many respondents felt that the current proposals would not benefit these groups and risk placing them under undue stress or pressure.

One parent-carer described it as “*a big cycle*”, reflecting frustration that past initiatives like the Government’s reintroduction of REMPLOY are being presented as new solutions without addressing the underlying challenges faced by these groups. This suggests a risk that policies may continue to overlook those with the most significant barriers to employment.

Carers of people with high support needs should also be explicitly included in exemption criteria. In response to our survey question “**Do you believe that carers should combine a carer’s role with employment?**” the majority of parent-carers said no.

SURVEY DATA: PARENT-CARERS

Responses highlighted several key, recurring reasons why **combining unpaid care with employment** is often unrealistic:

Lack of flexible working arrangements

Frequent and unpredictable health or behavioural needs
of the person being supported, requiring short-notice absences from work.

Unavailability of reliable, paid care options

Indirect care responsibilities
as managing health appointments, attending meetings, and liaising with multiple professionals.

Limited opportunity for carers to engage in the labour market
without compromising the quality of care.

These findings reinforce the need for employment policy to recognise unpaid care as essential and skilled work. For many families, caring is not a temporary barrier to employment, it is a long-term responsibility with fluctuating and intensive demands.

To safeguard wellbeing and avoid unintended harm, we recommend that exemptions be extended to:

- Individuals with high-level or complex support needs who cannot engage meaningfully in work-related activity.
- People with severe, fluctuating, or hidden conditions that are poorly captured by rigid assessment frameworks.
- Carers whose responsibilities significantly limit their ability to work or look for work.

11. Should we delay access to the health element of Universal Credit within the reformed system until someone is aged 22?

This policy change fails to recognise the significance of the transition from childhood to adulthood. Our ***What Comes After Education for Young Disabled People report*** found that **more than half of young people (55%) felt worried about leaving school or college**. It also highlighted a lack of creative housing solutions that allow young people to live with their friends or partners.

While the Government emphasises getting young disabled people into work, there is **little consideration of how to support them in building**

fulfilling lives, including access to meaningful activities and the ability to maintain relationships with peers. Removing access to health-related benefits at this critical time **risks further isolating young people during an already challenging transition.**

Creating a four-year gap between the end of DLA at 18 and access to the Universal Credit health element at 22 would **leave many disabled young people, care leavers, and those without strong family networks without the financial stability needed to move into adulthood.** The loss of timely access to linked support, such as Carer's Allowance or the Motability scheme, could also reduce their independence and access to education, employment, or housing.

Young people with lifelong conditions are already navigating the complex shift from DLA to PIP. **Many aged 18 to 21 will not be eligible for PIP and may, therefore, be excluded from all forms of health-related financial support.** This loss of financial benefits would only compound the difficulties they face during the transition, increasing the risk of poor mental health and greater reliance on emergency support later.

This proposal also **overlooks the state's responsibilities as a corporate parent for care-experienced young people.** For those leaving care at 18, access to benefits is not simply a financial matter, it is a foundation for stability and independence.

To withdraw that support without offering credible alternatives is both short-sighted and harmful.

Any reforms to support systems must centre the lived experience of disabled young people and care leavers, **ensuring that policies do not deepen existing inequalities or undermine opportunities for a safe and fulfilling future.**

Key recommendations:

- **Maintain access to the health element of Universal Credit from age 18** to support a stable transition to adulthood.
- **Provide more explicit guidance and communication** to young people and their families regarding benefit entitlements during the transition period.
- **Ensure care leavers and disabled young people are prioritised** in policy decisions affecting benefit eligibility and access to support.

12. Do you think 18 is the right age for young people to start claiming the adult disability benefit, Personal Independence Payment? If not, what age do you think it should be?

Transitioning to adult benefits at 18 can be a **challenging and abrupt change**, particularly for disabled young people who may still be in education, undergoing health or social care assessments, or in need of ongoing support.

Extending DLA to age 18 could **reduce pressure** for some young people by avoiding an early PIP assessment and easing administrative burdens during exams and post-16 transitions. For these individuals, it would provide important stability at a critical time. However, **for many** others, this raises serious **concerns about delayed access to wider financial support** available through adult benefits, potentially prolonging financial hardship.

Many disabled young people experience complex and fluctuating needs that do not align neatly with chronological age. **For some, the move to adult systems at 18 risks gaps in support, delays in essential funding**, or additional stress during a critical period of development.

Feedback from parent-carers surveyed by Together Trust highlights concerns that the current system does not sufficiently recognise these complexities. Several respondents stressed that young people with high support needs, complex disabilities, or mental health conditions require a more individualised and flexible approach to benefit transitions. Together Trust, as a disability charity supporting children and adults with a range of needs, recommends a more flexible approach that:

- Provides a **gradual and supported transition period** between children's and adult benefits, including tailored advice and independent advocacy.
- Recognises that **some young people may need to remain on children's or transitional benefits beyond 18**, based on individual assessments of their developmental stage, education status, and support needs.

In summary, rather than a fixed age cut-off, **eligibility should be based on individual needs and circumstances** to ensure young people receive timely and appropriate support, **avoiding unnecessary disruption or hardship**.

13. How can we support and ensure employers, including Small and Medium Sized Enterprises, to know what workplace adjustments they can make to help employees with a disability or health condition?

To ensure that employers, including small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), are equipped to make appropriate and effective workplace adjustments for employees with a disability or health condition, we recommend a **multi-faceted approach** that includes **funding reform, employer education**, and **cultural change**.

Our survey of parent-carers identified **inadequate workplace accommodations** as a key **barrier** to sustaining employment for disabled people and their carers. Notably, workplace adjustments alone are not enough. They must be **underpinned by a genuinely inclusive workplace culture**.

Parent-carers raised concerns about **how disabled employees** and those with health conditions are **treated**, particularly when requiring adaptations or extended absences for medical reasons. Many reported experiences of **discrimination, lack of understanding, or being unpaid during time off**, as well as **negative assumptions when their health fluctuated**. These cultural and structural issues create real barriers to retention, even when adjustments are in place.

Parent-carers also expressed **strong demand for flexible working, physical workplace adaptations, sensory-friendly environments, remote working options**, and **additional training and support**, none of which should depend solely on employer discretion or capacity.

In addition, the **lack of accessible, adapted, and affordable transport** was repeatedly raised as a critical **barrier** to employment. Without tackling this alongside workplace reform, disabled people and those with health conditions will continue to face compound disadvantage.

Feedback from the Head of our HR department highlighted that line managers often feel overwhelmed or unsure of how to provide effective support. Step-by-step guidance was seen as vital.

Additionally, it was noted that many organisations are still in the process of developing internal cultures where staff feel safe and supported in disclosing their needs. Without this cultural shift, adjustments may go unrequested or unmet. It is important for the Government to enable and

require employers to provide reasonable adjustments tailored to the individual needs of employees.

Key recommendations:

- Where adjustments are insufficient or unavailable, **offer direct government funding to individuals** to ensure access to essential support.
- **Support employers**, especially line managers, with practical training and clear processes can significantly improve confidence and delivery.
- **Expand Access to Work** by increasing its funding, improving responsiveness, streamlining the claims process, and allowing auto-enrolment for eligible individuals, especially those in precarious or temporary work.
- **Set clear, enforceable expectations for workplace mental health policies** across all employers.
- **Ensure access to in-house mental health support** as part of standard employment practice.
- **Invest in prevention strategies** to reduce burnout, bullying, and workplace stress issues frequently highlighted in our consultations.
- **Introduce stronger legal protections** and clearer guidance to guarantee fair and consistent treatment of disabled employees, especially in performance management and absence policies.
- **Co-produce and co-design all strategies** related to workplace adjustments and assistive technology with disabled people and carers to ensure solutions are relevant, effective, and user-friendly.