

# Calderdale DART: Spring 2014 Newsletter

**Office Address: Harrison House 10 Harrison Road Halifax HX1 2AF**

**TEL HX 346040 & 346950 FAX 322338**

**Email: [calderdaledart@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:calderdaledart@hotmail.co.uk)**

**Website: [www.calderdaledart.org.uk](http://www.calderdaledart.org.uk)**

**Telephone & reception opening hours Monday, Tuesday Thursday 10am to 4pm.  
Wednesdays & Fridays office appointments only, by arrangement**

Welcome to the latest edition of our newsletter which we hope you will find interesting and informative

## ➤ **Funding**

Last October, we were awarded a grant of £23,750 for an 'early intervention service' from the Councils Economic fighting fund, this project ended on 31<sup>st</sup> March. The end of the project brings to a close a 26 year funding relationship with Calderdale Council. We had received grants from Calderdale Council since 1988 firstly from Social Services and more recently from the Communities Directorate. A decision to tender for a 'one size fits all' advice and information service to all Calderdale residents in 2012 meant that we could not bid as we were set up to deliver a specialist disability advice and information service. We received some Transition funding from Calderdale Council for the period April 2012 to September 2013 which was followed by the Economic Fighting fund award for the period October 2013 to March 2014.

The loss of the Council funding now means we are unable to deal with many of the thousands of clients we previously assisted over the last 30 years. This is not only very frustrating for clients we cannot help; but to the staff at DART. We are very aware of the demand on services such as ours, particularly at a time when so many changes are being made to the benefits system as a result of the Governments Welfare Reform Programme. We had warned the Council that their decision to cut over £100,000 from their advice budget and to go for a single tender would have a huge impact on our client group who were the ones facing most of the welfare reform measures, but this was to no avail. We did apply to the Big Lottery fund for a service around the welfare reform changes and although our application was considered by them to be a good one, it was rejected on the basis that demand outstripped supply. We will continue to pursue other funding avenues where possible, but as anyone who works in the voluntary sector knows, no one appears to want to fund advice services even though there is so much demand for them.

We will continue to deliver our Cancer Support service funded by the Calderdale and Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust; a carer's advice service which funded by the Carers

Project, and we provide a small amount of disability rights advice through the Making Advice Work Partnership Project (funded by the Lottery). In the next few months we will be launching a new service funded by the Calderdale Clinical Commissioning Group (CCCG). This will be a 2 year service which will offer a Personal Planning Process primarily to newly disabled people who face life changes as a result of the sudden onset of disability. We will publicise the service once we are ready to launch it.

We would like to offer apologies in advance to anyone who may contact us for help in the coming months, as unfortunately unless you fit into our remodelled client group, because of these changes to our funding, we may be unable to help you.

### ➤ Premises

For the past 21 years we have been tenants of a Council owned building at Harrison House. Over 12 months ago a decision was taken to put the building up for sale. This followed the loss of revenue income to the council when the Substance Misuse Service had decided to move from the building in March 2011. Early in the New Year a decision was taken to sell the building at auction. During this period our service faced numerous disruptions from people wandering around the building to view prior to the sale. The auction took place on 20<sup>th</sup> February and we were told by the Estate Agent the building was sold, a completion date was set for 20<sup>th</sup> March. On 27<sup>th</sup> February a leak was discovered in the cellar and the Council decided to turn the boiler off. The Council supplied us with 4 electric heaters. If anyone reading this is familiar with our office you will know that the four heaters would have the same effect as having your gas fire on at home and opening all of the doors and windows. We continued to pursue the Council to get the repair carried out and were eventually told that it was the new owners responsibility. However the Council cancelled then reinstated the cleaning service, and also informed us that the rent and service charge liability was still with the Council. We continued to pursue the Council over the boiler repair as they would not release the contact details of the new owner until he completed the purchase.

Over two years ago we also reported a leak to the roof in one of the toilets which also seeped down to the disabled toilet below. Mould spores then developed and plaster started to fall from the ceiling and walls. We constantly pursued this repair with the Council, and every now and then a workman would call and have a look. Eventually the toilet became impossible to use and the Council's solution was to put up a not in use sign . They then agreed to open up two toilets in the upper part of the building; these toilets are up 23 steps and are physically impossible to access by some members of staff and our clients, who had to continue using the disabled toilet with its 'built in shower' from the water above. It will come as no surprise that eventually a member of staff slipped on the floor causing an injury to her back. We are hoping there will be no long lasting damage and we are now trying to find out who would be liable either the Council or the new owner.

We have now been given the name and email address of the new owner , although he has still not responded to our request to meet with him, or to let us know when the boiler will be repaired. We do know that we have had to endure some terrible working conditions since 27<sup>th</sup> February and that we are likely to have a very large electricity bill for what has been an

ineffective alternative heating system. Whilst we cannot offer thanks to the Council for their concern; we can only hope the new owner has more of a duty of care to his tenants. The sale of Harrison House also means that after 27 years we will no longer be tenants of the Council.

➤ **Bedroom tax' is causing severe financial hardship, say MPs**

**The government's "bedroom tax" is causing "severe financial hardship and distress" to disabled people who can do nothing to avoid its impact, according to a committee of MPs.**

The work and pensions select committee said that the bedroom tax – or the spare room subsidy removal, as it is called by the government – was having a "particular impact" on disabled people who have adapted homes or need an extra room to hold medical equipment or accommodate a carer.

The committee said it was "deeply concerned that the policy is causing severe financial hardship and distress to people with disabilities, many of whom will not easily be able to move".

The regulations, introduced last April, mean that tenants in social housing are punished financially if they are assessed as "under-occupying" their homes.

The committee, chaired by the disabled Labour MP Dame Anne Begg, recommends in the report that anyone living in a home that has been significantly adapted for them should be exempt from the bedroom tax.

[The report on the government's housing benefit reforms](#) also recommends an exemption for all households containing someone receiving higher level disability living allowance or personal independence payment.

And if the government is unwilling to introduce these measures, the committee says it should provide an exemption for those disabled adults unable to share a room with a partner because of their impairment, or when a room is required for medical equipment, or for a carer.

Witnesses to the inquiry estimated that 60-70 per cent of households in England affected by the bedroom tax and 80 per cent of affected households in Scotland contain a disabled person.

And an estimated 100,000 affected households live in properties which have been adapted or were purpose-built to accommodate the tenant's disability-related needs.

The latest estimates suggest the bedroom tax has affected half a million households, with an annual financial loss to households in the north of England's three areas of £160 million, compared with £30 million in the south-east (not including London).

The committee says the bedroom tax is a “blunt instrument” for achieving the government’s wish to use social housing stock more efficiently and reduce overcrowding.

Dame Anne said: “The government has reformed the housing cost support system with the aim of reducing benefit expenditure and incentivising people to enter work.

“But vulnerable groups, who were not the intended targets of the reforms and are not able to respond by moving house or finding a job, are suffering as a result.”

She added: “Discretionary housing payments (DHPs), which local authorities can award to people facing hardship in paying their rent, are not a solution for many claimants.

“They are temporary, not permanent, and whether or not a claimant is awarded DHP is heavily dependent on where they live, because different local authorities apply different eligibility rules.”

The committee said it was “a particular concern” that some local authorities were taking income from disability benefits into account in the means tests they applied for determining eligibility for DHP awards, and that this practice should be stopped.

The committee called on the Department for Work and Pensions to monitor the impacts of its reforms “carefully” and take “urgent remedial action where necessary to assist the hardest hit claimants, particularly as many of them may be affected by other welfare reforms, including those to disability and incapacity benefits”.

Meanwhile, [the Child Poverty Action Group](#) is acting in a judicial review for two disabled grandparents, Paul and Susan Rutherford, whose 13-year-old disabled grandson Warren, needs 24-hour care by at least two people.

Two paid care workers stay overnight in their adapted, three-bedroom bungalow at least twice a week.

But as a result of the bedroom tax, the family have been found to be “under-occupying” their home and have had their housing benefit cut.

Although the regulations allow for an extra bedroom if the claimant or their partner needs overnight care, this does not apply if a disabled child needs an overnight care worker.

The Rutherfords’ lawyers are arguing that this discriminates against disabled children, under the European Convention on Human Rights. A high court hearing is set to take place on 14 May.

***(Disability News Service 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2014)***

## ➤ Council Tax

### **Direct Debit**

Direct Debit is by far the most popular way people choose to pay their Council Tax and in Calderdale over 45,000 households (60%) already use this method.

### **So why should you switch to Direct Debit?**

As well as being very quick and easy to set up (either online, by phone or in person), it's free, totally secure and you can pick from a number of different payment dates. What makes Direct Debit the ideal way to pay Council Tax is that it is automatic and takes the worry out of having to remember to pay each month!

### **Request to pay Council Tax by twelve monthly instalments**

The Government has amended Council Tax legislation so as to enable Council Tax payers to pay their monthly instalments over the whole financial year instead of the previous ten month scheme.

If you already pay by Direct Debit **your deductions will be amended automatically** to collect the new instalment amounts.

Use the online form to [Request to pay Council Tax by twelve monthly instalments](#).

### **Debt advice**

If you have Council Tax arrears and are having problems paying it back, you can contact the Council who can provide advice to Calderdale residents about their debts.

We can help in a number of ways:

- we can help you sort out your debt problem in the best way for you, and with your agreement
- we can check your benefits to make sure you are getting all the money that you should
- we can advise on solutions which cover all of your debts, such as debt management plans
- we can help arrange for the payments on what you owe to be reduced
- We can help you to regain control of your finances.

We won't make any judgment about why you are in debt. Our job is to help sort out the problem, however the debts arose. **Contact** [revenues.recovery@calderdale.gov.uk](mailto:revenues.recovery@calderdale.gov.uk)

**Telephone:** 01422 393649.

## Other sources of advice

The following organisations can advise on different types of debt such as rent and mortgage arrears, credit card debts and bank loans, the payment of council tax or miscellaneous invoices.

They can help:

- check you are getting all the benefits you may be entitled to
- help you to identify the most important debts and take action accordingly. The law gives different creditors different ways of getting their money back.
- help plan your weekly and monthly budget
- draw up a financial statement by looking at your income and outgoings
- help you to decide on a plan to deal with your debts
- negotiate with the people you owe money to
- Advise you on court procedures, help reply to court documents and represent at court appearances where appropriate.

➤ **Name:** Calderdale Citizens Advice Bureau

➤ **Web site:** [Calderdale Citizens Advice Bureau](#)➔

➤ **Telephone**

➤ **Name:** Bankruptcy-Insolvency Debt Advice Service

➤ **Web site:** [Bankruptcy-Insolvency Debt Advice Service](#)➔

➤ **Telephone:** 0800 074 6918.

➤ **Name:** StepChange Debt Charity

➤ **Web site:** [StepChange Debt Charity](#)➔

➤ **Freephone:** 0800 138 1111.

➤ **Name:** Debt Support Trust

➤ **Web site:** [Debt Support Trust](#)➔

➤ **Freephone:** 0800 085 0226.

➤ **Name:** National Debtline

➤ **Address:** Tricorn House 51 - 53 Hagley Road Edgbaston Birmingham B16 8TP

➤ **Web site:** [National Debtline](#)

➤ **Freephone:** 0808 808 4000

*(Calderdale Council website)*

## ➤ Care in Calderdale

Calderdale Council is one of only 16 councils in the country who provide care for those who are assessed as having Moderate, Substantial or Critical needs.

According to a report by Age UK, national spend on social care services for older people has significantly reduced since 2010. 87.5% of local authorities only provide care for those assessed as having Substantial or Critical needs.

Despite budget pressures, Calderdale Council wants to ensure that older people in the borough get the help they deserve. By continuing to support people whose needs come into the Moderate, Substantial and Critical categories, we aim to look after those who are in need due to disability or illness, or because they might not have families, friends or neighbours to help them.

One of the ways we're supporting older people is by committing to becoming a dementia friendly borough. Dementia is a growing problem in the UK. It is estimated that 1 in 20 people over 65, and 1 in 5 over 80 are affected by dementia. Over 670,000 people in England currently live with dementia (or condition), and this number is expected to double over the next 30 years.

Calderdale Council is working with Alzheimer's Society to make the borough a Dementia Friendly Community. We will be inviting organisations from the public, private and voluntary sectors to join Calderdale Dementia Action Alliance. In addition to encouraging these organisations to become more dementia friendly, the Alliance will also act as a catalyst for the development of Dementia Friendly Communities across Calderdale.

This will be done by:

- Raising awareness in the community for both people and businesses
- Asking people to think how they could help people with dementia
- Recognising that people with dementia can make a contribution in their community

Calderdale Council's Cabinet Member for Adults, Health and Social Care, Cllr Bob Metcalfe, said:

*"I'm really pleased that we are one of the few councils that continue to provide care for those assessed as having Moderate needs.*

*"We're all aware of budget pressures for the Council, but despite these limited funds, we continue to provide the advice and support needed for those who are finding it increasingly difficult to manage tasks at home due to failing health, age or disability.*

*“Our work on tackling dementia also shows our commitment to increasing the awareness and understanding of the disease, and improving care for everyone affected.”*

For more information including a description of the four levels of eligibility for support visit [Access to care](#) or for details about our work with the Alzheimer’s Society visit [Dementia Friendly Communities](#)

*(Calderdale Council News Centre 27<sup>th</sup> March 2014)*

➤ **DWP misses incapacity benefit migration deadline... and then blames Atos**



The government’s highly-politicised programme to reassess every disabled person claiming old-style incapacity benefit (IB) has missed its deadline for completion, Disability News Service (DNS) can reveal.

The coalition launched the reassessment programme early in 2011 and insisted that it would be completed within three years, by the end of March 2014.

But many of the 1.5 million disabled people who were to be reassessed are still waiting to be tested by the government’s contractors Atos Healthcare for their eligibility for employment and support allowance (ESA), which is replacing IB.

The national “migration” programme of people still claiming IB had been due to start in April 2011 but actually began several weeks earlier than planned. At its peak, more than 10,000 disabled people every week were being tested by Atos.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) was only able to give figures from last June, which showed that about three-quarters of IB claimants who were due to be reassessed had “been through the process”.

Later figures were not available, but DWP admitted that it had missed its deadline of the end of March. It claimed that the decision to allow Atos to quit before the end of its contract next year had had a “knock-on effect on our intention to complete the process of IB reassessment by April 2014”.

In February, DNS reported how Atos staff were openly blaming a shortage of doctors willing to work for the company for causing lengthy delays in assessing disabled people for their “fitness for work”.

And last week, DWP announced that it had agreed to let Atos pull out early from the contract to carry out work capability assessments (WCAs) on both new ESA claimants and existing IB claimants.

A DWP spokesman said: “This has had a knock-on effect on our intention to complete the process of IB reassessment by April 2014, and we continue to work hard to reassess the remaining claimants who remain on IB.”

But he was unable to say how many IB claimants were still waiting to be reassessed, or how long the reassessment process would last.

The delayed reassessment migration is the latest embarrassment for work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith and his sweeping programme of welfare reforms.

The Work Programme, the new universal credit system, the replacement of working-age disability allowance by personal independence payment, and the imposition of the “bedroom tax” – among other programmes – have been plagued by delays, technical problems, and accusations that they discriminate against disabled people.

Coalition ministers have repeatedly insisted that the IB reassessment programme was necessary in order to help disabled people who have been “abandoned” on out-of-work benefits back into the job market.

Since the reassessment programme started, ministers have repeatedly tried to emphasise how many former IB claimants have been found “fit for work”, but have been far less keen to talk about the small proportion who have then found jobs through the Work Programme or the specialist Work Choice scheme.

Disabled activists have also pointed to links between the WCA and the way Atos carries out the assessments, and relapses, episodes of self-harm, and even suicides and other premature deaths among those being reassessed.

In December, the court of appeal – in a case driven by IB claimants worried about the reassessment programme – ruled that the WCA discriminates against people with mental health conditions, learning difficulties and autism.

Meanwhile, [the latest figures for new ESA claimants](#) show that, for claims begun in April to June last year, 69 per cent of those assessed were initially found eligible for ESA and just 31 per cent found fit for work, with 51 per cent placed in the support group for those with the highest support needs.

The numbers eligible for ESA are likely to rise even higher once the results of appeals feed through into the figures.

When the WCA was at its harshest, in the winter of 2008 – soon after its introduction – only 10 per cent of claimants were being placed in the support group after their WCA, with as many as 65 per cent found fit for work.

The DWP spokesman said: “We have regular independent reviews into the WCA so we can ensure disabled people receive the level of support that they need.

“The rise in the number of people in the support group reflects that ESA is being directed to those who need it most.

“People who disagree with the decision on their claim are entitled to ask for the decision to be reviewed as a mandatory reconsideration. If they are still not satisfied they have the option of taking it to a tribunal.”

The website [Benefits and Work pointed to other figures in the report](#) which it said showed the ESA system was “on the verge of complete collapse”.

The figures show that, for claims made between April and June 2013, 33 per cent of claimants were still waiting for their assessment or a decision on their eligibility.

This has risen from 27 per cent in the January 2014 figures (claims started from January to March 2013), and 21 per cent in the October 2013 release (for claims started between October and December 2012).

In [the April 2012 release](#), just 16 per cent of claims were still ongoing (claims started from June to August 2011).

***(Disability News service 3 April 2014)***

➤ **Right to ask for personal health budgets**



People with complex health care needs now have the ‘right to ask’ for a personal health budget.

The scheme is being rolled out across the country after the budgets were trialled in a national pilot programme between 2009 and 2012 at sites all over the country.

They give people more independence over how their healthcare money is spent, be that on carers to provide intensive help at home, equipment to improve quality of life or therapies like counselling.

People with complex health care needs from April 1st have the 'right to ask' for a personal health budget.

The scheme is being rolled out across the country after the budgets were trialled in a national pilot programme between 2009 and 2012 at sites all over the country.

They give people more independence over how their healthcare money is spent, be that on carers to provide intensive help at home, equipment to improve quality of life or therapies like counselling.

**Tim Kelsey, NHS National Director for Patients and Information**, said: "We are very pleased today to launch the next step in the roll-out of personal health budgets. From today people who have significant health needs and are eligible for NHS Continuing Healthcare, can ask their NHS team to provide their care through a personal health budget.

"We are also pleased that from October eligible people across England will have the right to have a personal health budget which can make a significant difference to peoples' quality of life and help them stay out of hospital. We have been working with Clinical Commissioning Groups all over the country to ensure they are prepared to provide eligible patients with all the information they need and to provide the budgets as an option from October."

Over the past year every CCG in England has signed up to NHS England's support programme and more than 80 per cent have attended the Accelerated Development Programme helping them prepare to offer the budgets and support patients to plan their care.

A personal health budget is an amount of NHS money available to some people with long term conditions to meet their healthcare and well-being needs. People design and agree a plan with their healthcare team that shows how they will use the budget to meet their goals, which could include therapies, personal care and equipment. The budgets can be managed in the form of a notional budget, direct payments or a third party arrangement.

Personal health budgets are not new money – they are a way of using NHS money differently, where people want to and where it is clinically safe.

The budgets were trialled in a national pilot programme between 2009 and 2012 which showed that they led to better quality of life and psychological well-being, and, particularly

for people with complex healthcare needs who use a lot of NHS services, led to a reduction in hospital use.

The Government's Mandate to the NHS also states that from April 2015 people with long term conditions who could benefit will have the option of one. This policy is expected to be further developed in 2014/15.

NHS Continuing Healthcare is the name given to a package of care that is arranged and funded solely by the NHS for individuals who are not in hospital but have complex ongoing healthcare needs. This is a relatively small number of people, around 58,000 nationally, who have the most complex long term health needs and potentially have the most to benefit from a more personalised and flexible approach to managing their health needs. Taking up a personal health budget will be optional, and anyone who does not want to manage their healthcare needs in this way can leave their care arrangements as they are now.

The [NHS England website has information, resources and individual stories](#).

The [full evaluation can be found on the Public Health Budgets Evaluation website](#).

For more about personal budgets go to <http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/how-we-can-help/benefits-information/factsheets/independent-living-factsheets>

*(Disability Rights UK News April 2014)*

### **Participants needed for a study concerning the emotional impact of cancer**

In the Department of Psychology at the University of Sheffield, we are conducting research into how people of any age with any type of cancer feel about themselves and the consequences those feelings might have for mental health.

The study involves filling out a series of short questionnaires and will take approximately 15 minutes. All responses are anonymous and will be treated confidentially.

A full debrief will be available following participation and we will give participants feedback on the results at the end of the study.

If you are interested in taking part in the research, please use the following link to access the study pages, find out more information and to take part:

[https://sheffieldpsychology.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV\\_0kdwMCqWNd3bvhi](https://sheffieldpsychology.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_0kdwMCqWNd3bvhi) or type the details into your browser

The study is password-protected and you will need the following password to log in:  
myemotion

Thanks, your participation is very much appreciated.

Regards, Haffiezhah An-Nadiyah Azlan

## ➤ **Need help through the benefits maze?**

**Disability Rights Handbook: Our guide to benefits and services for all disabled people, their families, carers and advisers.**

In this period of welfare reform and benefit cuts, keeping up with the new rules is critical. Fully updated for 2014-15, this book provides in-depth, comprehensive guidance on the benefits system and information on other services and resources.

- How the system works, how to claim and how to challenge decisions
- Benefits for people living with health conditions, injury or disability and for carers, children and young people
- Support for those looking for work or in retirement
- Getting and paying for care services

From 2014, Universal Credit – a new benefit replacing six benefits and tax credits – will be rolled out across parts of the UK. Potentially affecting almost eight million people, this represents the biggest change to the benefits system since the introduction of the welfare state. In this period of unprecedented change and benefits cuts, keeping up with the new rules is crucial.

### **Keep your Handbook up to date all year**

Add the Handbook Updater to your order and we'll send you page-by-page updates as legislation changes throughout the year. Published bi-monthly from June 2014 to February 2015 it will arrive directly to your **email inbox** in a convenient, easy to print A4 PDF format. Just select the Handbook plus Updater option from the drop down below. Just £5 (including VAT)

#### **Prices**

- **Concessionary:** £17.00
- **Concessionary + Updater:** £22.00
- **Full price:** £32.50
- **Full price + Updater:** £37.50
- Address 12 City Forum, 250 City Road London EC1V 8AF

Office Number: 020 7250 3222 (this line open Mon-Fri, between 09.00 and 12.30pm and 1.30 and 4.00pm)

Fax Number: 020 7247 8765

Email: [enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org](mailto:enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org)

- - See more at: <http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/contact-us#sthash.NxfG5JgJ.dpuf>

**The handbook will be sent to you when it is published in May**

## ➤ Civil servants deployed to help Capita clear PIP assessments backlog

Demand for face-to-face evaluations for disability benefit has overwhelmed the company contracted to carry them out

Ministers have been forced to intervene and deploy civil servants to shore up a private company struggling to clear a backlog of medical assessments for payments to tens of thousands of terminally ill, sick and disabled people.

In a letter leaked to the Guardian, a senior civil servant says the "one-off" step will be taken because Capita is failing to process the recently introduced personal independence payment (PIP) claims in time.

The benefit, worth between £21 and £134 a week, is meant to cover transport, care and other costs associated with being seriously sick or disabled. Waiting times for assessment have been so long that in some cases people with terminal conditions have died before receiving a penny.

Speaking on the BBC's Andrew Marr Show on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> April, the work and pensions secretary, Iain Duncan Smith, said his new PIP system would be fairer than the old disability living allowance (DLA). Under DLA, he said, people went years and years without being able to get the right support for their condition. With PIP, Duncan Smith said, many more people would get face-to-face assessments and the right sort of help.

However, the demand for face-to-face evaluations has overwhelmed the company contracted to carry them out – so much so that the DWP may cut back on such assessments to reduce waiting times.

In a letter dated 20 March, DWP staff were told they would be drafted in for a "one-off exercise" to clear Capita's backlog. Work to reduce "the current backlog to a normal level of work ... was now moving at pace", the letter said.

It added: "Ministers have also been very clear that they see the need to drive up PIP performance to an acceptable level as a key priority for the department."

In one of three steps to be trialed, the department will cut down on face-to-face referrals by getting its own staff to determine whether people are eligible for PIP using paper-only evidence.

"We are also considering whether DWP case managers could make more decisions earlier in the journey before formal referral" to Capita, the letter said.

The DWP confirmed that a pilot of paper-based decisions was starting in Wales and Bootle, but said it had always stated that if the case laid out in paper submissions was straightforward, not everyone would need a face-to-face interview with a medical professional.

PIP has already been criticised by the National Audit Office, which said in February that a backlog of 92,000 claims had built up and that people were facing "distress and financial difficulties" because of mismanagement by civil servants as well as Atos and Capita.

Last year the coalition disability minister Mike Penning said those diagnosed with illnesses such as terminal cancer would not have to wait longer than seven days to receive extra state aid.

Asked why he had not imposed formal targets on Capita and Atos, Penning said he would use his "size 10 boots" to enforce the desired wait times.

Following sustained criticism of their work, last month Atos confirmed it was departing early from another contract similar to PIP. Duncan Smith told the Marr show that Atos would be paying reparations for their failures on the work capability assessment contract.

"We have now actually asked them [Atos] to go, to leave. They didn't ask us to go, we have asked them. And we will not pay a penny for that. They will actually pay reparations for failure to achieve what they were meant to achieve. The taxpayer will not be out of pocket."

Mark Serwotka, head of the Public and Commercial Services union (PCS), which represents frontline DWP staff, said such benefit assessments should not have been outsourced in the first place.

"We have consistently said these sorts of services should be in-house, private companies have no place in providing them and have failed time and again. The DWP needs to invest in staff and resources to ensure disabled people get the support they need and deserve," he said.

Capita said it was dealing with the situation by "taking on extra staff, including healthcare professionals, and extending the hours for carrying out assessments".

It said: "We continue to deliver the assessments in a fair and objective way, providing high-quality reports to allow the Department to make its decision, and giving people the time they need to tell us how their disability affects them."

A DWP spokesperson said: "Ministers are committed to driving up PIP performance and we're in regular contact with our providers to do this, as you would expect.

"We've always said that where claimants have enough evidence they won't need to be seen in person. However, the majority of people will continue to have face-to-face assessments under the new benefit this government introduced, unlike the old system of disability living allowance where only around 6% were seen."

*(Guardian April 2014)*

➤ **Budget for a bleaker future: By Ian Macrae**

**In widening even further the gulf between the haves and have-nots, George Osborne has also legislated against making things better in future.**

Yet again George Osborne has drawn an unhelpful distinction between those on social security benefits, including millions of disabled people, and those seen by him and the government as being of greater worth.

Towards the end of his budget statement in the House of Commons the chancellor referred to "the makers, doers and savers", saying the government is on their side. This was a budget which, in keeping with the increasingly clichéd language of government spin, had already been billed as "A budget for hard-working families".

There are disabled people who are both hard-working and members of families. There are also disabled people who make, do and save. But far too many more are forced into a make do and mend way of living.

This is because, as has been said often before in this blog and elsewhere on the Disability Now site, chancellor Osborne and his government colleagues have set about cutting the benefits which support people who, for reasons outside their control, aren't able to make or do things or have no money left over to save.

At the same time, he and his colleagues, most notably in the Department for work and Pensions, have demonised people in receipt of social security as skivers, cheats and scroungers.

Thus the line is drawn between the haves, who see themselves as being on the right side of the line, and the have-nots, whom the government has placed beyond the pail.

Although in this budget chancellor Osborne has made no further cuts on existing benefits, he's done something far more insidious and equally regressive. In creating a cap on future social security spending, he has deliberately and seriously reduced the options of future governments to be able to undo his work and redress the balance in favour of disabled people on benefits. This looks less like ideological reform and more like spite.

*(Disability Now Newsletter)*



Thank you for supporting our organisation; since we joined Local giving we have raised nearly £6,000

Your support is important to us so we want to tell you about Localgiving.com, the fundraising website we use.

Donating to us through Localgiving.com lets you claim Gift Aid\*, giving us an additional 25% at no extra cost to you!

It also saves on administration, which means we have more time to focus on our important work. To make a donation go to:

**[Localgiving.com/calderdaledart](https://localgiving.com/calderdaledart)**

Or visit any page on our website and click on the “make a donation” banner

Thanks again for your generosity and support. We hope you’ll continue to support us through Localgiving.com

*Whilst every effort is taken to ensure that the information given is accurate, Calderdale DART cannot accept responsibility for the description or other circumstances relating to information given in this newsletter*