

Meeting Notes

Our monthly meeting notes, agenda and updates.

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RSN Greater London August Notes

Updates from the Disability Unit

- RSN Chairs and DU Monthly meeting took place 29 July 1.30-3pm. Zara Todd met with the Chairs to update on the work of the independent Disability Advisory Panel. She welcomed any issues the RSNs may wish to raise to the panel so we could enlist their leverage along with ours.
- RSN Chairs to send DU their **top 3** RSN priority themes by region by *1 September*. I created a page [RSN London Themes](#) to gather our thoughts, but the ones we had discussed to date included:
 - Social care for disabled adults
 - Mental healthcare act
 - Unpaid carers and their rights as workers
 - SMI alongside disabilities
 - Lifelong lack of independence making language and the push to economic value oppressive
 - Others to come
- The next theme is **Access to Work (*July to October*)**. Initial thoughts were discussed at the DU-RSN Chair meeting on 23

September, ahead of a high level 4 minute verbal summary per region at the Minister Timms-RSN Chair meeting in October (date TBC). Detailed written feedback to be collated and sent to DU by 25 September. The RSN can cover what they would like on the theme, however DWP have listed what it would be useful for the RSN to consider providing feedback on (see the document of minutes from the meeting for details).

- The following theme is afterwards is the **Plan for Disability**, which we expect to run in autumn 2026 (exact timings on this are to be confirmed).

Updates from RSN Greater London

We have two new members - Lora Noncheva and Ian Fenn. They both bring loads of lived experience and knowledge to our membership. I'll ask them if they'd like to intro themselves in our call.

I am testing digital tools as mentioned last month.

Thanks to Michele, I was reminded our old email list was stopped when I moved off Google Workspace. This is now reinstated with my

newer email provider, Proton. You will have been invited to a new email list, please do accept.

All email sent to the list email address below will be distributed to all members of that list, including replies to it.

members@rsngreaterlondon.org.uk

For collecting feedback to specific topics like our themes, I have set up another go with Etherpad, a collaborative web page to gather views on Access to Work, our current theme for the Minister. We used this for the PIP Review a while back. This can be accessed at any time of your convenience at this link:

https://rsn-pad.pikapod.net/p/RSN_Greater_London_Access_To_Work_Pad

In terms of keeping notes and documents, I'm trying out this wiki, which is a collaborative website that all logged in people can view, navigate, edit and add comments. It uses a books metaphor.

You use your email address and your first name-last name (all one word) as the password. Do change your password afterwards.

[RSN Greater London](#) is our bookshelf, which holds books for [Meeting Notes](#), [Ministerial Themes](#), [RSN London Themes](#), [RSN Greater London Info](#). Each book has pages such as what you're reading now. You can navigate using the menu visible at all times, and see where you are with the breadcrumbs at the top. It should be a straightforward structure.

On each page, there are Actions on the left to edit, watch for changes, or add a page.

You can add comments by highlighting text and clicking on the chat balloon in the little pop up that appears, or just click add a comment at the bottom of the page.

Just [email me](#) with any questions or help.

<https://ddl-bookstack.pikapod.net/shelves/rsn-greater-london>

Another is a discussion forum, which is a way to keep messages or posts in structured channels for multiple discussions and feedback to issues at the same time, but without the need for real time chat as in WhatsApp.

Link TBC

RSN Greater London July Notes

Overview

I apologise for the prolonged silence, I was very busy in June and then out of the UK till almost mid-July, so catching up on things.

At the July monthly meeting, I had some technical difficulties getting the Zoom meeting started and quite a few people sent apologies.

There is never an issue with not being able to join monthly meetings, we always hope to see you when possible and will share updates here and by email/WhatsApp to keep you updated.

I am trying different digital tools to allow for more ways to input or respond. You can share your comments and feedback via comments here in:

A wiki to share docs and pages for comments. More coming with a link.

EtherPad (our collaborative doc tool to gather views for various issues to Government - https://rsn-pad.pikapod.net/p/RSN_Greater_London_Pad)

Email (chair@rsngreaterlondon.org.uk)

WhatsApp group (joining link, but not obligatory - https://chat.whatsapp.com/HZSjpReBjCDFb5qdSS6ppr?mode=gi_t)

The Disabled Londoner (<https://thedisabledlondoner.org.uk>), via comments to posts

Any publicly accessible updates and general disability news have been published here:

<https://thedisabledlondoner.org.uk>

Latest

Following Andy Burnham's appointment as PM, in the restructure, the Disability Unit has moved with Equalities and Opportunities, from Cabinet Office to the [Ministry of Housing, Communities and](#)

[Local Government](#). Minister Stephen Timms remains as key minister for disabled people.

I'll chase on more updated from the DU, as I haven't heard from them in a while, but we are having our monthly meeting of the DU and RSN Chairs this Wednesday, the 29th, so I can share more after that.

Updates sent from the Disability Unit

Minutes from the last monthly Disability Unit and RSN Chairs Meeting on 1st July (attended by Kush as Deputy as I was away).

Key points/actions to note:

- Disability Confident scheme survey closes at 11:59pm on 17 July.

- **Next DU-RSN Chairs monthly meeting** 29 July 1.30-3pm (August meeting cancelled), where DU hope to bring Zara Todd to meet with the Chairs to update on the work of the independent Disability Advisory Panel.
 - RSN Chairs to send DU *their* **top** 3 RSN priority themes by region by *1 September*.
 - The next theme is **Access to Work (*July to October*)**. Initial thoughts to be discussed at the DU-RSN Chair meeting on 23 September ahead of a high level 4 minute verbal summary per region at the Minister Timms-RSN Chair meeting in October (date TBC). Detailed written feedback be sent to DU to collate for DWP by 25 September. The RSN can cover what they would like on the theme, however DWP have listed what it would be useful for the RSN to consider providing feedback on (see the minutes for details).
 - The following theme is then the **Plan for Disability**, which we expect to run in autumn 2026 (exact timings on this are to be confirmed).
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Equal Pay and Pay Discrimination

The Office for Equality and Opportunity (OEO), within the Cabinet Office, have today launched a [consultation on Equal Pay and Pay Discrimination](#).

The UK government is seeking evidence and views on how we can deliver a comprehensive ***reform of the current pay discrimination framework*** so that it works better for workers, businesses, and the justice system.

We are seeking views on proposals to fix the areas of the system that are currently falling short. We are also seeking views on how we can address gaps and inconsistencies in the framework currently affecting disabled people, those from ethnic minority groups, and outsourced workers. The responses from this consultation will help us to ensure that we meet our ambition and fulfill our objectives to:

- make pay discrimination less likely to happen in the first place
- provide effective legal protections against pay discrimination for women, ethnic minority people, disabled people and outsourced workers
- where a dispute about pay discrimination does arise, make it easier to resolve, reducing the time and expense involved for

claimants, employers and the justice system

We are committed to collaborating with businesses, civil society, and trade unions to get the balance right with these reforms, ensuring that they fully account for all parties' needs and circumstances. The responses to this consultation will be used to inform our next steps.

As an important stakeholder, we are keen for the RSN to be able to share your views. We would also encourage you to share this information with your wider networks.

Unfortunately we are unable to publish the accessible and alternative formats of the consultation document today. We appreciate the frustration this may cause to you and your members, and will publish these formats on [this page](#) as soon as possible. To ensure alternative formats are available for sufficient time to enable consideration of our proposals, we have extended the consultation to 15 weeks. This consultation closes at **5pm on 27 October 2026**. We will write to you again when the accessible and alternative formats are available.

As you will have seen from my email yesterday, you have been sent an invite for an optional meeting this ***Friday 17 July 11-11.20/30am*** with my colleagues in the wider OEO to update you on this work. Please bring any questions/comments on the above to this call.

RSN Annual Activity Update

Please find a letter attached from Minister Timms writing to you announcing the publication of the RSN annual activity update, which covers the work of the RSN December 2024 to December 2025.

The DU also want to thank the RSN Chairs and their members for all their hard work. Please can you share the letter and report with your members. Here is the link to the report (also in accessible formats):

www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-unit-regional-stakeholder-network-annual-activity-update and we have also added

a link to it from the main RSN page:

www.gov.uk/government/groups/disability-unit-regional-stakeholder-network#about-the-rsn

Here also are links to comms that we have put out around this today and we would be grateful if you are able to re-share any of these on your own accounts please, as this publication not only showcases the great work of the RSN, but also hopefully encourages new member applications:

LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/posts/rsn-ugcPost-7482451726042689536-Wrc/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_ios&rcm=ACoAADc3WGsBobKteYYtGc6LfdzW5wyk-K68-4o

X: <https://x.com/oeogovuk/status/2076684451422110155?s=20>

Timms Review Update

Please see an **update from the co-chairs** of the Timms Review: Sharon Brennan, Dr Clenton Farquharson CBE and the Minister for Social Security and Disability, Sir Stephen Timms on [The Timms Review - GOV.UK](#). Alternative formats (including BSL, Easy Read and audio) are also available on this page.

This co-chair update contains details of the Review's **Interim Report**, which we are sharing on behalf of the Timms Review steering group. The Interim Report provides a fuller update on the steering group's work to date, and includes a summary of the Call for Evidence findings.

The report is available at [Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment: Interim Report - GOV.UK](#) and alternative formats (including BSL, Easy Read and audio) are also available on this page. The steering group would be very grateful if you could share the Interim Report widely throughout your organisations and networks.

RSN Chairs Meetings and Next Theme

The **new RSN theme** will be **Access to Work**. My colleagues at ***DWP will come to speak to you all about this at the meeting*** of Chairs and the DU on the 29th.

At the meeting DU can also discuss with you on future themes following your queries by email.

We will also have a colleague from the **DU ATech team** *coming to the meeting to update you about their work.*

The next DU and Chairs meeting is 29th July 130pm.

Other Government-related Updates

Employment Gap Report Launch - 13 July 2026

I attended the launch of the **Employment Gap Report Out of Sight - Out of Work.**

This was in their follow up email:

A wide range of valuable perspectives were shared - including great input from yourself, with many useful points raised in the Report. Taken together, the discussion led to a clear and shared conclusion: the government needs to create a Taskforce to act on what is already known - the barriers are clearly defined, we now need to have the courage to create outcomes.

As we went round the table, it was evident that employers need more guidance and support to turn policies into processes; assistive technology skills need to be taught early on to enable; government must create a clear pathway for people from the point of diagnosis to enable them to make use of their talent; and shift culture and attitudes by leading the way in procurement.

We will be following up with you as we move this forward and would greatly value your continued involvement.

In the meantime, please find below a link to the Employment Gap Report Out of Sight – Out of Work as well as to today's LinkedIn post recapping the launch meeting.

Please do share freely on your official LinkedIn channels and to your member newsletters if you can!

Employment Gap Report Out of Sight – Out of Work

<https://lordchrisholmes.com/report-on-the-employment-gap-for-blind-and-partially-sighted-people-in-the-uk-out-of-sight-out-of-work/>

LinkedIn post:

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/lord-chris-holmes_73-of-blind-or-partially-sighted-bps-people-ugcPost-7482450105099382784-wv0x/?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAABrYTpAB0dHOa1Y1y1Sv3zefGsN2u9Q3LrM

DWP Roundtable 23rd June on Accessibility and Technology

I attended this remotely while waiting for my flight from Heathrow. Pat McFadden is gathering views on Accessibility and Technology for disabled people.

The next one is in September, where we will put forth ideas on the table.

Equality Objectives London

This is from a series of invitations from the Greater London Assembly:

The GLA is refreshing the Mayor's Equality Objectives, which are due to be published in 2026.

Reducing inequality is a priority for the Mayor and our engagement process will use our shared understanding of the Mayors' powers to build upon four key themes. The engagement will include identifying shared priorities and common themes across the objectives to tackle both structural and systemic drivers of inequality.

The first session will focus on theme 1:

Healthy and inclusive communities in London that have a voice in the decisions that affect their lives.

(e.g. reducing mental and physical health inequalities, support digital inclusion, invest in high street regeneration)

RSN Greater London

We've had two new applications to join our network. I am booking chats with both to learn more.

I met with a group in Parliament who were campaigning against the 'floating' bus stops in cities like London. They would be keen on our support in raising more awareness of this. National Federation of the Blind of the UK <https://www.nfbuk.org/>

As mentioned above, the theme for the next Ministerial meeting is on Access to Work, and hearing your views on this to bring to the meeting. I hope to hear more on dates in the Disability Unit and RSN Chairs meeting this Wednesday the 29th, but just wanted to give you all a heads-up

We also should review those issues of concern to ourselves and how we can go about collecting useful info and identify routes to bring this to the attention of relevant people via the Disability Unit.

Our issues covered adult social care, unpaid carers, life-long lack of independence and capacity, the mental health act and its impact on practices of institutional care.

RSN Greater London June Notes

Reminder our monthly meeting is Tuesday, 9th June at 6pm.

[https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82507632756?pwd=pQXbpop4UFbsb0KM
G6oE0xMFDTvkoc.1](https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82507632756?pwd=pQXbpop4UFbsb0KM
G6oE0xMFDTvkoc.1)

1. Disability Unit Updates

Timms Review update from steering committee

Please see an update from the co-chairs of the Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Sharon Brennan, Dr Clenton Farquharson CBE and Sir Stephen Timms, Minister for Social Security and Disability at: [The Timms Review - GOV.UK](#). Alternative formats (including BSL, Easy Read, Large Print and audio) are also available at this page.

This co-chair update contains details of a 'Workshop in a Box', which we are sharing on behalf of the Timms Review steering group. The Workshop in a Box is available to any organisation, group, or elected representative who wishes to participate, and aims to facilitate discussion about what PIP is for, what's it like to apply for PIP, and how decisions are made about PIP. There are drop-in webinars on 10 and 16 June, where anyone interested can hear more about the workshops and ask questions. Further information, including on how to sign up to a webinar, is available on at [Timms Review of Personal Independence Payment: run a workshop - GOV.UK](#). Alternative formats (including BSL, Easy Read, Large Print and audio) are also available at this page. Organisations will be able to submit insights from their workshops for 6 weeks, until 17 July.

The steering group would be very grateful if you would consider hosting one of these workshops using the resources provided.

Alan Milburn Report Young People and Work

This morning the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) officially published Alan Milburn's interim report for the independent review into Young People and Work.

You can view and download the official document directly on [GOV.UK](#) here: [**Young people and work: interim report**](#)

This concludes the discovery phase of the review; with final recommendations expected later this year.

[Disabled people's experiences of harassment and victimisation](#)

Page summary:

A qualitative evidence review that explores evidence on disabled people's lived experiences of harassment and victimisation in the UK.

[Disabled people's experiences of and access to justice in the UK](#)

Page summary:

A qualitative evidence review that explores evidence on disabled people's lived experiences of and access to justice.

[Disabled people's lived experience in the UK: evidence reviews and reports](#)

Page summary:

Reports on the lived experience of disabled people in the UK in areas including housing, jobs, relationships, education, social care and attitudes.

Timms Review Workshop in a Box

In our [recent open letter](#) we laid out our multi-strand evidence gathering and engagement programme designed to allow people and organisations to contribute to the Timms Review in a way that works for them. A varied approach will ensure that the Review is informed by both lived experience and wider evidence and underpins our commitment to co-produce the Review with disabled people, the organisations that represent them, carers, clinicians, experts, MPs and other stakeholders.

At the beginning of June 2026 we will be launching the fourth strand of this programme called 'Workshop in a Box'. This is a tool that will allow organisations of all sizes to provide evidence from real people on the impact of PIP on their lives.

We are sharing this information now to give stakeholders time to consider whether they may wish to host a Workshop in a Box engagement session and to provide as much planning time as possible for those that do.

1. What is a Timms Review Workshop in a Box?

This engagement tool was used by NHS England in Change NHS 2024 engagement. It is a tool that is aimed at helping you facilitate a conversation about the Timms Review and the role PIP plays in people's lives. The input we receive from this will form a key part of the co-production process of the Review.

We will provide downloadable materials on key areas of interest to the Steering Group to help you run your own events with the people you advocate for, the public or other stakeholders. We will also include a template to capture and share ideas and insights back with us to inform the Review.

The 'Workshop in a Box' will be open to anyone who would like to host a session. This includes, but is not limited to, DDPOs, disability or health charities, community groups, and elected representatives.

The Timms Review Workshop in a Box will be launched on 8 June 2026, with the window to return feedback until 17 July 2026. As a steering group we recognise the time and effort required to plan and facilitate these workshops, and this email is intended to provide as much notice as possible to support planning.

2. Our ask of you

The steering group recognises that charities, advisory networks and other grassroots organisations often hold greater trust with people with direct experience and knowledge of PIP. We also know that hearing from a wide range of voices, especially those least likely to engage with more formal Government evidence channels, is essential if we are to provide a PIP offer that is fair to all, including the most marginalised communities.

If you feel able to, we would like to ask you to reach out to your networks of disabled people or those with lived experience **once the Workshop in a Box offer has launched**, so we can ensure the steering group develops its recommendations from a broad foundation of lived, living and learned experience from across the UK.

In turn we will ensure that the Workshop in a Box materials are inclusive and provide flexibility on how to engage with people from

different backgrounds and communities. The Workshop in a Box offer is intended to be an inclusive and flexible opportunity for disabled people and individuals with direct experience of PIP to shape the Review.

Workshops can be held in-person or online, with a range of options for what to cover, allowing sessions to fit the expertise of participants and run from 30 minutes to two hours at a time. Hosts are encouraged to draw on their own expertise and understanding of those that they know best to run sessions in a way that best meets participants' needs.

The steering group is looking forward to hearing the views and experiences shared through these workshops and is grateful in advance for the time, knowledge and commitment involved in hosting them.

SEND Review Follow up Questions

Please find some answers from DfE to the specific questions raised. As mentioned throughout, the key has been ensuring that you all contribute your views and questions directly into the SEND consultation. Now the consultation has closed, please can future queries be directed to the standard DfE correspondence channel, details here: [Contact the Department for Education \(DfE\) - GOV.UK](#)

In addition, DU of course know just how important this topic is, and we will also provide you with any updates that we get from DfE on the SEND consultation next steps in due course.

What is happening to future EOTAS packages, especially those post-16 and post-19?

- *Current legislation remains in place and a local authority may continue to put in place education otherwise than at a school or college provision under section 61 of the Children and Families Act 2014, where it is satisfied that it would be inappropriate for the provision to be made in a school or college.*

- *The consultation proposes the introduction of specialist provision packages for all children and young people with complex needs. These packages will recognise and address needs which currently can lead to education outside of school being deemed appropriate, including, for example, a ‘Social and emotional development focused on internalising behaviours’ package. The department is appointing an independent expert panel who will advise on content and delivery of the packages. Decisions on the proposals will be informed by responses to the consultation including engagement events focussed on the use of EOTAS provision.*

We note that Connect to Work is now being advertised for 16-18-year-olds, will that affect EHCP’s being continued?

- *For most 16-18-year-olds, including those with EHCPs, education and training should take priority over employment programmes. This includes study programmes, supported internships, and apprenticeships. However, this may provide an alternative route for a few who may struggle to engage with other options.*

- *Young people with an EHCP are a key group who may be considered for Connect to Work, because they often have recognised special educational needs and/or disabilities that create barriers to employment. However, having an EHCP does not automatically make a young person eligible. They must still meet the programme's wider eligibility and suitability criteria.*

What classes as complex needs - is there a breakdown or menu-card so parents understand which “box” their young person is being placed in?

- *In the consultation, “complex needs” refers to children and young people who require specialist-level support. Rather than setting a single definition, complexity will be defined through the Specialist Provision Packages, each of which will clearly describe the needs it is intended to support. Broadly, complex needs are significant and long-term needs that cannot be met in mainstream classrooms alone, even with enhanced SEN support. This includes children who need a substantially different curriculum, a significantly adapted way*

of accessing the curriculum, or a high level of specialist support, adaptations or equipment.

- *In future, a statutory needs assessment will be based on whether a child or young person needs the provision set out in one of the Specialist Provision Packages. We will ensure that the packages are broad enough, to ensure that each individual child or young person will have their specific needs met through the provision they receive from the Package. This individualisation and personalisation will be captured in their EHCP.*
- *The Packages will reflect the best available evidence from both research and practice. They will be developed by sector experts, including specialist and mainstream headteachers and MAT leaders, local authority commissioners and specialist practitioners such as EPs, SaLTs and OTs. An independent expert panel will oversee the development of the Packages and keep them under review. We will work closely with families throughout this process.*
- *The SEND consultation includes a draft outline of seven Specialist Provision Packages. These packages are indicative, developed by specialist sector experts, and are expected to evolve. Descriptions of the Packages may change, and*

additional packages may be introduced to cover the full range of support needed by children and young people with complex needs.

Access to Work

Following the mention by Minister Timms at the meeting, this is the [DWP press release](#) and the [Written Ministerial Statement](#) on **Access to Work**.

Workplace Protections for Unpaid Carers Consultation

From one of the RSN Chairs

We wanted to make you aware that the Government has today launched a consultation on new workplace protections for unpaid carers and parents of seriously ill children, as part of the ongoing work to implement the Employment Rights Act.

The consultation, launched by the Minister for Employment Rights Kate Dearden, sets out several proposals that could significantly

change the rights of those with caring responsibilities in the workplace. These include introducing paid carer's leave for the first time, a new "right to return" to work after a period of intensive caring - similar to existing maternity leave protections - and new guidance to help workers and employers better understand carers' workplace protections.

Currently, around three million unpaid carers balance work with caring responsibilities, with many forced to reduce their hours or leave the workforce entirely - at an estimated cost to the economy of £37 billion a year. The Government believes these proposals could help thousands return to work and support employers to attract and retain skilled staff.

The consultation is open to everyone with a vested interest, and we would strongly encourage you to respond and share your views. The consultation has been published [here](#) and will close on 1 September 2026.

You can also find the press release [here](#) for your reference, which sets out the full details of the consultation.

How you can help

We would be very grateful if you could share news of this consultation with your networks and membership, so that as many people as possible can contribute their views.

We would also welcome your support in amplifying our social media content on this announcement. You can find our posts at the following links:

- [LinkedIn](#)
- [Instagram](#)
- [Facebook](#)
- [X](#)

If you have any questions about the consultation or would like to discuss further, please don't hesitate to get in touch.

Thank you for your continued engagement on implementing the Employment Rights Act, and we look forward to hearing the views of you and your networks.

RSN Greater London Updates

PIP Review Submission

Thanks to all who shared views on the PIP Review via our collaborative doc and elsewhere.

I hope you found enough ways to contribute and let me know how it was.

The docs that were sent are here: One around our own themes and one around their themes.

RSN Greater London Agenda

That list again:

Other Activities

I saw Minister Timms twice recently:

- The APPG for Assistive Tech Annual Event - 2nd June
- The Lilac Centre First Anniversary

I have another Accessibility and Tech roundtable with Secretary of State Pat McFadden from Heathrow Airport

Also, I'm reviewing a Call For Evidence about Assistive Tech across Empowerment, Inclusion and Independence. This was announced by Minister Timms at the above APPG.

I was invited to a consultation by the Greater London AI Task Force on behalf of disabled communities.

The Disabled Londoner is a website to share public government news and related items in London.

thedisabledlondoner.org.uk

The ND Entrepreneur report is out

I'm at LTW, including Financial Inclusion with banking ambassador

RSN Greater London September Notes

Updates from the Disability Unit (NOTE: these are in their words)

The Timms Review steering group is keen to discuss their ***emerging recommendations*** with you and would value your insight as they test and refine them. **DWP** are looking to organise a session on **1 October, 1.30-3pm**, for this discussion with RSN Chairs and an invite will come from DWP shortly. It will be attended by some members of the Timms Review steering group, alongside a few DWP officials who will support the logistics of the meeting. DWP will share more information about the emerging recommendations before the meeting.

This session will allow all RSN Chairs to feed in and is separate to the other, longer 'Shaping Recommendations' workshops with the public that some of you or your members may have applied to be part of.

Meeting summaries from Ministerial meetings with the RSN Chairs were published:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-unit-regional-stakeholder-network-meeting-summaries>

The next RSN Chairs and DU meeting is 23 September - we have lots to cover as we should be having two guest speakers (including from the Law Commission on transport accessibility) and to get your initial high levels thoughts on the Access to Work theme please (DWP officials will also be attending). The Minister's Office should also be sending out the invite for October for you to feedback on this theme too please. Just a reminder that on this occasion though, the detailed written feedback would ideally follow by 25 September please so DWP can have this sooner.

This is the press release after the Prime Minister announced today (18 August) that the government will lift time restrictions on concessionary bus passes. From 1 April 2027, people who hold a disabled bus pass can travel on buses for free, no matter the time of day. www.gov.uk/government/news/free-bus-travel-247-for-disabled-people-as-prime-minister-takes-further-action-to-ease-cost-of-living

The Disability Unit is looking into how the RSN can engage on the Casey Commission social care Big Conversation.

Please also find an update from DWP on the query around the reasons why some people have had their PIP reviews extended by 3 years, and the impact on things like Blue Badges:

- Since 6 April 2026 we have reduced the frequency of repeated reviews in PIP. For most claimants over 25, their first review will be a minimum of 3 years and, assuming they remain entitled, 5 years for their next review. We want to ensure claimants receive the right level of award while at the same time reducing unnecessary award reviews. This will make the system far more efficient and remove unnecessary pressure from disabled claimants whose needs rarely change at each review. Reducing the frequency of PIP award reviews will enable us to increase the number of WCA reassessments and the proportion of PIP/WCA health assessments conducted face-to-face.
 - Blue Badge is a devolved matter, but for DfT in England.
-

Please also find an update from DWP on the query around sole traders and Disability Confident reform:

- Testing of initial thinking is expected to conclude late Summer, with findings anticipated in late Autumn 2026.
 - Development of the new Small and Medium Employer (SME) pathway continues, with testing of selected products currently underway.
 - Existing members will be informed in advance of any changes, enhancements or new elements introduced to the scheme.
- We are currently considering implementation approaches and, where appropriate, transition arrangements to support members through any changes.
-

Find some recently published foresight research (a report by the National Centre for Social Research on how the needs and experiences of disabled people will evolve over the next 5, 10 and 20 years): www.gov.uk/government/publications/disability-foresight-research-future-trends-for-disabled-people

RSN Greater London and Other Updates

The Greater London Assembly (GLA) are launching their Action Plan for Disability on Thursday. They have shared an exec summary ahead of time. Headlines are:

Poverty

- Work with Disabled Londoners to ensure their voices inform the Mayor's response to government decisions on disability benefits and income-related issues.
- Pilot improvements to accessible advice provision to better integrate the needs of Disabled Londoners in the GLA's financial hardship programme design and delivery, including by delivering training to staff, venue descriptions for locations with funded advice services and including Disabled Londoners in programme governance structures.
- Improve benefit take-up through its income maximisation programme, including a pilot to focus on uptake of disability benefits.

Policing and Safety

- Pilot new, more safe and appropriate ways for Disabled Londoners to report crime and improve victim support for Disabled Londoners, this includes working with Disabled

victims of crime and exploring ways to simplify reporting.

- Embed lived experience in decision making within MOPAC's oversight and scrutiny of the MPS, including through co-production and advisory groups, and disability hate crime and leadership training.
- Work with the London Fire Brigade and local authorities to ensure safe evacuation routes and appropriate support for Disabled Londoners during emergencies.

Housing and Planning

- Focus on accessibility throughout the development of the London Plan.
- Provide funding to increase the provision of accessible, safe and high-quality accommodation-based support for Disabled survivors of domestic abuse.
- Work to ensure that high-quality data is available to partners working on housing access for Disabled Londoners, including through introducing processes to maintain higher quality data moving forward.
- Support partners, including boroughs and housing providers, to better understand and meet accessible housing needs of their communities and use available data to inform decision-

making and accountability.

- Work to improve access to suitable homes across different tenures and better embed lived experience in decision making

Transport

- Work to improve uptake of concessionary travel options for Disabled Londoners
- Work with partners to ensure Disabled Londoners are engaged in improvements to Taxicard
- Work to improve training for frontline staff and ensure they better understand and can meet the needs of Disabled Londoners.

Employment and Skills

- Increase our work to tackle employment barriers by embedding lived experience voices in employment support programmes, including through testing new approaches to integrated employment support and embedding lived experiences through employment support programmes
- Help create more accessible and inclusive workplaces and continue to learn about the importance of intersectional approaches.

- Work to improve access to GLA-funded skills provision and to support increasing Disabled Londoners awareness of available services and identifying the most appropriate services for them.

GLA Ways of Working

- Strengthen its engagement with Disabled Londoners including by strengthening the DDPO Forum and embedding more consistent feedback loops, appointing a lived experience co-chair to the forum, and appointing GLA disability commissioners to provide additional resources to support the delivery of the Action Plan.
- Strengthen accessibility of GLA services and events and work to ensure that staff will be able to understand the needs of Disabled people and facilitate their involvement.
- Strengthen access to relevant GLA programmes including grant funding and procurement processes.

Agenda and Actions

1. Any questions of information to follow up on the updates above?

There's no problem to bring them up in your own time later on, via email or online here.

2. Any further views on Access To Work for the next Minister meeting?

[Etherpad Link](#)

3. What would be your top 3 themes to share to the Disability Unit?

We had a few such as:

- Adult Social Care - funding, assessment, delivery, systemic
- Mental Health and Illness - not only as co-occurring but as a disability itself
- Lifelong Support and Capacity - presumptions and systemic issues for people who lack capacity ever for work and independence, despite it being in the name of PIP.
- Carers - unpaid, missing skills, attitudes, system of care agencies and LA allocations, family members on the lowest rung of the ladder, impact of community care
- Employment, young people, neurodivergence - Inadequate support that is not designed or tailored for individuals or even those like them

- Access to outside the home in terms of accessible transport and physical environment.

Meeting Summary (note this is AI-generated by Zoom, so there will be mistakes!)

Key Outcomes

The meeting surfaced deep, systemic failures across PIP assessments, Access to Work administration, social care funding, and carer recognition. Members shared firsthand accounts of benefit misuse by local authorities, chronic delays and rule changes in Access to Work reimbursements, and the near-total absence of support for unpaid family carers. The group aligned on priority themes to bring to upcoming minister and disability unit meetings, including PIP reform, Access to Work flexibility, transport accessibility, employment pathways, and carers policy. Marc will represent these views at a PIP steering group meeting on 1 October and a disability unit meeting on 23 September.

PIP Reform & Assessment Failures

- **Separation of assessors from DWP:** Penelope clarified that PIP assessors are entirely separate from DWP PIP staff — a distinction that matters because the failures are concentrated in the outsourced assessment layer, not the DWP caseworkers. 12
- **Assessment incompetence documented:** Penelope's own assessment was marred by the assessor forgetting to tape the session, failing to ask required questions, and conducting a session lasting over 90 minutes with significant omissions; she appealed but did not ultimately need to proceed. 2
- **Positive DWP caseworker experience:** Despite the poor assessment, the DWP PIP staff responded with empathy when Penelope was overwhelmed by caring responsibilities, extending her review by a year — cited as evidence that ground-level DWP staff can be supportive. 2
- **Assessor training gap on non-visible conditions:** Marc noted that earlier RSN research had already flagged poor assessor training on non-visible disabilities and neurodivergence as a major recurring theme. 3
- **Review frequency confusion:** Members flagged widespread confusion about why some PIP reviews are triggered more frequently than others and what the legal or policy basis for

that is — identified as a priority question to raise. 14

- **PIP steering group meeting — 1 October:** Marc will attend a meeting with DWP and the TIMS review steering group to hear emerging recommendations on PIP reform; he will share those recommendations with the group beforehand to allow collective feedback. 5
 - **Workshop scale concern:** Jax raised that only 300 people have been invited to PIP reform workshops despite 4 million people being on PIP, and reports suggest Stephen Timms may have already formed his conclusions. 6
 - **Voucher scheme risk:** Concern raised that converting PIP into a voucher scheme could have cascading effects on social care financial assessments, particularly regarding the **daily living component** currently used in means testing. 6
-

Local Authority Benefit Clawback & Financial Assessment

- **PIP daily living component misused in means testing:**
Local authorities routinely treat the PIP daily living amount as income in financial assessments, despite it being intended to offset the extra cost of disability — described as

fundamentally misrepresenting the benefit's purpose. 7

- **Disability-Related Expenses (DREs) inconsistency:**

Councils vary widely in what they allow as DREs, with some using fixed amounts for utilities regardless of actual costs; assessments are reportedly spread over 3–5 years rather than reviewed annually. 7

- **Universal Credit grab:**

Marc described Greenwich Council attempting to take almost all of his daughter's Universal Credit, with DREs being the only buffer — and the council initially unaware that the Motability scheme had already absorbed the mobility component. 89

- **Residential care impact:**

Once in residential care, the daily living component of PIP ceases entirely; Marc's daughter has been in residential care for 4–5 years and no longer receives it. 8

- **Inter-council inconsistency as a systemic problem:**

The lack of unified national standards means outcomes are determined largely by which council a person falls under and the council's own financial pressures. 910

- **Section 117 funding abuse (serious mental illness):**

Penelope detailed a pattern where local authorities divert people who are entitled to uncapped Section 117 post-

detention funding into homeless hostels instead of proper clinical supported living, then charge them PIP and Universal Credit toward that accommodation — a direct breach of the Mental Health Act. 1112

- **Key ask:** PIP should not be conflated with general income; its purpose as a disability cost-offset must be legally protected and ring-fenced from council financial assessments. 10
-

Access to Work: Systemic Failures

- **Outstanding invoices crisis:** An interpreter agency for the Deaf reported over **150 outstanding bills** from Access to Work, forcing them to hire a dedicated staff member solely to chase payments — an additional cost on top of the funding shortfall. 1314
- **Employer deterrence:** Companies are declining to engage with Access to Work for their disabled staff because upfront costs and reimbursement delays make it financially unviable; this directly affects hiring decisions for disabled candidates. 14
- **Claim rejection surge:** Michele reported a dramatic increase in Access to Work claims being rejected, requiring claimants

to repeatedly chase and appeal — a particular burden for disabled people who already have significant demands on their time and energy. 15

- **Rule changes without notice:** Fiona disclosed that DWP changed the documentation requirements for claims without informing claimants, deliberately enabling a wave of rejections to improve cash flow; audits have also become significantly more forensic. 16
- **Fraud justification disproportionate:** Fiona noted that actual fraud in Access to Work is negligible relative to the economic contribution of the disabled workforce; the clampdown is not proportionate. 16
- **Tapering support for neurodivergent workers:** Richie raised that Access to Work treats neurodivergence as a temporary condition by tapering support over time, which contradicts its lifelong nature; this is especially problematic when job roles change, managers change, or projects shift — all of which create friction points requiring renewed support. 1718
- **Inflexible hour allocation:** Richie described cases where Access to Work queried why hours were not used evenly, despite the rationale that neurodivergent employees may

need intensive support at the start of a role and during transitions, not uniformly across weeks. 1819

- **Workarounds exist but are coach-dependent:** Marc noted that experienced neurodivergent business coaches know how to invoice and log hours in ways that satisfy Access to Work while actually delivering flexible support — but this knowledge is not standardised and not universally accessible. 20
 - **Shift from ongoing to fixed-term support:** Marc observed a reported trend away from ongoing support (e.g., virtual admin) toward time-limited coaching, driven by cost — undermining long-term needs. 3
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Employment, Education & Post-School Transitions

- **Cliff-edge after education:** Richie's research (supported by Jax) found that young disabled people face a complete drop-off in employment support once they leave education, with no structured guidance or transition planning. 21
- **EHCP loss at transition:** Parents reported children having EHCPs removed at the point of leaving education, only to later encounter services that require an EHCP for access — creating

a catch-22. 21

- **Local offer failures:** Local offers are inconsistent, out of date, and largely unknown to families; navigation of employment services post-education is described as broken. 21
- **Stigma around specialist employment services:** Some young people do not want to use specialist disability employment services; the ask is to upskill mainstream employment services to be inclusive by default, rather than requiring disabled people to use separate provisions. 22
- **Industry bodies not inclusive:** Marc cited the British Computing Society (BCS) as an example of an industry body whose certifications and apprenticeships are not designed for neurodivergent people — a gap the BCS neurodivergent group is actively pushing to close. 23
- **Pathways to Work Innovation Fund:** DWP has launched this fund following Pat McFadden roundtables; Marc will attend an explanatory workshop the following week and will share the registration link with members. 2425
- **EHCP ceased = reassessment trigger:** Marc is pursuing a care reassessment for his daughter following cessation of her EHCP (end of education), arguing that a milestone assessment

is required under the Care Act regardless of elapsed time. 26

Carers: Recognition, Pay & System Failures

- **Carers systematically excluded:** Penelope flagged that carers are largely absent from disability policy frameworks and adult social care structures — unsupported, untrained, and vulnerable to exploitation in terms of time and labour. 2728
- **Family assumed to absorb care for free:** Jax described social services readily assuming family members will provide care unpaid while simultaneously paying profit-making agencies £1,440/week (£75,000/year) for care that is not being delivered as allocated. 29
- **Luke's case — 42 hours allocated, not delivered:** Jax's son Luke is allocated 42 hours of care per week in Brighton; his social activities are still organised by Jax, his GP and neurology consultant remain in Croydon, and 7 hours were removed without notice or a revised care plan — six weeks of silence from social services despite escalation. 293031
- **Provider locked in via block contract:** Luke's current provider comes as part of a block contract covering three

flats; Jax has a new provider and flat lined up but cannot proceed until Croydon social services respond — while the current provider continues to receive over £1,500/week. 31

- **Belittlement of family carers in professional settings:**

Jax recounted a friend being addressed dismissively as "mum" at a CHC meeting after 27 years of caring for a daughter with tumours and epilepsy; her input was disregarded entirely. 32

- **Michele's experience — sole carer for father with**

dementia: Michele is sole carer for her father, has had to go self-employed and work part-time, earning only £4K since April; she had no say in the care agency allocated, has experienced dangerous and incompetent carers, and is routinely held to ransom by agencies who treat her as a burden rather than a paying client. 333435

- **Zero-hours contracts driving carer shortage:** Agency carers are on zero-hours contracts, receive no sick pay, and earn minimum wage — making recruitment and retention nearly impossible; agencies consequently keep unsuitable or potentially dangerous staff because they have no alternatives.

35

- **Community care = unpaid volunteering by default:**

Penelope warned that plans to move people out of hospitals

into the community (discussed in relation to PPL) will in practice mean more people are forced into unpaid caring roles; the RSN should get ahead of this policy direction. 36

- **Deputyship and LPA burden:** Both Marc and Jax highlighted the administrative and financial complexity of deputyship — Marc has a first quarterly protection report due, Jax is navigating a financial reassessment following her son's migration to Universal Credit, with the council now seeking to claw back transitional payments and everything above the MIG. 263738
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Transport & Physical Accessibility

- **Taxi card unreliable:** Fiona stated that most disabled people she knows do not use the taxi card because the associated taxi company is so unreliable that it renders the benefit unusable for time-sensitive journeys. 39
- **Waymo (driverless taxis) not wheelchair accessible:** Jax raised whether Waymo driverless taxis are disability-friendly; Fiona confirmed they are not — wheelchair users cannot board. 40

- **Black cab booking improvements:** Jax noted that black cabs have improved their booking technology and can now be pre-booked similarly to Uber, but this was not the case when taxi cards were first introduced. 40
- **Transport as a prerequisite:** Fiona emphasised that accessible transport and built environment must be resolved before any other participation goals are achievable; she is involved in the forum feeding into the London GLA disability action plan. 41
- **GLA London Disability Action Plan:** Launching Thursday; covers poverty, policing and safety, housing and planning, transport, employment and skills, and GLA internal services. Marc has an embargoed executive summary and was hoping Kush would attend in his place due to a scheduling conflict. 4243
- **Supported living housing stock unknown:** Marc noted that councils lack accurate data on what supported living stock exists — a problem identified years ago that remains unresolved and relevant to both housing and clinical care planning. 4344

Upcoming Meetings & Governance

- **PIP Steering Group — 1 October:** Marc attending; emerging recommendations will be shared with the group before the meeting for collective input. 545
- **Disability Unit Monthly Meeting — 23 September:** Includes guest speakers on transport; Marc will share high-level Access to Work views gathered from the group as a preview ahead of the minister meeting. 4546
- **Minister Meeting (upcoming):** Access to Work is the confirmed theme; the group's lived experience inputs from this session will inform Marc's representation. 47
- **Top 3 themes for future minister meetings:** Members were asked to nominate priority themes; discussion surfaced: social care, transport and physical access, employment and post-education transitions, carers, and mental health/SMI-specific issues. 212748
- **Casey Commission on Social Care:** Marc flagged a missed email about RSN engagement opportunities on the Casey Commission's "big conversation" on social care; he will raise this at the 23 September disability unit meeting. 4
- **Bus pass / Freedom Pass:** Time restrictions on off-peak-only travel are being removed for Freedom Pass holders in London — noted as a positive development relevant to members. 46

- **Zoom platform issue:** Marc recently migrated from Google to Proton Calendar (citing privacy and security), which left residual old Zoom meeting links active, causing Richie to join the wrong call; acknowledged and to be resolved. 49
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Action Items

- **Marc:** Attend PIP steering group meeting on **1 October**; share emerging recommendations with the group beforehand for collective review. 5
- **Marc:** Attend disability unit monthly meeting on **23 September**; raise Access to Work themes, Casey Commission engagement, and bus pass updates. 445
- **Marc:** Send the **Pathways to Work Innovation Fund** registration link to all members; attend DWP explanatory workshop the following week and report back. 25
- **Marc:** Share Zoom AI-generated meeting notes with all attendees following this session. 50
- **Marc:** Chase his daughter's care reassessment following EHCP cessation under the Care Act milestone trigger. 26
- **Marc:** Complete first quarterly deputyship protection report (due **10 September**). 3738

- **Marc:** Follow up on GLA London Disability Action Plan launch (Thursday); confirm whether Kush attended and obtain full plan details. 4243
- **Richie:** Register for the Pathways to Work Innovation Fund workshop once Marc shares the link. 25
- **Jax:** Submit letter to Croydon social services explaining the financial reassessment context for Luke's UC migration and challenging the clawback of transitional payments. 3851
- **All members:** Provide Marc with their **top 3 priority themes** for future minister meetings to inform the disability unit's agenda-setting. 47