

Karen writes: Am I being watched ? I have just received a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions with the following text:

We have recently received information which casts some doubt on your continuing entitlement to DLA. We are unable to provide you with further details of the information we have received. This is because the Freedom of Information Act, Section 30, prevents us from disclosing information provided by a confidential source. The Agency receives information from a number of sources, including internal data matching, information from other public bodies and members of the public.

We require some additional information from you to determine whether you are still entitled to the DLA you are receiving. Acting on behalf of the Secretary of State we have the authority to seek information about a person's continuing entitlement to benefit under Reg 32(1) of the Social Security (Claims and Payments) Regulations 1987.

I enclose a DLA review form which I would like you to complete and return within two weeks of receipt, using the envelope provided. If you have any difficulty in returning the form by this date, please contact us to discuss. Our contact details are at the top of this letter. Once we have received your completed form, we may need further medical information. We may want to request information from people who may have treated you or are currently treating you for your medical conditions or you could be referred for an independent medical examination. Once all necessary information has been received, your claim will be referred to a decision maker who may make a new decision on your entitlement to DLA. I will write to you and inform you of the outcome of our enquiries once they are completed.

It is important you return the attached review pack by 15/10/10. If you do not do this, your DLA could be suspended and your payments ended. I must also remind you that it is your responsibility to inform the department of any relevant change of circumstances that have occurred which could affect your continuing entitlement to benefit. If you have any queries regarding this letter please telephone the number above between 8.30am and 5.00pm.

I had my Incapacity Benefit renewed at a Medical PCA last October with no problems. They have also just send me a new DLA form, so does it mean I have to apply again ?

We've seen this before, and it has happened to some other members. I think that although you got Incapacity Benefit again, something in the examining doctors report has suggested that you are no entitled to DLA. This likely to happen more and more, as more ESA medicals are carried out. You will have to apply for DLA again, but before you do, obtain the IB85 from the DWP and let a welfare rights advisor see it. Ross, one of ours members saw this in a national newspaper which explains things.

The great disability benefit free-for-all

Half of claimants are not asked to prove eligibility

HALF the 3.2million people on disability benefit have never been asked for evidence to back their claims, it emerged last night.

In addition, nearly a million people have been on disability living allowance for at least 14 years, a Government analysis of claims for the benefit revealed.

DLA costs the taxpayer £12billion a year, the same as the Department for Transport's entire annual budget.

But now, in what is likely to be the most contentious of the Coalition's welfare reforms, ministers are preparing a crackdown on the payments.

Cuts to DLA, which is meant to help people who have specific mobility or care needs and cannot do things such as walk or wash and dress themselves, have been criticised by charities and Labour MPs.

However, ministers say figures

By James Chapman
Political Editor

showing how the benefit ballooned under Labour – and has been paid to people for years with no checks – demonstrate an urgent need for reform.

The Department for Work and Pensions says the number of people on DLA has risen inexplicably from 2.5million in 2003 to nearly 3.2million.

Of those, 31 per cent – almost a million – have been claiming for 14 years or more, while 46 per cent have been on the benefit for more for ten years.

Half have not been asked for evidence to support their claim, having been given the benefit based entirely on their original application form.

The figures also show wide regional variations.

The North West has the highest level of long-term DLA claims, with nearly 160,000 people on the benefit for over 14 years.

London and the South East

have the lowest number of long-term claims.

A Government source said: 'DLA was designed to give extra support to disabled people and the Government wants to make sure that continues.'

'The problem is there is no system of review. People can be given the benefit and no one checks if they still need it.'

'The Government wants a fairer

'Taking us back to the Dark Ages'

way of reviewing DLA so money goes where it is most needed.'

More than two million people on DLA have been given indefinite awards, which means they have no further contact with officials about whether they still need the benefit.

The Government now wants all claimants to undergo periodic medical tests to justify the payments. Ministers propose to end

the automatic right to DLA, worth up to £70 a week for care and up to £50 a week for travel.

Claimants will be paid a 'personal independence payment' after being tested on their ability to carry out key everyday activities.

A group of 27 organisations for the disabled has warned against plans to axe the mobility part of DLA, which it says will hit 80,000 care home residents unfairly.

The DWP says some residents receive the benefit to pay for taxis even though their care home or local council provides transport.

Mencap chief executive Mark Goldring said: 'We strongly urge the Government to reconsider the proposal to remove the mobility component of DLA.'

'Removing this benefit will take us back to the Dark Ages, stripping people of control over their lives and leaving them stuck in residential care homes.'

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Make an appointment to see your welfare rights advisor ASAP for a fill out of the DLA form, obtain the IB85 meantime, and a report from your ME specialist and GP.