

Fast-tracked access to benefits for people with terminal illness expanded

Changes announced today confirm that the current Special Rules for Terminal Illness which fast-track benefit applications for those with a terminal diagnosis of six months is to be replaced with a new 12-month, end of life definition.

The move will ensure that people in the final year of their life will receive vital financial support quicker than they can do at present and at the highest rate through revised Special Rules.

Minister for Disabled People Justin Tomlinson said:

Being diagnosed with a terminal illness is devastating and this change will increase much needed support for people who are nearing the end of their lives.

The new 12-month approach will ensure people get the financial help they need as quickly as possible in the most challenging of times. We have carefully considered the best approach and I am grateful to everyone who has contributed to our work in reaching this outcome.

Under the updated rules, clinicians still have discretion and will be supported by a realistic and straightforward definition, which aligns with current NHS practice.

Ministers plan to implement the 12-month end-of-life approach across five DWP benefits, beginning with Universal Credit and Employment Support Allowance next year and Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment when parliamentary time allows.

It follows a DWP evaluation which heard the views of people nearing the end of their lives, their families and friends, the organisations supporting them and the clinicians involved in their care.

Matthew Reed, Chief Executive of the end of life charity, Marie Curie, said:

Following years of campaigning for change, Marie Curie welcome the news today which is significant step forward and a tribute to all those who bravely shared their experiences of the benefits system. This will help ensure that more dying people can concentrate on making the most of the limited time they have left, rather than worrying about their finances. Marie Curie believes that everyone has the right to the best end of life care and support.

There is more to be done, but this is important progress and we look forward to working with the UK Government to bring in this change as quickly as possible.

Marie Curie will continue to play our part in making the case for people living with terminal illness to receive the financial support they need at the end of life, and ensuring that terminally ill people and their health professionals know what they are entitled to.

Sally Light, CEO of the Motor Neurone Disease Association said:

The MND Association is pleased the Government has listened to the voices of terminally ill people and announced it will scrap the 6-month rule.

This is a victory for the hundreds of campaigners across the country who have worked tirelessly alongside the MND Association urging the Government to change the rules.

Now the recommendations must be implemented quickly, to ensure no more people already facing the most difficult time of their life have to wait to claim the support they not only desperately need but are entitled to.

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