

Terminally ill benefit claimants deserve a fresh and honest evaluation of the way the system supports them

Citing her own personal experiences, Amber Rudd has asked the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to set up an honest and in depth evaluation of how the benefits system supports people nearing the end of their life and those with severe conditions.

While Special Rules for Terminal Illness mean that if you are living with a terminal illness you can have your benefit claim fast tracked and paid at enhanced rates many charities have campaigned for the rules to be changed.

Work and Pensions Secretary Amber Rudd said:

Having a life limiting illness or severe condition can cause unimaginable suffering for the patient and for their loved ones.

Having seen it in my own family I know that the last thing you need is additional financial pressures or unnecessary assessments.

So that's why today I am beginning work on a fresh and honest evaluation of our benefits system so that I can be sure that people who are nearing the end of their life are getting the best possible support.

I hope that this comprehensive evaluation of how we treat those with severe conditions and terminal illnesses will help ensure these vulnerable people get the support they need from our benefits system.

I want people to have confidence in what we do at the DWP, ensuring no one is suffering unnecessary hardship at this especially difficult time.

Not all doctors understand the system or feel confident they are making the right diagnosis for their patients, and the rules are often seen as favouring those living with cancer when other heart breaking illnesses can also limit life.

For those living with the most severe or progressive conditions, benefit processes have recently been made simpler, moving them out of unnecessary reassessments.

However, the Work and Pensions Secretary wants to look again to make sure that these processes are working effectively and to see if more can be done to improve engagement with the department for claimants living with the most

severe conditions.

Amber Rudd yesterday visited the Macmillan Horizon Centre cancer support in Brighton to begin conversations with stakeholders and today will host a number of charities at the DWP, including Macmillan and Hospice UK.

She has also ordered the department to seek the views of a wide range of people, including patients, doctors and nurses.

The review will include 3 strands of research:

- hearing directly from claimants and charities about their first-hand experiences
- considering international evidence to find out what works in other nations and the support they provide
- reviewing current DWP performance to better understand how our Special Rules for Terminal Illness and Severe Conditions processes operate and perform

Amber Rudd will also seek senior medical input to help shape the evaluation and review the evidence gathered. Professor Bee Wee, NHS National Clinical Director for End of Life Care for NHS England is attending today's roundtable.

Around 500,000 people die in England each year and around three-quarters of those deaths are expected – that is they are not sudden or unexpected. There are many more people who are living with severe or progressive health conditions.

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