

# Cuts and changes to social care and disability benefits

This factsheet gives at-a-glance information about the ways that people obtain care services, Disability Living Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance. It also outlines some of the problems that people are dealing with as cuts to council social care budgets and Welfare Reform Act changes take effect.

## Social care

### How care entitlements and eligibility are assessed

People who want care services from their local council (help with a range of daily activities, from dressing, to bathing, to shopping and going out) have their needs evaluated by the council's social care team. They are then placed in one of four categories – or **Fair Access to Care Bands (FACS)**:

- **Critical:**  
People who face a threat to life, or a loss to their independence, if they don't have care services and their needs met.
- **Substantial:**  
People who will be unable to carry out the majority of their personal care or domestic routines without care services.
- **Moderate:**  
People who face some risk to their health or wellbeing, or who might lose their independence, without care services.
- **Low:**  
People who find one or two aspects of their daily life hard to manage without help.

### Problems

Many councils have **stopped funding care for people in the low and moderate groups**. Some have also tried to **restrict funding to people in the critical band only**, which has led to court challenges.

The Independent recently published a report based on False Economy Freedom of Information research into the numbers of people affected by these band changes in the past two years. We found that **more than 7,000 disabled and elderly people had lost some or all of their state-funded support** after councils changed eligibility rules.

See: [www.falseeconomy.org.uk/blog/councils-lack-of-cash-hits-7000-elderly-and-disabled-people](http://www.falseeconomy.org.uk/blog/councils-lack-of-cash-hits-7000-elderly-and-disabled-people)

**FALSE ECONOMY** is the website for everyone concerned about the impact of the government's spending cuts on their community, their family or their job.

[FalseEconomy.org.uk](http://FalseEconomy.org.uk)

## Other issues

### Increased charges for care

Councils across the country have been **increasing charges** for a range of services, including homecare, meals on wheels and transport.

Research at the end of last year showed that the average charge for an hour of home care **increased by ten percent between 2009/10 and 2012/13** from £12.29 to £13.61. See [www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/disabled-home-care-costs-up-10-percent-7756875.html](http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/disabled-home-care-costs-up-10-percent-7756875.html)

### Closure of the Independent Living Fund

The Independent Living Fund (ILF) was originally set up to provide extra funding for people with severe disabilities who wanted to live independently and stay in their own homes. The fund was **closed to new applicants in 2010**.

Now, the government is consulting on **plans to shut the fund**. It will **devolve funding** to local authorities in England and to the devolved administrations in Scotland and Wales. The consultation will end on 10 October 2012: [www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2012/future-of-ilf.shtml](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/consultations/2012/future-of-ilf.shtml)

ILF users have raised many issues, including concerns that **councils will not be in a position to prioritise this funding** and care in an era of vicious cuts to social care.

## Disability Living Allowance

Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is a benefit paid to children and adults with disabilities to help with **extra costs they may have as a result of their disabilities**.

DLA is paid at different rates to different people, depending on their circumstances. There are two parts to DLA – a **care component** and a **mobility component**. The care component is paid to people who need care and the mobility component to help people get around.

Some people use their mobility component to pay for adapted cars, which they use to get to work and general travel needs. Some people receive both the care and mobility components of DLA, while others get just one.

### Problems

From 2013, **DLA will be phased out** by government and a new payment called the **personal independent payment** brought in.

**Atos Healthcare has won contracts worth more than £400m** to run eligibility tests for this benefit. This is the same private company which has run the highly controversial and unpopular work capability assessment eligibility tests for Employment and Support Allowance (see below).

The government aims to **cut the DLA bill by 20%** as it phases DLA out.

People on lifetime DLA awards – people who, until now, have not had to reapply for DLA, because their disabilities **are not expected to improve** – will also be reassessed.

## Employment and Support Allowance

Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) is a benefit for people who are **unable to work because they have an illness or disability and/or who need support in work**.

People are assessed for this allowance in interviews that are run by private company Atos Healthcare and are extremely controversial. The assessment is widely described as **unfair, stressful and inaccurate** (in June, the British Medical Association called for an end to it).

ESA applicants are placed in one of two groups – the **support group** (not expected to find work), or the **work-related activity group** (expected to find work).

### Problems

Many people have been found fit for work and told to apply for **Jobseeker's Allowance**, where they have to show they are actively looking for a job.

Others are placed in ESA's work-related activity group, when they believe that they **should be placed in the support group**.

This has caused enormous controversy. Many of Atos original assessment decisions have been **overturned on appeal**.

This year, the government also placed new restrictions on the amount of time people can receive ESA. People on contributions-based ESA are **now only eligible for that benefit for one year**. The government plans to make means-tested ESA part of the Universal Credit (more on that soon).

## Find out more

### Group sites

**Atos Victims Group News** – [www.atosvictimgroup.co.uk](http://www.atosvictimgroup.co.uk)

**Benefits and Work** – [www.benefitsandwork.co.uk](http://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk)

**Disabled People Against the Cuts** – [www.dpac.uk.net](http://www.dpac.uk.net)

**False Economy on disability benefits** – [falseeconomy.org.uk/blog/tags/tag/Disability](http://falseeconomy.org.uk/blog/tags/tag/Disability)

### Personal sites

**Benefit Scrounging Scum** – [www.benefitscroungingscum.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.benefitscroungingscum.blogspot.co.uk)

**Diary of a Benefit Scrounger** – [www.diaryofabenefitscrounger.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.diaryofabenefitscrounger.blogspot.co.uk)

**Jayne Linney** – [www.jaynelinney.wordpress.com](http://www.jaynelinney.wordpress.com)