

WELFARE REFORM COMMITTEE

WRITTEN SUBMISSION RECEIVED FROM ANONYMOUS

Having received this link via Autism Rights Group Highland (ARGH), I wish to add my experience to the collection.

I am 41 years old, female and living alone in Aviemore. I have Asperger's Syndrome, depression, fatigue and am now being investigated for borderline personality disorder, though I and my support workers have doubts about this diagnosis and I suspect that the psychiatrist suggesting it is under pressure to get people off benefits as he tells me it can be cured now by a course of therapy which is intended to force me to think a different way. He seems sceptical about the futility and potentially damaging effect of enforcing this on someone with autism, not to mention the stress the very idea of it is causing me (I have had increased anxiety and sleep disturbance since this issue arose).

I receive DLA high rate care and low rate mob, with the transition to PIP due to be triggered any day now; I am in the support group for ESA having just succeeded in having that extended for another year after an initially very hard fought two year award. I live independently and do voluntary work but my GP is very concerned about the effect on me if this evident stability is threatened because it makes the benefits people disbelieve me and not appreciate that I would instantly deteriorate into crisis if I were pushed into looking for mainstream employment. The regular reassessments for both benefits are a huge worry as I stand to lose up to 50% of my income if I do not get the enhanced rate of PIP, because of the associated disability premiums. I am not affected by the bedroom tax as I am in a one bedroom rented house and the rental is expected to be long term but it is with a private landlord and the day will come sooner or later when I have to move. Due to the lack of one bedroomed social housing it is likely I will be affected by the bedroom tax at a later date. I could absorb it if my benefits remain at their current levels but not if I lose much of them. This is another added worry, as well as the shortage of housing in Highland and my single, no children status which means I will not be a priority despite my autism and it is unlikely that mainstream authorities will appreciate that they cannot force an autistic person into shared accommodation and I would be unsafe in emergency homeless accommodation because of my inability to judge social situations and read people as well as my autism and wariness causing me to seem aloof / snobbish, which I am not, but which would trigger anger and resentment amongst people who are sensitive to such behaviour from others.

The effect of the welfare reforms on me is currently in the form of continuous worry and stress as well as the morale and energy drain of the ongoing awareness of the public backlash against "the Jeremy Kyle demographic" of people on long term benefits and that we are perceived as scroungers when in fact I work as hard as I can within the confines of my fatigue and am holding two voluntary jobs, at the new

Autism Initiatives Highland one stop shop for autistic adults, which I helped to found, based in Inverness and at the Strathspey Steam Railway (non public facing office work) here in Aviemore, as well as periodically helping friends and contacts with online research, creative ideas etc for their own related projects.

Thank you for taking the time and trouble to listen to and collate the views of those of us affected.