Regarding the current Welfare Reform Report, the point I would wish to make on behalf of deafblind people is that we have been proposing the same small number of measures to help deafblind people for the past 12 years or so, and the same difficulties re-appear with each new government policy. In short what works for a person with a single impairment does not necessarily work for a person with the dual sensory loss. This is in the main due to the fact that their “compensating sense” has been lost.

There is a need to recognise that deafblindness is a unique disabling condition and special measures need to be in place to ensure the inclusion of deafblind people. In particular deafblind people need to receive one to one communication and guiding support to be able to participate in any meaningful way. And they need that specialist support not to be classified as “Care”, which it can sometimes be, it is not. Communication support for deafblind people is the equivalent of BSL interpreting for Deaf people.


In England and Wales Section 7 Guidance is in place to ensure deafblind people receive the necessary communication and guiding support. This has never been implemented in any meaningful way in Scotland.

Instead the DLA regulations have become more stringent, making it almost impossible for deafblind people to qualify for the higher rates, and this was very much the intention when these benefits were first introduced, and severe dual sensory loss became one of the qualifying conditions. Today only fully deafblind people who use deafblind manual qualify for the higher rates, the other deafblind people who may be registered blind but retain a little hearing receive the same rate of benefit as those who have a single sensory loss.

And as pointed out by the deafblind people whom the Welfare Reform committee met in Lenzie, deafblind people are now required to substantially contribute to their guide/communicator costs, where these are funded by social work, due to the fact that this communication support is now classed as “care” and is therefore chargeable.

Deafblind Scotland
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