

## **Welfare reform bill: Government could be set for two U-turns**

The government could be set for major climb-downs over two of its most controversial cuts to benefits claimed by disabled people.

As the government launched its new welfare reform bill, work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith confirmed that plans to cut housing benefit by 10 per cent for anyone claiming jobseeker's allowance (JSA) for more than a year would not now be included in the bill.

The proposal had drawn widespread criticism from campaigners, who said disabled people faced multiple barriers to finding work and so were more likely to be on JSA for long periods of time.

They also said that increasing numbers of disabled people were claiming JSA because of the unfairness of the eligibility test for employment and support allowance, the replacement for incapacity benefit.

But the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is also rethinking plans to remove the mobility component of disability living allowance (DLA) from most disabled people in residential care.

The plans have caused outrage among disabled people and disability organisations since they were announced last year.

Maria Miller, the minister for disabled people, has repeatedly claimed that the cut would remove the "overlap" between the mobility component and the obligations of local authorities and care homes to provide transport for disabled residents.

The DWP said this provision of mobility was "patchy" across the country, and it had now decided to "take a step back" and "review the policy", although the measure was still in the bill.

A DWP spokesman told Disability News Service: "We know there have been a lot of people who have not been happy with the measure. We have listened to people."

But he said no decision had yet been made and he could not say how long the review would take.

Neil Coyle, director of policy for Disability Alliance, greeted the review with caution, saying he had no confidence that the government would adequately resource any alternative solution.

And Anne Kane, policy manager for Inclusion London, added: "Our position has to be that it is in the bill and we are opposing it until we are told otherwise."

But she welcomed the housing benefit u-turn. "We think that is very important because significant numbers of disabled people would have been affected by that because of the impact that cuts to employment and support allowance will have."

But she added: "It is a drop in the ocean in terms of the things that have got to be stopped in this bill."

**17 February 2011**

### **Welfare reform bill: Reform efforts 'will be undermined by cuts'**

Disability organisations have greeted the government's new welfare reform bill with a mixture of caution and outright hostility.

The bill will see disability living allowance (DLA) replaced by a new personal independence payment (PIP), with a new assessment to test eligibility. The government plans to cut spending on the benefit for working-age recipients by a fifth and target it at "those who really need it".

A new "universal credit" will see working tax credit, child tax credit, housing benefit, council tax benefit, income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance and income-related employment and support allowance replaced by one single payment. This will be withdrawn at a single "taper" rate as a claimant's earnings increase.

The bill will also impose a limit of 12 months on those receiving "contributory" employment and support allowance (ESA) who are in the work-related activity group of disabled people expected to prepare for work.

And there will be new powers to tackle benefit fraud and error, and a “benefit ban” of up to three years for those who repeatedly fail to look for work or take a job when available.

The prime minister, David Cameron, said the bill would give “those with disabilities who can work the opportunity to work” while “those who can’t work and can’t be expected to work will be supported”, with “sanctions for those who abuse the system”.

Disability Alliance (DA) said the bill “contains some positive elements” but the “overall package of welfare cuts risks increasing poverty and despair for disabled people and their families”.

DA said it welcomed efforts to simplify access to benefits, provide more support to help disabled people find jobs through the new Work Programme, and create the universal credit taper for those in work but on low earnings.

But it warned that the universal credit’s “aspiration to tackle poverty” would be undermined by the overall package of cuts to support for disabled people.

Anne Kane, policy manager for Inclusion London, said the bill was “a disaster”, with cuts to ESA, DLA and housing benefit, and concerns around universal credit.

She said the measures would be “nothing but negative for very, very large numbers of disabled people in terms of cutting income and reducing independence and increasing poverty”.

RADAR said it supported efforts to simplify the benefits system and remove disincentives to work, but was concerned that disabled people would be penalised for society’s failure to break down barriers such as negative attitudes and inaccessible workplaces.

Liz Sayce, RADAR’s chief executive, warned that much of the bill’s detail was still unknown, and called on the government to “provide full transparency about their proposals”.

The government has also launched a review of the system of sickness absence from work, in a bid to “explore radical new ways” to “help more people stay in work and reduce costs”.

**17 February 2011**

### **Proposals ‘will help more disabled people into parliament’**

The government hopes a new strategy will help more disabled people become local councillors and MPs.

The £1 million-a-year package of six proposals includes a new Access to Elected Office Fund to help would-be disabled politicians meet the extra disability-related costs of running for office.

The government also wants to change attitudes about disabled politicians among the public and political parties, build a network of disabled MPs and councillors to act as role models, and develop new training opportunities for disabled candidates.

It also wants to help political parties improve their support for prospective disabled candidates – particularly at local level – and do more to explain their legal obligations under the new Equality Act.

The announcement comes a year after the cross-party speaker’s conference on parliamentary representation reported on ways to increase the number of disabled, female and minority ethnic MPs.

A [consultation](#) on the new proposals will run until 11 May, with the scheme expected to launch later this year.

It will apply to UK Westminster elections, English local elections, Greater London Authority elections, English mayoral elections and elections of police and crime commissioners in England and Wales.

Theresa May, the Conservative home secretary and minister for equalities, said: “It’s not fair that someone who has the right to take an active role in our democracy is prevented from doing so simply because are disabled.

“Disabled people are under-represented in politics, and this package of support will help remedy that.”

Liz Sayce, chief executive of RADAR, strongly welcomed the strategy.

She said: “RADAR has supported several disabled people to stand for election and to successfully become local councillors or mayor through our Leadership Programme.

“We need more initiatives to give disabled people the confidence, the practical support and the flexibility to become a local councillor or MP.

“Having more disabled people included in decision-making means local and national policies are created which reflect what everyone wants and needs in their communities.”

The disabled MP Paul Maynard told young disabled people at the launch of an all party parliamentary group, on the same day the strategy was launched: “It is really, really important that you just do not wait for somebody else to speak on your behalf and you grab those opportunities with both hands.

“I hope that some of you today... might before too long be sitting at this end of the table.”

**17 February 2011**

### **EU action means new rights to bus and coach travel**

Disabled people have finally secured “important rights” to travel on buses and coaches across the European Union (EU), following two years of negotiations.

The new EU regulation will guarantee non-discriminatory access to transport and a right to accessible information before and during a journey.

There will also be compulsory disability awareness training for all drivers, although member states will be able to exempt themselves from this duty for five years.

The regulation also includes a right to full compensation for lost or damaged wheelchairs and other assistive equipment, while information about passengers’ rights will have to be provided in terminals and online.

And for journeys over 250 kilometres, disabled passengers will be entitled to free assistance at terminals and on board coaches.

If a passenger has made a request at least 36 hours before departure, and the transport provider is unable to provide suitable assistance, the passenger will have the right to be accompanied by an assistant at no extra charge.

Member states will be able to exempt their regular domestic services from this assistance duty for up to eight years.

The regulation was approved by MEPs this week after it was agreed by individual EU governments last month, and will come into force in 2013.

Europe's leading disabled people's organisation, the European Disability Forum (EDF), said that, although the final regulation "does not include all our demands", it provides disabled passengers with a "set of important rights".

An EDF spokeswoman said the 250 kilometre limit was "very, very high", while the need to notify transport providers of a need for assistance 36 hours before the journey was too long.

EDF said its members would have a "key role" in ensuring there was "constructive dialogue" with bus operators and transport bodies over implementation of the regulation, but it called on EU countries not to ask for exemptions.

A Department for Transport spokeswoman said: "The EU regulation will secure significant benefits for passengers, including disabled people and people with reduced mobility, whilst containing transitional arrangements to ensure the industry has time to prepare.

"Decisions on whether to use the available exemptions to delay the application of certain requirements will be taken next year following consultation with interested parties."

RADAR said the move was "a real step towards accessibility for disabled people".

Marije Davidson, RADAR's public affairs manager, said: "Despite disability discrimination legislation, disabled people still experience negative attitudes and can't get on inaccessible buses.

"This will strengthen our rights and improve access to education and employment. RADAR wants these measures to be implemented as quickly as possible."

**17 February 2011**

### **Consumers 'are being overcharged for mobility aids'**

Disabled consumers are being overcharged for mobility aids, and many are buying low-quality products and equipment that fails to meet their needs, campaigners have told the Office of Fair Trading (OFT).

The OFT said that disabled people, consumer groups, charities and trading standards departments had made their concerns clear during a public consultation.

Following the consultation, the OFT this week formally launched an investigation into the mobility aids market.

The OFT will examine three major issues affecting the market for wheelchairs, scooters, stair lifts, bath aids, hoists, adjustable beds and specialist seating.

The study will ask whether disabled consumers have the necessary information to buy the mobility aids they need; whether they are being treated fairly by the industry; and whether there is a lack of competition in the wheelchair market.

Many of the responses to the consultation raised concerns about consumers being overcharged, buying low quality products, and buying mobility aids that either "fall short of or exceed their needs".

There were also concerns about the use of high pressure and misleading sales tactics, with some firms seeking to "exploit consumers' lack of information";

the failure to use clear and fair terms and conditions; and firms that do not allow consumers to use their legal right to cancel their purchase.

If the investigation finds the market is not working well, the OFT could make recommendations to business or government, take legal action against companies suspected of breaking the law, or refer the entire mobility aids market to the Competition Commission for further investigation.

The [Disabled Living Foundation](#) (DLF), which provides advice and information on mobility aids, welcomed the investigation.

Chris Shaw, DLF's chief executive, said: "Although many of the companies in this sector have excellent practices, unfortunately we still often hear from people who have received poor service or bought expensive items of equipment that are not suitable."

Nearly 5,000 calls were made last year – an increase of 20 per cent – to complain or seek advice about mobility aids to Consumer Direct, the OFT's advice service, with most complaints about defective products, customer service, high-pressure selling and misleading advertising.

The study is likely to be published in September.

To contribute to the investigation, email [mobilityaids@oft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:mobilityaids@oft.gsi.gov.uk)

**17 February 2011**

### **Government to scale back vetting and barring scheme**

Millions of people working or volunteering with "vulnerable adults" and children will no longer need to have their criminal records checked, under new government proposals.

The government said it wanted to "scale back" the Labour government's plans for the vetting and barring scheme (VBS) – which was to cover England, Wales and Northern Ireland – to "common sense levels".

Last June, the government announced that the planned implementation of the VBS was to be halted, pending a “thorough review”.

Now the government has published its review and has concluded that more of the responsibility for “safeguarding” should be placed on individuals and employers, rather than the state.

Changes to the VBS will be introduced as part of the government’s protection of freedoms bill, which had its first reading on 11 February.

As part of the changes, there will be a merger between the Criminal Records Bureau – the public body that checks people’s criminal records – and the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA), which decides whether someone is a risk to “vulnerable groups” and should be barred from working or volunteering with them.

Checks will in future be restricted to those working “most closely and regularly” with “vulnerable adults” – defined as those who need support or healthcare services – and children.

Those working or volunteering with “vulnerable groups” will also no longer have to register with the VBS and be continuously monitored by the ISA.

People will also be able to take their checks with them between jobs, through a system allowing for continuous updating of criminal records disclosures that will “cut down on needless bureaucracy”.

Deborah Kitson, director of the [Ann Craft Trust](#), which works to protect people with learning difficulties at risk of abuse, said it “made sense” to reduce the numbers needing checks but that she had concerns about “how far this may be taken”.

She raised concerns about the “portable” CRB checks, and said she would “need to be convinced that the CRB updates referred to are efficient and prompt and so do not leave people at risk”.

Kitson said she welcomed “a balance of responsibility for safeguarding to be shared by the state and the employer” so employers also have to be “diligent in their recruitment and safeguarding strategies”.

Deputy prime minister Nick Clegg said: “We inherited a messy criminal records regime that developed piecemeal and defied common sense.

“Our reviews concluded that the systems were not proportionate and needed to be less bureaucratic.

“They will now be scaled back to sensible levels whilst at the same time protecting vulnerable people.”

**17 February 2011**

### **Maynard pledges to hold bosses to account on access**

Leisure, public transport, tourism and university bosses are to be brought in front of a new group of MPs and “held to account” for their failure to make services accessible to young disabled people.

Paul Maynard, chair of the new all party parliamentary group (APPG) for young disabled people, made the pledge at the group’s launch in Westminster this week.

Maynard, the disabled Conservative MP for Blackpool North and Cleveleys, said the group would highlight those areas “where service provision simply is not good enough” for young disabled people.

He said: “What we want to make sure happens is that all those service providers get summoned here... are made to stand in front of us as MPs and are held to account for what they are doing and what they are not doing.”

Maynard said he wanted to ensure that at every one of the group’s agms “we can point to successes where we have changed the culture of service provision in this country”.

He said he particularly wanted to challenge problems faced by young disabled people with complex needs as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood.

The APPG – which will be vice-chaired by Labour’s shadow equalities minister Fiona Mactaggart – has been set up with the support of Trailblazers, a campaigning group of more than 300 young disabled people run by the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign.

Members of Trailblazers were at the launch to talk about the investigations they have carried out since 2008 into the inequalities they face in public transport, employment, higher education, tourism and leisure facilities.

Oxford University student Zoe Hallam said that many young disabled people “get the impression that they are turned away because of their disability because employers think of us as risks or inconveniences”.

She added: “If we are capable of doing the job, and we are capable of doing the job, there should not really be any barriers.”

Social worker Hannah-Lou Blackall told MPs at the launch that young disabled people need “boundless determination, problem-solving skills and a robust sense of humour” just to plan a holiday.

## **16 February 2011**

### **MPs hear first-hand evidence of DLA fears**

An influential committee of MPs has heard direct evidence from disabled people about their fears over the government’s disability benefit reforms.

Dame Anne Begg, the Labour MP who chairs the Commons work and pensions committee, had asked disabled people to take part in the experimental session so she and her colleagues could hear the “real voices of the people that are affected” by the reforms.

One of those invited, Kate Gordon, told the committee about her fears over disability living allowance (DLA) reforms, and said DLA had “totally supported me to get into work”, while being able to obtain a car under the Motability scheme had “totally transformed my life”.

She raised the fear that wheelchair-users like herself who were able to wheel a certain distance would not be found eligible to receive the personal independence payment (PIP), which is set to replace DLA.

Caroline Richardson, another wheelchair-user, added: “Immediately you develop those skills you’re no longer disabled – that’s the inference of [the DLA consultation] document.”

She said the consultation document was “inaccurate” and that she could “go through it line by line” and “tear it apart”.

Dr Sharon McConville, who has a mental health condition and receives DLA, said she would probably be assessed as having “lower needs” under the government’s reforms and so would lose her DLA funding.

If that happened, she said, she could “quite rapidly fall into the category of the greatest need”.

Jayne Leak, who has autism, told the MPs she was “very concerned” that she was “one of those people that is going to be marginalised and fall out under the PIP”, and would develop mental health problems as a result.

But the Conservative MP Oliver Heald said that neither the development of new independent living aids nor the Disability Discrimination Act had stopped the “remorseless rise in the number of people claiming and the amount of money being spent” on DLA.

The second half of the session was devoted to concerns around the work capability assessment (WCA) – the controversial eligibility test for out-of-work disability benefits.

Among the concerns, MPs heard about the failure of Atos Healthcare, the company that carries out the assessments, to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people taking the test.

Afterwards, Dame Anne said the committee would visit Burnley next month where she hoped to arrange a “town hall meeting” to hear from disabled people who have been involved in the pilot scheme to use the WCA to test the “fitness for work” of incapacity benefit claimants.

**16 February 2011**

### **Inquiry aims to expose impact of cuts on independent living**

An inquiry by MPs and peers will investigate how the coalition government's regime of spending cuts is affecting disabled people's right to independent living.

The decision by the joint committee on human rights – whose members include the disabled peer Baroness [Jane] Campbell – to hold the [inquiry](#) on independent living has been welcomed by a string of leading disabled activists.

The committee has issued a public call for evidence, with a deadline of 29 April.

The inquiry will particularly focus on the impact of the cuts announced in the comprehensive spending review and emergency budget, and how they have affected disabled people's right to independent living, which is guaranteed under the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Dr Hywel Francis, chair of the committee, said he was "keen to hear evidence from disabled people about how effectively this right is upheld in practice, how policy could be improved, and the possible impact of the comprehensive spending review".

Sue Bott, director of the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL), said the inquiry was "very welcome, very timely" and that NCIL would be encouraging its members to submit evidence.

She said: "We are increasingly seeing that disabled people are facing cutbacks, particularly to packages of care, which really calls into question independent living and being able to participate in society on the basis of equality."

Anne Novis, a leading disabled activist, said the cuts were "undermining independent living policies, people's rights to be safe, to have a quality of life, to be able to get up in the morning and get out".

She said: “I do believe it is an important process and I want to encourage people to give evidence, but I am not convinced that this current government will take any notice of this inquiry’s findings.”

Among the cuts the committee will examine are the decision to remove the mobility component of disability living allowance from most people in residential care, restrictions on council social care budgets, and the decision to close the Independent Living Fund (ILF) to new members.

Anne Pridmore, chair of [Being the Boss](#), a user-led organisation which supports disabled people who employ personal assistants, said she believed independent living for disabled people had “gone back 20 years” because of the government’s cuts.

She is convinced ILF will close completely in 2015. When this happens, she will lose half her support funding.

She said: “I am going to do everything I possibly can in the next four years because after that I am going to be in an old people’s home.”

**16 February 2011**

### **Government ‘failed to consider equality in school building cuts’**

Inclusive education campaigners have welcomed a court’s ruling that the government failed to take account of the impact on disabled pupils and other minority groups when it scrapped a string of school building projects.

Education secretary Michael Gove has been told he did not consult widely enough over his plans to scrap the projects, and failed to pay enough attention to equalities issues in reaching his decision.

It is the second time in a month that a judge has told a public body to rethink plans to reduce spending because of a failure to carry out a proper assessment of how the cuts would affect disabled people and other minority groups.

It follows a court ruling on the decision by London Councils to slash spending on a London-wide grants programme.

Simone Aspis, policy and campaigns coordinator for the Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE), said Gove's decision had meant there was no opportunity "for spanking new buildings that are accessible to disabled learners".

She said ALLFIE hoped the ruling would provide an opportunity for local disabled people's organisations and family groups promoting inclusive education to "lobby hard" with both their local authorities and the secretary of state to allow the projects to go ahead.

Aspis said the court's ruling was another boost to the fight against spending cuts and showed that "you cannot just go ahead with policies without doing a proper equality impact assessment on what the implications will mean for disabled people".

Although the judge, Mr Justice Holman, did not order Gove to reinstate funding for any of the projects, he did tell him to reconsider his decisions.

But the judge said that the final decision on the projects rested with Gove, and that he "may save all, some, a few, or none" of them, while "no one should gain false hope from this decision".

The judicial review was brought by Luton, Waltham Forest, Nottingham, Newham, Kent and Sandwell councils, following Gove's decision in July 2010 to cancel projects under Labour's Building Schools for the Future scheme in their areas.

The aim of the scheme, introduced in 2004, was to rebuild or refurbish every secondary school in England over the following 15 to 20 years.

A Department for Education spokesperson said: "We are delighted that the judge did not call into question the decision to end the wasteful and bureaucratic Building Schools for the Future programme."

**16 February 2011**

## **Report's author criticises government over weak response**

The author of a report on services for people with “profound intellectual and multiple disabilities” has criticised the coalition government for its weak response to his recommendations.

Professor Jim Mansell said the government had failed to describe how it would address the problems he described in his report, which covers areas including housing, personalisation, self-advocacy and assistive technology.

And he criticised the government for simply repeating steps it was already taking, while saying it was for local social care and health agencies to resolve the other issues.

He said: “Since the report was commissioned on the basis that government recognised that existing arrangements were not doing enough for adults with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities, I find it difficult to believe that the specific attention needed will now be forthcoming.”

Mansell said that new policies introduced by the coalition government – including removing the mobility component of disability living allowance from most people in residential care and closing the Independent Living Fund to new members – “betray lack of understanding of the issues involved” and were “undermining the spread of good practice”.

And he said the government’s suggestion that families could ensure their needs were met through local campaigning was “not credible” as they were “already often fully stretched trying to get the help they need” and “often fear that if they agitate for better services their disabled relative will be punished by lack of services they need”.

Mansell’s Raising Our Sights report was commissioned, and published, by the Labour government, but the coalition government has now published its response.

The PMLD [profound and multiple learning disabilities] Network and the charity Mencap said the government’s response was “extremely disappointing”, and they accused it of “not taking responsibility to ensure the needs of people with PMLD are met”.

Paul Burstow, the care services minister, said the government “fully support” the report and have “taken on board its central message that prejudice, discrimination and low expectations are major obstacles that all people with learning disabilities face”.

He said achieving the “best outcomes” for people who need support “requires a more personalised service and we will ensure that progress continues in this area so that more people benefit”.

But a Department of Health spokeswoman declined to comment on Mansell’s criticisms of the government’s response.

There are about 16,000 people with profound intellectual and multiple disabilities in England, who all have great difficulty communicating, limited understanding, and high support needs.

**16 February 2011**

### **Blue badge reforms are ‘huge step forward’**

The government has announced major reforms of the blue badge parking scheme for disabled people – the first on such a scale since its launch 40 years ago.

Councils will be forced to use more independent mobility assessments – instead of asking GPs to assess applicants – of those who do not qualify automatically for a badge.

How this will work has not yet been finalised, with new guidance for councils expected in May or June.

Included in the reforms is a long-awaited plan for a national database of the 2.5 million badge-holders, which should make it easier for councils to enforce the scheme. The database could include badges issued in Wales and Scotland.

Councils will be given “tough” new enforcement powers, including the right to cancel badges that have been lost, stolen, have expired or been withdrawn due to misuse, and on-the-spot powers to confiscate such badges.

The government also plans to contract a company to design, print and supply all blue badges across England – with a new electronic badge that will be harder to forge and alter – although councils will still process applications.

The maximum fee a council can charge will rise from £2 to £10, the first increase in nearly 30 years.

It will also be possible to renew badges online through the government’s directgov website.

The government says faster renewals and less abuse could save £20 million a year.

The National Fraud Authority’s latest estimate is that blue badge fraud costs the UK about £46 million a year.

Norman Baker, the Liberal Democrat transport minister, said at the launch of the new plans in Camden, north London, that they would ensure the badge was “fit for purpose” and that “people who need blue badges can get them and use them”.

He also promised to write to supermarkets to encourage them to tackle abuse of accessible parking bays in their own carparks.

Dai Powell, chair of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC), said the plans were “a huge step forward” but it was vital that they delivered “integrity” to the scheme.

Helen Dolphin, a DPTAC member and director of policy and campaigns at the charity [Mobilise](#), said: “I am pleased that at last we have some reforms that are hopefully going to make a difference to the tremendous abuse the scheme is still suffering from.”

She said too many local authorities were issuing badges to people who do not need them.

Eligibility for the badge will also be extended to more disabled children aged between two and three, with automatic entitlement given to disabled service personnel and veterans with high support needs.

Many of the changes announced will be introduced within a year.

**14 February 2011**

### **Minister defends decision to abolish 'different era' DPTAC**

A transport minister has described the government's accessible transport advice body as "a creature from another era", as he tried to justify the decision to abolish it.

Liberal Democrat Norman Baker was speaking as two members of the Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC) were in north London to help him launch government reform of the blue badge parking scheme.

Four months ago, the government announced that DPTAC would be abolished, as part of its so-called "bonfire of the quangos".

Baker accepted that DPTAC had played an important role in advising on the reforms, and he said: "We also listen very carefully to DPTAC."

But when asked by Disability News Service why the government was scrapping the advisory body, he said: "They were created in a time when legislation did not mainstream disability issues. They are a creature from a different era."

He said the government would "still have access to the expertise" but would "just arrange it in a different way".

Dai Powell, chair of DPTAC, replied: "I am a creature from a different era and hopefully for the future as well."

He said the government had worked "very closely" with DPTAC on its blue badge reforms.

When asked whether he was happy that the government was abolishing DPTAC, he said: “It is important for us that the views of disabled people are heard at the highest level.”

Helen Dolphin, a DPTAC member and director of policy and campaigns for the charity [Mobilise](#), who was also at the launch, added: “We also have to recognise that although there have been improvements it is still very, very difficult for disabled people to get around.

“There has been progress but it is still a very inaccessible transport system for disabled people.”

She said later: “I sincerely hope there will be a successor body.”

**14 February 2011**

**News provided by John Pring at [www.disabilitynewsservice.com](http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com)**