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Mr Martin Weaver  
13 Chiswick Village  
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Our Ref: TO/16/8640

5 October 2016

Dear Mr Weaver

Thank you for your recent correspondence, raising issues arising from Government policies which are the responsibility of this Department. The Prime Minister receives a large volume of correspondence and is unable to reply personally on every occasion. I have been asked to respond.

A wide range of benefits and allowances is available from this Department. There are a variety of methods for calculating and awarding entitlement. However, both Employment and Support Allowance and Personal Independence Payment, the main benefits for disabled people, focus on the impact of the condition. Therefore, as we recognise that disabled people are experts in their own lives, information provided by them plays an important role. In every case, consideration is given to any evidence that the claimant has provided. Consideration will also be given to whether further evidence will help in providing advice on the claim to the Department's decision maker. Such evidence can come from a variety of sources, including GPs, hospitals and social workers, as well as family members and carers.

When claiming Personal Independence payment most people will be asked to attend a face-to-face consultation with a trained independent assessor. We believe this is key in creating a fairer, more objective, and more transparent assessment than that which exists under Disability Living Allowance. Such a consultation also gives individuals the opportunity to put across their own views of the impact of their health condition or impairment on their everyday lives. We accept that face-to-face consultations may not be appropriate in every case. However, we believe that these decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis, reflecting the personalised approach to individuals' circumstances which is inherent to Personal Independence Payment. If it is deemed that there is enough evidence, then the claimant will not be asked to attend a consultation. Ensuring that the claimant is able to tell us who is best placed to provide supporting evidence is a core part of our approach.

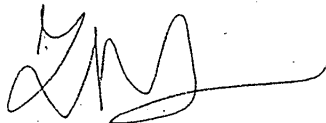
We are passionate about exploring ways to ensure that all disabled people can live independent lives and enjoy full and equal participation in a modern, inclusive society. Sadly, however, many of them must overcome obstacles to this every single

day and so I believe it is incumbent upon us all, as members of a civilised and compassionate country, to work together to ensure that they can realise their full potential just like anybody else.

Our vision for disabled people, whatever their age or background, was set out in our cross-government disability strategy: 'Fulfilling Potential', which aims to remove the barriers that disabled people face to enable them to fulfil their potential and have equal opportunities to play a full and active role in society. We developed our approach with very extensive engagement with disabled people so that it reflects what they have said is important to bring about the changes that will have a real and lasting impact on their day-to-day lives.

That means, for example, changing attitudes towards disabled people and creating more inclusive and accessible communities. It means continuing to work in partnership with disabled people and their organisations, business, the voluntary sector and others to break down the barriers faced by disabled people. It means supporting disabled people to take full advantage of employment opportunities wherever possible to halve the disability employment gap. And it means making sure all people, whatever their impairment, have the opportunity to access services and live as fully engaged members of a modern society in every aspect of day to day life.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Z Ahmet', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Z Ahmet  
Ministerial Correspondence Team