**Dear Mr Tomlinsen**

We as representatives of disabled people’s organisations and organisations representing the disability sector in Wales are writing to you to raise grave concerns about the Green Paper on Health and Disability.

We are extremely disappointed by the Green Paper as a whole. While there are some aspects that may benefit the lives of disabled people, we cannot see this happening with the current Green Paper as it stands.

Although the Green Paper gives as its purpose to support disabled people through the benefits system, there are significant gaps in this paper. The authors of this paper seem exclusively interested in supporting disabled people into work. While we do not disagree with this idea, the result is that this Green Paper leaves behind large swathes of disabled people. The fact of the matter is that many disabled people cannot work and may never be able to work, but that does not mean that they deserve to be ignored by their government or that their access to support is any less important.

The failure to offer substantive change is especially disappointing given the fact that the UK Government has been criticised by the UN for violating disabled people’s human rights. One particularly harmful component of the UK benefits system is the use of sanctions. We are disturbed to see that there is only one passing mention of sanctions in the whole proposal. If the UK Government insists on continuing to use benefits sanctions, it should make the rules surrounding them fully transparent.

It is also important to note that disabled people who fail to find work mostly do so because of lack of opportunities and support. We have found again and again that with the right support disabled people can excel in the workplace. The Green Paper frames disabled people’s failure to find work as a matter of personal failure. This is all the more dramatic since disabled people have been affected for years by negative stereotypes, often perpetuated by people in power and politicians. The idea of disabled people being “benefits scroungers” has negatively affected many disabled people. This policy goes nowhere to address this issue or identify how the Government will support disabled people beyond trying to ferry them into the workplace.

We must also note that although one of the aims of this document is to support independent living and freedom for disabled people to live as they choose, this document does not address how this might be made possible for people who are not in paid employment. There is also no mention of making sure disabled people are treated well within the workplace. There is little mention of the quality of the job or procedures in place to strengthen their rights in the workplace. There is no acknowledgement in this document of the fact that many disabled people are forced out of work due to discrimination.

The motto of the disability rights movement that has carried us forward is “nothing about us without us”. You write repeatedly in this Green Paper of having conducted extensive consultations with disabled people across the UK. We must point out that this document gives no indication that input from disabled people has been used to fundamentally reform the most problematic aspects of this policy. If the current Disability Minister Chloe Smith MP and the Westminster Government truly want to be allies to disabled people, they should begin by working with us in a more substantive manner, truly listening to how we think the system should be reformed so that you can make meaningful institutional change. Disabled people in the UK have been systemically failed by successive governments for many years and unfortunately, this paper contains far too many major gaps for us to have faith that this will change.

Kind regards

Disability Wales, Learning Disability Wales, All Wales People First