

31<sup>st</sup> March 2016

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the Personal Independence Payment (PIP).

The Government is determined to support everyone to achieve their full potential and live independent lives. In the last 12 months alone, 152,000 more disabled people have moved into work. That represents real lives transformed as people with disabilities are supported to move into work and therefore benefit from all the advantages that brings.

The Government is also committed to supporting those most in need and currently spends around £50 billion every year on benefits alone to support people with disabilities or health conditions. Spending on those with disabilities or health conditions will be higher in every year to 2020 than in 2010.

PIP was introduced to be a more modern and dynamic benefit to help cover the extra costs faced by disabled people. Unlike Disability Living Allowance (DLA), PIP is designed to focus support on those with the greatest need. For example, 22 per cent of claimants are receiving the highest level of support, compared to 16 per cent under DLA.

Before Christmas, the Government held a consultation on how part of the PIP assessment works in relation to aids and appliances. Following that consultation, the Government has decided it will not be going ahead with the changes to PIP that had been put forward, and has confirmed there are no plans for further welfare savings. Parliament has already legislated for £12 billion in welfare savings through the Welfare Reform and Work Act, meeting the pledge made to the electorate in our manifesto.

I welcome the fact that the Government wants to build on the progress it has already made in supporting people with disabilities, by starting a new conversation with disabled people, their representatives, healthcare professionals and employers. We need to make the welfare system work better with the health and social care systems, and to work towards fulfilling the commitment made at the last election to halve the disability employment gap. I look forward to working with colleagues to achieve these aims.

Thank you again for contacting me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**

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