



Merton Centre for Independent Living
Unit 1 Batsworth Road
Mitcham, Surrey
CR4 3BX

09 September 2020

REF: Removal of Benefits Sanctions

Dear Mr Hammond and Ms McDonagh,

I am writing to you on behalf of Merton Centre for Independent Living to urge you to take action and help us to scrap benefit sanctions once and for all.

Please raise this issue within your political party and table motions and amendments in Parliament to remove benefit sanctions for good.

The London-wide Deaf and Disabled People's organisation Inclusion London has produced a briefing summarising some of the evidence. Merton CIL supports their key points that there is ample evidence to show that conditionality and sanctions are counterproductive in moving people towards employment and instead cause debt, hunger and distress and in some cases destitution. These outcomes are particularly acute for Deaf and Disabled people.

You can read Inclusion London's briefing on their website here:
<https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/campaigns-and-policy/facts-and-information/welfare-reform/stop-benefit-sanctions-now/>

They wrote this briefing before the coronavirus pandemic and the situation we are now in will have made sanctions even more dangerous, cruel and unnecessary. It is especially unfair and unjust when we are facing a historic rise in unemployment to force people into searching for jobs which are not suitable for them or do exist at a time when many will still be facing restrictions relating to the virus.

Many of the people being forced to look for work will come from Disabled and or BAME communities who have already experienced a shocking and disproportionately high number of deaths during the pandemic. The likelihood of dying from Covid-19 amongst these groups is significantly higher than the general population. Disabled people will face an increased risk of exposure to Covid-19 if they have to attend jobcentre appointments, travel on public transport or go into a workplace where social distancing and other safety measures have not implemented in full. For Disabled people, including those who are shielding, many workplaces where it is not possible to work from home will pose an extremely high risk.

Please act now to help address this great injustice.

Yours sincerely,



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