

# **STEALING PIP TO FUND COMMUNITY CARE**

**an article by**

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There have been so many social policy reforms in the past decade that it can be hard to keep up with their implications, but there is a cumulative effect. With little interest by the national press the implications of the social policy reforms, and the human consequences of removing yet more financial support from the chronically ill and disabled community, has become the norm.

One of the most significant social policy changes was when Disability Living Allowance (DLA) was replaced by the Personal Independence Payment (PIP) in 2013. Since then, former DLA claimants have gradually been reviewed with many losing access to benefit when PIP is refused. This has meant that many disabled people who were employed subsequently lost their jobs as access to a Motability vehicle, via DLA or PIP, was removed when the applicant failed to access a PIP award.

The latest assault on the independence of the disabled community is by Local Authorities. With their income drastically cut during the austerity measures, which were adopted without ethical approval by the coalition government, the Local Authorities are now claiming access to PIP awards to fund social care in the community. Enforcing this claim means that the chronically ill and disabled community have had their quality of life eroded.

Many disabled people have no idea that this claim to PIP income by the funding authority can be successfully challenged. Having been awarded PIP, and having been reassured by the funding authority that the home care package would be fully funded, chronically ill and disabled people could be forgiven for committing their PIP income for additional costs to support their identified needs. They aren't in any position to save the PIP income in case the local authority wants access to it, as this income is already allocated. So, by suddenly demanding access to PIP funding for essential home care, the chronically ill and disabled community will once again become prisoners in their own homes long after the Coronavirus threat has ended. The PIP award that pays for disabled people to enjoy, for example, access to the Internet and IT support, supported swimming, supported craft activities, supported trips to the country and supported visits to the museum will end when they no longer have access to pay for these additional costs; which added a valuable quality of life to the often very difficult existence of the disabled community.

It is unacceptable for Local Authorities to now presume access to PIP awards, which were granted for the use of the disabled recipient and not as a funding stream for community care. It is possible to successfully challenge this claim, and I recommend that the disabled community refuse to commit their hard won PIP award to the local authority and challenge the integrity of the claim.

I recently challenged this claim by my Local Authority and, following assessment, I have been awarded an increase in hours and an increase in funding, without losing my PIP award.

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