



# Down's Syndrome Scotland

helping people realise their potential

Mr Matthew Oakley  
Independent Review of Sanctions  
Review Team  
1<sup>st</sup> Floor, Caxton House  
6-12 Tothill Street  
London SW1H 9NA

Friday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2014

Dear Mr Oakley,

## **Call for Information – Jobseekers (Back to Work Schemes) Act 2013**

Down's Syndrome Scotland welcomes the opportunity to respond to this call for information. As a charity, Down's Syndrome Scotland works to improve the quality of life for everyone in Scotland with Down's syndrome and their families. Down's syndrome affects approximately 20 per cent of the learning disability population and is the single biggest diagnosed cause of learning disability. Therefore we have a particular interest in changes to the benefits system.

The issue of benefit sanctions constitutes a significant concern for Down's Syndrome Scotland and we are of the view that the impact of a benefit system relying on punishment-led interventions must be carefully considered by the UK Government.

In implementing a system grounded on penalties which can be enforced against beneficiaries if they fail to comply with the rules, greater attention must be given to the wide range of needs/disabilities benefit claimants may have. This is particularly important for people with learning disabilities, like Down's syndrome. Due to their condition, people with Down's syndrome are less likely to be able to strictly abide by demands imposed through the Jobseekers (Back to Work Schemes) Act 2013 (if applicable) or other changes currently made to the benefits system. It is therefore essential for the UK Government to acknowledge that not being able to abide by demands is different to deliberately breaking them.

The benefit system should focus on what people can do and work towards maximising their skills and strengths, not diminishing their ability and confidence. Down's Syndrome Scotland

158/160 Balgreen Road, Edinburgh EH11 3AU

Tel: 0131 313 4225 Fax: 0131 313 4285 E-mail: [info@dsscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@dsscotland.org.uk) Web: [www.dsscotland.org.uk](http://www.dsscotland.org.uk)

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also believes that the experience and needs of service users should be more systematically considered before implementing changes in order to establish a successful and reliable benefit system.

We understand that your review specifically focuses on the operation of sanctions imposed as a result of the Jobseekers (Back to Work Schemes) Act 2013 and that our evidence deals with broader concerns regarding the benefit system and the issue of benefit sanctions. However we trust that our comments will assist you with your work.

Please do not hesitate to contact our office on 0131 313 7452 or at [Rachel@dsscotland.org.uk](mailto:Rachel@dsscotland.org.uk) should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,

Rachel Le Noan  
Policy Officer  
Down's Syndrome Scotland

158/160 Balgreen Road, Edinburgh EH11 3AU

Tel: 0131 313 4225 Fax: 0131 313 4285 E-mail: [info@dsscotland.org.uk](mailto:info@dsscotland.org.uk) Web: [www.dsscotland.org.uk](http://www.dsscotland.org.uk)

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