

DISABLED PEOPLES' DIRECT ACTION NETWORK

PRESS RELEASE (3/12/2008)

DISABLED PEOPLE TAKE DIRECT ACTION IN CENTRAL LONDON TO PROTEST AND DRAW ATTENTION TO NEW BENEFIT HARASSMENT

Instead of celebrating the International day of Disabled People today, we - and our supporters - are in central London protesting against the government's "Employment Support Allowance" (ESA) and "Work Capability Assessment" (WCA) which are replacing "Incapacity Benefit" (IB). This punitive economic attack will hit thousands of the poorest in society, forcing them further into poverty and a discriminatory job market, while thousands more are losing their jobs due to the deepening recession.

A DAN spokesperson said: "If the government were sincere in their attempts to help Disabled Claimants, they wouldn't be cutting benefits or adding new hoops in the process. They would target discriminatory employers and fully appreciate the difficulties those with Invisible and Fluctuating conditions will have in the job market. This is a cynical exercise designed to move the goal-posts in assessments and ensure that many will no longer qualify for the benefits they have been legitimately receiving."

* Political and media spin - suggesting there has been significant increases in Incapacity Benefit claims - is misleading. The DWP confirms there has actually been a drop in IB claims since 2000.

* A much higher percentage of Disabled People than previously are now living in the community and claiming benefits, rather than being institutionalised.

* A long hours / short breaks culture (instead of providing flexi-time or work from home) makes it harder for Disabled People and those with medical

conditions to cope with employment.

* There is a lack of access to meaningful education and training for Disabled People, leading to a lack of qualifications, job skills and therefore decent jobs with adequate incomes.

* ESA and the WCA is an even more punitive benefit and assessment than the previous procedure (IB). Claimants who fail the new assessment will lose entitlement to Disability Living Allowance (DLA) as well as ESA.