

Formal response received from Harrow Association of Disabled people by email 21.9.12

Re council tax benefit

The key issues for us are:

Disabled people will be disproportionately affected by having to pay more council tax, because, although the amount may not be huge, it is additional to other financial decisions currently being made, such as to work related benefits such as ESA, having to contribute to all care costs, loss of concessionary travel and potential loss of DLA through new upcoming PIP scheme.

Disabled people's higher likelihood of being unable to work is not necessarily a choice, or even because of their impairment - disabled people experience disproportionate barriers to work, such as employer prejudice, lack of practical access in workplaces, being more likely to have had poor education, less likelihood of previous work experience etc. They should not be treated as people who choose not to work, and should not be penalised for being on benefits by having to pay more towards council tax.

There would be mixed views from disabled people about whether child benefit should be regarded as income, but on the whole I think most people recognise that it is simply additional income, so it would be reasonable to treat it as such.

DLA is different. Being disabled is expensive, and DLA is given specifically to cover the extra costs of disability and help people meet direct disability needs. To make people use it for everyday expenses like paying council tax will mean that there will disability needs which cannot be met as a result.

In a significant number of cases, the council would be no better off, as the financial re-assessment would simply be moving the person's financial responsibly between paying for care costs and council tax.

HAD's view is that disabled people need to be protected from having losing council tax benefit.