

**“DLA is not under threat . . . be very happy” says minister**

In what may represent a dramatic victory for campaigners, Care Services Minister Phil Hope yesterday (28<sup>th</sup> September 2009) told a reporter at the Labour Party conference that DLA is not under threat by the Care Green Paper.

According to the Disability Now website, Phil Hope, when asked if he would abolish DLA after the election, replied:

“No. All the models that we have done have not included DLA. But if people were to make a case to integrate DLA into a comprehensive system, then I'm very happy to hear that case and have those arguments.

"DLA is not under threat and people can be very happy".

We know that some people will claim that the minister's comments are evidence that campaigning to save DLA was unnecessary. It's a claim, however, that can only be made by ignoring such as the following:

**1** Earlier this month the DWP press office said in relation to whether DLA would be scrapped: “It depends on what people say in the consultation. We need to see what people say when they respond.”

**2** The same minister who is now saying DLA is not under threat wrote to MEP Liz Lynne just a fortnight ago stating that: “. . . this is a consultation exercise and no final decisions have been made about which disability benefits might be involved, or how they would be affected.”

**3** The same minister also refused to rule out the possibility of DLA being axed in an interview earlier this month with Disability Now.

**4** Last month Child Poverty Action Group claimed that it had received assurances from ‘senior sources’ at the DWP that DLA was not under threat. Just four days later CPAG revealed that it had “subsequently been contacted by the DWP who have said that no decisions have been taken as to the future of DLA whilst the consultation is ongoing.” CPAG then went off to lobby the Department of Health on the issue.

**5** For almost two months national charities such as the MS Society have tried, but failed, to get clarification from the government as to whether DLA would be affected by the care green paper.

**6** Just last week, David Behan, the Director General of Social Care at the Department of Health, published a blog post on the Big Care Debate website clearly trying to reduce the flood of hostile responses. He could have easily done so by saying outright that DLA would not be affected by the green paper - he didn't.

The reality is that, *if* the government have now stepped back from an attack on DLA before the care consultation has even ended, it is because of the literally thousands of angry responses on the Big Care Debate website, the thousands of signatures on petitions, the torrent of angry letters to MPs, the motions before the Scottish and Welsh assemblies and the growing pressure from disability charities who were themselves under enormous pressure from outraged claimants.

It's because the focus on the single issue of benefits is fast becoming a public relations disaster for a Green Paper signed by no fewer than six secretaries of state.

Above all, if there's been a change of heart, it's because people have fought so effectively to protect the benefits of disabled people.

I don't know if the fight is yet over for DLA, but I do know for certain it's only just begun for AA. Please forgive my scepticism but we're all in this together.

I know something about weasel words. If AA is abolished then DLA will almost certainly follow. Follow the link below to access more information and sign the petition to save AA & DLA.



With best wishes and keep campaigning,

Benefits Bob the Welfare Weasel

[www.houlston.freeserve.co.uk/mental.htm](http://www.houlston.freeserve.co.uk/mental.htm)