**Families outraged after government hands ‘sickening’ award to DWP safeguarding team**

The government handed its own disability benefits safeguarding team an “outstanding contribution” award, just weeks after a coroner found that flaws in the disability benefits system had caused the death of a young disabled mum.

The award was made by the cross-government Operational Delivery Profession (ODP), which is headed by Peter Schofield, permanent secretary of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

The decision to present the award to DWP’s Disability Services Customer Experience and Safeguarding Team was described this week by the sister of Philippa Day, the disabled benefit claimant [who died in October 2019](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/philippa-day-flawed-pip-system-led-to-young-mums-death-says-coroner/), as “sickening” and “abhorrent”.

Safeguarding specialists within DWP were shortlisted by senior civil servants across three categories of the inaugural ODP awards.

The award winners, announced in an online ceremony on 11 March, included the disability and safeguarding team, who won the Outstanding Contributor of the Year Award.

That award was announced just six weeks and one day after a coroner ruled that flaws in DWP’s disability benefits system were “the predominant factor and the only acute factor” that led to Philippa Day taking her own life.

Gordon Clow, assistant coroner for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, had highlighted 28 separate “problems” with the administration of the personal independence payment (PIP) system that helped cause the death of the 27-year-old, from Nottingham.

He concluded that there were “deficiencies in the system’s ability to process PIP claims without causing unnecessary distress to claimants”, including problems with training for call handlers, DWP’s record-keeping, guidance on additional support for claimants, and inaccurate DWP correspondence.

But despite those conclusions, senior civil servants decided just a few weeks later to recognise DWP’s disability services customer experience and safeguarding team with an award for its “significant and lasting contribution to improving the lives of others”.

Imogen Day, Philippa’s sister, said she was left “physically sickened” when she was informed by Disability News Service (DNS) of the award.

She said it showed DWP “patting themselves on the back” just six weeks after she and her parents had had to listen to Clow detail the 28 separate mistakes by DWP and its contractor Capita that had led to her sister’s death.

She said: “It doesn’t suggest that they have learned anything.

“This is a public body that has been found to have made so many mistakes that it has killed somebody.”

She added: “I understand it is important for staff morale and job retention [to recognise staff with awards] but there is a time and a place for that, and that time is not just after your department has been found responsible for somebody taking their own life.”

The disability and safeguarding team had also been shortlisted in the “collaboration” category, while DWP’s safeguarding operational delivery lead was shortlisted in the “leader of the year” category.

ODP supports civil servants who run frontline services such as processing passports and driving licences, and running the benefits system.

[Its awards were devised](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/operational-delivery-profession-awards-2021) to “recognise, celebrate and reward those stars in ODP who have truly shone this year”.

The nomination process began in 2020, the same year that [DNS revealed](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/the-death-of-errol-graham-man-starved-to-death-after-dwp-wrongly-stopped-his-benefits/) how a disabled man, Errol Graham, had starved to death after DWP wrongly stopped his out-of-work benefits.

Alison Burton, who has led the campaign for justice for Errol, her father-in-law, said the award decision was “disgusting” and “ignorant” and called for it to be revoked.

She said: “It means that the government’s view of the DWP’s actions towards our family is they are acceptable, but they are not acceptable, they are far from acceptable.”

Burton said the award showed the government was trying to cover its back and show that it had acted correctly, even though it knew that claimants had died because of its actions.

She said: “How do you justify that? It’s shocking. It’s downright insulting.”

[Joy Dove](https://www.facebook.com/groups/338612933431362/?ref=pages_profile_groups_tab&source_id=105096470174380), whose daughter Jodey Whiting took her own life after her employment and support allowance [was wrongly stopped](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/jodey-whiting-dwp-ignored-five-safeguarding-chances-before-wca-suicide/) for missing a work capability assessment, said she was “disgusted” by the award.

She said: “It’s awful. It’s like rubbing salt in the wounds and making a mockery of everything.

“It’s upsetting, it’s like killing them again. It’s horrible and sickening and frustrating, when all of our families are breaking apart.

“I don’t understand how they can do it.”

The nomination process for the ODP awards also began in the year that [DNS reported](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-staff-repeatedly-failed-to-follow-suicide-threat-guidance-secret-death-reviews-reveal/) that DWP’s own secret reviews showed how its staff had had to be repeatedly reminded what to do when claimants disclosed that they might take their own lives.

2020 was the year that work and pensions secretary Therese Coffey [told the Commons work and pensions select committee](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/heartless-coffeys-duty-of-care-claim-sticks-fingers-up-to-benefit-death-families/) that DWP has no duty of care to benefit claimants and that that duty should be left to “the local councils, the social services, the doctors and other people”.

It was the year that a National Audit Office (NAO) report [showed that DWP had misled both NAO and the Information Commissioner’s Office](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/letter-shows-appalling-dwp-misled-two-watchdogs-over-benefit-deaths/) over the secret reviews on deaths linked to its own safeguarding actions.

And it was also the year that DWP [admitted destroying secret reports](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-admits-destroying-secret-reports-into-benefit-related-deaths/) into suicides and other deaths of benefit claimants for “data retention” reasons.

DWP refused to comment on the awards.

**11 November 2021**

**UK government admits widespread disability access failures at COP26**

The UK government has admitted widespread and serious access failings at this month’s COP26 climate change conference in Glasgow.

As well as accepting that there have been problems with the accessible entrance to the conference, the UK government – which is hosting the event – has also admitted failing to provide sign language interpretation on broadcasts and webcasts.

Last week, the government said a “genuine mistake” was to blame for the Israeli energy minister, Karine Elharrar, a wheelchair-user, [being left unable to access the conference venue](https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/nov/02/wheelchair-using-minister-denied-entry-to-cop26-venue) on the first Monday of the conference.

But Disability News Service (DNS) has continued to collect evidence of further failings from disabled people who have attended the conference over the last fortnight.

They include concerns raised this week by [Inclusion Scotland](https://inclusionscotland.org/), which has described how the platform for an event that one of its disabled managers spoke at during COP26 was not accessible to those with mobility impairments.

Although none of the speakers at the event had a mobility impairment, they had not been asked in advance about their access requirements.

Inclusion Scotland had been promised that a livestream of the event, which focused on disability-inclusive climate action (*see separate story*), would be captioned, but it was not.

Inclusion Scotland also said that not all the electric shuttle buses used at the conference were wheelchair-accessible, while there was a failure to provide British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation for many of the events.

Susie Fitton, Inclusion Scotland’s policy manager, said the access failures at COP26 showed how disabled people are excluded or are not expected to participate in high-level discussions about climate action.

She said: “Disabled people have been systematically neglected in international, national and local responses to a changing climate.

“This is evidenced by buses being laid on to bring people to COP26 that are electric but not wheelchair accessible, or livestreams to side events being provided to enable remote participation that are not captioned for people with hearing impairments, or the total lack of BSL interpretation for many events at COP.

“What are we saying to disabled people by failing to provide these things? That we don’t expect them to have a seat at the table when we discuss climate change and that their rights, requirements for daily living and perspectives on climate action are not important enough to be an integral part of events like COP.

“This must change if we have any chance of responding to a changing climate in ways that work for all of us.”

Jason Boberg, who has been attending COP26 on behalf of the [SustainedAbility Disability and Climate Network](https://www.sustainedability.org/), said there had been “massive issues” with the accessible entrance to the conference.

He pointed to poor signage, and the lack of information about the existence of an accessible entrance, which means “many people don’t know it exists, let alone where to go and what to do”.

He told DNS last night (Wednesday): “The accessible entrance is also the same as the ministerial entrance which makes it very difficult, as you have to argue with security that you’re meant to be there if you don’t meet their idea of looking like a high ranking official.

“This evening we came into the venue late and the accessible and ministerial entrance was locked with a chain, so to access it we had to demand for it to be opened and then step over a curb.

“We get harassed daily by the security who demand to see proof of disability before letting us through and who yell at us when they think we’re going the wrong way.

“It’s a degrading and demeaning start to what is an incredibly stressful situation fighting for our rights to be upheld in the context of climate change.”

He added: “It means we start every day with the brutal message that this space is not for us, and that we are not expected to be here.

“That does have an impact on the work and energy you’re able to bring to what is already an emotionally and physically taxing two weeks.

“It sets the scene for the conference, and it reminds us that in the climate safe future many people imagine, disabled people aren’t even in the picture.”

In the last week, the UK government has admitted for the first time that there were problems with both the lack of BSL interpretation on broadcasts and webcasts, and with the accessible entrance, although it has so far refused to answer other questions about its access failures.

In a statement, which it refused to clarify, a government spokesperson said: “BSL sign language was provided for the opening ceremony and we are working hard to rectify this and add BSL sign language to host broadcast for COP presidency press conferences and events as soon as possible.”

It refused to comment on the lack of captions, or on whether it had been warned before the conference about the access issues.

It also said that it was “working to resolve any issues around the accessible entrance”, which included increasing signage and providing more staff to “ensure anyone needing to use the accessible entrance is supported/directed”.

The statement was sent to DNS several days before the latest problems experienced by Boberg at the accessible entrance.

The spokesperson added: “We are committed to making this an inclusive and accessible summit.

“Our accessibility support desk is on hand to assist with any requests for assistance, and there are hearing loops available in conference and plenary rooms.”

But it has so far refused to provide any further information about the problems with the accessible entrance.

Meanwhile, Lynn Stewart-Taylor, the Deaf campaigner who led the #WhereIsTheInterpreter campaign, which highlighted the UK government’s failure to provide a BSL interpreter at its televised pandemic briefings, is now preparing [a new legal class action](https://forms.gle/MufduBLuKZhLEYmLA) against the government over its failure to provide BSL interpreters for the COP26 broadcasts.

She said: “I could not believe that we had been totally ignored again.

“Sign language people messaged me straight away, including a deaf teaching assistant concerned about the lack of access for sign language children that meant they were unable to follow the COP26 announcements.

“The government has failed us.

“I feel that having come this far, we need to hold the government to account, and let them know that our rights cannot be ignored.

“If we don’t fight to change the system, things will continue to be the way they are.

“So I have taken the decision to bring legal proceedings again, against the Cabinet Office.”

[The Royal Association for Deaf people](https://www.royaldeaf.org.uk/) is supporting the legal action.

Vicky Foxcroft, Labour’s shadow minister for disabled people, said: “It is completely unacceptable that a series of accessibility failures have led to some disabled people being unable to access the COP26 venue.

“The lack of sign language or subtitles for anything other than the COP26 opening ceremony is also a big failure.

“Disabled people face these barriers every day and the UK government’s disability strategy does little to address them.

“We need to see clear actions from the government, not just words.”

**11 November 2021**

**DWP blanks out entire report on support for ‘vulnerable’ universal credit claimants**

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has refused to release any details from a report – commissioned by the prime minister’s office – into the effectiveness of its support for “vulnerable” claimants of universal credit.

The report is believed to have been commissioned after an investigation by the public spending watchdog, the National Audit Office, [found in June 2018](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-is-failing-vulnerable-claimants-of-universal-credit-says-watchdog/) that DWP was failing to support vulnerable universal credit (UC) claimants and was unable to monitor how they were being treated.

Disability News Service (DNS) [later revealed](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/chaotic-universal-credit-led-to-disabled-mans-death-sister-tells-un-poverty-expert/) how a man with learning difficulties died a month after attempting to take his own life, following a move onto UC that left him hundreds of pounds in debt.

DNS also reported in 2018 that DWP had carried out [at least four secret reviews](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwps-secret-benefit-deaths-reviews-universal-credit-death-linked-to-claimant-commitment-threats/) into the deaths of UC claimants.

[Newly-released papers](https://depositedpapers.parliament.uk/depositedpaper/2283670/files) have now shown that a report by the Prime Minister’s Implementation Unit (PMIU) was presented to DWP bosses at a meeting on 22 October 2019.

But when papers from the meeting of the universal credit programme board (UCPB) were finally deposited in the House of Commons library last week\* – two years after the meeting took place – none of the PMIU report was included.

Instead, a single page stated that the report was “exempt” from release because – under [section 36 of the Freedom of Information Act](https://ico.org.uk/media/for-organisations/documents/1175/section_36_prejudice_to_effective_conduct_of_public_affairs.pdf) – DWP believed that releasing it would be damaging “to the effective conduct of public affairs”.

Without being able to read the report, it is impossible to know what flaws PMIU found and what action DWP took.

Instead, another document from the 22 October meeting said only that the PMIU report was the result of “a deep dive on the effectiveness of support for vulnerable Universal Credit (UC) claimants”, including visits to 14 jobcentres.

And it said that UCPB was asked to “note and comment on the report and support the joint work to progress the recommendations moving forwards”.

Although the paper said that some of the recommendations were “straightforward to agree actions”, it also said that there were “some more complex recommendations that we are continuing to consider how best to implement”.

Another document released last week shows that charities, campaign groups and other organisations consulted by DWP on the so-called “managed migration” phase of the rollout of UC raised repeated concerns that moving people from legacy benefits onto UC would see them “fall between the cracks and suffer hardship”.

This document, from a UCPB meeting on 16 April 2019, showed that DWP had research “highlighting the same risks”, as well as “experience of other DWP migrations from which we can learn”.

This “experience” is likely to include the tragic and shocking impact of the migration of claimants of incapacity benefit (IB) onto employment and support allowance (ESA) by reassessing them through the work capability assessment system.

The IB to ESA migration began in the spring of 2011 and was [later linked by government-funded research](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/damning-research-on-wca-deaths-is-timely-reminder-of-governments-shame/) to 590 suicides in just three years.

The UC managed migration process – now apparently renamed “move to universal credit” – will eventually see claimants of legacy benefits such as ESA moved onto UC, even if their circumstances have not changed.

The document shows DWP admitting that it will be prepared to stop people’s benefits if they refuse to move onto UC voluntarily.

In an appendix titled “Draft Core Narrative”, DWP says it wants to learn how to move as many people as possible onto UC through managed migration “without resorting to stopping benefits”, but it says that there are “a group of people that we cannot move without stopping existing benefits and we need to be able to do that where necessary”.

Managed migration contrasts with “natural migration”, which sees claimants of legacy benefits forced to move onto UC when their circumstances change.

A managed migration pilot project began in Harrogate in 2019, but it had to be suspended last year because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Work and pensions secretary Therese Coffey [told MPs this week](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-08/debates/F6C9B395-A176-4880-ADDB-41BFD7CA0B52/OralAnswersToQuestions#contribution-FAFE0910-EBA3-48F4-8824-FF46FD60C5A1) that she was “not envisaging a need for the pilot to be resumed in Harrogate” but that it had “informed our plan, which is still in preparation, on resuming the managed move to universal credit”.

DWP refused to comment on the documents.

*\*DWP agreed to release the programme board documents at regular intervals – although so far only at least two years after meetings have taken place –* [*as a result of years of work*](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/campaigners-six-year-battle-to-secure-the-truth-about-universal-credit/) *by freedom of information campaigner John Slater*

**11 November 2021**

**‘Urgent action needed’ to ensure disabled people are not neglected in climate battle**

Urgent action must be taken to stop disabled people’s rights from being “systematically neglected” in the battle against climate change, international delegates at the [COP26 conference](https://unfccc.int/conference/glasgow-climate-change-conference-october-november-2021) in Glasgow have been told.

Three disabled speakers repeated the message that disabled people and their organisations must be at the heart of policy discussions around climate change.

The event on disability-inclusive climate action was also warned of the disproportionate impact that climate change was having on disabled people around the world.

[The event](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=CAJy_BEUQpk&list=PLBcZ22cUY9RL4TEKTBfoLupiqS5n7Kr6c&index=29) was organised by Canada’s McGill University, Inclusion Scotland, League of Women Voters, International Disability Alliance and Human Rights Watch.

Susie Fitton, policy manager for Inclusion Scotland, told the meeting: “Our human rights as disabled people, our requirements for daily living, and our perspectives on climate action have to date been systematically neglected in international, national and local responses to a changing climate.

“This urgently needs to change, and we hope that this event will be a form of catalyst for that change.”

She told the meeting about Inclusion Scotland’s new paper, [It’s Our Planet Too…](https://inclusionscotland.org/home-page-news/inclusion-scotland-publishes-climate-change-report-ahead-of-cop-26), reported on [last month by Disability News Service](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/ground-breaking-event-and-report-could-be-catalyst-for-cop-26-action-on-disability/).

She said the report highlighted two key issues, “that disabled people in Scotland stand to be harder hit by climate impact but are often excluded or disadvantaged by actions to address climate change”.

Fitton said disabled people around the world were being “hardest hit” by “extreme weather, bigger wild fires, longer droughts and more intense storms and floods”.

She said this can be “catastrophic” for some disabled people who are “less likely to be evacuated safely, more prone to health risks, and less likely to have insurance that protects their assets and homes”.

And she said this was not just an issue for disabled people in the global south.

She said: “We saw in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in America that community evacuation warnings, shelters and emergency transport were not accessible to disabled people, and as a result significant numbers drowned in their own homes or in nursing homes.”

And she said this “sense of environmental vulnerability is growing closer to home for disabled people in Scotland”, where 280,000 properties were vulnerable to rising sea and river levels, while the ground floor and level access properties required by many disabled people were “particularly vulnerable to flooding”.

Despite this, she said, disability issues receive little attention from policy-makers on climate issues in Scotland.

And efforts to reduce emissions, such as active travel schemes that emphasise walking and cycling, “all have the potential to actively discriminate against disabled people”, including those who rely on cars and cannot afford new electric vehicles.

She showed delegates a photograph of an older, disabled woman being forced to cross a cycle lane to board a bus, because of a “spaces for people” scheme in Edinburgh.

Fitton suggested that disabled people had faced discrimination because of acts of “eco-ableism in the environmental movement”, including a failure to recognise that “many of the changes to habits and lifestyle that could help minimise climate change… are very difficult or even impossible for some disabled people to do”.

And she called on the UK to use COP26 as a platform to encourage other governments to “view disabled people as key stakeholders” in the development of climate change policy, while she said the Scottish government also needed to involve disabled people and their organisations in climate change policy-making.

She added: “There can be no climate justice in Scotland without the active involvement of disabled people.”

Jose Viera, chief executive of the [World Blind Union](https://worldblindunion.org/), a founding member of [International Disability Alliance](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/), told the event that change “has to be driven” by organisations of disabled people.

He said: “We are here to learn from others, we are here to share the experience that many of you have, but we know what is good for us, we know what we need, we know what and how we should be included in the discussion around climate change.

“People with disabilities are dying out there as a result of the impact and effect of climate change.

“There is no time to keep waiting or to lose if we want to stop persons with disabilities from dying in the different disasters.”

He called for disabled people to be closely involved in climate change policy-making, and not only to be restricted to meetings with government departments of social affairs and health, education and employment, but also with ministries connected with climate change issues in departments covering justice, transport and development issues.

Pratima Gurung, from [Indigenous Persons with Disabilities Global Network](https://www.internationaldisabilityalliance.org/content/indigenous-persons-disabilities-global-network), said in a pre-recorded video that it was time “to negotiate, to network” for inclusion in climate action, which meant disabled people and indigenous disabled people needed to be “clearly mentioned” and included in documents, policies and UN structures.

She said: “We need to be at the centre as we are in the front line from the vulnerability aspects, and our voices need to be heard.”

She said that “global commitments” must reach those on the ground by ensuring change for “the most vulnerable people like us” and “ensuring that no-one is left behind”.

She said: “This is what inclusion means for us.

“I know that this is not a very easy task, but if we do not realise it, it will harm every one of us in many forms, so it is time for us to put the custodian of this nature – indigenous people, indigenous people with disabilities – and people with disabilities into the centre by protecting all of us.”

**11 November 2021**

**Rail company breaks level access pledge, then rewrites history**

A major programme to improve access to rail services on the Isle of Wight has left disabled campaigners feeling let down and frustrated after they discovered that a train operating company had broken its promise to introduce level access boarding.

South Western Railway (SWR) had pledged that its £26 million upgrade programme on the eight-station Island Line would provide newer trains, “modernise the rail experience” for passengers, and provide a “real improvement”.

A graphic on its website, published as far back as September 2019 and [tweeted at the time by the island’s Tory MP Bob Seely](https://twitter.com/IoWBobSeely/status/1173616471941046273), also included a promise to “provide level access” by adjusting platform heights.

Media coverage [from 2019](https://www.railway-technology.com/projects/the-island-line-upgrade-isle-of-wight/) mentioned that the programme involved “creating level access from the train to the station platform”, while an article from another rail publication last year stated: “Level access will be provided at most stations, although ramps will need to be deployed for wheelchairs at a couple of locations.”

But when the Island Line reopened last week, SWR announced only that adjustments had been made “to reduce the gap between the train and the platform to improve accessibility”, rather than eliminating the gap as it had previously promised.

SWR also produced a new graphic that said platform heights had been adjusted to “improve accessibility” rather than “provide level access” from platform to train.

SWR now insists that creating level access across the network was never part of its plan.

Instead, trains at six of the stations are level with the platform, but still have a horizontal gap, it says, which means that ramps are still necessary for wheelchair-users to board trains at every one of the line’s eight stations.

Bren Flood, a disabled transport enthusiast who highlighted the concerns, said: “I think it’s a huge let-down, not only for residents of the island but also the many visitors who use the rail service.

“Having a fully accessible line is what was promoted to people as part of the upgrade works; what has been delivered is very much not.”

He said that to still have stations with “supposed level boarding but noticeable gaps and requiring the use of the onboard ramps is not what was promised”.

Flood also pointed out how the ramps shown in photographs of the upgraded Island Line were potentially dangerous because they were too short for the height difference between some of the platforms and trains.

[Doug Paulley](https://twitter.com/Doug_Paulley), a leading accessible transport campaigner, added: “It is great that the Island Line has improved access.

“However, I’m sad that they have failed to deliver on their long-stated promise to take the opportunity of their extended line closure and new stock to deliver level access.

“It is such a disappointment, especially when they openly promised it for so long.

“This last couple of days they’ve been carefully removing references to ‘level boarding’ on their website – and with that, sadly we know that they are locking in gaps and height differences for the foreseeable future.

“I feel that they have orchestrated a gaslighting ‘[bait and switch](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/bait-and-switch)’: promising level access, which brings disabled people independence, confidence and safety, and now not just failing to provide such, but denying that they ever promised any such thing.”

An SWR spokesperson said: “From the outset of the Island Line upgrade project, we have been committed to improving the accessibility of the railway.

“While creating step free or level access across the entire Island Line network was not included in the scope of this project, we have raised the height of platforms and lowered track, making it easier to board trains at board trains at Ryde Pier Head, Ryde St Johns Road\*, Smallbrook, Sandown, Lake and Shanklin stations.

“While the platform is level with the trains at these stations, our guards may need to use a bridging ramp due to a horizontal gap between the two.

“In addition to these upgrades, we now have passenger information screens onboard our Island Line trains, making it easier for customers with hearing impairments to travel.”

He added: “We’re sorry that, due to an oversight, the correct range of ramps were not available to our guards when the Island Line reopened last week.

“This has now been rectified.”

But Flood said: “The fact that SWR have now stated that the ramps shown in well circulated images are not the correct ones for the train is staggering on a ‘new to the island’ fleet.

“Did they not consult with real world users beforehand?”

*\*Platform one but not platform two, which is an island platform that is only accessible via a footbridge*

**11 November 2021**

**Minister provides latest evidence of empty disability strategy funding promise**

The minister for disabled people appears to have confirmed that the Treasury has provided no new funding to boost the government’s National Disability Strategy, other than for employment and education schemes.

Disability News Service (DNS) [reported last month](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/spending-review-and-budget-come-up-nearly-empty-on-disability-strategy-funding/) that the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, appeared to have failed to provide any new funding for disabled people in the budget and spending review, except for education and back-to-work support projects.

That [seemed to be confirmed later](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-appears-to-confirm-that-spending-review-came-up-almost-empty-on-disability/) when a Department for Work and Pensions spokesperson – after being asked for details of new disability-focused bids that were successful in the spending review – pointed only to spending on disability employment support and new school places for children with special educational needs.

This week, the new minister for disabled people, Chloe Smith, [was questioned in parliament](https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-11-08/debates/F6C9B395-A176-4880-ADDB-41BFD7CA0B52/OralAnswersToQuestions#contribution-D3ADDA2A-6D5A-4400-97C8-F5B0D7EEB6FB) about the Treasury’s apparent failure to provide new funding to support the disability strategy.

Vicky Foxcroft, Labour’s shadow minister for disabled people, told her it was clear that “money is required to deliver a fully inclusive society”.

And she asked the minister to confirm that the spending review provided no extra funding linked to the strategy, other than for education and employment.

She also asked if Smith planned to ask the chancellor for more money and if she would push for a full debate on the National Disability Strategy.

Smith told her the strategy and its implementation would be one of her “utmost priorities”.

But she pointed only to funding provided through the budget and spending review for disability employment support, and she ignored the call for more funding and a debate on the strategy.

The prime minister, Boris Johnson, [said in August](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1006098/National-Disability-Strategy_web-accesible-pdf.pdf) (PDF) that the National Disability Strategy would be a “down payment” on the promise to “build back better and fairer, for all our disabled people”.

[But analysis of the strategy](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/government-reveals-national-disability-strategy-offers-just-28p-per-person-in-new-funds/) by DNS showed it was accompanied by only £3.95 million in new funding, or just 28p for every disabled person in the UK.

When [challenged by MPs in September](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/government-reveals-national-disability-strategy-offers-just-28p-per-person-in-new-funds/) about the lack of new funding, the then minister for disabled people, Justin Tomlinson – later sacked in a ministerial reshuffle – had suggested that new funding was likely to be announced soon.

He said that a “huge amount” of the work of the government’s Disability Unit in the following few weeks would be to provide evidence for individual government departments that would “strengthen the likelihood” of disability-focused funding bids being successful in the spending review.

But the spending review and budget outcome suggests that government departments other than the Department for Education and DWP failed to put in any disability-related bids to the Treasury, or that the Disability Unit did not provide them with the necessary evidence to persuade the Treasury to provide new funding.

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**Other disability-related stories covered by mainstream media this week**

Tens of thousands of care home residents face losing vital support as unvaccinated carers clock off for the last time before double vaccinations become mandatory: <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/nov/10/care-homes-in-england-set-to-lose-50000-staff-as-covid-vaccine-becomes-mandatory>

A man with cerebral palsy says he was “unceremoniously booted” from a Ryanair flight because his wheelchair was too “heavy” to lift off a conveyor belt and into the plane: <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/man-cerebral-palsy-thrown-ryanair-25388231>

Blue badge holders could be permanently banned from driving into pedestrianised areas in York city centre. Disabled drivers were stopped from accessing the city’s “footstreets” during the pandemic to make way for social distancing and pavement cafes. Now, a report due to go before the council next week, is recommending adopting the ban permanently: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-york-north-yorkshire-59210329>

Two in five disabled workers have been pushed into financial hardship over the last year, according to new TUC polling published today: <https://www.union-news.co.uk/tuc-poll-two-in-five-disabled-workers-pushed-into-hardship-during-pandemic/>

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**News provided by John Pring at** [www.disabilitynewsservice.com](http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com)