



APPG for Terminal Illness
APPG for Motor Neurone Disease

Justin Tomlinson MP
Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work
Department for Work & Pensions

SENT BY EMAIL

22 June 2021

Dear Justin,

As the chairs of the All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG) for Terminal Illness and for Motor Neurone Disease, we are writing to express our concern at the Department for Work & Pensions' (DWP) delay in publishing its review of how the welfare system treats terminally ill people.

As you will be aware, [the APPG for Terminal Illness's 2019 report *Six months to live?*](#) found that the current legal definition of terminal illness is arbitrary, outdated and not based on clinical reality. Terminally ill people who have an uncertain prognosis and may survive longer than six months are unable to access fast-track support from the benefits system.

Our report details the stress, hardship and financial difficulties this creates for many dying people and their families. Clinicians, social and palliative care workers and medical experts all recommend reform of this rule.

We welcomed the DWP's decision to review the law in July 2019. However, it is now nearly two years since that announcement was made and, despite repeated assurances from you in the House of Commons that this issue is a priority for the DWP, the review remains unpublished. The Queen's Speech this year contained no reference to reforming the six-month rule, despite some of the necessary changes requiring primary legislation.

Continued delay is unacceptable. The charities Marie Curie and the Motor Neurone Disease Association estimate that more than 6,000 people have died waiting for a decision on their benefits claim since the DWP announced its review, and more are dying each week that the Government fails to act.

The Scottish Government legislated in 2018 to scrap the six-month rule for devolved benefits. However, the rule remains in place for reserved benefits such as Universal Credit. In addition to the continuing impact on terminally ill claimants in England & Wales, the DWP's inaction also furthers a 'two-tier' system for terminally ill claimants in Scotland and inconsistency across the nations of the UK.

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You have assured the House of Commons that the DWP has concluded work on its review and that it intends to scrap the six-month rule. The APPGs we chair cannot see any reason for publication of this review to be delayed further.

We ask that you write to us as soon as practicable, confirming the date on which the DWP's review will be published, and proposals will be brought forward to reform how the benefits system treats terminally ill people, without further delay.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Drew Hendry', with a horizontal line underneath.

Drew Hendry
Chair, APPG for Terminal Illness

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Lewer', with a horizontal line underneath.

Andrew Lewer
Chair, APPG for Motor Neurone Disease