

Press release

Friday 15 October

**“You Cannot Bully People off Incapacity Benefit”
Charities Respond to Government Statements on Incapacity Benefit**

The Disability Benefits Consortium (DBC) questions the suggestion made by the Prime Minister in his speech in Budapest yesterday (Thursday October 14), that people on incapacity benefit ‘should be working’. Indeed, his own DWP Minister, Baroness Hollis, stated in the House of Lords two days earlier that:

“My noble friend is again right when he says that there is no abuse. The amount of fraud in disability benefits is extremely limited... you cannot bully people off incapacity benefit. If you change the structure of the benefit you do not necessarily get more people into work”

These comments clearly illustrate confusion at the highest level in Government and the disabled people that the DBC supports are beginning to express real concern that what little financial security they have may be taken from under them.

John Knight, Head of External Policy at Leonard Cheshire, comments:

“Rather than accusing Incapacity Benefit recipients of ‘languishing on benefits’ he should take a closer look at research by the Department of Work and Pensions which shows fraud amongst claimants is less than half of one per cent. This means that the vast majority of claimants need, and deserve, the money.

“Any policy that makes already poor people poorer is bad, cheap and ill thought through. This continual harassment of disabled people is nothing other than crude electioneering.”

Knight concludes, “Ultimately this continual and unsubstantiated knocking of Incapacity Benefit is causing unnecessary distress to the disabled people it supports”

Further Information

For media enquiries please contact Mark Frodsham on (020) 7802 8246 or email m.frodsham@lc-uk.org. Out of hours Mob: 07903 949 388

Or Lorna Reith Lorna Reith, Chief Executive, Disability Alliance on (020) 7247 8759. Out of hours Mob: 07973 426 337

Notes to Editors:

1: Baroness Hollis is Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in the Lords. The comments were made on October 12, 2004

2: The Disability Benefits Consortium comprises the Disability Alliance and Royal Association for Disability and Rehabilitation plus organisations working with disabled people including Action for Blind People, Age Concern, Citizens Advice, Contact a Family, MacMillan Cancer Relief, L'Arche UK, Leonard Cheshire, Mencap, Mind, Motor Neurone Disease Assoc, Parkinsons Disease Society, RNIB, RNID, Scope, Sense, Skill