

02 February 2005

Age Concern's response to the DWP's proposed reform of Incapacity Benefit in the 5-year plan

Gordon Lishman, Director-General of Age Concern England, said:

"We support the aims of this package but the devil will be in the detail. We need reassurance that the new responsibilities placed on those claiming Rehabilitation Support Allowance will be flexible enough to accommodate individual health needs and circumstances. Those who are unsuccessful in finding work should not be penalised - everyone should have access to a decent income.

"However it is positive that those with severe health conditions will gain from the new Disability and Sickness Allowance. We welcome the recognition that many vulnerable people with disabilities may be unable to return to work and are most at risk of prolonged poverty.

"But the Government should not forget the millions already on Incapacity Benefit who also need additional support and generous financial incentives to return to work. We welcome the success of Pathways to Work which is helping new claimants of Incapacity Benefit return to work quickly but the lessons of the pilot scheme must be built into the new reforms."