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Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
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Our ref: MC2021/72535

30 September 2021

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 6 September to the Secretary of State on behalf of a number of your constituents about Z2K's briefing on the Health and Disability Green Paper. I am replying as the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work.

As the Minister for Disabled People, I am personally committed to improving the services and support for disabled people and people with health conditions. I want to ensure that the support the Department for Work and Pensions provides now, and in the future, opens up opportunities and provides people with choices. Ultimately, I want to close the disparities that exist and enable those people that could work with support to have those opportunities.

Many changes and improvements have been made to the current system which we recognise does not always work well for some. We know this because we have engaged extensively with disabled people to understand what is and is not working.

The Health and Disability Green Paper, published in July, is an important opportunity to explore more broadly how health and disability benefits can better support people now. It is also very clear that we are starting a discussion on whether we should be looking at much bigger changes to the current system. I want to be guided by the responses we receive and will consider all options that could more effectively support disabled people into work and to live independently, whilst also ensuring that the system is affordable in the future so that we can continue to provide support to the people who need it most.

To open the broader debate on future changes, the Green Paper explores ways to improve the design of the benefits system and poses illustrative ideas to generate discussion. We do not have any pre-conceived ideas and are keen for people to help shape thinking on what options we could explore and how ambitious we should be. We want to hear from disabled people and their representatives about the approaches and solutions we should consider to improve the system.

Further information on how to respond can be found on the Government website at: www.gov.uk/government/consultations/shaping-future-support-the-health-and-disability-green-paper.

We are committed to meaningfully engaging with disabled people and their representatives. That is why, over the last 12 months, we have talked with hundreds of people and organisations through service user workshops and charity-led virtual events to ensure that we know what is and is not working. Although the formal consultation ends on 11 October, as before publication, we will continue to regularly engage with stakeholders, particularly on the more 'green' aspects of the paper that focus on future reform.

After the consultation, detailed proposals will then be brought forward in a White Paper in mid-2022, setting out how we can better enable people to live more independently and take up work.

In the meantime, the Department will continue to work with charities such as Z2K, representative bodies, Disabled Persons Organisations and disabled people to ensure we focus on the best solutions that will make a real difference to disabled people across the country.

I hope your constituents will find this reply helpful.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chloe Smith', with a horizontal line underneath it.

Chloe Smith MP

Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work