

# Disability Newsletter

March - 2026 Issue 3



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## The Survey Results and Housing Issues.

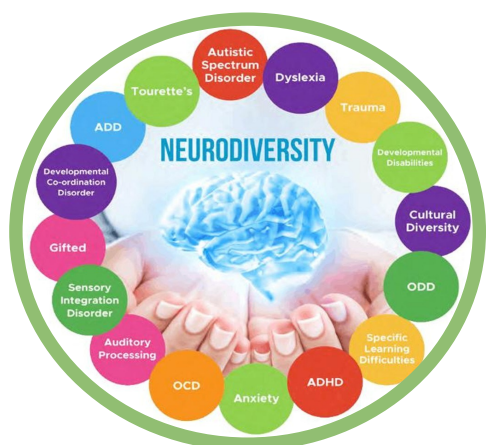
### Survey Results

The response to our disability cuts survey has been extraordinary. Nearly 5,000 members took part. This level of engagement shows just how urgently these issues are affecting disabled people.

Alongside the survey data, we received hundreds of additional comments and personal testimonies. Members described the very real harm caused by the current system: from being humiliated or mistreated during disability assessments to being pushed out of work because employers refuse to provide reasonable adjustments. Many also shared fears about not being able to afford essentials — including prescriptions or privately funded medical treatment — if benefits were cut.

These experiences are not isolated. Together, they reveal a widespread and deeply troubling pattern that cannot be ignored.

Please see page 3 for the results.



### Neurodiversity Week

March 16th to 20th 2026

Please keep a look out for events  
coming up during

Neurodiversity Celebration Week

## Are Local Authorities letting disabled people down over housing?

We have been contacted by disabled members who are deeply concerned about the suitability of housing provided by Local Authorities and housing associations. Many report being placed in properties that are simply not fit for purpose — homes where they cannot move around safely, cook, clean, or meet basic personal hygiene needs.

Even more troubling, when members have challenged these failings, some have received dismissive and inaccurate responses. In one case, a housing association claimed they were not required to make changes because they were “not covered by the Equality Act” — a statement that is both unhelpful and deeply concerning.

We believe that housing for disabled people must be genuinely accessible and fit for purpose. Local Authorities have a responsibility to enforce this through planning and oversight. No development should be approved unless it meets appropriate accessibility standards and respects the rights and needs of disabled residents.

## Member Article

### The **Public Authorities (Fraud Error and Recovery) Act (PAFER Act Explained** by DR Dylan Murphy

The legislation introduces three significant expansions of state power. First, the controversial **Eligibility Verification Measure (EVM)** mandates banks to monitor the accounts of millions of benefit claimants and their associates. This constitutes an unprecedented system of **mass financial surveillance**, requiring banks to report any account that triggers a DWP-defined "eligibility indicator." Many human rights groups describe this as a disproportionate "fishing" exercise that treats all claimants as potential criminals and is likely to breach the Right to Privacy (Article 8 of the ECHR).

Second, the Act significantly expands the Department for Work and Pensions' (DWP) debt recovery powers. It introduces the **Direct Deduction Order (DDO)**, which allows the DWP to seize funds directly from bank accounts without a court order, bypassing crucial judicial safeguards. Furthermore, the DWP gains the punitive power to disqualify debtors from driving, a sanction that can severely impact an individual's ability to work and access essential services.

Third, the PAFER Act grants DWP investigators police-like powers of entry, search, and seizure, aligning them with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984, and crucially, authorizing the use of "reasonable force" to execute a warrant.

The focus on "benefit fraud" is a political distraction from the far greater financial losses caused by corporate fraud and tax evasion. By expanding surveillance and enforcement, the Act effectively **criminalizes poverty**, creating a "two-tier justice system" where the presumption of innocence is lost for benefit claimants. The Carer's Allowance overpayment scandal is highlighted as a real-world example where DWP's systemic failures led to large debts, which are now used to justify the repressive DDO power against vulnerable individuals, conflating administrative "error" with deliberate "fraud."

Ultimately, the PAFER Act is a repressive step, replacing a welfare state built on trust with a digital surveillance regime based on suspicion and control.

# The Survey Results are in....

**KEY:**

DNR = Did not respond PNS= Prefer not to say

**Age Group**

15% DNR    0% under 18    2% 18-24  
 29% 25-44    32% 45-59    22% 60+

**Employment Status**

74% Employed 9% DNR 2% PNS  
 7% Retired 7% Unemployed 1% Self Employed

**Do you believe your assessor had the qualified knowledge to carry out your assessment fairly?**

14% YES 35% NO 51% DNR

**Do you receive any of the following benefits?**

22% DNR 28% None 6% UC 4% ESA 35% PIP  
 3% Other 1% ADP 1% DLA

**Would you need to give up work if your benefits were cut?**

47% YES 53% NO

**Do you receive Access to Work benefits or reasonable adjustments?**

36% DNR 38% No 26% Yes

**How would you rate your experience of the application process?**

36% Happy 64% Unhappy

**How would you rate your experience of the assessment process?**

37% Happy 63% Unhappy

**Regional Comparison**

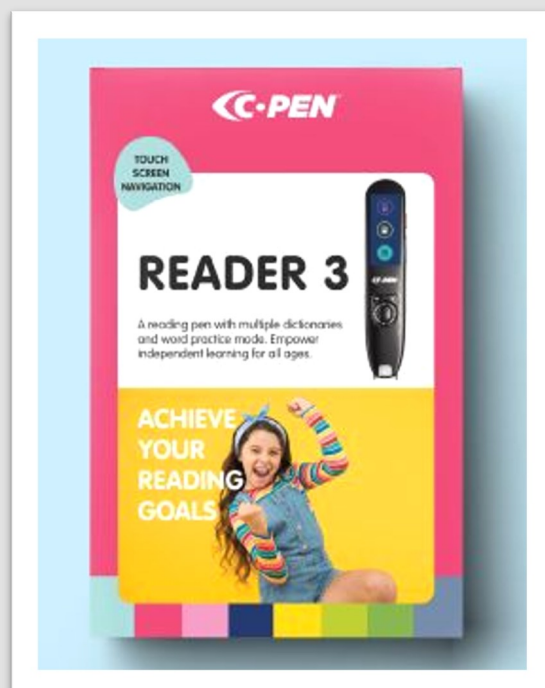
Regions	England	Northern Ireland	Wales	Scotland
How would rate your Application process?	25% Happy 75% Unhappy	21% Happy 79% Unhappy	26% Happy 74% Unhappy	28% Happy 72% Unhappy
How would you rate your assessment?	25% Happy 75% Unhappy	21% Happy 79% Unhappy	27% Happy 73% Unhappy	26% Happy 74% Unhappy
Do you believe your assessor had the qualified knowledge to deliver your assessment fairly?	36% No 64% Yes	38% No 62% Yes	43% No 57% Yes	36% No 64% Yes
Would you need to give up work if your benefits were cut?	28% No 72% Yes	34% No 66% Yes	24% No 76% Yes	27% No 73% Yes

## Introducing C-Pen

National Disabled Committee member Dan Smith has been working closely with Scanning Pen to secure a supply of C-pens for Unite to trial. This will allow us to properly assess how effective they are for members who experience difficulties accessing text documents.

We are hopeful that C-Pen technology will provide a practical solution to many of the barriers our members face when reading or processing written information. If the trial is successful, our aim is for these devices to be made available through branches for members who need them.

At present, the South West Region is the only region that has been able to secure a meaningful number of devices; availability elsewhere remains extremely limited. If you believe a C-Pen could support you and would like to trial one on a temporary basis, please contact [Equality@unitetheunion.org](mailto:Equality@unitetheunion.org).



## Join us for National Disabled Members Seminar 23rd March at 12:30 via Zoom

Hear from Sharon Harding, Martyn Gwyther and the organising team on the campaign implementation so far and see the C-pen in action from the company

Scanning pens

Register for the seminar by scanning the  
QR Code



To find out more about the campaign or to get involved.

Please contact

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