

# contributing on equal terms:

service user involvement  
and the benefits system

social care  
institute for excellence



# about this document

This document is an easy-read summary of a report from the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE).

The full report is called *Contributing on equal terms: Service user involvement and the benefits system*.

This document does not cover all the information in the full report – only the most important bits.

# who is this document for?

This document is for people who use social care services and who are also receiving benefits from Jobcentre Plus.

It is also for the government so that they know what sorts of problems people who use services are having with getting paid for the work they do and with receiving the benefits they are meant to get.

# why we wrote the report

Lots of people who use social care services work with the organisation that provides the services (this could be the local authority or another organisation) to tell them what works well with the services and what doesn't work well.

People who do this work should be paid for working in the same way that everyone else is paid.

But many of the people who do this kind of work also receive benefits, such as the Disability Living Allowance or Housing Benefit.

If they get paid for the work they do then they might have their benefits reduced or taken away and this could mean they have less money in the long term.



Because of this, people aren't getting paid very much and some people aren't getting paid at all. This is because the people they are working for don't want them to lose their benefits.

This is a big problem and lots of people are unhappy about it.

The government wanted to find out exactly what sort of problems people were having with getting paid and getting their benefits. They also wanted to get some suggestions for how they could fix the problems.



# main findings of the report

- People who give their views to make services better should be properly paid.
- Current government rules make it hard for people who receive benefits to be paid for the work they do.
- The rules about getting paid are not very clear.
- Some people think that people on Income Support (a type of benefit) cannot be paid expenses for work. Other people think they can.
- Many people are confused about whether they should get paid or not.
- People who are paid wonder if they are breaking the law.

- People who are paid worry that they will lose their benefits.
- People who are paid wonder if they will have to start paying tax.
- People who work with social care organisations to make services better worry that the people at Jobcentre Plus will think they don't need to be on benefits any more and can go to work and look after themselves.

These problems are stopping people from taking part in having their say to make services better.



# what the report suggests needs to be done

- The government must know that the benefits system is not working properly. It is stopping people from taking part in work to make services better.



- The benefits system has to change, and quickly, to make sure people can do this work.
- By working with social care organisations to make services better, people learn new skills. These skills could help people feel better about themselves and in getting a job. The benefits system should support this.
- People who use services should be helped to work. Not stopped.
- It should be seen that taking part in these discussions does not mean that people are ready to stop receiving benefits and to go to work and look after themselves.
- People should be able to get paid for the work they do.
- The amount of money that people can be paid when they are also on benefits should be higher.

- There needs to be better information about how much people are allowed to be paid.
- The way that Jobcentre Plus – the organisation that gives out benefits – works and its rules need to be looked at and changed.
- Jobcentre Plus staff need training to find out more about disabled people and their needs.
- The law about working should be looked at to make it fairer for people who work with social care organisations to make services better.



# who wrote the report?

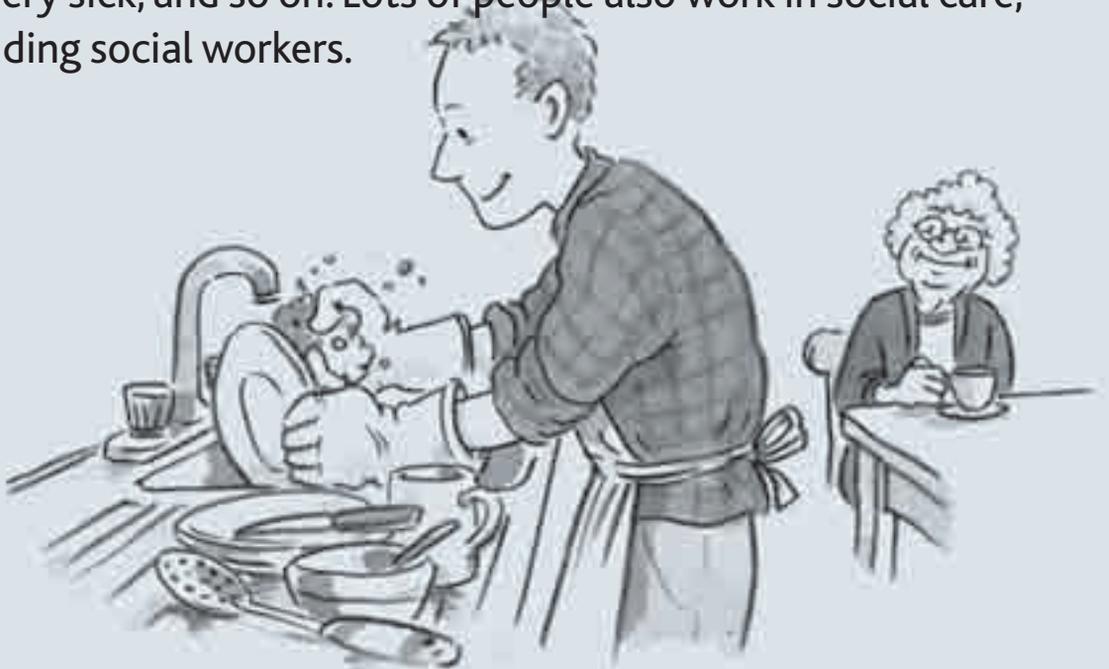
The report was written by an organisation that stands up for people who use services and their carers. This organisation is called Shaping Our Lives. Shaping Our Lives worked with lots of people who use services to find out what their problems were and what they wanted changing.

The Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) provided money to have the report written. SCIE's job is to help people who work in social care to make social care services better.

# word list

Social care: Social care is the term we use to describe the types of services that local authorities and other organisations offer

to help people to live their lives. Lots of people use social care like older people, disabled people, people with learning disabilities, people with mental health problems, people who are very sick, and so on. Lots of people also work in social care, including social workers.



Social care services include lots of things like helping people at home (like helping them to cook or to have a bath), care homes, places where people can go for the day and do activities, helpers for people who are physically disabled, and lots of other things.

Benefits: There are many different types of benefits, such as Housing Benefit, Disability Living Allowance, Income Support, and many others. A benefit is a payment someone receives to help them live. Usually people who receive benefits don't have much money. Benefits are given out by an organisation called Jobcentre Plus on behalf of the government.

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