

'Complicated' system making it difficult for sick people to claim benefits

October 31 2012

Dr Dyson, a general practitioner who was recently diagnosed with breast cancer, has first-hand experience of the difficulty faced with trying to claim sickness benefit. Due to her illness she has not been able to work since early July and wanted to claim employment and support allowance.

Surprised at not being given the option to complete a form online, she was forced to ring a premium rate phone number where she was forced to wait on hold for 30 minutes, followed by 40 minutes of questioning. Dr Dyson was then told that she would be sent some forms to sign whilst also being asked to produce her original birth certificate, marriage certificate and medical certificate of sickness with any details of pensions or sickness insurances, all of which had to be sent by recorded delivery.

Dr Dyson is fortunately not reliant on state benefit and does not feel ill or unwell and as such, feels she has the "strength and perseverance" to persist with her claim, but says that many of her patients do not have such luck. She also says that if anyone had a hearing loss or speech impediment the original telephone conversation would have been near "impossible".

She says it is a "scandal" that the system is so complicated and that it is likely to fail the people who are most in need of help and suspects it is a government ploy to "reduce the number of benefit claims and reduce the overall cost of welfare".

Dr Dyson concludes that what she believes is a "bureaucratic claim system" should be revealed for what it truly is: a government that is withholding funds from sick and needy people.

Provided by British Medical Journal

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