

3.12.25

Dear Ms Brunton,

I am writing this letter to thank you for the proposed award of Member of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year 2026 Honours List for services to disabled people and to let you know that regrettably, I must decline at this time as the situation for disabled people in the UK is simply intolerable.

Despite being grateful that the life-changing work of my organisation, Glasgow Disability Alliance, has been acknowledged, I feel that I cannot accept a personal honour because disabled people are being so dishonoured at this time. In fact we are being demonised, dehumanised and scape-goated for political choices and policy failures by consecutive governments. Disabled people are becoming more unwell due to unfair, inadequate and inaccessible work, barriers to securing work, inadequate benefit levels and rising extra costs including backdoor taxation for social care support and rising costs like heating, clothing and vital independent living equipment. And the political choices made in the UK Budget have supercharged the inequalities and unfairness disabled people face.

I received your letter the day of the UK Budget, Wednesday 26th November and was opening it as this budget was being read. Although there are some positives in the budget, there is far more harm than good for disabled people: it is another missed opportunity to make real changes which would have improved disabled people's lives. Disabled people have suffered horrendous impacts of 15 years of austerity, the Covid Pandemic and the cost of living crisis. These impacts including reduced life outcomes from participation in families, communities, education and work to our very lives being reduced- 60% of all who died of Covid in Scotland were disabled people and we have now the compelling evidence of the UK Covid Inquiry to back this up.

Disabled people are also experiencing health inequalities so that life- *while lived* - is lived with more illness and barriers and sometimes early death. GDA has lost hundreds of members over the years since the pandemic and tragically some of these have been to suicide. And in turn, some of this is attributed to policy failures resulting in poverty, homelessness, lack of support and social isolation and loneliness for disabled people of all ages.

Some of the good things in the budget include increases to disability benefits in line with inflation, extended award period for PIP and removal of two child benefit cap and for these measures, Glasgow Disability Alliance and our members are grateful. However, these are vastly overshadowed by the extremely draconian actions being taken which negatively impact disabled people's lives and plunge them into further poverty, removing them even more, from living lives of meaning and fulfilment.

Disabled people needed the UK Government to take action to uphold their rights to support to be realised in relation to social care across the life-span. Instead, I note an increase to investment in children's social care which is not matched with any increase in investment in adult social care which is so very much needed to keep our NHS afloat and to enable disabled people to live independent lives of meaning and choices.

Additional concerns include:

- Reforms to PIP including increased face to face assessments will cause extreme concerns and stress as well as accessibility issues for disabled people.
- The Health Elements of Universal Credit freezing will worsen financial security for those disabled people unable to work
- Motability Scheme cuts will mean the end of tax exemptions and VAT relief as well as removal of options for bigger and more accessible cars, compromising choices and independent living for disabled people and increasing our costs. This situation has been described by disabled people as “devastating” and “punitive”, adding hundreds of pounds to upfront payments to lease cars. Disabled people are completely confounded by these measures which seem unfair and unjust and “threaten exclude disabled people from daily life, including working life” say GDA members.

The budget includes no commitments for social care, accessible transport, adapted housing, education or national wheelchair services and this lack of investment and missed opportunity on disability related spending will deepen existing inequalities and leave disabled people facing exclusion, isolation, homelessness and unsafe care levels.

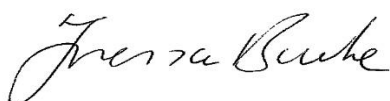
The negative framing of disabled people e.g. references to “luxury” cars and reforming welfare “so that is doesn’t pay to be off sick rather than work” is misleading and belies reality. In relation to Motability, disabled people pay personally for any shortfall in funding to access bigger and more accessible vehicles and with regard to seeking employment, disabled people actually face exceptional barriers in terms of securing work – primarily employer discrimination, lack of accessible transport, lack of social care and now rationed access to work support.

Disabled people and Disabled People- Led organisations around the UK, needed our Government to embed compassion, fairness and opportunity in this budget instead of placing blame on disabled people for an inaccessible and discriminatory world. This would have meant shoring up public services including social care supports which disabled people and the NHS rely on every day. There is also still a necessity for the UK Government to talk with disabled people, believe our lived experience and co-design solutions with our organisations.

My final comments are that I am writing this letter one day ahead of UN International Day of Disabled People 2025 which is the 3rd of December. This day aims to raise awareness of challenges faced by disabled people and to promote the full and equal participation of disabled people in all aspects of society. The 2025 themes is "Fostering disability-inclusive societies for advancing social progress," when ironically, the UK Government budget and related rhetoric has the opposite impact- intended or otherwise.

We are now 30 years from the 1995 Disability Discrimination Act, which disabled people campaigned for to secure protections across Employment; Education; Transport; Goods & Services; Premises and access to the environment. All these years later, disabled people describe and experience more injustices and inequalities than ever and the UN has reported that not only has there been no progress but that there have been rights regressions for disabled people in the UK. This reality, combined with the impact of the recent UK Budget has resulted in a loss of hope and a feeling that disabled people are dishonoured – criticised, condemned and brutalised not only by actions in the budget but by the messages it sends. For this reason I must decline the offer of award of Member of the Order of the British Empire in the New Year 2026 Honours List.

Yours Faithfully,



Chief Executive Officer, Glasgow Disability Alliance