



Press Release  
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## **NEW BENEFITS SYSTEM MAY MEAN UNFAIRNESS AND GREATER POVERTY FOR PEOPLE WITH HIV**

As the Government introduces the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) to replace Incapacity Benefit, NAT warns that the benefits reform agenda, whilst necessary, fails to meet the needs of those with long-term and fluctuating disabilities such as HIV.

In a response to the Government consultation on benefits reform, NAT highlights the significant stigma and discrimination amongst employers in relation both to disability in general and HIV in particular. **Focussing solely on the disabled and ignoring the barriers to work erected by society, is to miss the greater part of the problem.**

NAT also stresses:

- the need for effective training for those undertaking medical assessments,
- the need for incentives for employers to take on those with fluctuating conditions,
- the dangers in the Government's coercive approach to problem drug users, and
- the additional assistance needed for those with long-term health conditions who now move on to Job Seekers Allowance.

Deborah Jack, Chief Executive of NAT, said:

*'With half of all people with HIV not in paid employment and serious poverty having affected one in three HIV positive people, greater support to get people with long-term health conditions back into work is very welcome. But the Government is trapped in the 'workshy' mindset, failing as yet to grasp the need for high quality, individualised and flexible support for the vast majority who want to work but need assistance and understanding in order to do so.'*

### **Notes to the Editor:**

'NAT's consultation response - No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility' is available to download at [www.nat.org.uk/Our-thinking/Every-day-issues/Benefits.aspx](http://www.nat.org.uk/Our-thinking/Every-day-issues/Benefits.aspx)

### **NAT**

NAT (National AIDS Trust) is the UK's leading charity dedicated to transforming society's response to HIV. We provide fresh thinking, expert advice and practical resources. We campaign for change.

Shaping attitudes. Challenging injustice. Changing lives.

[www.nat.org.uk](http://www.nat.org.uk)