

## To Members of the Parliamentary Inquiry into Accommodation and IFS

While my son Adrian Smale was successful in receiving ASF about 15 months ago, for which I am naturally very grateful, I would nevertheless like to comment on the application process.

The process that was in place over the five or more years that I was applying on Adrian's behalf required us to apply three times a year. The form was some 50 pages long and we were in addition required to get statements from family, friends, neighbours, medical staff, etc. in support of our application. Very early on it was acknowledged that Adrian's needs were high, but there were insufficient funds available to grant ASF at that time. We were then required to apply again / update our application in the next round.

My comments on the process, in no order of priority, are as follows:

1. The current process is extremely onerous, stressful and demeaning. It requires the applicant to be negative about themselves and their children. We are used to being proud about the achievements of our children and stoic in our ability to manage difficult situations such as bringing up a disabled child. So it does not come easy to be negative and say "my son cannot ..." or "I am unable to cope with...". But the impression is that the only way to motivate your case and get funding is to portray yourself and your child as negatively as possible.
2. Naturally I accepted that there were people with higher needs than my son and I. But it was frustrating to then have to turn around and apply again even though it was acknowledged that my son met the criteria but the only problem was lack of funds. While we did not have to apply again in the next round I felt that unless my application was current it may have been perceived as coming from a family that was not well motivated. A much less stressful process would be to acknowledge the need and tell the applicant that "under the current funding scenario your application may be successful in x years time". In that way the family can organise their lives for that period and plan accordingly. Not knowing when or if the application will be granted is extremely stressful. In Adrian's case if I had known that it would have been 5 years before he was likely to be funded I would have saved the hassle and stress of submitting fifteen 50 page submissions and getting the associated letters of support. More importantly I could have planned my own life in the knowledge of how much longer I would need to care for Adrian.

If appropriate I would be happy to discuss these points further.

Yours sincerely



Paul Smale