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Dear Linda

Thank you for your letter of 9 August in which you invited me to speak at your first national conference on 29 October.

Unfortunately I am unable to accept your kind invitation due to existing diary commitments. However, I would like to take this opportunity to assure you that this Government is fully committed to enabling disabled people to have the same opportunities and choices as non-disabled people.

I realise that change is worrying and people want to be sure the Government has listened to the concerns of those who might be affected. That is why over the past year I have made it a personal priority to regularly meet disabled people, their families and the organisations that represent them.

Many such organisations are already working closely with the Government to help shape our welfare reforms, including improvements to the Work Capability Assessment and the introduction of Personal Independence Payment to replace Disability Living Allowance. The insight of organisations such as Scope, Mencap, Leonard Cheshire Disability, RNIB and Mind into how the present system can fail to support disabled people, particularly with regard to work, is immensely valuable. I have also worked with user-led organisations such as RADAR, UKDPC and People First, and value their important contribution.