

ORAL CONCOURS 2015 ANGLAIS - LVII

David Cameron calls on obese to accept help or risk losing benefits

People who cannot work because they are overweight or suffering addiction problems could be threatened with losing their sickness benefits if they do not accept treatment under plans due to be outlined by David Cameron on Saturday.

Under proposals that are likely to be met with resistance from charities and some medics, the Conservatives will consider whether to reduce payments worth about £100 a week for those they consider could do more to help themselves by going on medical programmes designed to make them to lose weight, stop taking drugs or give up alcohol.

The prime minister has asked Prof Dame Carol Black, an adviser to the Department of Health, to examine whether it is appropriate to withhold benefits from those who refuse assistance.

Similar ideas have been floated before by Conservative-controlled Westminster council but were criticised by Dr Lawrence Buckman, the British Medical Association GP committee chairman, as "draconian and silly".

Under the claimant contract, guidelines introduced in 2013 mean jobseekers can have their unemployment benefits withheld if suspected addiction problems are preventing them making enough effort to get into work.

When this was introduced, it was criticised by charities such as DrugScope, which warned that the change set a "dangerous precedent" and would breach the principles of the NHS constitution.

Cameron will say: "Too many people are stuck on sickness benefits because of issues that could be addressed but instead are not. Some have drug or alcohol problems, but refuse treatment. In other cases, people have problems with their weight that could be addressed, but instead a life on benefits rather than work becomes the choice.

"It is not fair to ask hardworking taxpayers to fund the benefits of people who refuse to accept the support and treatment that could help them get back to a life of work.

"The next Conservative government is determined to make sure that the hardest to help get the support they need to get them back to a fulfilling life."

The announcement is part of a week in which the Conservatives will focus on welfare policy ahead of May's election. The party will say there are 100,000 claiming sickness benefits who have treatable conditions but are not accepting medical help.

Cameron will say: "I have asked Professor Dame Carol Black to undertake a rapid review into how best to support those suffering from long-term yet treatable conditions. In particular, I have asked her to consider whether people should face the threat of a reduction in benefits if they refuse to engage with a recommended treatment plan — it is vital that people who would benefit from treatment get the medical help they need."

Black said: "I am deeply interested in trying to overcome the challenges these types of benefit claimants pose. These people, in addition to their long-term conditions and lifestyle issues, suffer the great disadvantage of not being engaged in the world of work, such an important feature of society."