



Benefit claimants signed off work for being obese or for having alcohol or drug addictions could see their welfare payments reduced or even stripped if they refuse treatment under new Tory plans.

2.5million people are on sickness benefits, 1.5million of which have been receiving payments for more than 5yrs.

Around 100,000 of these claimants receive money from tax-payer handouts totaling £500 million a year because of health conditions brought on by treatable conditions such as obesity and substance abuse.

This week David Cameron ordered a review of the current benefits system after saying that it was "simply not fair" to expect hard working people to fund lifestyles of claimants who are not willing to receive help for their conditions.

"Too many people are stuck on sickness benefits because of issues that could be addressed but instead are not" said Mr Cameron.

"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."

If David Cameron returns to Downing Street after the next election he will appoint Professor Dame Carol Black, a medic and welfare policy expert, to examine the current benefits system. She will devise new strategies to encourage unemployed drink, drug and food addicts to receive help in order to combat their addictions and ultimately get them back into a work environment.

Cameron's pledge comes as Chancellor George Osborne committed the Tories to finding £12billion more in welfare spending cuts in the two years after the election on May 7.

"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.

"That is why I have asked Professor Dame Carol Black to undertake a rapid review in to how best to support those suffering from long-term yet treatable conditions back in to work.

"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." said Cameron.

Dame Carol was Head of Rheumatology at the Royal Free Hospital and has advised for the Department of Health and the Department of Work and Pensions on welfare issues in the past. She will explore different incentives to encourage claimants to enroll on recommended treatment programmes that the government offer in order to combat their addictions.

"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." she said.

But opposition and experts within the field labeled Cameron's latest pledge as a 'stupid little stunt'.

Alastair Campbell, Labour's former spin doctor and a former alcoholic, is an ambassador for Alcohol Concern. He told radio station LBC that the Prime Minister was "pathetic" and was not taking the problem of addiction seriously enough. He went on to say that the Prime Minister should be describing addiction as "an illness, not a lifestyle choice" and should instead invest in treatment and minimum unit pricing.

"To say we are not going to give you benefit because you are fat, we are not going to give you benefit because you drink too much, just think about what we have become as a country that that is our Prime Minister and that is how they treat a serious illness." said Campbell.

Source: [The Express](#)