

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO BE ACCOMPANIED TO ALL BENEFIT APPOINTMENTS

You have the right to be accompanied to interviews at the Jobcentre and all DWP offices – **and that's official!** The DWP write on the government website:

"Customers have the right to ask a representative to help them conduct their business with DWP..."

A customer representative is any person or organisation acting on behalf of or making enquiries for the customer. The representative could be helping a customer in several ways, including progress chasing, helping them make a claim, seeking an explanation of entitlement and how it has been decided, representing them with a reconsideration or appeal, or helping them manage their finances. This can be at any stage of the customer's business with DWP."



Representatives may include:

- *advice or welfare rights organisations*
- *professionals such as social workers, community nurses or doctors*
- *family members or friends”*

www.gov.uk/government/publications/working-with-representatives-guidance-for-dwp-staff

In practice this right has sometimes been denied. Whenever this has happened to Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty (ECAP) advocates, we have made an official complaint and whenever necessary organised solidarity demonstrations.

On every occasion the Jobcentre has backed down and recognised claimants' right to be accompanied and represented.

NO NEED TO FACE THEM ALONE

Certainly if you have any appointment you think might pose problems we advise you to take a friend or adviser with you. For example, if they are threatening benefits sanctions, trying to change your Jobseeker's agreement /Claimant commitment or force you to go on schemes or apply for jobs you don't want, or if you are called in by the Counter Fraud team, you should NOT face them alone. If you have a benefits medical exam e.g. for ESA or PIP you should be accompanied.



ECAP accompany people to such interviews, and to interviews at City of Edinburgh Council, all the time.

If anyone tries to stop your friend or adviser accompanying you, then tell them the DWP says this is allowed, and show them the quotes in this leaflet.

SOLIDARITY CALL-OUTS

If a satisfactory outcome cannot be achieved by advocacy through meetings, letters, phone calls etc., then ECAP – with the agreement of the claimant concerned of course – can do a solidarity call-out. This involves calling on as many people as possible to gather and take action at the appropriate office.

This has been done in the past at jobcentres, employers using workfare, councillor surgeries, and and other places – generally with successful results. If this collective response could become widespread we believe that this could result in a counter-power from below that could make benefits cuts, and potentially austerity policies in general, unworkable.

More on the Right to be Accompanied at
edinburghagainstopoverty.org.uk



GET INVOLVED!

Join the ECAP solidarity network to support claimants and others in struggle with the authorities. All welcome to the ECAP drop-in every Tuesday 12 – 3pm, and to our meetings 7pm on the first Monday of each month. Both are held at:

The Autonomous Centre of Edinburgh (ACE)
17 West Montgomery Place
EH7 5HA
www.autonomous.org.uk

Edinburgh Coalition Against Poverty
ecap@lists.riseup.net
www.edinburghagainstpoverity.org.uk
Facebook & Twitter

DON'T BE BULLIED OR INTIMIDATED – LET'S SUPPORT EACH OTHER AND STAND UP FOR OURSELVES.

