

Assessing the Assessors

The Work Capability Assessment's culture of contempt



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Anyone who has been to the Edinburgh festival knows that space is at a premium and every pub, social club and church hall is turned into a venue. In 2013 I was working in the basement bar of the Lothian and Borders Police Social Club – not my normal first choice of basement if I’m honest - which had been taken over by the Stand Comedy Club. As basements go it’s pretty good, but when a city scrambles to convert every cupboard into performance spaces there is a price to pay and disabled access is often that price.

MARK THOMAS

100 ACTS OF MINOR DISSENT

And so it was that a young woman wrote me an email and said words to the effect of “Oi, me and my mates want to come and see you, but we can’t get the wheelchairs down the steps, so either find an accessible venue OR come round to my living room and let’s do the gig there”.

I opted for the living room. Who wouldn’t? It was a raucous and eye opening night, full of fun, alcohol and cake. It was one of my favourite shows of the year.

Afterwards we sat chatting and eating and quickly the talk turned to Atos and the 'fit for work' assessments. To say people were angry would be an understatement and everyone seemed to have horror stories about the experience of being assessed. People were rightly furious that some of the assessment centres didn't have disabled access and shared tales of assessors not having even read the medical notes. Some had got carers to accompany them to the centre and travelled in from considerable distances, only to arrive and be told the assessment was cancelled and their appointment would be rescheduled.

But what was truly shocking was **not the rage but the fear**, people were fearful of the assessment and, as it turns out, with good reason.

It is intolerable that this should be the case. We are in the wrong century for people with disabilities to be marginalized, living in fear and treated as second-class citizens.

Those conversations proved to be the starting point of this document. Which is very simply a method of trying to document and quantify people's experience with Atos and the assessments. Not everyone is privileged to do a gig for disabled people in someone's living room and listen to the testimony, but everyone can read this report.

I am proud and grateful for the small part my team has played in this.

Mark Thomas

Summary

- 1.** The WCA is **abusive**. It causes harm and damages health, especially mental health.
- 2.** The WCA is **disrespectful**; it treats people as unreliable, feckless or fraudulent.
- 3.** WCA reports are woefully **inaccurate**, they are influenced, not by objective judgements, but by a system that wants to save money and meet targets.
- 4.** The WCA process is **callous** and inhumane.
- 5.** Instead of respecting disabled people's need for accessibility the WCA seems **prejudiced** against disabled people.
- 6.** The WCA seems to promote **unprofessional** practice.
- 7.** The WCA seems designed to cause, hardship and **poverty**.

Cruel & unnecessary

“The last assessment reduced me to floods of tears. I couldn’t stop crying all the way home and spent a week hidden away in a dark room, not letting anyone see me out of shame. I stopped medications because I felt like a fraud. This did not help. Unsurprisingly.

I am depressed and socially isolated, the latter partly due to total unilateral deafness, which went undiagnosed at birth. I try my absolute hardest to get well, but life and progress is ripped apart by constant forms and worry. Three weeks ago I got the latest form, lost my grip totally and also became seriously physically ill because of the stress: tonsillitis one week on, followed by viral meningitis two weeks.

My Doctor said: **“I think Atos is making you very ill. You need to relax and not do anything.”**

I have no social life and dream of having a job, but a mental illness does not improve when the media is full of comments about how worthless you are.”

The weakest people have been systematically targeted by the Government and few people speak up. People might not like that, but it’s the truth. **I only hope one day we’ll have the space to look back and understand how utterly cruel and unnecessary this has been.”**

[Testimony from one respondent]

Introduction

The Government's Work Capability Assessment (WCA) was supposed to help more disabled people to find work. It has been a dismal failure.

Under on-going pressure from disability campaigners, Atos, the private healthcare company working for the DWP, resigned from its contract. But it will just be replaced by a similar organisation.

This report describes the results of a survey of **884 people** who have been through the WCA. It suggests that the flaws in the WCA are systemic.

The problem is that the Government, and its contractors, are working to a policy based on prejudice. The WCA promotes a **culture of contempt** towards disabled people.

1. Abusive

The WCA is meant to be an independent healthcare assessment to help people identify whether they are able to work and to ensure they get the right support.

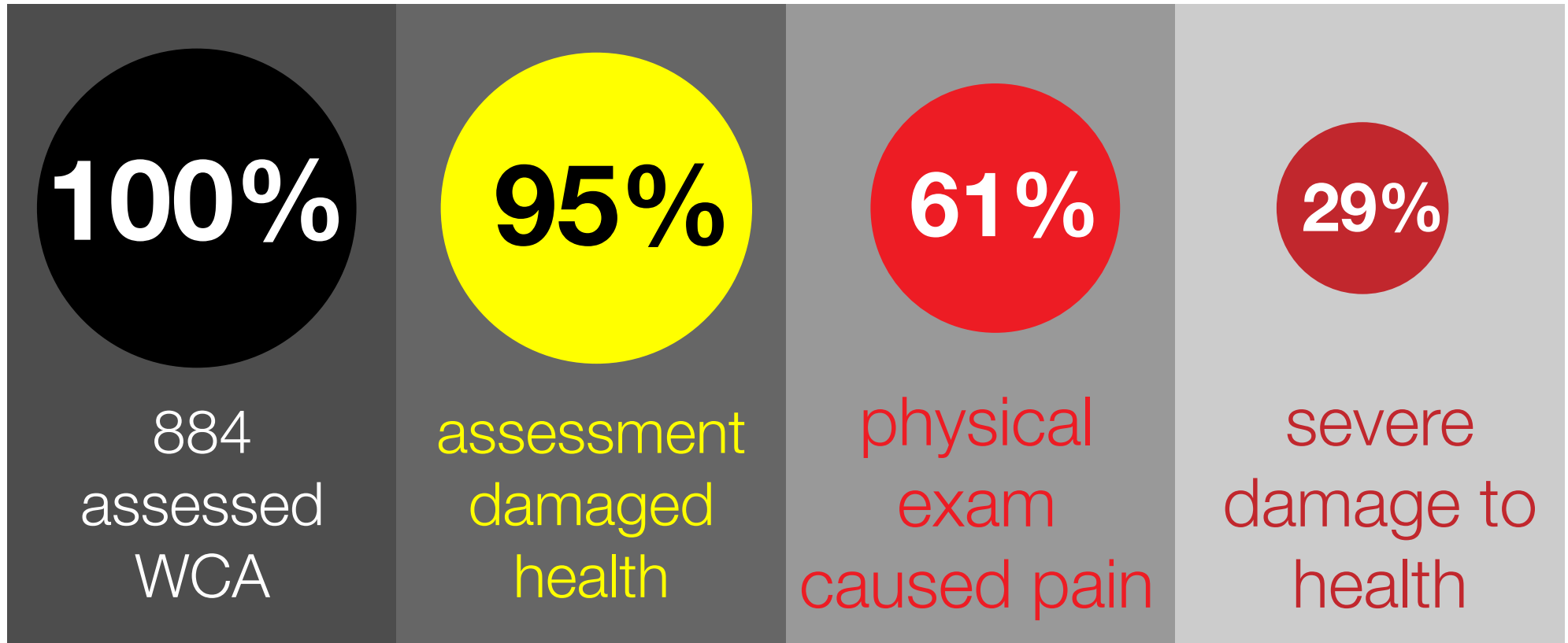
However, in practice, the process is a form of abuse which seriously damages people's health:

- **81%** were not aware they could have a home assessment if they requested it.
- **61%** of the time there was a physical examination, and this almost always caused pain.

- **95%** found the assessment damaged their health, with **29%** reporting severe damage.

The following pages contain moving testimony from **884 people** who have gone through the WCA. 73% of this group had physical impairments and 70% had mental health problems.

Health assessments that make you ill



- On the day of my assessment I was really anxious and ended up having a panic attack and was physically sick.
- My symptoms are much worse since going through this whole experience. Now awaiting reassessment - the whole process just makes me more ill.
- Worst thing I have ever experienced. I had a **panic attack** through the whole interview. She demanded to see my self injury scars and then visibly reacted to them which felt humiliating - it was just awful.
- She caused such **pain** that I was almost totally unable to walk for 2 days afterwards.
- The whole experience has added to my various conditions and left me taking further medication.
- Guilty and paranoid - 'fit for work' and living in fear everyday.
- I was **sobbing** throughout and so was my carer by the end - she was horrified.
- Now on anti-depressants and Valium for panic attacks thanks to the DWP and Atos.
- Tragically, my friend has committed **suicide** since losing her appeal.
- I had to take Diazepam to get there, and take my mum with me (I'm agoraphobic). In the weeks since receiving the appointment, my mental and physical health has declined considerably. This whole process has set me back years.
- To repeat the process with mental illness is to relive the wound of mental pain.
- I have deteriorated mentally and am suicidal; I had a crisis and mental health intervention; my medication was increased - it's a stressful, worrying time in the appeals process.

- It was the second worst experience of my life after severe accident.
- It makes me ill. I feel like **killing myself** every time I have to go.
- I was there for two hours, during the assessment I got steadily more fatigued and uncomfortable, I found it more and more difficult to explain things. The nurse stopped the physical examination, because I was in so much **pain**.
- My mental health has deteriorated considerably since my assessment and I have been unable to open mail or answer the telephone since.
- The whole experience left me nearly dead through suicide.

- Even though I have rightly been placed in the 'Support Group' the irony is that at the beginning of this process with the right help and support I may have had a chance of being employable; but now I have been **set so far back** on my road to recovery I'm doubting it will ever get any better.*
- It nearly caused me another **heart attack** and the appeal took over 14 months.
- I have felt suicidal since this process. I am now in a 'Support Group' but it really was hell. It only takes a brown envelope to come and I am in a **blind panic**.

[*The paradoxically named 'Support Group' is for people who are deemed not 'fit for work'.]

2. Disrespectful

Government rhetoric and bad policy-making has created a crazy situation where people who receive benefits are presumed to be lazy or deceitful.

This is the opposite of the truth. Benefit fraud is very small indeed (merely 0.7%).

At the same time **£17 billion goes unclaimed** because people are either unaware of their entitlements or feel stigmatised by the system.

The research showed that **80%** of the time the person did not feel the assessor listened to what they had to say.

Respondents spoke movingly of how the system demeaned them at every stage.

- It is criminal, inhumane, unjust and does not make me feel proud to have served 18 years for Queen and Country. In their time of need I was willing to **pay the ultimate sacrifice**; now in my time of need these criminals turn their backs.
- The initial assessment was bad, but the appeal process was much worse. I was made to feel like a **criminal**.
- Terrifying, unfair and farcical. The whole thing is stressful and demeaning, making you **feel like a beggar, cheat and liar**. I now live in fear of the next assessment and change to PIP [Personal Independence Payment] too, for the shambles it will also bring.
- The nurse said I couldn't have PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder] as I had never been in a **war-zone** or a natural disaster.
- I am an ex Army lad with 20 years service and assessed as having 70% disabilities

for war disabilities. This process was **terrifying, humiliating and degrading**, I was treated appallingly, it was made obvious that I was not believed in anything I said and I felt suicidal leaving. I had scars from my surgery! I had letters from the surgeon. But felt I wasn't believed!

- I feel too, that when dealing with **adult or child survivors [of abuse]** it's so important to believe the person! And all this Atos stuff totally undermines an individual. I have a case history going back over 30 years.
- I feel **worthless**, and it underpins that idea when I have to present myself and show my anxiety in person, for no medical reason other than that the Government disbelieves my GP, CPN [Community Psychiatric Nurse], CMHT [Community Mental Health Team] and my psychiatrist.

- The assessor watched me **crawl across the floor** to a chair, I was in tears of pain and humiliation.
- There is an initial premise that you are a **liar or fraud** - it is abhorrent.
- I have paid into the system all my life (37 years) and to be treated like a **scrounger** is disgraceful. My health has become worse from all the hoops we have to go through.
- I feel this process caused my illness to worsen and last longer. If I was given the correct help I believe I would be back at work by now. I've been made to feel like a **criminal**.
- I was asked if I was on drugs and it was reported my dirty clothing was **"a lifestyle choice."** I was living in a refuge, and they were the only clothes I had.
- I also lost a point for apologising at getting upset because of my **Mum's death** the week before, for I "seemed to be in complete control of my emotions".
- The DWP and Atos between them, have literally **ripped my life apart**. I did not suffer a nervous breakdown in order to get benefits, for God's sake. Evil does not even begin to describe this bastard of a system.
- I got injured on duty as a Special Constable I now feel like I'm the criminal. My GP has supported me, the DWP are now not paying me anything. At the appeal they were told to review me in two years, that's October 2014. I'm scared about it. **I served my country and can't help how it has left me.**
- Cruel. Invasive. Why should I give my most intimate humiliating details to **someone who isn't even a doctor?**

3. Inaccurate

Appeals against the WCA process are very common, and very often successful. Moreover the DWP are routinely settling in the claimant's favour just before a tribunal rather than fight the Secretary of State's case in court.

As Franklin (2013) has demonstrated the problem here is not just poor practice and an inadequate assessment framework. The WCA is clearly being managed by the DWP in order to achieve certain targets.

Professional practice is undermined by the DWP's own contract management and by a culture which puts financial control before honesty or professionalism.

90% of the time the assessor did not take written notes and the person was not able to ascertain that these were a true and accurate representation of what was said.

The system seems almost to be designed to lead to inaccurate or misleading assessments. This is reflected in the human testimony that follows.

- I have no idea what she had written and I was not given the choice to see what was written about me.
- I requested a copy of the report afterwards; it contained **absolute lies** about what I had said and done.
- The notes I got back from the DWP were nothing like the assessment! They were like a **fiction novel** about another person!
- I'm a retired qualified nurse due to work injury. This assessment isn't worth the paper it's printed on.
- At the **tribunal I was awarded 45 points**, much, much more than the 6 points Atos gave me. The judge and GP there were lovely, understanding and actually listened to me and took my hospital notes into account. The **judge, with tears in her eyes, apologised for my treatment by Atos** and praised me for my determination and ability to cope.
- Their report contains outright lies - quotes of things I didn't say, tests he didn't do, etc.
- I went home crying, in fear that she would lie, and lo and behold she did. Now I have no mobility component, back to being housebound again at 19. What sort of life is this?
- I was found to score 0 points by Atos. On appeal I was awarded **33 points**. The DWP did not turn up to the appeal hearing.
- I won my appeal, the case was stopped just a few days before it was due to be heard at tribunal.
- **Assessor lied** in her statement on more than one occasion.

- She bullied me throughout constantly trying to trip me up by asking the same questions in different ways over and over, then she accused me of lying. She tutted and huffed throughout and asked, **if I'd tried to commit suicide why I wasn't dead**. She had me in tears.
- When he paused to read the medical information I'd submitted, it turned out he was just looking at the directions to the assessment centre Atos had sent me - he wasn't reading the medical at all.
- My answers had not been accurately recorded by the Atos 'healthcare professional'.
- I have supported many people at medicals and tribunals and there is little consistency in the medical assessments.

4. Callous

The assumptions that underlie the WCA have no empirical basis. Government advisor, now minister, Lord Freud, seems to have invented callous assumptions about how many disabled people could in fact work.

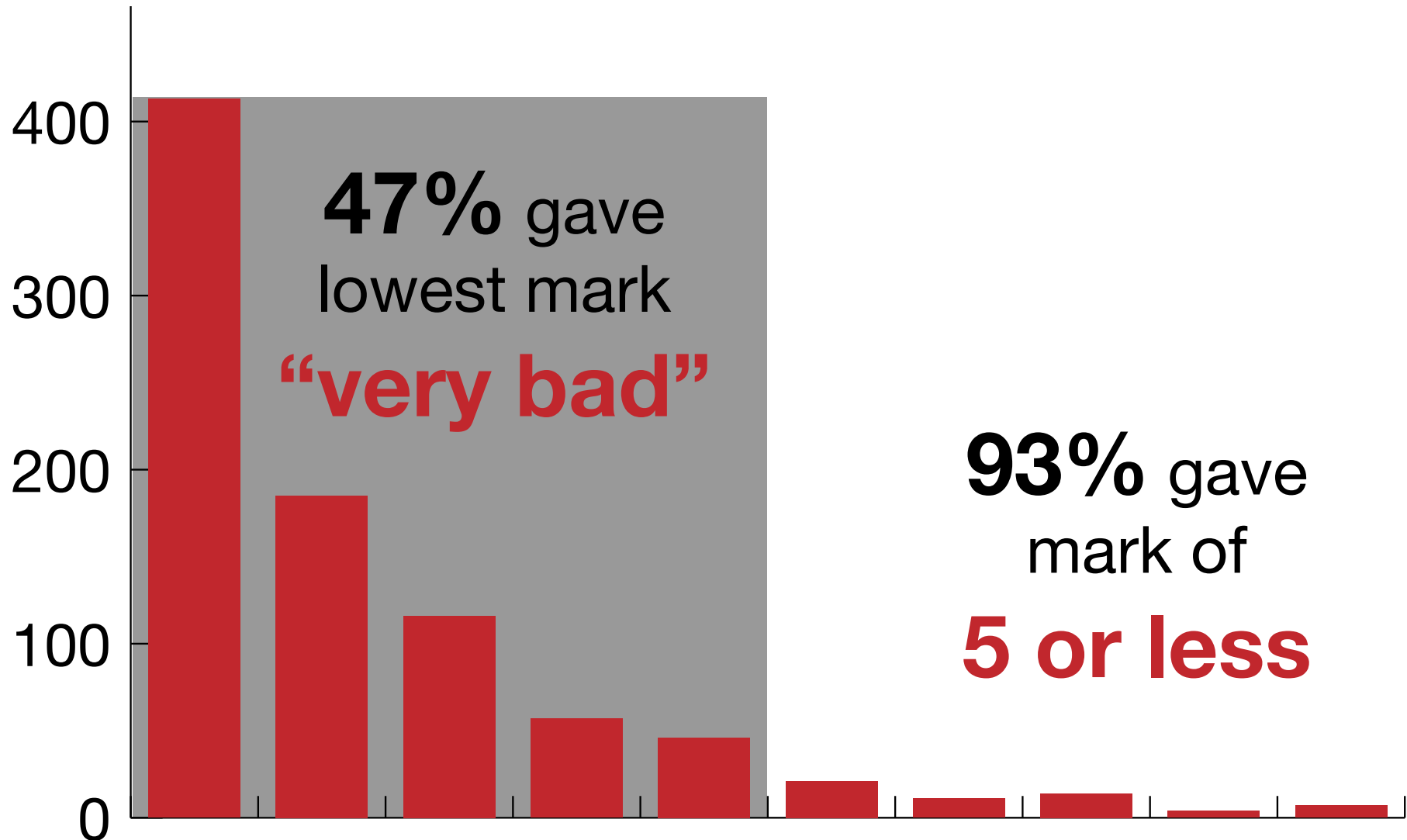
This mindset has fed directly into the whole of the WCA.

- **47%** marked their experience as 'very bad' the lowest possible score.
- **93%** marked their score with 5 out of 10 or less.
- **67%** were considering making a complaint.

- **91%** had been fearing the assessment process and **79%** found the process as bad as they had feared.
- **10%** of those using public transport had to make **4** changes to get to appointment.

Again and again respondents testified to their callous treatment at the hands of so-called 'healthcare professionals'.

Assessing the Work Capability Assessment



- I have had probably 5 medicals over the years with Atos for my same mental health issue that has not changed, and this was the first time I was examined physically. I had to give a peak flow test and lie on a bed and lift my legs in the air. I still don't know why.
- In the porch on the other side of the door I **slumped into a chair, sobbing**. The admin staff saw me and did nothing. I remained there sobbing until my daughter drew up and helped me into the car. The 'healthcare professional' report said that I left without any obvious discomfort or distress.
- Afterwards I felt traumatised and even my healthy, strong brother who had accompanied me was **shocked** by the

whole experience. My physical health has declined considerably. This whole process has set me back years.

- I received the letter, from Atos, on the day of my **husband's funeral**.
- WCA led to my husband having an **emotional breakdown** through the stress of dealing with the claim for me, this also had a knock-on effect for our children.
- Still waiting for my appeal over a year later. Also have another one as they put me through it again while appealing still. Continuously kicking me while I'm down.
- I attempted suicide when I received my assessment letter. I rang Atos to ask if they could delay it on compassionate grounds and was **told I'd be better off killing myself**.

- I cried through most of the interview; sometimes I couldn't speak I was so upset.
- My mental health team worker is no longer available due to **funding cuts**.
- The stress of this humiliating assessment has left me suicidal. In fact that is probably my best option as I no longer feel I can go through this again.
- The computer system was down and I couldn't be interviewed. After over an hour waiting I was told to go home and await being sent for another interview. That night I suffered a **heart attack** and spent nearly two weeks in Papworth.

5. Prejudiced

It is extraordinary that a Government service for disabled people seems to show no understanding of disability. In fact the services seemed discriminatory and prejudiced against disabled people.

- **80%** felt the assessment was not conducted in a fair and humane manner.
- **74%** found that the centre was not adequately furnished for the needs of disabled people (e.g. did the chairs have armrests).
- **50%** found there were no car parking facilities on site or close by.
- **16%** found that the centre was inaccessible to them.
- **33%** said the centre did not have ground floor assessment rooms available.
- **68%** said there were no refreshments, such as drinking water, available.
- **87%** said they were not made aware of where the toilets were.
- **59%** were not welcomed by the administrative staff or security staff.

- I didn't understand the interviewer as I am deaf. I felt I was being **mocked**.
- Did not feel I was taken seriously as I had an 'invisible' disability.
- Reasonable adjustments were not provided.
- When I asked for another appointment to be made, as I couldn't mentally cope with my surroundings, the woman said "**Tough**, it will be the same any day you come in".
- I asked for a home assessment, they said "No". I asked if I could get help with travel costs, they said "No". I had to struggle just over a mile on foot, it took nearly two hours.
- I was put into a spare room with a G4S **security guard** because I was having panic attacks and was left in there for over an hour with no windows - waiting for my appointment to start.

- The assessor deliberately intimidated me because of my mental health problems.
- I appealed and won, as I proved my disability; and also that the assessor had told me that **people 'like me'** shouldn't have children.
- After the assessment I tried to leave his office but couldn't remember how to get out of the corridor. He took me back to the waiting room. I sat down and tried to remember how I had got to the centre but realised I couldn't work out how to get home. I spoke to the receptionist but she couldn't help. I sat down near the door and was so terrified and confused I started to cry. **The staff all ignored me**. After 20 minutes the doctor who had assessed me came into the waiting room. He looked at me then wished the receptionist a good evening walked past me and left the building.

6. Unprofessional

Instead of using the expertise of NHS doctors and nurses the Government is paying private companies under contract. Moreover the pressure created by the DWP's contract seems to encourage unprofessional behaviour:

- **96%** were not told before the assessment that they could record their interview.
- **55%** were not told that they were allowed to be accompanied.
- **32%** of cases the assessor did not introduce themselves or explain who they were.
- **62%** of cases they did not explain the procedure - what would happen during the assessment and what would happen afterwards.
- **87%** the assessor had not reviewed medical evidence supplied and was not familiar with the person's case history.
- **55%** of the time the person was not allowed to ask questions.
- **26%** of the time the initial documentation was not in an appropriate format.

Unprofessional Practice in WCA

884 people assessed **WCA**
Work Capability Assessment

80% of assessors
didn't seem to **listen**

55%
NOT told
could have
companion

55%
NOT allowed
to ask
questions

96% **NOT** told before
they could **record interview**

90% of time assessor
did **NOT** take **written notes**

- Neither my doctor nor mental health nurse's comments were taken into account.
- I was seen by a physiotherapist who had **no working knowledge of mental health** issues.
- The first assessment was of such poor quality that the report started by stating that "the patient has **this MS thing**" as the 'doctor' who conducted the assessment apparently had no idea what Multiple Sclerosis is.
- When I was assessed he explained he wasn't a doctor but a physiotherapist and said he was qualified to deal with mental health.
- When I first applied I had only CFS [Chronic Fatigue Syndrome], then I had CFS and depression, now I have CFS and depression and panic and anxiety, I

blame Atos and this system totally for the **deterioration in my mental health**.

- Examination left me **unable to walk** at all - they pushed hard on operation scar - I was left suicidal.
- The 'healthcare professional' was not listening during parts of the interview, did not record certain aspects of the interview which were on the recording, and their report directly contradicted the recording. I won on appeal.
- The assessor suggested that finding God and **buying a cat would cure PTSD** [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder].
- I suffer from Agoraphobia. I spotted that the Nurse had diagnosed me as having Acrophobia, which is a fear of heights.
- I was press ganged into forgoing the recording that I had requested.

7. Impoverishing

The original justification for the WCA was that it would help disabled people to find work. But the reality is that the WCA has failed to help people into work. Instead its main purpose is to reduce the incomes of disabled people:

- Pushing some onto Job Seekers Allowance, where their **income drops**.
- Pushing others into the bizarrely named 'Work Related Activity Group' [WRAG] where their income also drops.
- Only 25% (a target set by Government, but without any empirical foundation) are deemed incapable of finding work, and are then placed in the Support Group.
- You are more likely to find work in the Support Group than if you are in the WRAG; just one sign of how badly designed the whole system is.
- The process not only impoverishes people directly it also leads to other delays and reductions of income as people try to challenge unfair assessments.
- **62%** of our sample had to wait more than 3 months for their assessment, **8%** were waiting more than one year.

- I'm the carer: the whole experience ruined my partner for months, he never wants to go anywhere near an Atos assessment again to the point **he would rather starve** than go through it again.
- The whole experience has been soul destroying, I have tried to kill myself due to the **financial hardship**. I just don't know what to do.
- Decision overturned at tribunal, as it should have been - 36 points. I went **from 82kg to 68kg** during my 6 months on minimum Income Support.
- I am still waiting for an appeal date some 18 months later. With loss of benefit I now suffer greatly as I **can't heat my home** properly, which makes my lung complaint worse as the bedrooms are damp. I also suffer from severe pain to my joints, which again isn't helped by the lack of warmth.
- The WCA experience was so traumatic I **dropped my claim** rather than go through it again.
- I have been waiting 6 weeks for a mandatory reconsideration; I'm now suffering with depression because of the process.
- My benefits stopped on 19th Feb not cut, stopped. For the first time in my life (55 years old) **I have had to starve**.
- I have to **beg to survive**, I don't know what to do. I think about killing myself every day, just to escape this shit life and system.

Conclusions

The WCA is part of a series of wider 'reforms' which are not reforms. They increase the problems faced by disabled people and make the United Kingdom a worse place to live.

- 1.** The WCA process is abusive. Repetitive and mandatory reassessments are wasteful, damaging and are used punitively. The WCA makes health conditions or impairments worse and causes excess deaths.
- 2.** Overwhelmingly people testified that WCA reports are profoundly inaccurate, medical evidence is ignored by the DWP decision makers and by the healthcare professionals contracted to perform the WCA.
- 3.** The DWP are routinely settling in the claimant's favour just before a tribunal rather than fight the Secretary of State's case in court.
- 4.** Lack of reasonable adjustments routinely discriminates against disabled claimants.

- 5.** The length of the process as well as harming people's health, also leaves them in financial crisis. They can win at tribunal but this is often after over a year of penury and at a severe cost to health and mental wellbeing. Fluctuating conditions (mental and physical) are simply not being recognised; this leads to many people being incorrectly assessed to be able to work.
- 6.** Ministerial assurances and reviews about standards, professionalism, timescale, ability to appeal and record do not reflect the reality of the WCAs and people's lived experience.
- 7.** The entire process and attitude of officials and the media they brief, make people feel like criminals. This is particularly damaging for people with mental health issues. Fraud, by the DWP's own figures, is only 0.7%.
- 8.** The removal of legal aid, the introduction of mandatory reconsideration and cuts to local government have compounded the failures of the WCA to create an even more abusive, inefficient and unjust process.
- 9.** The scale, severity and persistence of wrongdoing indicate a massive and ongoing State-sponsored programme of human rights abuse of disabled people, ill people and carers.

Background

This report came about by a series of coincidences, hard work, planning and good will from good people of good conscience. It may be said it actually began in 2003 when I was put through an early iteration of the WCA in a New Labour pilot in Manchester. At that time the Logic Integrated Medical Assessment (LIMA) software was run and owned by Schlumberger-Sema before Atos bought them out. Eleven years ago, it was a bad system causing unnecessary suffering, it has only gotten worse.

I appealed the assessment with the help of legal aid (now cut by the government) and won, and in the process found someone either at the company or the ministry had fraudulently altered my files to deny me benefits. This set the tone

for the implementation under New Labour of this appalling disability-denial system.

The Conservative and Liberal Coalition, despite warnings not to, continued it and made it worse. My last WCA almost killed me. While recovering in late summer and autumn of 2012 I became a co-founder of the WOW Petition. Knowing others who had not been so lucky to survive and knowing many others being traumatised by the WCA on a daily basis drove us to make WOW a success.

We got wonderful help from our patron and co-founder Francesca Martinez and from many other organisations, NGO's (including Amnesty International, Unite and Scope) and the frontline resistance grassroots disabled people's

organisations DPAC, Black Triangle, Pat's Petition, Carerwatch, Glasgow Against Atos. Spartacus network, Atos Miracles, lawyer Nick Dilworth at illegal.org.uk, wewillbeheard.org and The Centre for Welfare Reform.

Maybe it was because of Francesca's influence or maybe it is a testament to the freedom of thought still cultivated in the live stand-up world, but many comedians helped us, and it was through Tiernan Douieb that I met Mark Thomas and the mysterious 'Susan'.

Together with the other groups we evolved an idea - to give the survivors of the WCA a chance to assess the people and system that assessed them, thus **Assessing the Assessors** was born.

Launching in Edinburgh with a mass party outside the Atos assessment centre in Edinburgh, we had cake, we had tea and coffee, we had a conjurer! And we had the questionnaire presented in

accessible format (including easy read, Braille and audio, read by Alexei Sayle), Mark even gave up his bed to accommodate me!

Soon we had the questionnaire online thanks to DPAC's technical wizard Bob Ellard, and as the months wore on we got hundreds of responses.

What was most remarkable was the optional blank field at the end where people could write about their own experiences. This became an astonishing record of evidence. Most people chose to fill this in such was their need to communicate how their lives had been so deeply affected by the WCA and the Atos-DWP abuse heaped upon them.

Mark toured the country promoting the questionnaire as part of his now legendary show **100 Acts of Minor Dissent**. WOW succeeded in forcing a main chamber debate in the House of Commons, the first for a motion devised and

brought by disabled people, ill people and carers (and leading to a vote which we won, but which the executive, ie the Government has refused to abide by, democracy huh?). But awareness was raised, alliances cemented and morale boosted.

Then came the epic finale of Mark's show in Sheffield, a five hour extravaganza! Dr Simon Duffy of The Centre for Welfare Reform beavered away to produce a report for the show, while Jane Bence, another WOW co-founder dragged me from my island hideaway to the sunny climes of South Yorkshire. We presented it onstage and Mark succeeded in achieving **100 Acts of Minor Dissent** and we at last met in person the inestimable Susan McNicholas!

What was striking was the testimony in people's own words held the real power. Page after page contains what can only be described as horror stories from a Kafkaesque nightmare, in a country that seems to have engaged upon a regime of

removing disabled and ill people from society by the most opaque and brutal bureaucratic means possible.

There is no doubt the WCA causes deaths. There is no doubt it is not fit for the purpose, there is no doubt it must be abolished as a simple matter of morality, human decency and basic human rights.

Our new campaign New Approach **@newapproach_UK** aims precisely to do this:

Abolish the WCA and replace it with a fair system of assessment and support.

Even now as you read this four disabled people every day lose their lives after having their benefits removed under this process. So please, read without prejudice, and share these truths and Join the Resistance.

Rick Burgess (@TenPercent)

All the data referred to in this report can be found on the online spreadsheet here:

<http://bit.ly/wcasurveydata>

Question	Yes	Percent
Q1: Were you aware you could have a home assessment if you requested it?	154	78.67%
Q2: Were there car parking facilities on site for you?	323	100.00%
Q3: Was the centre accessible to you?	714	83.81%
Q4: Did the centre have ground floor assessment room available?	562	86.58%
Q5: Were any refreshments, such as drinking water, available?	367	51.78%
Q6: Were you made aware of where the toilets were?	169	13.87%
Q7: Were you welcomed by the administrative staff & security?	382	81.58%
Q8: Was the centre adequately furnished for the needs of Disabled People - for example did the chairs have armrests?	221	86.47%
Q9: Were you told before the assessment that you could record the interview?	32	4.41%
Q10: Were you told that you were allowed to be accompanied?	383	44.74%
Q11: Did your assessor introduce themselves and explain who they were?	582	87.58%
Q12: Do you have physical measurements?	604	79.64%
Q13: Do you have Mental Health issues?	804	70.40%
Q14: Did they explain the procedure? - what would happen during the assessment and what would happen afterwards?	328	78.10%
Q15: If you provided medical evidence had the assessor reviewed it and was they familiar with your case details?	169	13.87%
Q16: Were you allowed to ask any questions?	385	45.17%
Q17: Were you escorted physically?	618	80.89%
Q18: Did the issues you were given?	424	81.27%
Q19: Did you receive the initial discussion in a convenient format - i.e. in Braille or voice if appropriate?	344	73.17%
Q20: Do you feel the assessor believed what you had to say?	111	79.07%
Q21: Did the assessor take full notes and were you able to see what they were taking notes on?	63	9.87%
Q22: Do you think the assessment was conducted in a fair and thorough manner?	176	35.12%
Q23: Would you consider making a complaint?	671	86.86%
Q24: Do you fear your assessment?	782	91.48%
Q25: Was it as hard as you thought it would be?	478	79.16%
Q26: How do you expect?	541	88.25%
Q27: How long have you been waiting for your assessment?		
0 to 2 months	210	27.67%
3 to 6 months	327	42.47%
9 to 12 months	132	17.17%
1 to 2 years	68	8.74%
more than 2 years	42	5.42%
None	115	14.87%
N	384	
Q28: How do you feel the process affected your health?		
Not at all	76	4.52%
Moderately	871	88.25%

Further reading

The disability community can generate high quality research and analysis to challenge the injustices that are growing in the UK. There is already a significant body of work available:

To understand the impact of the UK Government's austerity policies: O'Hara M (2014) *Austerity Bites*. Bristol, Policy Press. [Link](#)

On how the DWP's contracts shape the assessment process: Franklin K (2013) *How Norms Become Targets*. Sheffield, The Centre for Welfare Reform. [Link](#)

On how Government cuts target disabled people: Duffy S (2014) *Counting the Cuts*. Sheffield, The Centre for Welfare Reform. [Link](#)

On the failure of the Work Related Activity Group: Hale C (2014) *Fulfilling Potential?* London, Mind. [Link](#)

On the background to the ESA and other related 'reforms': see the work of the [Spartacus Network](#)

New Approach

Free of political persuasion and not tied to any particular organisation or representative body, New Approach aims to devise a much better replacement to the Work Capability Assessment.

We're a committed group of four who will work in close liaison with anyone who cares enough to listen and help us achieve our goal. Our skills range from helping hundreds of damaged individuals negotiate the WCA maze from the front-line of the advice sector, to forcing a main debate in Parliament.

We've done much to highlight the injustice inflicted upon thousands of physically and mentally unwell people of all ages and now intend to bring about real change.

To find out more visit: www.newapproachuk.org

Follow us on twitter: [@newapproach_UK](https://twitter.com/newapproach_UK)



Campaign for a Fair Society

Everyone is equal, no matter their differences or disabilities. A fair society sees each of its members as a full citizen – a unique person with a life of their own. A fair society is organised to support everyone to live a full life, with meaning and respect.

To find out more visit: www.campaignforafairsociety

Follow us on twitter: [@4aFairSociety](https://twitter.com/4aFairSociety)

The logo for the Campaign for a Fair Society. It features a black rectangular banner with the text "CAMPAIGN FOR A" in white, uppercase letters. A thin white horizontal line is positioned below "CAMPAIGN FOR A". Below the line, the words "FAIR SOCIETY" are written in a larger, bold, white, uppercase font. The banner is supported by a black, stylized triangular base that tapers to a point at the bottom.

CAMPAIGN FOR A
FAIR SOCIETY

The Centre for Welfare Reform

The Centre for Welfare Reform is an independent research and development network. Its aim is to transform the current welfare state so that it supports citizenship, family and community. It works by developing and sharing social innovations and influencing government and society to achieve necessary reforms.

To find out more visit: www.centreforwelfarereform.org

Follow us on twitter: [@CforWR](https://twitter.com/CforWR)



Information

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