

## **Chronically ill and disabled people now have much more to fear...**

Sometimes, you have to wonder which world the Prime Minister (PM) lives in, as it's certainly not the real one...

She will realise this in time, when there is a public reaction to her appointment of one of the most reviled women in British politics to a very influential government post, which guarantees that even more preventable harm will be created by this dangerous right-wing Conservative government.

Attempting to demonstrate her authority as PM, and disregarding the ever growing list of 40+ MPs who still really want [her removed as leader](#), this week was the long-awaited Cabinet reshuffle. Theresa May didn't have a lot of choice given that some Ministers refused to move, some resigned, and some were never under consideration but, when it comes to kicking people when they're down, the biggest catastrophe of the reshuffle is the appointment of [Esther McVey MP](#) as yet another Secretary of State for Work and Pensions. McVey is [the fifth person to be appointed](#) to the top job at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in the last two years. They don't tend to stay long...

This is not the first time McVey has been at the DWP. The last time she was a Minister at the DWP, in various roles, was from September 2012 to March 2015. She worked with Iain Duncan Smith (IDS), a previous very successful Secretary of State for the Coalition government, who almost single handedly transformed the wellbeing of several million people in the UK by his relentless demonising of the chronically ill and disabled claimants of social security identifying them as '[scroungers](#)', when he had no evidence for such a claim. Aided by the vicious right-wing [tabloid press](#), prosecuted disability hate crimes increased by 213% when IDS was in office, and it didn't occur to [him to show concern...](#)

However, McVey was the real power behind the throne. She failed to hide her delight when, with one policy after another, she introduced social security policies that were always [destined to kill](#) many of those who were too ill to work, and many more chronically sick and disabled people lived in fear. Savage policy after policy had negative implications for chronically sick and disabled people, added to the constant threat of sanctions which meant that the [deaths started climbing](#), but McVey is oblivious to human suffering.

One of her most memorable speeches was in 2013, when she declared that people being forced to access food banks is "...positive; people are [reaching out to support others](#) in church groups, community groups, local supermarkets and other groups." She thought it was a good idea to close the Rempoy factories, which guaranteed that [875 disabled workers](#) would lose their jobs.

In December 2012, McVey actually boasted that when Disability Living Allowance (DLA) was replaced by Personal Independence Payments (PIP), more than 300,000 people would have their benefits cut or removed altogether which, [she felt was a good thing](#). Of course, the

ramifications of these savage attacks against chronically ill and disabled people also meant that with the loss of DLA, and the failure to qualify for PIP, chronically ill and disabled people would [also lose access to their Motability vehicle](#), many of which had been specially adapted for the driver when a previous British government didn't begrudge helping to support disabled people to get to work, or just to enjoy their independence.

During her time at the DWP, McVey introduced sanctions for social security claimants despite various official reports warning they [would cause harm](#) and, in 2015, the DWP admitted that sanctions [were linked to suicides](#) yet they were destined [to remain](#) as DWP policy; despite academic research which exposed the link between the enforced disability assessments and [a decline in public mental health](#).

Time has moved on. Detailed academic evidence demonstrated that the ongoing welfare reforms and austerity measures are introducing [American social security policies](#) into the UK, as [all planned a long time ago](#), and successive governments are continuing [the legacy](#) of the first female UK Prime Minister to demolish the UK welfare state, regardless of [human consequences](#).

As the new Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, no doubt Esther McVey will continue where her predecessor [David Gauke finished](#). The endless fear of British sick and disabled people who are too ill to work has meant that [almost half of all claimants](#) of the Employment and Support Allowance begrudged disability benefit have actually [attempted suicide](#) rather than face destitution, yet I guarantee that nothing will change. Indeed, it is very likely that the situation for those least able to protest is about [to get a lot worse](#) now that Esther McVey has acquired the top job at the DWP.

© 2018 Mo Stewart

10<sup>th</sup> January, 2018

(800 words)

