

After ten years of suffering the DWP still try to hide mortality totals

Latest mortality totals of ESA claimants who died when judged “fit for work” withheld again

October 2018 is the tenth anniversary of the introduction of the most savage attack on the sick and disabled community since the welfare state began.

Described at the time as the adoption of “welfare reforms” when, in reality, the reforms adopted by New Labour were the beginning of the end of the welfare state and they had been planned for a long time. Neoliberal politics, which puts “the market” as the only priority, was driving all political thinking since Thatcher, who had introduced neoliberal politics to the UK, and the welfare state was on the hit list.

The adoption of welfare reforms meant that, in future, all sick and disabled benefit claimants who were unable to work would be treated as [malingerers](#) by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and they would have to prove their entitlement to essential funds regardless of human suffering or fatal consequences.

Outsourced to the private sector at the suggestion of [Lord David Freud](#), the adoption of the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) in October 2008 was used to resist access to the new Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) long-term sickness and disability benefit, which had replaced Incapacity Benefit.

The ESA assessment was guaranteed to cause preventable harm. Since the introduction of the WCA there has been a dramatic increase in public [mental health problems](#) in the past ten years, as the DWP disregard evidence of a vast increase in suicides linked to the WCA, and the DWP disregard Coroners’ reports identifying the WCA as being [linked to suicide](#) and self-harm.

The WCA uses the [discredited](#) Waddell-Aylward biopsychosocial (BPS) model of assessment, which disregards diagnosis, prognosis and past medical history. Exposed by former healthcare professional and disabled veteran Mo Stewart, following several years of independent research, the BPS model of assessment is identified as the adoption of American social policies by the DWP, on route to the planned future [demolition of the UK welfare state](#) to be replaced by private health insurance.

Mo’s research is now acknowledged by academics, as she is invited to speak at seminars and she writes for academic journals. She said “ *...welfare reforms and austerity was always going to be painful and the DWP needed to find someone to blame. The disabled community made very easy targets as this dangerous assessment, influenced by the American insurance industry, was always going to cause preventable harm. By disregarding diagnosis and medical opinion, some chronically sick and disabled people were going to die. It was a medical certainty.*”

Former DWP Chief Medical Officer Professor Sir Mansel Aylward had been the driving force behind the replacement of Incapacity Benefit, and [he was funded](#) by the insurance industry to produce the 2005 [DWP commissioned](#) research to justify adopting the BPS model of

assessment, which was destined to cause preventable harm to many as the previous psychological security of the UK welfare state was [successfully destroyed](#).

The welfare reforms were increased by the coalition government in 2010 with the addition of austerity measures. More and more benefit cuts were introduced together with punitive sanctions as Iain Duncan Smith MP, when Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, took every possible opportunity to demonise the sick and disabled community in need of welfare funding.

His terminology when describing those in greatest need [attracted attention](#), and soon the press were describing sick and disabled people as “scroungers”, “skivers” and a drain on the public purse. This rhetoric worked well and Iain Duncan Smith watched as disability hate crimes including murder [climbed by 213%](#) during his term in office, as the DWP continually resisted publishing the ESA mortality totals.

In 2015 the DWP were ordered to publish the figures by the Information Commissioner, and the [mortality statistics](#) identified that from December 2011 to February 2014 a total of 2,380 sick and disabled ESA claimants died after the DWP decided they were “fit for work”, refused them access to the ESA, ordered them to search for work then watched as they died trying.

The same mortality statistics identified that, during the same period, 7,200 ESA claimants died after being placed in the work related activity group (WRAG), which is for claimants whom the DWP deemed were well enough to actually prepare to return to work as diagnosis is disregarded. GPs protests were disregarded.

No doubt due to the public outcry when the ESA mortality totals were finally published in 2015, the DWP have resisted publishing more until very recently. For a much shorter time period, from March 2014 to February 2017, the new ESA mortality totals identified a total of 10,950 people who died when in the WRAG, despite the DWP’s insistence that they were to prepare to return to work.

However, the all-important figures of the numbers of chronically sick and disabled claimants who died in the same time frame, when judged “fit for work,” have not been disclosed. Sarah Newton MP, the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work, has since [refused to provide](#) the information when requested by Shadow Minister for Disabled people, Marsha de Cordova.

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