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Date: 29th October 2019

Mr Peter Schofield
Permanent Secretary
Department for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London SW1H 9NA

OPEN PUBLIC ACCESS

Dear Mr Schofield

Re: *Influences and Consequences*
The Conclusion to the Preventable Harm Project
2009 - 2019

Please excuse this unsolicited contact as I write to you in my capacity as the lead researcher in the UK regarding the Preventable Harm Project, which is now drawing to a close following ten years of independent research. *Influences and Consequences* will be published later this year.

Following your recent evidence¹ to the Work and Pensions Select Committee (the Committee) earlier this month, together with the evidence offered by the Secretary of State, I believe I am duty bound to alert you to detailed and disturbing evidence that appears not to have been brought to your attention, or to the attention of anyone of significance at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Therefore enclosed, for your personal attention, please accept copies of letters written to the former Chief Medical Officer (CMO), Professor Dame Sally Davies², together with a recent letter to Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, in her capacity as the Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee³. I believe the content of the letters to be self-explanatory.

As the lead independent researcher in the UK over the past ten years, regarding the identified preventable harm created by various and ongoing DWP 'welfare reforms', it remains a growing concern that DWP representatives demonstrated during evidence to the Committee that reality is a long way away from their knowledge and experience.

The overwhelming confidence demonstrated during the evidence regarding the benefit claims 'processes', that for many people are demonstrably unworkable, seems to be unknown to you. The claims that Job Centre staff are 'skilled and supportive people' is not confirmed by the personal experience of countless numbers of those in greatest need and, with the greatest respect, DWP official reports remain a long way away from the lived experience of those in greatest need in this country^{4,5,6}. These may be political decisions, but your Department have implemented them.

Regardless of your demonstrated confidence in Universal Credit (UC)¹, which has failed all academic scrutiny and is demonstrably fatally flawed, I believe attention needs to be drawn to the preventable harm created by the adoption of the dangerous and discredited Waddell-Aylward^{6,7} biopsychosocial (BPS) assessment model, adopted for the Work Capability Assessment (WCA) to limit access to the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for anyone whose unfit to work. People are dying Mr Schofield when, quite literally, “*killed by the state*”⁸. **It’s time to stop the killing, time to stop the tunnel vision of celebrating UC, and time for someone to take responsibility and to be held to account for the preventable harm created by DWP social policies.**

By definition, ‘preventable harm’ is identified as the “presence of an identifiable, modifiable cause of harm” in healthcare (Nabhan et al., 2012). The removal of the clinical opinion of family doctors for claimants of long-term sickness and disability benefit was destined to cause preventable harm...

The WCA was demonstrated to negatively impact on public mental health when using neoliberal politics (Watts, 2018; Mills, 2018). Recommended by the former banker and Labour government adviser David Freud (Freud 2007), the WCA is conducted by the private sector, at an eventual cost to the public purse of £1.6billion (PAC, 2016), over a three year period, to conduct disability assessments for the ESA and related disability benefits. The distress created for disability benefit claimants by repeated WCAs for serious health conditions, particularly those that cannot improve, created a negative impact on public mental health (Barr et al 2015)...

Discrediting chronically ill and disabled people who were unable to work was very easy to achieve, was guaranteed to negatively impact on public mental health (Beresford, 2016; Garthwaite, 2014) and was necessary to remove the psychological security provided by the welfare state, on route to its eventual total demolition (Stewart, 2016). There would be grave human consequences to this removal of guaranteed financial support by the state for those in greatest need. The constant threat of sanctions led to fear and a significant rise in suicides of ESA claimants (DNS, 2015; 2017; Ryan, 2015), with the endless public humiliation of disability benefit claimants by DWP Ministers negatively impacting on mental health service users (Beresford, 2016)...

The WCA “is intrusive, insensitively administered and regularly leads to inappropriate outcomes in respect of disabled people’s capabilities” (Dwyer et al 2018). Used to restrict access to the ESA and its successor benefit Universal Credit, there are three possible outcomes...

Detailed testimony has identified that the imposition of harsh sanctions by the DWP was life-threatening for some benefit applicants (Mehta et al., 2018)...

Consequently, long-term sick and disabled claimants in need of financial support by the state live in fear of the DWP, as the ESA is currently being phased out to be replaced by Universal Credit. Claimants have been intimidated over a period of years, are very conscious that public opinion is against them and that they are treated with suspicion not empathy (Garthwaite, 2014). Suicides linked to welfare reforms are climbing (Mills, 2018; DNS, 2017a; Ryan, 2015), and a growing number of benefit-related deaths are associated with sanctions (DNS 2017a) in what has been described as “Britain’s secret penal system” (Webster, 2015)...

Preventable Harm: Creating a Mental Health Crisis⁵
Journal of Public Mental Health: Vol 18, No 4, pp 224-230
Mo Stewart
2019

I suggest that the Secretary of State uses her much celebrated PhD in science to analyse the ongoing atrocities in this country created by dangerous DWP social policies, when influenced since 1992 by the second worst insurance company in America, which actually means the second worst insurance company in the world.⁶

My work over the past ten years has been on behalf of the disabled community, and all evidence is shared with them. Without a public email address, please be advised that the distribution list below will access this letter prior to you, and this letter will be published online for public access to the content of it.

Mr Schofield, you should be alert to the fact that the Cameron Cabinet Office attempted and failed to incentivise me to stop the research with a cash offer in 2014, and the Cabinet Office are very familiar with my work. Perhaps it's time you were too?

You and your team need to be much better informed.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about the things that matter.”
Martin Luther-King Jr

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Author of *Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state*. New Generation Publishing 2016

<https://www.mostewartresearch.co.uk>

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Copied to:

John-Paul Marks, Director General of Work and Health Services

Professor Chris Whitty: CMO and Chief Scientific Adviser

Duncan Selbie: Chief Executive Public Health England

Frank Field MP, Chair, Work and Pensions Select Committee

Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, Chair, Health & Social Care Committee

Professor Tom Shakespeare, Professor of Disability Research, LSHTM

Professor Peter Beresford, Professor of Citizen Participation, University of Essex

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Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite, Dpt of Social Policy, Sociology and Criminology, University of Birmingham

Dr Lucy Series, School of Law and Politics, University of Cardiff

Dr Simon Duffy, Director, the Centre for Welfare Reform

Graham Vanbergen, Editor, TruePolitica UK News

Steven Preece, Editor, Welfare Weekly

John Pring, Editor, Disability News Services

References

- ¹ Evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee: 16th October 2019
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/iplayer/episode/m0009znl/select-committees-work-and-pensions-committee>
- ² Letter to Professor Dame Sally Davies
<https://www.mostewartresearch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Redacted-letter-Prof-Dame-Sally-Davies-3rd-MAY-2019.pdf>
- ³ Letter to Dr Sarah Wollaston MP, Chair, Health and Social Select Committee
<https://www.mostewartresearch.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/REDACTED-letter-Chair-Health-Social-Care-Cttee.pdf>
- ⁴ Psychological tyranny masquerading as welfare reform
The Journal of Critical Psychology, Counselling and Psychotherapy Vol 19, No 1, p26-35
- ⁵ Preventable harm: creating a mental health crisis
Journal of Public Mental Health : Vol 18, No 4, pp 224-230
- ⁶ Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state
New Generation Publishing, London, 2016, 187pp ISBN: 978-1-78507-783-8 (pbk)
- ⁷ Blaming the victim all over again: Waddell and Aylward's biopsychosocial (BPS) model of disability.
Journal of Critical Social Policy Vol 37, Issue 1, page(s) 22-41
- ⁸ Killed By The Sate
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