

Dear Minister

27<sup>th</sup> September, 2021

Re: [Shaping Future Support: The Health and Disability Green Paper](#)

A Briefing by Mo Stewart

Research Lead, Preventable Harm Project

Congratulations on your appointment as the Minister for Disabled People, Health and Work.

As an introduction, please be advised that I write in my capacity as the research lead for the [Preventable Harm Project](#) that I led for ten years.

Some backbench MPs from both main parties are familiar with the *Project* findings, and invited me to write a briefing during the public consultation regarding the new Health and Disability Green Paper, which I was happy to provide. I have not identified these MPs, but others who have expressed an interest during debate are included in this email, as is my local MP Steve Barclay.

Given the content of the briefing, I was then requested to alert you to its findings and, to that end, I offer you access to the above online link plus a PDF copy of the published briefing paper.

Of particular note is the fact that, despite political rhetoric, the UK government has historically funded the least amount of gross domestic product to public spending for the past 40 years when compared with 14 other affluent European countries. Clearly, costs can't continue to be justified as being the reason for the social policy reforms and brutal austerity measures, which have created a public health crisis.

Minister, there is an ongoing well-documented public health crisis in the UK, which is directly linked to various social policy reforms adopted since 2010, together with the continued use of the fatally flawed *non-medical* functional work capability assessment (WCA), which has -vely impacted on the health, wellbeing and often on the survival of those in greatest need, which has yet to be acknowledged by your Department or by the Government.

As long ago as 2015 [Professor Ben Barr and colleagues](#) established that "*for each additional 10,000 reassessments using the WCA there were 6 suicides, 2700 cases of reported mental health problems, and the prescribing of an additional 7020 antidepressant items.*" Clearly, this demonstrates the serious adverse consequences of using the WCA, which is disregarded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and is the consequence of the adoption of American social and labour market policies.

In the recent past the Minister for Welfare Delivery dismissed any claims against the WCA because there were five reviews, which are now very outdated. However, the authors of those reviews were not given access to all the evidence, and are now on record as demonstrating concern, given that they were not alerted to the numbers of deaths linked to the WCA, the rising numbers of suicides due to the fear of the DWP, [or Coroners' reports](#) warning of the link between the WCA and suicides. There is also a tendency to disregard the fact that the [government's own expert panel rejected the use](#) of the WCA as being 'unfit for purpose', yet their collective clinical opinion was disregarded.

As a demonstration of this identified preventable harm created by social policy reforms, I have provided access to a paper published in December 2019 by the [Journal of Public Mental Health](#) which demonstrates the problems now faced by some of those in greatest need, as a direct result of the various social policy reforms and the fatally flawed WCA in particular. The research paper was acknowledged as an 'outstanding paper' in the 2020 Emerald Literati Academic Awards.

I have also attached a research paper written at the request of the Editor for the new [Journal of \(In\)Justice International](#), which is to be published in a special edition of the journal relating to disability.

Access to the attached briefing and published research papers, and the research website listed above, offer a vast amount of detailed evidence demonstrating the preventable harm created by social policy reforms, together with the adoption of austerity measures, which were ideologically motivated, [ethically unjustified and financially unnecessary](#), as identified in a catalogue of [published academic papers](#).

Minister, some of your backbench colleagues hope that this growing amount of detailed evidence will be considered as a matter of urgency by the DWP, and by the Department for Health and Social Care. There is no justification for the continued use of [the fatally flawed WCA](#), which is demonstrated as causing preventable harm of many of those in greatest need. One government report, not released to the press, actually identified that almost 50% of claimants of the Employment and Support Allowance, who had to endure another WCA to retain access to their disability benefit, had attempted suicide at some point. Perhaps, Minister, you should ask yourself why?

The DWP commissioned research (Waddell and Aylward in 2005, 2010; Freud, 2007) [failed all academic scrutiny](#), so the justification used for the adoption of the WCA is and always was invalid.

The WCA uses a non-medical biopsychosocial functional model of assessment, which disregards clinical need and was the invention of the insurance industry, and an American corporate giant identified by the American Association of Justice as being the second worst insurance company in the US have advised the DWP regarding welfare claims management since 1992. The ongoing human crisis created by the WCA and the social policy reforms were co-designed by corporate America with successive UK administrations.

There is an identified growing public health crisis directly linked to the WCA and to the social policy reforms, which are dominated by a [fiscal priority whilst disregarding health and wellbeing](#), as created by reforms introduced by various administrations since 2010.

As recently reported to the Attorney General, it's clearly past time to revisit social policy legislation as a matter of urgency, and the dangerous WCA should be abolished to prevent this ongoing identified government imposed preventable harm continuing.

Please feel free to contact me if you wish to discuss the research findings from the [Preventable Harm Project](#).

I trust this evidence is helpful, and cause for concern, and I thank you for your time.

Sincerely

**Mo Stewart**

Fellow, Centre for Welfare Reform

Research Lead, Preventable Harm Project



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

Author of [‘Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state’](#). New Generation Publishing 2016

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

<https://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/influences-and-consequences.html>