

# Mo Stewart

Fellow, Centre for Welfare Reform  
Research Lead, Preventable Harm Project

---

Phone: xxxxx xxxxxx

Mobile: xxxxxxxxxxxx

Email: xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

Date: 18<sup>th</sup> November, 2022

## [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

Maria Caulfield MP  
Minister for Mental Health  
Department of Health and Social Care  
39 Victoria Street  
London SW1H 0EU

Private and Confidential

By email  
[psmariacaulfield@dhsc.gov.uk](mailto:psmariacaulfield@dhsc.gov.uk)

Dear Minister

Re: The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms  
*Justice, Power and Resistance* <sup>1</sup>

Congratulations on your appointment as Minister for Mental Health.

I write in my capacity as the research lead for the Preventable Harm Project,<sup>2</sup> (2009-2019) to alert the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to an identified public mental health crisis,<sup>1,3,4</sup> which is directly linked to social policy reforms adopting a ‘*non-medical functional assessment*’ to limit access to disability benefit.<sup>5</sup> All clinical need was disregarded, which is a very dangerous precedent.

It is a growing concern that this identified public mental health crisis directly linked to social policy reforms<sup>5,6,7</sup> has been routinely disregarded by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), and seems to be unknown to the DHSC. It is an error to disregard a public health crisis linked to policies adopted by another Department and, given the overwhelming evidence of the preventable harm created by the adoption of the fatally flawed Work Capability Assessment (WCA) by the DWP, this demonstrates that social policies were introduced using a fiscal priority whilst disregarding health and wellbeing.<sup>3</sup> Fatalities were inevitable as the assessment was adopted without any cumulative assessment, or plan to identify the impact of the assessment,<sup>3</sup> which was meant to be common practice when adopting social policies which were designed to impact on millions of lives. Ethics were disregarded, and a future public health crisis was created by the introduction of the WCA, together

---

<sup>1</sup> [The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms in: Justice, Power and Resistance - Ahead of print \(bristoluniversitypressdigital.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

<sup>3</sup> [‘First, do no harm’: are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health? A longitudinal ecological study | Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health \(bmj.com\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Adoption of Psycho-Coercion to Manipulate the UK Disabled Community: the Creation of the Politics of Fear](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Preventable harm: creating a mental health crisis. Journal of Public Mental Health, 18 \(4\), 2019 pp.224-230](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Dismantling the social safety net: social security reforms, disability and mental health conditions. BJPsych Bulletin, Volume 44, Issue 5, October 2020, pp. 208-212](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Burden and benefits-related suicides: “misconception” or state crafted reality? Journal of Public Mental Health, 21\(1\), 2022, pp. 46-56](#)

with the hostility, coercion and intimidation identified in all communication with benefit claimants by the DWP,<sup>8</sup> and the disturbing increase in sanctions which meant that some chronically ill and disabled claimants would be starved to death by the State when too ill to work.<sup>1</sup>

The present article seeks to explain how ordinary people carrying out their daily duties in employment service offices were able to implement cruel and inhumane social security reforms... We contend that it is crucial to situate this behaviour in the context of policy and practice changes which have encouraged the production and delivery of 'institutional violence' on the front line... encouraging front-line workers to deliver service in ways which led to a range of harmful outcomes for benefit claimants... Because front-line staff were measured ultimately on 'off-loads', finding ways to sanction claimants and/or dissuade claimants, as opposed to finding ways of facilitating transitions into work, had become a more rational option. When asked how the 0-13 week team would achieve the 'off-loads', worker three proceeded to explain how they would frequently treat claimants with 'disrespect' and use psychological harm as technique: 'they were pushing them until they either cleared off ... or they got sanctioned'.<sup>8</sup>

It is my understanding Minister that you have been an MP since 2015. That being the case, like many other MPs, you may be totally unaware of the relentless political attacks against the disabled community by the Coalition administration (2010-2015), which was aided by the persecution of claimants by the tabloid press who successfully stigmatised anyone claiming disability benefit. The human consequences of this social re-engineering, as used to limit public expectation of the social security budget, required a sustained attack and created an ongoing public health crisis<sup>1,4</sup> directly linked to the harm created by the political rhetoric of the Coalition administration, increased by unnecessary austerity measures, and should not be disregarded or underestimated.<sup>7,8,9</sup>



Persecution of the disabled community by the tabloid press supporting political rhetoric

[1 The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms in: Justice, Power and Resistance - Ahead of print \(bristoluniversitypressdigital.com\)](#)

[4 The Adoption of Psycho-Coercion to Manipulate the UK Disabled Community: the Creation of the Politics of Fear](#)

[7 Burden and benefits-related suicides: "misconception" or state crafted reality? Journal of Public Mental Health, 21\(1\), 2022, pp. 46-56](#)

[8 Violent bureaucracy: A critical analysis of the British employment service](#)

[9 The Impact of Austerity on Mental Health Service Provision: A UK Perspective Int Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 2018, 15 \(6\), 1145](#)

Their often hostile rhetoric encouraged a 213 percent increase in prosecuted disability hate crimes, and successive administrations disregarded the thousands of deaths directly linked to the Work Capability Assessment, which was adopted using a discredited and dangerous biopsychosocial model of assessment to restrict access to long-term disability benefit. Influenced by corporate America since 1992, the UK social policy reforms guaranteed that many of those in greatest need were destined to die when, covertly, killed by the State.<sup>1</sup>

Minister, please be advised that the Preventable Harm Project,<sup>2</sup> as initially conducted over a period of ten years (2009-2019), identified the influence of corporate America with UK social policy reforms since 1992, with a notorious American insurance giant appointed as the government's 'welfare claims manager' in 1994. The consequence of the influence of corporate America is that those in greatest need in the UK now live in fear of the DWP and being exposed to another WCA, which was co-designed with corporate America, and which disregards all clinical need, together with the constant threat of brutal and unnecessary financial sanctions for those in greatest need.<sup>4,10,11</sup>

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) makes various unsubstantiated claims in the Green Paper, including a claim by the Minister for Disabled People that "*the majority of people are satisfied with the (disability) assessment process*" (p4), seemingly based on the small numbers who appeal DWP benefit decisions; whilst disregarding the numerous obstacles the DWP intentionally created to restrict access to the appeal system. In fact, other than DWP rhetoric, there is no independent substantiated evidence that identifies that "*the majority*" of disabled people are "*satisfied*" with the disability assessment process. However, in contrast, there is a significant amount of published academic research that identifies the public mental health crisis created by austerity, by Universal Credit (UC), and by the disability assessment process; including vast numbers of deaths and suicides directly linked to the fatally flawed work capability assessment (WCA) (p2)...

What is constantly overlooked is the fact that the disabled community's experience of this DWP "*help and support*" is via the politics of fear using the WCA. The assessment is conducted by an unaccountable American corporate giant, with the fatally flawed WCA using a discredited BPS model which failed all academic scrutiny. Every clinical lead in the UK demanded that the WCA should be abolished including the Royal College of Psychiatrists, the Royal College of General Practitioners, the British Medical Association and the British Psychological Society, who all identified the WCA as being unfit for purpose. They were all disregarded by the DWP, as is the growing mental health crisis directly linked to the fear of the next WCA, and the constant threat of sanctions. To date, the DWP have disregarded all published, independent academic research which identifies the ongoing and inevitable public health crisis created by social policies adopted since 2010 (p7).<sup>11</sup>

There is no limit to the public health crisis created by the adoption of the dangerous WCA, the influence of corporate America with UK social policies, and the total disregard by the DWP of the many thousands of deaths linked to the WCA, with Coroner's reports that link the WCA to deaths of disabled people totally disregarded.<sup>12</sup> This is unacceptable Minister, and it is also totally unjustifiable.

---

<sup>1</sup> [The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms in: Justice, Power and Resistance - Ahead of print \(bristoluniversitypressdigital.com\)](http://bristoluniversitypressdigital.com)

<sup>2</sup> [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

<sup>4</sup> [The Adoption of Psycho-Coercion to Manipulate the UK Disabled Community: the Creation of the Politics of Fear](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Fear of Brown Envelopes: Exploring Welfare Reform with Long-Term Sickness Benefits Recipients](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Shaping Future Support: the Health and Disability Green Paper briefing](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Six families back petition to MPs calling for inquiry into DWP benefit deaths](#)

In closing, please be further advised that the commissioned research used to justify the adoption of the WCA failed all academic scrutiny, and the occupational health experts who conducted five annual assessments of the WCA were not given any evidence of the growing numbers of deaths linked to it, with all evidence of preventable harm hidden from the experts making the assessment. This is sinister. It was established long ago that the WCA was adopted to break what was once the psychological security of the “welfare state”, which has been achieved. However, it should be remembered that whilst it has been demonstrated how easy it is to manipulate the British public when aided by banner headlines in the tabloid press, the British public didn’t give any administration permission to intimidate, coerce and terrorise anyone whose unfit for work, but the DWP choses to disbelieve them then watches as 50% of ESA disability benefit claimants attempt suicide. Disregarding the numbers of those in greatest need who have been starved to death due to sanctions imposed when they are unable to attend a meeting is shameful and must end.

The only question remains is to how many more thousands of deaths will there be before the administration acknowledge the public health crisis created by this dangerous assessment, and when will the WCA be abolished?

The Secretary of State is aware of the disturbing Project findings.

Yours sincerely



**Mo Stewart**

Fellow, Centre for Welfare Reform  
Research Lead, Preventable Harm Project



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

Author of [‘Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state’](https://www.mostewartresearch.co.uk).  
<https://www.mostewartresearch.co.uk>  
<https://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/influences-and-consequences.html>

Copied to: Shadow Minister for Mental Health  
Shadow Minister for Public Health  
Chair, Joint Committee on Human Rights  
Chair, Health and Social Care Committee  
Chair, Work and Pensions Committee  
Minister for Primary Care and Public Health  
Minister for the Lords