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[The Preventable Harm Project](#)

The Rt Hon Steve Barclay MP
MJS House
Wisbech Road
Westry
March
PE15 0BA

Private & Confidential

via email:

stephen.barclay.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Steve

Re: Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper¹

I am saddened to report that it seems that given the disturbing content of the above White Paper,¹ the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) are determined to continue to threaten the wellbeing and quality of life of those in greatest need, with more planned changes to access to disability benefit which are guaranteed to cause more preventable harm to the chronically ill and disabled community who are unfit to work.

It is my understanding that you are familiar with the Preventable Harm Project² that I've led since 2009, and the volumes of published peer-reviewed papers^{3,4,5} which identified the public health crisis created by the DWP by the introduction of the flawed Work Capability Assessment (WCA), as adopted to limit access to the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). It seems that the DWP disregard all evidence of the public health crisis they created^{3,4,5} and they continue to breach '*their own guidance relating to suicidal benefit claimants.*'⁶

1 Transforming Support: The Health and Disability White Paper

[The Department for Work and Pensions, March 2023](#)

2 The Preventable Harm Project

[Mo Stewart Research](#)

3 'First , do no harm': are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health?

A longitudinal ecological study

[Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health 2016; 70: 339-345](#)

4 The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms

[Justice, Power and Resistance 2022](#)

5 Preventable Harm: creating a mental health crisis ~ Emerald Literati academic award for outstanding paper

[Journal of Public Mental Health Vol 18 No 4 2019, pp. 284-230](#)

6 DWP 'ignored five weeks of pleas for help from suicidal claimant'

[Disability News Service, June 2022](#)



It would appear that the DWP’s extreme neoliberal ideology devoted to force as many chronically ill and disabled people as possible into work, regardless of fatal human consequences, continues to drive all considerations as the deaths directly linked to the WCA are totally disregarded.⁷ (See: Table 1)

Table 1:
DWP mortality statistics, ESA claimants: Dec 2011 – Feb 2014, published Aug 2015

WCA outcomes at most recent ESA assessment: Dec 2011 - Feb 2014	Number of claimants leaving ESA with a recorded date of death
Fit for Work	2,380
Work-related activity group	7,200
Assessment phase	7,540
Support group	32,530
Unknown	930
TOTAL	50,580

Source: reproduced from 2015 DWP published evidence. Table created by the author.

The fact that 2,380 ESA claimants died within weeks of being found ‘*fit for work*’ by the fatally flawed WCA (Table 1), which disregards all clinical need, was of no apparent concern to the DWP, who refused to publish further detailed statistics due, entirely, to the public concern which identified that whilst disregarding the support group, **a total of 18,050** disability benefit claimants had died. They were either found fit for work when clearly they weren’t, they were during the assessment phase which demonstrates that chronically ill people should not be assessed for entitlement when catastrophically ill, in the work-related activity group which according to the DWP meant they should be fit for work within 12 months, or in the ‘unknown’ group which has yet to be established. Perhaps you could ask why the DWP continue to be reluctant to publish significant reports,⁸ and why ESA mortality statistics no longer include the numbers of claimants who died after being found ‘*fit for work*’... ?

Given that the WCA was the adoption of ‘*disability denial*,⁹ the DWP have now decided to make things a lot worse with this latest threat to wellbeing as identified in the new Health and Disability White Paper. Having established that conditionality is guaranteed to cause preventable harm and cannot be justified,¹⁰ the emphasis on increased conditionality in this

7 Thousands have died after being found fit for work, DWP figures show

[The Guardian 27th August, 2015](#)

8 DWP refuses to publish report that found disabled claimants had ‘unmet needs’

[Disability News Service, December 2021](#)

9 The Work Capability Assessment is the adoption of disability denial

[BJGP LIFE](#)

10 Welfare benefit sanctions are both ineffective and harmful

[Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change](#)



new White Paper is clearly ideological, and will cause relentless suffering to many more disabled and chronically ill claimants courtesy of the DWP. This latest attempt to intimidate and persecute the chronically ill and disabled community can't possibly 'help and support' anyone whose unfit to work.¹¹

Considering that the public consultation for the green paper paper has disregarded all recommendations by experienced academic and professional experts, and service-users, who identified significant published evidence to support their suggestions, clearly this public consultation was simply a public relations exercise. Given the content of the White Paper, a multitude of recommendations have been disregarded. Historically, when dealing with social policy reforms, the DWP has a long history of disregarding independent peer-reviewed research, which may explain why those in greatest need in the UK have no redress for the brutality of the DWP, and the culture of DWP staff who enjoy causing preventable harm and sanctioning as many claimants as possible as a form of entertainment.¹² These people are unfit for public service.

It is hoped that you will use this letter content to challenge the DWP, and invite an explanation as to why they intend to cause more preventable harm to those in greatest need?

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mo Stewart', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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'](#)

Creator of [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

Consequences [Influences and Consequences](#)

11 Shaping future support: the health and disability green paper

[A briefing by Mo Stewart](#)

12 Violent Bureaucracy: A critical analysis of British public employment service

[Critical Social Policy Vol 42, Issue 2, pp. 177-362](#)