



# Mo Stewart Research

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Date: 27th November, 2023

Laura Trott MBE MP  
Chief Secretary to the Treasury  
1 Horse Guards Road  
Westminster  
London  
SW1A 2HQ

via email

Dear Ms Trott

Re: The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms  
[Justice, Power and Resistance 6\(2\): 217–228](#)<sup>4</sup>

At the invitation of some of your Westminster colleagues who are familiar with my published research, I write in my capacity as a former healthcare professional and the research lead for the Preventable Harm Project<sup>1</sup> (2009–19) to express my concern regarding your recently reported comments to justify the suggested home employment of chronically ill and disabled people,<sup>2</sup> regardless of possible dire human consequences which are seemingly disregarded.<sup>3</sup> Whilst it seems that you agree that there should be help for disabled people to work, you appear to have no comprehension of catastrophic illness, which means that many of those in greatest need cannot possibly be expected to work, and shouldn't be persecuted when assessed by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) as being too ill to work<sup>4,5</sup> using the fatally flawed and totally discredited Work Capability Assessment (WCA).<sup>4</sup>

With the greatest respect, your reported comments identify yet another government minister demonstrating that social policies were adopted using a fiscal priority whilst disregarding the health and wellbeing of those in greatest need,<sup>3</sup> and it seems that your time at the DWP was well spent as you demonstrate their long-held indoctrination, as influenced by corporate America since 1992, that the chronically ill and disabled community should work regardless of the public health crisis created by successive administrations.<sup>4,5,6</sup> Indeed, those in greatest need now live in fear of the DWP and, by definition, the removal of care, concern, compassion and dignity for any disability assessment is the creation of government induced tyranny.<sup>3</sup>

This cold indifference to human need demonstrated by successive administrations has often had fatal human consequences,<sup>4</sup> with many thousands of chronically ill and disabled benefit claimants relentlessly persecuted by the DWP and covertly '*killed by the state*',<sup>4</sup> with no-one held to account as detailed and disturbing evidence of this government induced preventable harm is routinely disregarded.<sup>3-6</sup>



Following almost fifteen years of independent disability studies,<sup>1</sup> please be advised that the 'welfare reforms' were designed to cause as much harm as possible in order to remove the past psychological security provided by the welfare state, which has been achieved.

Despite previous government rhetoric, there never was any peer-reviewed detailed evidence of large amounts of disability benefit fraud and, long before you were elected as an MP in 2019, and at the same time as the then Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (2010–15) was making his disturbing claims which many people believed when aided by the tabloid press, the government's own published figures identified that only 0.5% of disability benefit claims were fraudulent and 99.5% were genuine<sup>4</sup> (Garthwaite, p 222). Perhaps, if you access the detailed references in this letter, you will become better informed and will resist the temptation to appear on TV to promote the latest disability denial programme designed by the DWP, which cannot possibly be justified. Disregarding diagnosis and prognosis when assessing claimants for disability benefit was always dangerous, and has cost the lives of thousands of chronically ill people. This is something that is disregarded by the DWP and I mentioned this in a recent letter to your colleague, which is now published online:<sup>7</sup>

I suggest that someone surviving with end stage emphysema, for example, doesn't wake up every day thinking about how much more benefit they can claim from the DWP. They are much more likely to wonder if this is to be their last day on earth, and I strongly suggest that this relentless persecution must end connected as it is to many thousands of deaths linked to DWP hostility and intimidation found in every written DWP communication with claimants, which began in 2010.<sup>7</sup>

The British public didn't give any government permission to terrorise those in greatest need, to disregard catastrophic illnesses, or to starve to death anyone whose too ill to attend a Jobcentre interview and yet this is the reality of social policy reforms adopted since 2008 and dramatically increased since 2010.<sup>8</sup> I suggest it's past time to end this government imposed public health crisis and to return care, concern, compassion and dignity to DWP disability assessments. Perhaps you could also advise Rishi Sunak that it's a much bigger 'national scandal'<sup>3-6</sup> that those in greatest need are living in fear of the DWP when too ill to work.

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



**Copied to:** Chair, Work and Pensions Committee; Chair, Public Accounts Committee; Chair, Health and Social Care Committee; Chair, Social Security Advisory Committee; Minister for Employment; Minister for Mental Health; Chloe Schendel-Wilson, Disability Policy Centre; Nikki Bond, Money & Mental Health; Henry Parkes, IPPR



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### 1 [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

Conducted by Mo Stewart

The Preventable Harm Project (the Project) ran for ten years, 2009 – 2019, and the website is used as a resource for social policy, public health and criminology courses with additional research reports, published papers and lectures added to the website and supported by academics in the UK and in the wider world. Sponsored by Policy Press since 2016, the Project identified the influence of corporate America with UK social policy reforms since 1992, with the ultimate political ambition being to eventually replace the welfare state with a system similar to the one used in America using private income replacement health insurance.

### 2 [Disabled people must work from home to do “their duty”, says UK minister](#)

Ben Quinn, political correspondent for the *Guardian* 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2023

“People with mobility and mental health problems will be asked to work from home or lose benefits as part of what a UK government minister described today as doing “their duty”. ...

Hundreds of thousands of people will be told to look for work that they can do from home or face having their benefits cut by £4,680 a year, under plans that were first reported in the Times. ... Earlier, she told Times Radio the government’s plans were “not just about forcing people out”. She added: “It’s saying we’re going to put the right mechanisms around you to help you with that. But ultimately, you have to engage with that, and that is an obligation on you as a citizen to do this. And if you don’t do this, we will look at sanctions.”

### 3 [Psychological tyranny prescribed by the DWP: preventable harm is government policy.](#)

*British Journal of General Practice* 2018, (677) 579 – Mo Stewart December, 2018

“DWP ministers insisted that they were helping chronically ill and disabled people to take responsibility for their own financial future by searching for employment. In reality, various reforms to social welfare policies allowed preventable harm by the State to creep into disabled people’s lives. The flawed Waddell and Aylward biopsychosocial (BPS) model of assessment was used by the DWP to justify the use of the WCA, and the excessive use of sanctions against ESA claimants are known to cause identified preventable harm, including starvation, for those least able to protest. ...

Guided by the 2001 Malingering and Illness Deception Conference, there is a strong ideological resistance within the DWP as to the reality of the lives of chronically ill and disabled people who are not in paid employment. Influenced by the American corporate giant Unum (Provident) Insurance since 1992, future social welfare policies would create fear within the disabled community, with an NHS report advising that 50% of ESA claimants had attempted suicide at some point. The Waddell and Aylward BPS model of assessment disregards diagnosis, prognosis, past medical history and prescribed medicines. So does the WCA.”



#### [4 The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms](#)

*Justice, Power and Rehabilitation 6{2}: 217–228 - Mo Stewart © Author 2023*

“In order to demolish the welfare state, it was first necessary to remove the past psychological security provided by the welfare state. This has been achieved, with disability denial created by significant social policy reforms since 2008. To justify the adoption of harsh and unnecessary austerity measures, which were introduced without ethical approval, the Coalition administration elected in 2010 vehemently challenged the integrity of the chronically ill and disabled community and routinely accused disability benefit claimants of fraud; while failing to produce evidence to support their claims. Their often hostile rhetoric encouraged a 213% 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.”

#### [5 ‘First do no harm’: are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health?](#) *Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health 2016; 70: 339–345*

by B Barr, D Taylor-Robinson, D Stuckler, R Loopstra, A Reeves and M Whitehead

“**Results** Each additional 10,000 people reassessed in each area was associated with an additional 6 suicides, 2700 cases of reported mental health problems, and the prescribing of an additional 7200 antidepressant items. The reassessment process was associated with the greatest increases in these adverse mental health outcomes in the most deprived areas of the country, widening health inequalities.

**Conclusions** The programme of reassessing people on disability benefits using the Work Capability Assessment was independently associated with an increase in suicides, self-reported mental health problems and antidepressant prescribing. This policy may have had serious adverse consequences for mental health in England, which could outweigh any benefits that arise from moving people off disability benefits.”

#### [6 Thousands have died after being found fit for work, DWP figures show.](#)

Patrick Butler, social policy editor for the *Guardian* 27<sup>th</sup> August, 2015

“Nearly 90 people a month are dying after being declared fit for work, according to new data that has prompted campaigners and Labour leadership contenders to call for an overhaul of the government’s welfare regime. ...

Statistics released by the Department for Work and Pensions revealed that during the period December 2011 and February 2014, 2,380 people died after their claim for Employment and Support Allowance ended because a Work Capability Assessment found they were fit for work.”

#### [7 Published letter to the Rt Hon Sir Iain Duncan Smith](#)

Mo Stewart - TruePublica UK online news 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2023

“Further to your reported recent comments in the national press advising that ‘*the Government must get people languishing on sickness benefit back to work*’ there is a growing concern that your well-documented opinion of the chronically ill and disabled community who depend upon social security benefit for their financial and physical survival remains hostile, whilst it seems to disregard the volumes of published peer-reviewed research which identifies the public health crisis created by the reforms when using a fatally flawed assessment model to limit access to disability benefit, whilst disregarding the often fatal human consequences and the disturbing increase in prosecuted disability hate crimes during the Coalition administration’s term in office (2010–2015). I suggest this is not a record to be proud of...”



**8 [Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state](#)**

Mo Stewart – New Generation Publishing, London, 2016

“Government is entitled to ensure that benefits are given to those with a genuine entitlement and to assess people. But the process must be professional and honest. In this book Mo Stewart peels back the layers of deception, and the confused thinking that underpins the destruction of social support for disabled people... Some of those assessed as fit for work died just afterwards. Others died later and some committed suicide. Stewart names names. She shows where and how the policies originated. She destroys all claims that they were based on solid research. To understand what is happening and why, this is the book to read and I thank Mo Stewart for writing it.”

Sir Bert Massie CBE, DL - Chair, Disability Rights Commission 2000 – 2007