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Barbara Bradley
Director General of Work and Health Services
The Department for Work and Pensions
DWP Operations
PO Box 5010
London SW1P 2WU

Private & Confidential

via email

Dear Director General

Re: The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms¹

[Justice, Power and Resistance 6\(2\): 217-228](#)

I write in my capacity as the research lead for the Preventable Harm Project² to alert you to an identified government induced public health crisis, which is directly linked to social policy reforms and to the hostile political rhetoric against the chronically ill and disabled community who are unable to work and need to claim disability benefit.¹ The adoption of a fatally flawed disability assessment model failed all academic scrutiny,³ and was guaranteed to cause death, despair and preventable harm to many of those in greatest need with no-one held to account for what is this relentless government enforced human suffering.^{1,4,5}

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. (p217)¹

¹ The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms [Justice, Power and Resistance 6\(2\): 217-228](#)

² The Preventable Harm Project [Mo Stewart Research | Cash Not Care](#)

³ Blaming the victim, all over again: Waddell and Aylward's biopsychosocial (BPS) model of disability [Critical Social Policy 2017, 37\(1\): 22-41](#)

⁴ Preventable harm: creating a mental health crisis [Journal of Public Mental Health 2019 18\(4\): 224-230](#)

⁵ 'First, do no harm': are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health? A longitudinal ecological study [J Epidemiol Community Health 2016 70: 339-345](#)



As a former healthcare professional, and the research lead for the Preventable Harm Project² since 2009, please be advised that successive UK administrations have resisted all significant published evidence which identified what is a government induced public health crisis, adopted to remove the past psychological security of the welfare state by the successful creation of the ‘*politics of fear*’,⁶ which enjoys bipartisan support. Since the introduction of the Work Capability Assessment, those in greatest need live in fear of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) whose increasingly hostile attitude towards the chronically ill and disabled community who claim disability benefit is very well documented in published academic papers⁷ and is demonstrably ideologically motivated.

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 by drawing upon Bauman’s (1989) theory of ‘institutional violence’. 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. Drawing upon interviews with ten front-line workers and managers in public and quasi-private employment services, the authors expose an array of policy tools and hidden managerial methods that were used during the Coalition administration (2010-2015); encouraging front-line workers to deliver service in ways which led to a range of harmful outcomes for benefit claimants (p3).⁷

Please be advised that it is unacceptable that those in greatest need now live in fear of the DWP that was originally created to help and support the chronically ill and disabled community. The relentless vitriolic commentary generated by the Coalition administration, continued by every successive administration, and happily reported by the national press, is linked to an increasing public mental health crisis for which no-one is held to account.^{5,6,7}



Source: courtesy of Mirrorpix

² The Preventable Harm Project [Mo Stewart Research | Cash Not Care](#)

⁵ ‘First, do no harm’: are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health? A longitudinal ecological study [J Epidemiol Community Health 2016 70: 339-345](#)

⁶ The adoption of psycho-coercion to manipulate the UK disabled community: the creation of the politics of fear [Centre for Welfare Reform, 2022](#)

⁷ Violent bureaucracy: A critical analysis of the British public employment service. [Critical Social Policy 1-21](#)



There is not now, nor has there ever been, any evidence of vast numbers of fraudulent disability benefit claims and, given that the DWP's latest official figures identify that fraud by Personal Independence Payment claimants is now zero,⁸ it is past time for this relentless and shameful government induced persecution of those in greatest need to end.

I understand that it is your responsibility for the 'day to day running of disability services'.⁹ It is therefore hoped that you will alert DWP ministers and the Serious Case Panel to the public health crisis created by relentless toxic rhetoric against those in greatest need, and encourage this political persecution of the chronically ill and disabled community to cease with immediate effect what is a '...*'scandal' of benefit claimant suicides ignored by DWP'*.¹⁰

Given that the published minutes of the meetings of the Serious Case Panel are very limited, and '*failed to mention that rules on when to investigate benefit claimant suicides had been weakened'*¹¹ it is apparent that the DWP spend more time defending the indefensible as opposed to offering the help and support needed by those in greatest need. This hostile DWP culture, together with toxic social policies, have generated a government induced public health crisis and caused the preventable harm of some of the most vulnerable people in the UK who are viewed as an unacceptable financial burden by all UK neoliberal governments.

Written by John Pring, the Editor of the Disability News Service, '*The Department'*¹² has just been published demonstrating '*how violent government bureaucracy killed hundreds and hid the evidence'*, and I strongly recommend that you and your DWP colleagues read it very soon.

Yours sincerely

Mo Stewart

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Research Lead, Preventable Harm Project



Copied to: David Bennet - Chair DWP Serious Case Panel, The Rt Hon Sir Stephen Timms, The Rt Hon Steve Barclay, Prof Ashwin Kumar – IPPR Director of research and policy, Dr Stephen Brien – Chair SSAC

⁸ DWP silent over whether Sunak was wrong to say PIP was being exploited, as fraud falls to zero.

[Disability News Service](#)

⁹ Director General, Work and Health Services [Barbara Bradley - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

¹⁰ Call for action over 'scandal' of benefit claimant suicides ignored by DWP. [Disability News Service](#)

¹¹ DWP faces cover-up claims after secretly weakening suicide rules. [Disability News Service](#)

¹² '*The Department: How a Violent Government Bureaucracy Killed Hundreds and Hid the Evidence'* [John Pring](#)