



# Mo Stewart Research

Fellow, Centre for Welfare Reform  
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Date: 5<sup>th</sup> February 2025

Henry Ripley CBE  
Legal Director  
DWP Legal Advisers  
Government Legal Dpt  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
London, SW1H 9NA

via email

Dear Mr Ripley

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

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

As an introduction, please be advised that I write in my capacity as the research lead for the Preventable Harm Project,<sup>1</sup> ongoing since 2009, and this contact is to offer you access to the above link to my most recent published paper.<sup>2</sup> Evidence within it is cause for serious concern.

I understand that you are a member of the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) Serious Case Panel in your capacity as the DWP Legal Director. That being the case, it is assumed that you would wish to be advised as to the identified public health crisis<sup>3</sup> impacting on those in greatest need by the continued use by the DWP of the fatally flawed Work Capability Assessment (WCA), which disregards all clinical need of chronically ill and disabled service-users. Disregarding clinical need was always guaranteed to create a public health crisis.<sup>2,3</sup>

Over time there has been a vast amount of published papers identifying the government induced public health crisis,<sup>4,5</sup> which continues to be disregarded by the DWP. This dismissal of the preventable harm created by disability assessments cannot be permitted to continue, and it is hoped that by offering detailed evidence to the DWP Serious Case Panel that they will be alerted to the identified public health crisis generated by social policy reforms.<sup>1-5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

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

<sup>3</sup> [Preventable harm: creating a mental health crisis, Journal of Public Mental Health 18\(4\): pp. 224-230](#)

<sup>4</sup> [‘First do no harm’: are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health? Journal of Epidemiol Community Health 2016; 70: 339-345](#)

<sup>5</sup> [Dismantling the social safety net: social security reforms, disability and mental health conditions, BJPsych](#)



For those in greatest need, they are living in very dark and dangerous times with social policies adopted by successive administrations using a fiscal priority, with a total disregard for health and wellbeing. The Coalition administration (2010-15) adopted increasingly hostile government rhetoric to fill the tabloid press, with the resultant disturbing increase in disability hate crimes which successive administrations disregarded, seemingly unaware that the relentless political persecution of disability benefit claimants would have social consequences, for which no-one is held to account.

For the chronically ill and disabled community, who are unable to work regardless of the relentless intimidation by the DWP,<sup>6,7,8</sup> there is despair as successive administrations created a false political claim that there were vast numbers of bogus disability benefit claimants who should be forced to return to work. This political manipulation of public opinion was not difficult to achieve, as demonstrated by Joseph Goebbels as long ago as 1943.<sup>9</sup>

‘If you tell a lie big enough and keep repeating it, people will eventually come to believe it. This lie can be maintained only for such time as the State can shield the people from the political, economic and/or military consequences of the lie. It thus becomes vitally important for the State to use all of its powers to repress dissent, for the truth is the mortal enemy of the lie, and thus by extension, the truth is the greatest enemy of the State.’<sup>9</sup>

Compared with the detailed reports provided by the Independent Advisory Panel for Deaths in Custody<sup>10</sup> the minutes provided by the DWP Serious Case Panel are cursory and provide no detailed discussion.<sup>11</sup> It is clear that a new Independent Advisory Panel for DWP-Related Deaths is urgently needed, not least because the DWP demonstrate no concern regarding the thousands of deaths linked to the DWP disability assessment, as demonstrated by Dr Allsopp in her recent evidence to the Work and Pensions Committee.<sup>12,13,14</sup>

Whilst the hostile DWP culture is demonstrated to intimidate those in greatest need, with the threatening DWP letter content to service-users when demanding yet another WCA, often for a health condition that is permanent and can't improve, it appears that DWP representatives

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<sup>6</sup> [Social & Policy Administration 48\(7\): 782-798](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Critical Social Policy 42\(2\), 2022: 306-326](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Rethink Mental Illness, March 2022](#)

<sup>9</sup> <https://news.ycombinator.com/item?id=5863246>

<sup>10</sup> [Safety in Custody Statistics, England and Wales: Deaths in Prison Custody to June 2024 Assaults and Self-harm to March 2024 - GOV.UK](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Minutes of the Serious Case Panel \(17 September 2024\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> [committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/15196/pdf/](#)

<sup>13</sup> [DWP's chief medical adviser dismisses importance of her own department's reviews into benefit deaths – Disability News Service](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Concern over 'gaps' in safety role of DWP's chief medical adviser – Disability News Service](#)



have no knowledge of the fear 'the Department'<sup>15</sup> has imposed over the years, impacting on the most vulnerable members of society with no redress.<sup>4,16</sup>

'In total, across England as a whole, the WCA disability reassessment process during this period was associated with an additional 590 suicides, 279,000 additional cases of self-reported mental health problems and the prescribing of an additional 725,000 antidepressant items. ...

Our study provides evidence that the policy in England of reassessing the eligibility of benefit recipients using the WCA may have unintended but serious consequences for population mental health, and there is a danger that these adverse effects outweigh any benefits that may or may not arise from moving people off disability benefits.'<sup>4</sup>

It is hoped that as the DWP Legal Director you will take onboard the identified catastrophic public health crisis generated by the continued use of the fatally flawed WCA.

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely

**Mo Stewart**

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



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

Producer [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

Researcher [Influences and Consequences](#)

Copied to: The Lady Chief Justice, The Right Honourable the Baroness Carr of Walton-on-the-Hill  
The Attorney General, Lord Hermer KC  
Chair, Work & Pensions Committee, Debbie Abrahams MP  
Chair, Health & Social Care Committee, Layla Moran MP  
Chair, Public Accounts Committee, Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP

<sup>4</sup> ['First do no harm': are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health? \*Journal of Epidemiol Community Health\* 2016; 70: 339-345](#)

<sup>15</sup> [The Department](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Psychological tyranny prescribed by the DWP: preventable harm is government policy - \*British Journal of General Practice\*, December 2018: 579](#)