

Labour's betrayal of those in greatest need

An article by Mo Stewart

Mo Stewart writes in her capacity as the research lead for the [Preventable Harm Project](#), ongoing since 2009, which exposed the government-induced public health crisis impacting on those in greatest need with no-one held to account.

Whilst many celebrated the removal of the unpopular Conservative government following the UK 2024 general election, the chronically ill and disabled community whose health and wellbeing was constantly threatened over the previous 14 years by the intimidation of the Department for Work and Pensions were cautious and less optimistic.

The last Labour administration under the leadership of Gordon Brown (2007-10) adopted the fatally flawed and totally discredited Work Capability Assessment (WCA) in October 2008 to limit access to the Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) long-term disability benefit, which is directly linked to the government-induced [suffering of those in greatest need](#). So, it was little comfort to know that Labour were back in political power again to continue with their brutal social policy legacy, which had been extended by the Coalition government (2010-15) and by successive Conservative administrations (2015-24).

It should be remembered that Tony Blair insisted that he represented 'New Labour' during his time as Prime Minister (PM) (1997-07), not least because he had adopted the same right-leaning neoliberal ideology as the previous Tory governments of Margaret Thatcher (1979-90) and John Major (1990-97), which is devoted to '[Cash Not Care](#).' Blair also introduced American social and labour market policies, and commissioned discredited [policy-based research in 2005](#), which justified the eventual creation of the WCA which disregards all clinical need and was guaranteed to cause preventable harm to the chronically ill and disabled community.

Following in Blair and Brown's footsteps the latest Labour PM, Keir Starmer, is continuing where the last Labour administration ended, whilst [continuing with the political attack](#) against the welfare state and the people who need to use it. Elected to government on 5th July 2024, Starmer has also made a concerted effort to remove members of the traditional 'old school' Labour party, who challenge the leadership when social policy reforms negatively impact on those in greatest need. People like John McDonnell MP, a former Labour Shadow-Chancellor, now an 'independent' MP having had the Labour whip removed for voting against the government on a previous vote regarding benefit cuts. He was punished for his integrity.

So far, under Starmer's leadership, the relentless political attacks aimed at the chronically ill and disabled community who are unable to work are not dissimilar to the attacks by the previous Conservative government(s). The political rhetoric when talking about the numbers of people claiming disability benefit often sounds like it's straight out of the Tory handbook, and [reducing the welfare budget again by almost £5 billion](#) in the recent 'Spring budget' guaranteed that many more chronically ill and disabled people will suffer the consequences of food poverty, living in unheated homes or [committing suicide when all hope is lost](#).

Due to the increasing brutality of social policy reforms over the past 15 years, there is an identified and growing [government-induced public health crisis](#), which successive administrations refuse to acknowledge or to accept, preferring instead to continue with hostile political rhetoric aimed at anyone claiming long-term disability benefit when not in paid employment. Consequently, over the years, chronically ill and disabled people have died in their thousands when '[killed by the state](#),' with no-one held to account.

Political protests object to the rising numbers of people claiming disability benefit for a mental health problem, whilst continuing to disregard the identified [public mental health crisis](#) generated by the impact of brutal social policy reforms, and the relentless political attacks against those in greatest need, with no-one in government accepting responsibility for the '[politics of fear](#)' that was routinely generated by successive neoliberal administrations.

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