

Dangerous, hostile political rhetoric continues

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Despite the well documented government-induced public health crisis generated by social policy reforms, successive administrations continue to threaten the health, wellbeing and survival of the chronically ill and disabled community, writes **Mo Stewart**

The party political conference season has ended for another year with one topic in common, which is the continued threat to those in greatest need. Social policies adopted using a fiscal priority disregarded the inevitable government-induced public health crisis that guaranteed that thousands of those in greatest need would die when, covertly, *'killed by the state'* with no one held to account, which the national press will not report.

Regardless of when the Conservatives were in Government or, as now, in opposition, their main political pastime over the past 15 years has been [a relentless attack](#) on the welfare state and the people who need to use it, as demonstrated by the Leader of the Opposition, Kemi Badenoch, [in her speech](#) at the Conservative Party Conference. Her well received speech was dominated by hostile rhetoric attacking disability benefit claimants when demonstrating her dangerous bias towards service-users suffering with a mental health problem. Based on fake news, Badenoch also attacked benefit claimants with ADHD and her comments demonstrated [a dangerous limited knowledge](#) regarding what is a neurodevelopmental condition, not a 'mild' mental health problem. But scapegoating the vulnerable has been a permanent occupation of every neoliberal administration since the Coalition government (2010-15).

In order to justify the brutality of austerity measures, which the British public were destined to resist, David Cameron and his multi-millionaire Chancellor George Osborne gave the British public someone else to blame for political decisions guaranteed to cause preventable harm to those in greatest need. They decided that the welfare bill was too high which clearly meant there must be benefit fraud on a large scale, for which there is no evidence. Every administration since the Coalition have continued to adopt social policies guaranteed to cause a public health crisis, as disability benefit claimants were relentlessly ridiculed, intimidated and demeaned due to the growing and begrudged costs of the UK welfare state.

It worked well as thousands have died, often by suicide, as the persecution by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) knows no bounds. To their everlasting shame, the intimidation of those in greatest need by the DWP was recently identified by the Work and Pensions Select Committee whose *'[Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants](#)'* report identified the hostile culture within the DWP, which needed to change.

It seems that no one at the political party conferences has read the damning report, given that the theme of the Labour and Conservative conferences was the relentless threats to disability benefit claimants. Speakers from both main parties demonstrated their [dangerous lack of knowledge](#) as they fed the public with fake news when demonising disability benefit claimants

whilst failing to offer any [evidence for their claims](#) that many disability benefit claimants should, simply, find a job. Many chronically ill and disabled people would very much like the opportunity to work, but successive administrations do tend to conveniently overlook the fact that the deck is stacked against them. Employers [are resistant](#) to employing disabled people, and any adjustments that may be needed to accommodate a disabled staff member is a financial burden many are not willing to fund.

If nothing else, various political leaders demonstrated how very easy it is to manipulate the British public, and the British parliament, with fifteen years of hostile political propaganda claiming vast numbers of disability benefit fraud claims which DWP figures failed to support. The latest DWP figures for Personal Independence Payment (PIP) benefit fraud (2024-25) were identified as being just 0.4 per cent of PIP spending and, in 2023-24, DWP figures for PIP fraudulent claims [were identified as being zero](#).

There is no mystery to why both Labour and Conservatives appear to be singing from the same hymn book, given that both are advised by the [Centre for Social Justice](#), which is the influential right-leaning think tank founded by Iain Duncan Smith in 2004, who makes no secret of his desire for the chronically ill and disabled community to stop [‘languishing on benefits.’](#)

However, the reports by the Centre for Social Justice that politicians are very happy to cite are policy-based reports not evidence-based reports, have no academic credibility, and the mental health charities [object to the content](#) of them:

However, the Centre for Social Justice’s (CSJ) latest report, Change the Prescription Update 2025, falls short of the evidence-based and compassionate approach that people living with severe mental illness need and deserve, and we have been extremely concerned by politicians referring to it in the media.

Much of the content risks reinforcing stigma, underplaying structural drivers of mental illness, and promoting recommendations that could cause further harm if adopted in policymaking.

The chronically ill and disabled community who are unable to work are unlikely to feel safer as long as the brutality of right-leaning neoliberal politicians influence social policies, with biased reporting guaranteed to cause [preventable harm](#) to those in greatest need.