



# Mo Stewart Research

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Date: 13 October 2025

Andy Cook  
Chief Executive  
Centre for Social Justice  
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London  
SW1H 9AB

Private & Confidential

**Recorded delivery post**

Dear Mr Cook,

Re: The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms<sup>1</sup>

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

I write in my capacity as the research lead for the UK Preventable Harm Project<sup>2</sup> to alert you to the above paper as published by academic publishers Policy Press. The paper identified the ongoing and relentless government-induced public health crisis due to what can only be described as a 'hostile culture' towards the chronically ill and disabled community by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), as identified by the Work and Pensions Select Committee in their '*Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants*' report published in May 2025.<sup>3</sup>

Reports by the *Centre for Social Justice*<sup>4</sup> (the Centre) are cited during political debate but are interpreted by politicians to justify intimidating and threatening those in greatest need; which is now 'the norm' in the UK.<sup>1,2</sup> The chronically ill and disabled community live in fear of the brutal DWP who adopted '*the politics of fear*'<sup>5</sup> to challenge all service-users accessing disability benefits. Politicians devoted to '*Cash Not Care*'<sup>6</sup> are so confident that they now adopt medical opinion without any medical knowledge when guided by your report,<sup>4</sup> as recently demonstrated in great detail at the Conservative Party Conference.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms, \*Justice, Power and Resistance\* 6\(2\): 217-228](#)  
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1332/GQDH4178>

<sup>2</sup> [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

<sup>3</sup> [Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Change The Prescription: Update](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The Politics of Fear](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state: Amazon.co.uk: Stewart, Mo: 9781785077838: Books](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Politicians with medical opinions | Guest Blog | Independent Living](#)



This political pastime threatening disability benefit claimants has been ongoing for 15 years but, as the numbers of deaths linked to increasingly extreme social policy reforms increase, so does the hostile political rhetoric and propaganda once again threatening the integrity of disability benefit claimants who are deemed to be unfit to work by every clinical opinion but not, it seems, by political opinion. ...

The dismissal of 'anxiety,' suggesting that it is a minor mental health condition demonstrates the dangers of politicians with lots of opinion regarding medical matters, but no medical knowledge. Someone should alert Kemi Badenoch to the fact that anxiety '*can be a critical mental health problem, especially when it is severe, prolonged, or interferes with daily life, leading to serious consequences such as social isolation, depression, substance abuse and, in severe cases, increased risk of suicide.*' That's why chronically ill people are awarded long-term disability benefit when UNABLE to work and, often, unable to leave the house, but a medical opinion is needed to make that judgement. Degrees in Law and Engineering awarded to the Leader of the Opposition appear to come to the wrong biased conclusion.<sup>7</sup>

What remains a mystery are the claims to suggest that the rise in mental health problems are incomprehensible to the Centre and to many politicians, whose only concern is '*Cash Not Care.*'<sup>6</sup> However, in my lengthy experience working with the Preventable Harm Project<sup>2</sup> (the Project), I would ask why the reasons for an increasing mental health crisis aren't as obvious to others as they are to those who are familiar with the Project?<sup>2,5</sup> This government-induced public health crisis<sup>1</sup> has been well documented, which no administration will admit.<sup>8-14</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms, \*Justice, Power and Resistance\* 6\(2\): 217-228 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1332/GQDH4178>](https://doi.org/10.1332/GQDH4178)

<sup>2</sup> [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

<sup>5</sup> [The Politics of Fear](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state: Amazon.co.uk: Stewart, Mo: 9781785077838: Books](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Politicians with medical opinions | Guest Blog | Independent Living](#)

<sup>8</sup> [First, do no harm': are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health? A longitudinal ecological study, \*Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health\*, 70\(4\): 339-45 doi:10.1136/jech-15-206209](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Dismantling the social safety net: social security reforms, disability and mental health conditions | BJPsych Bulletin | Cambridge Core](#)

<sup>10</sup> [Preventable harm: creating a mental health crisis \*Journal of Public Mental Health\* 18\(4\): 224-230](#)

<sup>11</sup> [An Independent Advisory Panel on DWP-Related Deaths](#)

<sup>12</sup> [Fear of the Brown Envelope: Exploring Welfare Reform with Long-Term Sickness Benefits Recipients \*Social & Policy Administration\* 48\(7\): 782-298 <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12049>](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Burden and benefits-related suicides: 'misperception' or state crafted reality? \*Journal of Public Mental Health\* 21\(1\): 46-56 <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMH-09-2021-0124>](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Violent bureaucracy: A critical analysis of the British public employment service \*Critical Social Policy\* 1-21 <https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183211001766>](#)



It's surely past time for the Centre to acknowledge this government-induced public health crisis, instead of the relentless recommendations impacting on the future wellbeing of the disabled community in published reports<sup>4</sup> which politicians are very happy to repeat.

I really don't think there is any mystery as to why we now have a population mental health crisis in the UK,<sup>8</sup> which I suggest was very predictable since the introduction of austerity measures in 2010 by the Coalition administration (2010-15), which drastically reduced local government funding which was destined to reduce or remove public support services.<sup>15</sup>

Evidence in the House of Commons library identifies funding reduction:

'The downward trajectory continues a pattern began in the 2011/12 settlement: by 2015/16 settlement funding for councils and fire authorities will have decreased by over 35% on 2010/11. Over the same period [Revenue Spending Power] RSP will have decreased by 14%. ...

The majority of regions have seen their settlement funding decrease by around 40%, the exception is London where Greater London Authority distorts the figures.<sup>15</sup>

The removal of local support services due to cost savings would, I suggest, guarantee future severe problems. Every action has a reaction and the removal of what was once dependable public support services very quickly changes what is often a problem towards being a disaster for the individual. This should be obvious.

Not everyone lives in the supportive family environment that policy makers tend to presume, and one of the first things to disappear when regional funds were reduced were the talking therapies so critical to supporting mental ill health. Relentless political persecution and continued press and media hostility informed by often extreme political claims guaranteed a negative impact, not least because such hostility impacted on public opinion when well documented in the right-leaning press. It is no surprise that prosecuted disability hate crimes increased by 213%<sup>16</sup> during the Coalition years (2010-15), with the then very vocal and very hostile Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, who regularly felt the need to mislead the public.<sup>17</sup> He continues to use his press column to condemn benefit claimants '*languishing on benefits*'.<sup>18</sup>

Clearly, if the public services hadn't been removed many of those now suffering from mental health problems would have benefitted from the talking therapies that can be

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<sup>4</sup> [Change The Prescription: Update](#)

<sup>8</sup> [First, do no harm': are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health? A longitudinal ecological study, \*Journal of Epidemiology & Community Health\*, 70\(4\): 339-45 doi:10.1136/jech-15-206209](#)

<sup>15</sup> [How big are the cuts to local government funding?](#)

<sup>16</sup> [EXCLUSIVE: Hate crimes on disabled rise by 213% | UK | News | Express.co.uk](#)

<sup>17</sup> [Duncan Smith lies twice about disabled people's support... in less than five minutes](#)

<sup>18</sup> [The creation of Thatcher's 'dark legacy'](#)



so very helpful, especially for anxiety and some forms of depression. What can't be justified, as suggested by the Leader of the Opposition at Conference, is the removal of financial support by way of benefits before the talking therapies have been funded and created in local areas. Also, once talking therapies are in place, it will take time for them to take effect, so removing anyone's benefit cannot be justified until they have had successful treatment which will permit them to have the confidence needed to search for work.

If you want the welfare bill to reduce, then you need to recommend that there is a change in culture. Politicians should stop intimidating and threatening chronically ill and disabled service-users and try suggesting support that will work, instead of more hostile and often dangerous rhetoric.

It seems my email address is blocked by the Centre, hence the need for this letter via the postal service. I hope this contact is welcome, that you benefit from the references in it and that you comprehend that, whilst the intention to help people may be genuine, if politicians are going to quote your reports and then intimidate those in greatest need, it isn't helping the Centre's reputation.<sup>19</sup>

Thank you for your time.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mo Stewart'.

**Mo Stewart**

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



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

Editor [\*The Preventable Harm Project\*](#)

Researcher [\*Influences and Consequences\*](#)

Copied to:

Tim Farron MP

Carolyn Harris MP

Dr Simon Opher MBE MP

Dr Jed Boardman MB BS FRCPsych BSc PhD - Consultant Psychiatrist

Professor Nick Harding OBE – Chair, Royal Society for Public Health

Professor David Hunter – Professor of Health Policy and Management, Newcastle University

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<sup>19</sup> [Letter to Helen Whately MP – Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions](#)