



# Mo Stewart Research

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Helen Whately MP  
Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions  
The House of Commons  
Westminster  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Private & Confidential

via email

Dear Ms Whately

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

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

Further to your memorable speech at the Conservative Party Conference<sup>2</sup> on 6 October, I write in my capacity as the research lead for the UK Preventable Harm Project<sup>3</sup> – ongoing since 2009 - to alert you to some evidence that may have escaped your attention.

It must be complimentary to learn that the Labour government have continued with the relentless political attacks against the long-term chronically ill and disabled community, as it seems that their social policies closely follow the immense harm generated by the social policies enforced by the previous Conservative administration (2022-24). I note you are continuing with these political attacks against those in greatest need, but the evidence you presented at conference was cause for concern,<sup>2</sup> not least because it was a deeply disturbing and dangerous hostile rhetoric using comments that are from political fiction, not reality:

“... millions have got themselves a sicknote from the GP and signed onto sickness benefits with just a form and a phone call. Millions are getting benefits for anxiety and ADHD along with a free Motability car. ... The problem is, you can get £5,000 more per year on sickness benefits than as a minimum wage worker, so no surprise that’s what many people are choosing, and it’s wrong. Our welfare system should be a safety net, not a lifestyle choice. ... Fix the sicknote system, bring back face-to-face assessments, end sickness benefit for low level mental health problems, stop the abuse of Motability and put British citizens first in our benefits system. ...”<sup>2</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>

<sup>2</sup> [LIVE: Conservative Party Conference in Manchester](#)

<sup>3</sup> [The Preventable Harm Project](#)



I note your evidence was accepted at conference with a round of applause which is a pity not least because the endless hostile political rhetoric and propaganda, as reported by every right-leaning newspaper in the UK, means that you continue to disregard the volumes of published evidence by UK social policy experts demonstrating the government-induced public health crisis generated by brutal social policy reforms, conducted under past Conservative leadership.<sup>1,4,5-7</sup> As a former healthcare professional, please be advised that this relentless hostile political rhetoric against disability benefit claimants, based on ideology and certainly nothing in the way of peer-reviewed published research, is cause for alarm. There is a tendency when guided by neoliberal politics to overlook the fact that these people you are relentlessly ridiculing are, for the most part, chronically ill and if you are going to publicly ridicule people you should at the very least get the facts straight. There are not, nor has there ever been 'millions getting benefits for anxiety and ADHD along with a free Motability car. ...' This is shameful Ms Whately, and totally UNTRUE.<sup>8</sup> Indeed:

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 who demonstrate 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 like social isolation, depression, substance use 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 qualification is needed to make that judgement. ...

Motability cars are not awarded depending on diagnosis but are accessed via the award of a disability benefit. People with ADHD, or any other diagnosis, who are awarded the Enhanced Rate of the Mobility Component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) can choose to use the income to lease a Motability car. There is no reason for hostile political ridicule since the benefit claimant is personally funding the lease of the car with the awarded benefit, and someone should alert the Shadow Secretary for Work and Pensions that Motability cars are not 'free.'<sup>8</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>](https://doi.org/10.1332/GQDH4178)

<sup>4</sup> [Preventable harm: creating a mental health crisis, \*Journal of Public Mental Health\* 18\(4\): 224-230 DOI: \[10.1108/JPMH-07-2019-0070\]\(https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMH-07-2019-0070\)](https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMH-07-2019-0070)

<sup>5</sup> ['First do no harm': are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health? \*Journal of Epidemiol Community Health\* 2016; 70: 339-345 doi: \[10.1136/jech-2015-206209\]\(https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2015-206209\)](https://doi.org/10.1136/jech-2015-206209)

<sup>6</sup> [Burden and benefits-related suicides: "misperception" or state crafted reality? \*Journal of Public Mental Health\* 21\(1\): 46-56 DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMH-09-2021-0124>](https://doi.org/10.1108/JPMH-09-2021-0124)

<sup>7</sup> [Violent bureaucracy: A critical analysis of the British public employment service. \*Critical Social Policy\* 42\(2\): 306-326 DOI: \[10.1177/02610183211001766\]\(https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183211001766\)](https://doi.org/10.1177/02610183211001766)

<sup>8</sup> [The danger of politicians with medical opinion and no medical knowledge](#)



You should also be alert to the fact that these relentless political attacks against those in greatest need demonstrate the dangers of right-leaning politicians adopting social policies based on a fiscal priority whilst disregarding health and wellbeing, which guaranteed that many people would die when, covertly, *'killed by the State.'*<sup>1</sup>

I further suggest that you acknowledge John Pring, who is the Editor of the *Disability News Service* (DNS), and the one journalist who never exaggerates political claims, and always reports political rhetoric that will impact on the chronically ill and disabled community:<sup>9</sup>

*Disability News Service* (DNS) reminded the party how government-funded research found that when a Conservative-led government tried to slash the number of people on out-of-work disability benefits and force them into work in the post-2010 austerity years, it led to **590 suicides** in three years.<sup>5</sup>...

In fact, DWP figures show – as highlighted by the Benefits and Work website – that only 190,000 PIP claimants have ADD, ADHD, anxiety or anxiety-related conditions as their 'main disabling condition' and receive an enhanced mobility component. ... And many in this group will not have exchanged their PIP mobility component for a Motability vehicle. ...

Motability Operations, the company that runs the scheme, says it has only a total of 860,000 customers, and many of those use their allowance to hire a powered wheelchair or mobility scooter.<sup>9</sup>

You should be alert to the fact that the DNS also exposed the exaggerated claims of your colleague, Mel Stride, who felt the need to alert conference to the *'spiralling welfare bill'* despite the fact that DNS had alerted the party's press office on at least three occasions that 'figures from the Office of Budget Responsibility show clearly that social security spending as a portion of GDP is predicted to remain at 11.1 per cent for the next five years, and that is lower than it was in 2015-16.'<sup>9</sup>

I have no idea who wrote your speech Ms Whately but, following 14 years of Conservative administration which were linked to the death of thousands of chronically ill and disabled service-users, many by suicide, your closing claims that the Conservative Party are the *'only ones that can fix welfare'* is an alarming thought. The identified government-induced public health crisis generated by previous Conservative or Conservative-led administrations hasn't disappeared since your party moved into opposition.<sup>1</sup> The chronically ill and disabled community whose physical and financial survival are dependent on the DWP are still living with this crisis your party created, and which the Labour administration are happy to continue

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<sup>9</sup> [Tory trio mislead party conference on disability benefits as they stir up hostility towards disabled claimants \*Disability News Service\* 9 October 2025](https://www.dns.org.uk/news/2025/10/09/tory-trio-mislead-party-conference-on-disability-benefits-as-they-stir-up-hostility-towards-disabled-claimants)



regardless of human consequences, which are often fatal, with no one held to account for the deaths, despair and human suffering generated by successive neoliberal administrations.<sup>10</sup>

Evidence of psycho-coercion began as political rhetoric replaced facts with fiction when creating a 'climate of hostility'. Over time the disabled community would suffer preventable harm, severe mental distress, and financial hardship due to political ideology, which identified the need to remove this State financial burden and to persecute disabled claimants who make demands on social security funding. The significant increases in government debt were created by the international banking crisis of 2008, but it was those in greatest need who were destined to pay the human cost for bankers' greed and incompetence.<sup>10</sup>

The chronically ill and disabled community who are unable to work are living in very dark times created by previous Conservative administrations and continued by the Labour government who, like administrations before them, disregard this catastrophic indifference to human suffering masquerading as social policy reforms.

Yours sincerely

**Mo Stewart**

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"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."  
Martin Luther-King Jr

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

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

Copied to: The Rt Hon Stuart Andrew – Shadow Secretary of State for Health and Social Care  
The Rt Hon Steve Barclay – Constituency MP  
Dr China Mills – Healing Justice Head of Research  
Dr Gail Allsopp – DWP Chief Medical Advisor  
Kamran Mallick, CEO Disability Rights UK  
Debbie Abrahams MP – Chair, Work & Pensions Select Committee  
Paulette Hamilton MP – Vice-Chair, Health and Social Care Committee

<sup>10</sup> [The adoption of psycho-coercion to manipulate the UK disabled community. The creation of the Politics of Fear](#)