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The Rt Hon Mrs Kemi Badenoch MP
Leader of HM Official Opposition
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

Private & Confidential

via email

Dear Mrs Badenoch

Re: The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms¹

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

Further to your keynote speech at the Conservative Party Conference,² I write in my capacity as the research lead for the UK Preventable Harm Project,^{1,3} ongoing since 2009, to alert you to significant evidence that may have escaped your attention.

I note with some disquiet that during your speech you acknowledged the significant support by the Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Helen Whately MP, despite the fact that her conference speech was cause for serious concern.⁴ A great deal of the content was political fiction demonstrating either her disturbing lack of knowledge or, worse, her determination to manipulate the audience:

“... 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. ...”⁴

It is very regrettable that the relentless political attacks against the chronically ill and

¹ [The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms Justice, Power and Resistance 6\(2\): 217-228](#)

² [LIVE: Kemi Badenoch’s Keynote Speech at Conservative Party Conference in Manchester](#)

³ [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

⁴ [LIVE: Conservative Party Conference in Manchester](#)



disabled community who are unable to work, ongoing when the Conservative Party were in government, have continued now that you are in Opposition.²

Helen Whateley's many claims during her conference speech were cause for serious concern,⁵ not least because her comments regarding the disabled community were dangerous and totally untrue, as were your comments regarding benefit claimants with mental ill health. They are based on hostile political rhetoric and propaganda impacting on those in greatest need, which have become the trade mark of past Conservative neoliberal administrations.⁵

'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. 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.'⁵

Furthermore, it is disturbing to note that a great deal of political propaganda -vely impacting on those in greatest need is influenced by the *Centre for Social Justice*, which you and your colleagues do tend to cite whilst overlooking the fact that this extreme right-leaning think tank has no academic credibility, publish discredited research that is not peer reviewed, and disregard challenges from real social policy experts, such as the Rethink Mental Illness team:⁶

'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.'⁶

The hostility demonstrated in your conference speech towards those in greatest need² is a

² [LIVE: Kemi Badenoch's Keynote Speech at Conservative Party Conference in Manchester](#)

⁵ [Letter to Helen Whately MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Work & Pensions, 13 October 2025](#)

⁶ [An alternative perspective on the Centre for Social Justice's Change the Prescription Report](#)



cause for serious concern as you do seem totally indifferent to the preventable harm such disturbing commentary can generate:

“... we will restrict benefit to those with the most severe mental health conditions, not anxiety or mild depression. Yes, these challenges are real, and people should get support, but they cannot be treated as a reason for a lifetime off work. And third, we will restrict Motability vehicles to people with serious disabilities. Those cars are not for people with ADHD. These are the first steps of a radical reform of our welfare system. We will return it to its founding principle that support only goes to those that really need it. ... I stand for a society where ... the vulnerable are supported, but where freeloaders are told where to get off.”²

This political pastime threatening disability benefit claimants⁵ has been ongoing for the past 15 years but, as the numbers of deaths linked to increasingly extreme social policy reforms increase,^{7,8} 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.^{9,10}

The latest derogatory commentary against disability benefit claimants with ADHD demonstrates dangerous political rhetoric Mrs Badenoch, not least because ADHD is not a mental health condition but a neuro-developmental impairment. Furthermore, your dismissal of ‘anxiety’ as not being a serious mental health condition demonstrates the fact that you are very poorly briefed, and I strongly suggest you disregard the biased reporting by the *Centre for Social Justice*:¹⁰

‘The dismissal of ‘anxiety,’ suggesting that it is a minor mental health condition demonstrates the danger 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 abuse and, in severe cases, increased risk to 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. Degrees in Law and Engineering awarded to the Leader of the Opposition appear to come to the wrong biased conclusion. ...’¹⁰

² [LIVE: Kemi Badenoch’s Keynote Speech at Conservative Party Conference in Manchester](#)

⁵ [Letter to Helen Whately MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Work & Pensions, 13 October 2025](#)

⁷ [An Independent Advisory Panel on DWP-Related Deaths](#)

⁸ [The Failure of DWP Safeguarding](#)

⁹ [Dangerous, hostile political rhetoric continues](#)

¹⁰ [Politicians with medical opinions](#)



Together with the Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, you demonstrate a complete misunderstanding of how access to a Motability car is achieved. It is totally unrelated to diagnosis, so claiming that *'those cars are not for people with ADHD'*² is another demonstration of the fact you are very poorly briefed and disregard the disturbing impact your well reported conference speech would have on the chronically ill and disabled community, who have been relentlessly threatened and intimidated by successive Conservative and Conservative-led administrations since 2010.

This level of relentless hostile political commentary has created an ongoing public health crisis, for which no one is held to account, as successive administrations adopted social policies which guaranteed that many of those in greatest need would be, covertly, *'killed by the state'*,¹¹ which I strongly suggest is nothing to celebrate.

Yours sincerely

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² [LIVE: Kemi Badenoch’s Keynote Speech at Conservative Party Conference in Manchester](#)

¹¹ [Killed by the state](#)