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Lorraine Jackson CBE
Director, Joint Work and Health
Department of Health and Social Care
39 Victoria Street
London
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Private & Confidential

via email
workandhealth@dwp.gov.uk

Dear Director

Re: The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms¹
[Justice, Power and Resistance 6\(2\): 217-228](#)

I write in my capacity as the research lead for the Preventable Harm Project,² ongoing since 2009, which identified the government-induced public health crisis¹ generated by successive social policy reforms and enforced by relentless hostile political rhetoric³ impacting on those in greatest need.

It is my understanding that you are ‘responsible for improving the health and employment outcomes for disabled people and those with health conditions.’⁴ However, as detailed to the DWP Chief Medical Advisor, Dr Gail Allsopp, it is beyond my comprehension how there can be any expected improvement in health and employment outcomes for disabled people and those with health conditions when successive senior ministers spend their time publicly challenging anyone claiming long-term disability benefit.⁵

It is therefore with considerable regret that I learn of your reported hostile and dangerous comments claiming that there are ‘incentives’ in the system for people to declare themselves unfit for work so they can ‘double their money’, and also ... that people are declaring themselves long-term sick.’ Secretary of State, this is a serious misrepresentation of reality and demonstrates that you are very poorly briefed just two weeks into your new role at the DWP.⁵

¹ [The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms in: Justice, Power and Resistance Volume 6 Issue 2 \(2023\)](#)

² [The Preventable Harm Project](#)

³ [Politicians with medical opinions | Guest Blog | Independent Living](#)

⁴ [Lorraine Jackson CBE - GOV.UK](#)

⁵ [Letter to Pat McFadden MP](#)



It remains cause for serious concern that the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) disregard all published peer-reviewed evidence⁶⁻¹² demonstrating the ongoing government-induced public health crisis by referring exclusively to DWP commissioned reports, which are essentially discredited policy-based reports,¹³ which guarantees the ongoing government-induced public health crisis impacting on those in greatest need with no one held to account.

Significant academic research¹⁴ has demonstrated the impact of social policy reforms is an increase in Common Mental Disorders with no significant increase in disability employment; which was the stated DWP ambition used to justify the relentless DWP hostility and intimidation of the chronically ill and disabled community.

In 2008, Incapacity Benefit was replaced by Employment and Support Allowance, which introduced a more stringent assessment process for assessing benefit eligibility – the Work Capability Assessment. ... Evaluation of this change has shown that it led to an increase in 290,000 people with mental health problems, increased antidepressant prescribing, and an estimated 600 Suicides. It also did not lead to an increase in employment amongst people with long-term conditions and often shifted people – particularly those with mental health problems – onto unemployment benefits. ...

These findings are consistent with other studies investigating policies that reduce benefit levels or access to social security benefits, which have reported similar negative effects on mental health. However, these studies generally did not investigate the health impacts of changes to income replacement benefits for disabled people. One exception is a study of the introduction of stricter assessment processes for these benefits in the UK that similarly found adverse mental health outcomes. It is perhaps unsurprising that policies that reduce the payments to social security claimants increase risk of poverty. It could be argued, however, that these income effects are compensated by increased employment incentives, reducing poverty through higher employment. Our results indicate that reducing benefits did not improve employment, and instead increased risk of severe poverty. This is also consistent with other evidence that such policies often have no, or small effects on employment of people with disabilities.¹⁴

6 [Burden and benefits-related suicides: 'misperception' or state crafted reality?](#)

7 ['First, do no harm': are disability assessments associated with adverse trends in mental health?](#)

8 [Violent bureaucracy: A critical analysis of the British public employment service](#)

9 [Preventable harm: creating a mental health crisis](#)

10 [Weaponising time in war on welfare: Slow violence and deaths of disabled people within the UK's social security system](#)

11 [Punitive welfare reform and claimant mental health: The impact of benefit sanctions on anxiety and depression](#)

12 [Punitive benefit sanctions, welfare conditionality, and the social abuse of unemployed people in Britain: Transforming claimants into offenders?](#)

13 [Blaming the victim, all over again: Waddell and Aylward's biopsychosocial \(BPS\) model of disability](#)

14 [The Health, Poverty and Employment Effects of Cutting Income Replacement Benefits for the Disabled](#)



As the Director of Joint Work and Health, please be advised that following 15 years of relentless DWP hostility, there can be little improvement in the health and employment outcomes for disabled people and those with health conditions when the DWP fail to accept any responsibility for the government-induced public health crisis that successive neoliberal administrations created.^{1,15,16}

Given that employers resist employing disabled people if costs are involved to make the venue accessible, and the reduction of government funding for Access to Work grants, which has meant that disabled people have lost their jobs as their financial support was reduced or removed without notice,¹⁷ perhaps you could alert the DWP to the fact that they are giving out mixed messages negatively impacting on those in greatest need. Furthermore, given that successive administrations insist that they intend to reduce disability benefit claimant numbers by one million people, perhaps you could please advise where these one million jobs for chronically ill and disabled people can be found since all evidence demonstrates that disabled people removed from disability benefit are now funded by unemployment benefit.

In keeping with all correspondence with government departments, this letter will be reproduced on the Preventable Harm Project website.

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

Author [*'Cash Not Care: the planned demolition of the UK welfare state'*](#)
Editor [*The Preventable Harm Project*](#)
Researcher [*Influences and Consequences*](#)

¹ [The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms in: Justice, Power and Resistance Volume 6 Issue 2 \(2023\)](#)

¹⁵ [Proposal for an Independent Advisory Panel on DWP-Related Deaths](#)

¹⁶ [The Politics of Fear](#)

¹⁷ [Government figures show first signs of 'perverse' cuts to Access to Work](#)

Copied to: Dr Gail Allsopp, DWP Chief Medical Advisor; Kamran Mallick, CEO Disability Rights UK;
Dr Huihui Song, Faculty of Public Health & Life Sciences; Social Security Advisory Committee