



# Mo Stewart Research

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Marcus Bell OBE  
Director, Disability Unit  
Cabinet Office  
70 Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AS

**Cause for concern**

via email

Dear Mr Bell

Re: The Law of Unintended Consequences<sup>1</sup>

I write in my capacity as the research lead for the UK Preventable Harm Project,<sup>2</sup> and have been invited to alert you to published evidence that will inform the Disability Unit of the identified government-induced public health crisis<sup>3</sup> that successive administrations have routinely disregarded. This is very dangerous.<sup>1,3-6</sup>

To justify the adoption of harsh and unnecessary austerity measures, which were introduced without ethical approval, the Coalition administration elected in 2010 vehemently challenged the integrity of the chronically ill and disabled community and routinely accused disability benefit claimants of fraud; while failing to produce evidence to support their claims. Their often hostile rhetoric encouraged a 213 percent increase in prosecuted disability hate crimes, and successive administrations disregarded the thousands of deaths directly linked to the Work Capability Assessment, which was adopted using a discredited and dangerous biopsychosocial model of assessment to restrict access to long-term disability benefit. Influenced by corporate America since 1992, the UK social policy reforms guaranteed that many of those in greatest need were destined to die when, covertly, killed by the State. (pp.217)<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> [The Law of Unintended Consequences](#)

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

<sup>3</sup> [The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Burden and benefits-related suicides: 'misperception' or state crafted reality?](#)

<sup>5</sup> [No one held to account](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants: Work and Pensions Committee, May 2025](#)



The Work and Pensions Committee's 2025 report<sup>6</sup> (the Report) confirmed the preventable harm generated by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), the Department's total failure to prioritise the needs of the chronically ill and disabled community and its failure to rectify mistakes with any urgency. As a consequence, there have been thousands of deaths directly linked to the Department, with no one held to account.<sup>5</sup> As the Director of the Disability Unit, it is assumed that you would wish to alert the Cabinet to this disturbing evidence, and to recommend that this public health crisis<sup>3</sup> generated by the Department's neglect should be considered a priority for the Cabinet's urgent attention.

We heard during this inquiry that the challenges DWP experienced with safeguarding stemmed from the culture within the Department. We were told that cost-effectiveness and efforts to move people into work had been perceived to be prioritised over providing genuine care and support to vulnerable people. ... In our view, the number one priority arising from our inquiry is for the Department to change its culture. This has been acknowledged and supported by Ministers. However, achieving cultural change is difficult. It will involve changes to processes and a different approach to policy development. It will also require bold action, led by Ministers and senior officials, to deliver genuine change in the Government's approach to safeguarding. (p.1)<sup>6</sup>

However, since the Report was published in May 2025 there has been a change in the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, which is a position now held by the Rt Hon Pat McFadden MP who clearly didn't read the Report. Within days of being appointed in September 2025 he was making totally false statements on national television, causing anxiety and offence to those in greatest need, and demonstrating that this relentless political assault against the chronically ill and disabled community would continue under the Labour administration.<sup>7</sup> Many more of the UK's most vulnerable people will suffer with such a dangerous attitude demonstrated by the new DWP Secretary of State:

Their anger and frustration only increased when new work and pensions secretary Pat McFadden [claimed in an interview](#) that there were currently 'incentives' in the system for people to declare themselves unfit for work so they can 'double their money', and also claimed that people were 'declaring themselves long-term sick.'

McFadden will have been aware that claimants cannot declare themselves 'long-term' sick but instead must go through the harsh work capability assessment process in order to be found not fit for work, and he should also have been aware that this system has [led to countless deaths](#).<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [The public health crisis created by UK social policy reforms](#)

<sup>5</sup> [No one held to account](#)

<sup>6</sup> [Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants: Work and Pensions Committee, May 2025](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Anger and frustration after DWP's latest jobcentre announcement and McFadden's 'incentives' comment](#)



Mr Bell, it is clear that there is a total failure within the Department to treat those in greatest need with anything other than contempt when under the leadership of Sir Peter Schofield. This DWP neglect of duty has also recently been demonstrated in the *Sayce Review*,<sup>8</sup> published in July 2025 and highlighted once again by the Work and Pensions Committee.<sup>9,10</sup> It is noted that Sir Peter will be ‘standing down’ from his position in the summer.

With the volumes of published peer-reviewed evidence and independent reports demonstrating the ongoing DWP-induced preventable harm generated over the past fifteen years, it is cause for concern to learn that there actually is a Disability Unit attached to the Cabinet Office. At some point responsibility needs to be taken for the total failure of the government’s largest Department, and the callous disregard for human need created by that Department;<sup>11-14</sup> that has yet to demonstrate any intention to improve regardless of published, damning government reports.<sup>6,8</sup> I trust this evidence has attracted your interest.

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

Yours sincerely

**Mo Stewart**

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

The Preventable Harm Project

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

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

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

<sup>6</sup> [\*Safeguarding Vulnerable Claimants: Work and Pensions Committee, May 2025\*](#)

<sup>8</sup> [\*Independent Review of Carer’s Allowance Overpayments, July 2025 \(Sayce Review\)\*](#)

<sup>9</sup> [\*Letter to Sir Peter Schofield from Debbie Abrahams MP, Chair Work and Pensions Committee, 4 February 2026\*](#)

<sup>10</sup> [\*MP Debbie Abrahams warns that culture change at DWP is ‘too slow’\*](#)

<sup>11</sup> [\*Select Committee Statement\*](#)

<sup>12</sup> [\*Letter to Minister of State for Social Security and Disability, January 2026\*](#)

<sup>13</sup> [\*Letter to Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, January 2026\*](#)

<sup>14</sup> [\*Letter to Director, Joint Work and Health Initiative, January 2026\*](#)

Copied to: Dr Gail Allsopp, DWP Chief Medical Advisor

Dr Jed Boardman, Consultant Psychiatrist/Senior Lecturer in Social Psychiatry

Debbie Abrahams, Chair Work and Pensions Select Committee

Baroness Lister of Buttersett CBE, FBA, FAcSS, Co-chair APPG on Poverty and Inequality

Kamran Mallick, CEO Disability Rights UK