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Duncan Smith tells DNS: ‘I’m not going to be accused by you’ over mental health deaths

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BY JOHN PRING ON OCTOBER 6, 2016

CRIME



**Iain Duncan Smith has denied responsibility for the deaths of people with mental health conditions who took their own lives after being unfairly found fit for work by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).**

Duncan Smith was speaking to Disability News Service (DNS) at the Tory party annual conference in Birmingham about his failure to act on a coroner's written warning in 2010 on the need to address particular safety concerns with the work capability assessment (WCA).

In the unplanned interview, which took place in a busy foyer in Birmingham's International Conference Centre, the former work and pensions secretary claimed repeatedly that five independent reviews of the WCA commissioned by DWP under his leadership had led to a "much improved system".

But DNS asked Duncan Smith about a report written by coroner Tom Osborne, who had ruled that the trigger for the suicide of Stephen Carré in January 2010 had been DWP's rejection of his appeal against being found "fit for work".

Osborne had called in what was known as a Rule 43 letter for a review of DWP policy – which has still not changed six years on – that means it does not always ensure that it obtains further medical evidence from a GP or psychiatrist if an employment and support allowance (ESA) claimant has a mental health condition.

Neither the Atos assessor who assessed Stephen Carré, nor the DWP decision-maker who subsequently decided that he was fit for work and therefore ineligible for ESA, had sought information from his GP, his community psychiatric nurse or his psychiatrist.

Osborne's letter was believed to be in Duncan Smith's in-tray when he was appointed secretary of state for work and pensions in May 2010, but **it was not answered until February 2016**, following questions raised by DNS.

Duncan Smith and Grayling also failed to pass the letter to Professor Malcolm Harrington, who carried out the first three reviews of the WCA, and they decided to roll out the assessment to hundreds of thousands of long-term incapacity benefit claimants with mental health conditions in the spring of 2011, without correcting the deadly safety flaw.

Duncan Smith (*pictured shortly after the interview*) repeatedly attempted to avoid answering questions on the coroner's letter, but eventually admitted that he remembered the Stephen Carré case.

He said: "I remember the case and I remember the work we did and we had five reviews so **I'm not going to be accused by you of anything.**"

He also said that he remembered what he referred to as "the early cases", but that he could not "remember every single letter from a coroner".

And when asked if he remembered one particularly case of a man with a mental health condition who took his own life after being found fit for work – again without further medical evidence being sought, and more than three-and-a-half years after the death of Stephen Carré – he said: “Go and ask the department about where they are now with all of that.

“Honestly, because I am not there at the moment.”

He claimed that his former department had done much to “soften” the WCA for people with mental health conditions and to take more account of the fluctuating nature of their impairments.

But he appeared to accept that he had failed to commission a pilot project to test new ways to collect further medical evidence for people with mental health conditions – aimed at correcting the failing that led to Stephen Carre’s death – despite promising the courts that he would do so.

Ministers told a tribunal in March 2015 – following a lengthy judicial review – that they would test ways to make the WCA safer by collecting medical evidence about each claimant from their doctor and psychiatrist, but by the time Duncan Smith quit his position 12 months later – nearly six years after he saw Osborne’s letter – the promised pilot project had still not been launched.

When asked if this was the case, he said: “Yes. I don’t know where the situation is now, because I left back in March.”

When DNS said that people were still dying because of this failure, he said: “The whole idea was to make the changes; we made a lot of changes early on and we have a white paper set in to reform the whole of the sickness benefit, which doesn’t work properly.”

He also appeared to try to shift blame onto his former colleague, Chris Grayling, who as employment minister in 2010 was in charge of the WCA, saying: “Back in 2010-11, Chris Grayling was in charge of it, he changed the nature of what we looked at.

“What we inherited from Labour at the time was quite a harsh system and we had, if you remember, about four or five reviews and each one of them recommended changes to soften it.”

As Duncan Smith tried to end the interview – after becoming increasingly irritated with the questions – DNS asked him what he thought of Police Scotland now considering whether it would launch a criminal investigation into his WCA failings.

But he said he was “not going to get involved in the detailed questioning from you”, before turning his back on DNS editor John Pring.

Disabled activists have called for Duncan Smith and Grayling to face a criminal investigation for the Scottish offence of wilful neglect of duty by a public official.

This call has been backed by the families of both David Barr and Paul Donnachie, two people with mental health conditions who took their own lives after being found fit for work.

Police Scotland is currently considering a dossier of information submitted by Black Triangle – including information on the deaths of Paul Donnachie and David Barr, as well as a third case, that of a woman known as Ms DE – before deciding whether to launch a criminal investigation.

The interview comes in a week where Duncan Smith’s failure to address wider concerns about the WCA was highlighted in humiliating fashion by new work and pensions secretary Damian Green, who told the party conference that it was “pointless bureaucratic nonsense” to expose many disabled people with high support needs to repeated WCAs, and promised to scrap the practice.

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USER RATINGS (9 VOTES)

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- Iain Duncan Smith
- Stephen Carre
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## DWP sends woman's confidential WCA report to privacy campaigner

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Stephen Carré scandal: DWP ‘finds’ draft report that was never sent to coroner

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**The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) has unearthed a “draft” report that ministers failed to send to a coroner six years ago, following concerns he raised about a suicide linked to flaws in the “fitness for work” test.**

The draft report has finally emerged more than three months after Disability News Service (DNS) **started questioning** why DWP appeared to have failed to respond to a Rule 43 letter about the death of 41-year-old Stephen Carré in January 2010.

That letter, sent to DWP by coroner Tom Osborne on 30 March 2010, linked the suicide with serious flaws\* in how the work capability assessment (WCA) was used to test the eligibility of people with mental health conditions for out-of-work disability benefits.

But letters from Osborne to DWP and the family of Stephen Carré show that ministers never produced an official response to the Rule 43 letter, as they were legally obliged to do.

Now DWP has finally admitted that it did exchange letters with Osborne during the summer of 2010, and even produced a “draft final response” to his letter in September 2010.

But the department has also admitted that it cannot prove that it sent this final response to Osborne.

Instead, a DWP spokeswoman claimed that colleagues had now found “a draft response that we meant to send back to the coroner” in 2010.

She said this draft response had now been sent to the coroner “for the avoidance of doubt and for completeness”.

She added: “Because we can’t confirm that it was sent [in 2010]and we can’t confirm that the coroner received it, for the avoidance of doubt we have sent the original draft.”

The existence of the draft report – and the admission that DWP cannot prove it was ever sent to the coroner – should raise serious questions about the political future of work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith and former employment minister Chris Grayling.

They made key decisions in the summer of 2010 about the WCA process that Osborne had linked to Stephen Carré’s death\*.

Among those decision was that they would roll out the WCA to hundreds of thousands of long-term claimants of incapacity benefit (IB) the following year.

They also failed to show the Rule 43 letter to Professor Malcolm Harrington, even though they had commissioned him to review

the “fairness and effectiveness” of the WCA.

The following year, in December 2011, a long-term IB claimant – Ms D E – took her own life after being told she was not eligible for ESA, a death later [linked by the Mental Welfare Commission for Scotland](#) to similar WCA failings to those that led to Stephen Carré's death.

And in 2014, another coroner wrote an almost identical letter to Osborne's, again warning of concerns about the safety of the WCA, after the death of a north London man, Michael O'Sullivan, who also took his own life after being found fit for work.

DWP this week claimed that it was unable to confirm that Duncan Smith and Grayling were shown Osborne's Rule 43 letter – and their department's draft final response – in 2010.

The DWP press office has also been unable to say whether the draft final response has now been shown to Duncan Smith and his current employment minister, Priti Patel, and his disabled people's minister, Justin Tomlinson.

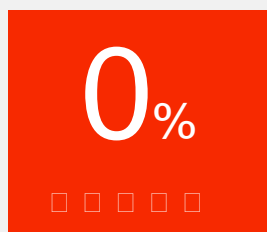
Last November, government-funded research concluded that the programme to reassess people claiming IB using the WCA [could have caused 590 suicides](#) in just three years.

DNS has been asking DWP about the Rule 43 letter since being shown a letter from Osborne to the Carré family in October 2010 in which he said that DWP had failed to provide a “substantive response” to his letter, despite its legal duty to do so within 56 days of receiving it in early April 2010.

At the time the letter was received, DWP was headed by Labour's Yvette Cooper, but a general election was called within days, and Duncan Smith replaced her as work and pensions secretary in May 2010 after the formation of the coalition government.

*\*Osborne ruled that the trigger for Stephen Carré's suicide had been DWP's rejection of his appeal against being found “fit for work”, and he called in his Rule 43 letter for a review of the policy not to seek medical evidence from a GP or psychiatrist if the claimant has a mental health condition.*

*Neither the Atos assessor who assessed Stephen Carré, from Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire, nor the DWP decision-maker who subsequently decided that he was fit for work and therefore ineligible for the new employment and support allowance, had sought information from his GP, his community psychiatric nurse or his psychiatrist.*



USER RATINGS (13 VOTES)



Chris Grayling

Department for Work and Pensions

Iain Duncan Smith

Rule 43

Stephen Carre

Tom Osborne

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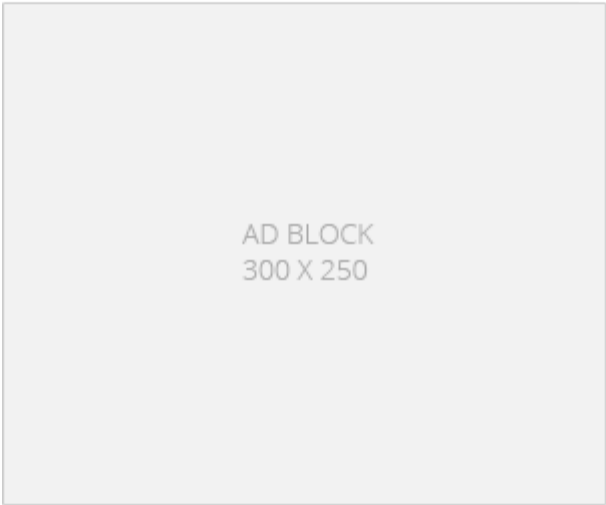
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## Parents of 'fit for work' suicide man back call for Iain Duncan Smith prosecution

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BY JOHN PRING ON JULY 28, 2016

CRIME



**The parents of a disabled man who took his own life after being wrongly found “fit for work” have backed attempts to persuade Scottish police to investigate the actions of former work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith.**

David and Maureen Barr have both told Disability News Service (DNS) that Duncan Smith and former employment minister Chris Grayling should be prosecuted over their failure to address serious safety concerns about the work capability assessment (WCA).

Their son, also called David (*pictured*), and also from Fife, was just 28 when he took his own life on 23 August 2013.

Despite his history of significant mental distress, David's parents believe the healthcare professional who assessed him – employed by the government contractor Atos – failed to contact their son's GP or his psychiatrist for further information about his mental health.

When questioned afterwards by the Procurator Fiscal's office – which investigates sudden deaths in Scotland – the assessor claimed he couldn't remember if he had made any phone calls, according to David's father.

The Atos assessor completed David's assessment by concluding, in June 2013: “He reports self harm in the past. He reports he attempted an overdose six weeks ago but he would not say what he took.

“He reports he has had no thoughts of suicide since. The evidence overall suggests that he is not at substantial risk.”

Despite David appealing against the decision that he was fit for work, and telling the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in a letter that he had “serious mental health problems that prevent me from doing everyday tasks which means I cannot work at this moment in time”, the Atos advice was rubber-stamped by DWP decision-makers.

The decision that he was not eligible for employment and support allowance (ESA) was confirmed in a letter to David on 17 July 2013. A month later, he took his own life.

His death is one of three cases contained in a dossier submitted to Police Scotland by disabled activist John McArdle, from the user-led campaign network **Black Triangle**, in an attempt to persuade the force to open an investigation into Duncan Smith and Grayling.

McArdle wants Police Scotland to investigate the two former ministers for the Scottish criminal offence of wilful neglect of duty by a public official, because they failed to take steps to improve the WCA in 2010 after being warned by a coroner that its flaws risked causing future deaths of people with mental health conditions.

Police Scotland **has been handed details of three people** – including David Barr – who died in the years after the coroner sent

his letter to DWP, and whose deaths campaigners believe could have been prevented if the two ministers had acted on that warning.

The force is currently awaiting further information about the three cases before deciding what action to take.

This week, David Barr's parents spoke of their hope for justice for their much-loved son, whose death they believe could have been avoided if Duncan Smith and Grayling had taken action.

David Barr senior said his son's mental health had deteriorated in the last couple of years of his life, but he had previously been able to work intermittently in agriculture and labouring, while his final job, which ended in 2011, was cleaning buses.

By the time he died he was no longer capable of working, his dad said, and he was taking strong medication including anti-psychotics and anti-depressants, and was experiencing paranoid delusions.

David's father, a bus driver, said: "His mind was gone, and anybody who assessed him should have seen that."

He told DNS this week that he was fully behind attempts to secure a prosecution.

He said: "If we let a defective bus in the road [and it killed someone] we would be up for manslaughter; that's why these people should be taken to court.

"They are talking about taking the former prime minister to court for war crimes, but this is just as bad, if not worse. They knew about it and did nothing about it.

"The whole thing is shocking. The ministers in charge of it should have sorted something out, stopped it, changed it, re-directed it, I don't know what."

He added: "If I see Duncan Smith on the TV, I just have to walk out, turn it off. I hate the man with a vengeance.

"He has known what was going on and he did nothing about it. He wants to be dragged over the coals for this, and if I can help in any way I will."

David's mother Maureen – David senior's ex-wife – also backed calls for a criminal prosecution.

She said: "It is time someone did something. [Otherwise] there will just be more like David and nothing is ever done.

"It makes you feel terrible that they should have done something [and didn't]."

His father is certain that the decision to turn down David's ESA claim was the trigger that led to his decision to kill himself, against a background of continuing financial pressures.

He remembers finding his son's WCA report and all of his other official paperwork scattered over the floor of his flat after he died.

He said: "It was just dumped all over the floor; anything to do with anything official, he'd just had enough of it. That's when I picked it up and read through it, this 33-page assessment."

David's mother Maureen said she believed the "fit for work" decision was "definitely" the trigger for his decision to take his own life.

She said: "It was the straw that broke the camel's back."

Several weeks after he died, two DWP officials visited the family and admitted that David should have been receiving ESA instead of jobseeker's allowance for nearly two years.

David's father said: "They were here for about an hour-and-a-half explaining everything. But these two – through Iain Duncan Smith – had killed my son, and I said this to them.

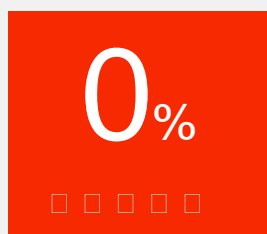
"They knew that what they had done was wrong and I said to them, 'Had it been your children in my son's situation, would you have acted the same way?' They couldn't answer that.

"I gave it to them with both barrels and they walked out with their tails between their legs, but it didn't bring my son back."

DWP paid the family £2,700 in compensation for the extra social security support David had not received while he was alive (the difference between the jobseeker's allowance he received and the ESA he should have been receiving).

Maureen Barr said: "They turned around and said, 'I don't suppose it will help now, but we have reversed the decision.'

"I couldn't believe it. I thought, 'What good is that to him now?'"



USER RATINGS (18 VOTES)



Chris Grayling

David Barr

employment and support allowance

Iain Duncan Smith

Police Scotland

work capability assessment

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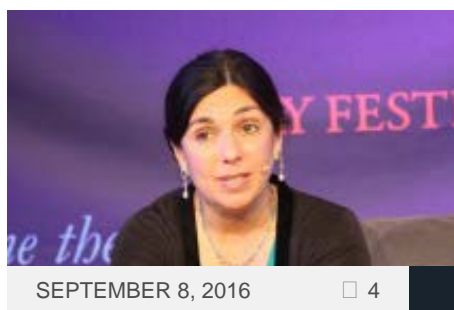
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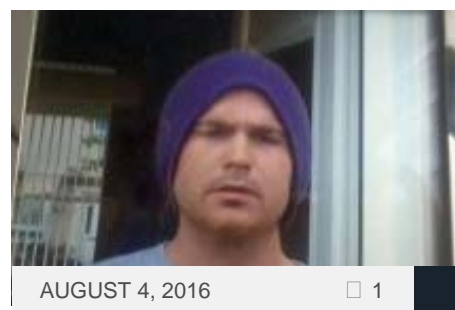
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Six years on, and still no DWP progress on ‘further medical evidence’

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BY JOHN PRING ON MARCH 10, 2016

BENEFITS AND POVERTY



**Work and pensions ministers have been accused of another attempt to avoid improving the safety of its “fitness for work” test for benefit claimants with mental health conditions.**

A year after ministers told a tribunal – following a lengthy judicial review – that it would test ways to make the work capability assessment (WCA) safer by collecting medical evidence about each claimant from their doctor and psychiatrist, the promised pilot project has still not been launched.

DWP's efforts to avoid taking steps to improve the safety of the WCA – by ensuring that all the necessary evidence is gathered before a decision on a claim for out-of-work disability benefits is taken – stretch back all the way to April 2010.

Six years ago, coroner Tom Osborne wrote to DWP to express concerns that it did not automatically seek further medical evidence from a claimant's GP or psychiatrist if they had a mental health condition, following an inquest into the death of Stephen Carré in January 2010.

DWP finally unearthed a draft response to Osborne's letter last month, but it has all but admitted that it was never sent to the coroner.

Four years later, in 2014, another letter was sent to DWP by a coroner, raising the same concerns and making almost identical recommendations, this time following the death of Michael O'Sullivan, from north London.

And almost exactly one year ago today, after the upper tribunal administrative appeals chamber ruled that the WCA discriminated against some people with mental health conditions, DWP promised to work with Maximus – the discredited US outsourcing giant that had just taken over the WCA contract from Atos – to develop a pilot programme to test new ways of collecting further medical evidence.

But that pilot project has still not begun.

In January, DWP told lawyers from The Public Law Project, who represented the two claimants who took the judicial review case, that it had been working with Maximus on a “feasibility study”, which had to be completed before the work could begin.

A spokeswoman for the **Mental Health Resistance Network**, which was behind the judicial review which tribunal case, said the aim of the pilot project would be to find a “reasonable” way to remedy the discrimination faced by claimants with mental health conditions.

But she said: “All we are getting back is ‘they are in discussion, they are in discussion.’”

The network is planning a campaign to demand that if and when DWP eventually launches the pilot project, the government is completely transparent in how it is carried out.

But the MHRN spokeswoman said she feared the government would conduct the pilot in such a way that would make it look as if gathering further medical evidence was an “unreasonable” adjustment to make under the Equality Act.

She also said she was “shocked and disgusted” that DWP had never informed their lawyers about the existence of the Stephen Carré coroner’s letter, or – later on in the case – the Michael O’Sullivan letter.

She said: “They withheld very significant evidence from that court case.”

DWP repeatedly refused this week to confirm that the pilot project has yet to start.

A DWP spokesman said the government began work with Maximus in December to “develop new and better processes for people with mental health conditions”.

When DNS asked for further clarity, he then added: “We started testing new processes with [Maximus] in December.

“We will analyse the findings once we’ve completed this work and then make a decision concerning the next steps.”

When DNS asked again whether this meant the pilot project had not begun, he said: “The testing is a key part of this process, which is currently on-going.”

DNS asked yet again whether this meant that the pilot had not yet started, he said: “As previously stated, work has already begun on this with initial testing starting in December.”

But DNS has since seen a letter from a DWP lawyer to The Public Law Project, which states that the work that began in December related to “a small-scale feasibility test” and not the “larger-scale pilot”.

This letter states that the test is “likely to take three to four months, following which the result will be evaluated and the learning and improvements suggested by the feasibility test will be incorporated into the proposed process to be tested in a larger-scale pilot”.

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USER RATINGS

(6 VOTES)

Department for Work and Pensions

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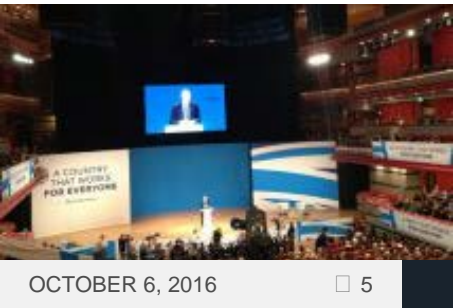
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Ministers know their WCA system is increasing suicide risk, says Ken Loach

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BY JOHN PRING ON OCTOBER 6, 2016

BENEFITS AND POVERTY





**Government ministers know their “fitness for work” system is making disabled people’s health worse, and is increasing the risk of suicides, the award-winning film director Ken Loach has told Disability News Service (DNS).**

He was speaking ahead of the national release of his critically-praised new film, *I, Daniel Blake*, which tells the story of a man with a heart condition who becomes caught up in the work capability assessment (WCA) system.

The film (*pictured*), which won the Palme D’Or at this year’s Cannes Film Festival, also addresses links between the complexity, unfairness and cruelty of the social security system and the increase in the use of foodbanks.

Loach also backed the idea of seeking a criminal investigation into the failings of former Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) ministers Iain Duncan Smith and Chris Grayling.

The Scottish-based grassroots group **Black Triangle** – supported by DNS – is seeking to persuade Police Scotland to investigate the refusal of Duncan Smith and Grayling to act on a letter written by a coroner weeks before the 2010 general election that warned ministers that the WCA process risked causing further deaths of people with mental health conditions.

Black Triangle, other disabled activists, and the families of at least two claimants who are believed to have died as a result of those uncorrected flaws, want to see the ministers prosecuted for the Scottish offence of wilful neglect of duty by a public official because they failed to act on that letter.

Loach told DNS that such a prosecution “sounds a good way of challenging them”, although he stressed that he did not know whether there was enough evidence to justify taking such a case.

But he said: “I think they know what they are doing. They know they are making people’s health worse. They know they are increasing the risk of suicide.”

The idea for the film came, says Loach, from the “extraordinary” stories he and his writing partner Paul Laverty kept hearing about the WCA, which he said came “one after the other” in the newspapers, through online campaigns and via Twitter.

As they investigated the issue, Loach and Laverty visited about six towns and cities, including London and Glasgow, but mostly across the Midlands and the north of England, where they heard “story after story”.

They also talked to organisations like Black Triangle, and individual disabled people, which Loach said was “hugely valuable in covering the ramifications and the details of the system”.

Following that research, Laverty developed the two main characters, and then wrote the first draft of the script.

Loach said the most striking aspect of what they were told was the “perversity” of the system, which he said was the “common

denominator” of people’s stories.

“You would find one route blocked off, so you would turn somewhere and go along another path to get resolution or solve a problem or get someone to speak to you and that would cut out and you would find somewhere else,” he said.

“And the hours and the effort that goes into dealing with the bureaucracy that is actually going to bring you back to square one...

“It’s snakes and ladders all the time. You go up a ladder and then you’re down a snake.

“That was the common denominator that came time and time again.”

The character at the heart of the film, who has to deal with the WCA system, is not, says Loach, “an extreme case”.

“There are so many stories we could tell, so many different perspectives, much harsher experiences than there are in the film,” he said.

“We were very conscious that we didn’t want to make it an extreme case.

“We wanted to say to people who haven’t been through it, ‘This could happen to someone like you, as well as someone who has plainly got a serious health issue.’”

He said he hoped that disabled people and those with health conditions who have been through the WCA system will feel that their experiences have been “recognised” by his film.

He said: “I would hope they would feel that somebody was expressing a little bit of what they experienced, that there is something that rings true to them, given their experience, and they feel at least acknowledged.”

And he said he hoped that it would encourage them to join people in similar situations and “make their voices heard” and campaign for change, and “just feel confident enough to carry it further”.

Loach’s films stretch back over five decades and are known for their strong focus on issues of social justice, illustrating his own socialist principles, including *Up The Junction*, *Poor Cow*, and more recently *Raining Stones*, *Bread and Roses*, *The Wind That Shakes The Barley* – which also won the *Palme D’Or* – and *Land and Freedom*.

But *I, Daniel Blake* is also released 50 years after *Cathy Come Home*, the hugely-influential film Loach directed for the BBC in 1966, and which led to the formation of *Crisis*, the charity for single homeless people.

Loach said there was a “common denominator” between the two films.

“The common denominator is a state that knows – in the 60s it was a housing issue that we made the film about – the social

problems that they have created; they refuse to do anything about them to solve the fundamental issues, so they punish the people who are suffering because of it.

“It was the same in housing [in the 1960s]; they weren’t building houses, they chose not to, and they dealt with people who were therefore homeless very harshly, and it destroys families, and they would sooner do that than solve the problem.”

But Loach stressed that the film had to be character-driven, despite the many distressing stories and information they had heard about.

“You just start with the stories you hear and try and tell the truth of the situation,” he said.

“Once you have done the general research, which Paul did most of, and you have written the characters, then all the research is there to inform how you tell the story, but what’s going to drive it is the people in the film and they have to be individuals and not ciphers to make an argument.

“You just want to tell a story that gets to the heart of it, to the essence of it.

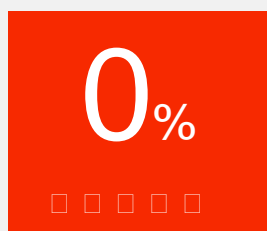
“There’s a million details and a million stories if you want to make an academic treatise of the situation, but just tell one story with a couple of people that gets to the nub of the situation if you can.”

Meanwhile, **Black Triangle** used a local premiere of the film in Newcastle this week to launch a new campaign, in association with fellow grassroots network Cross Border Alliance.

Their **Cradle 2 Grave campaign** – backed by both Loach and Lavery – highlights “the violation and systematic abuse of human rights of those unfortunately relying on the state for health and financial assistance”.

They say that “time is running out” to save the NHS, the social security system, pensions and public services for future generations, and that health and public services are “overrun by an ideology where money and profits come before lives”.

They hope to raise money through crowdfunding to launch a national poster campaign, with posters “in every town and city across the UK”. **Donations can be made** through the Cradle2Grave website.



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Black Triangle

I Daniel Blake

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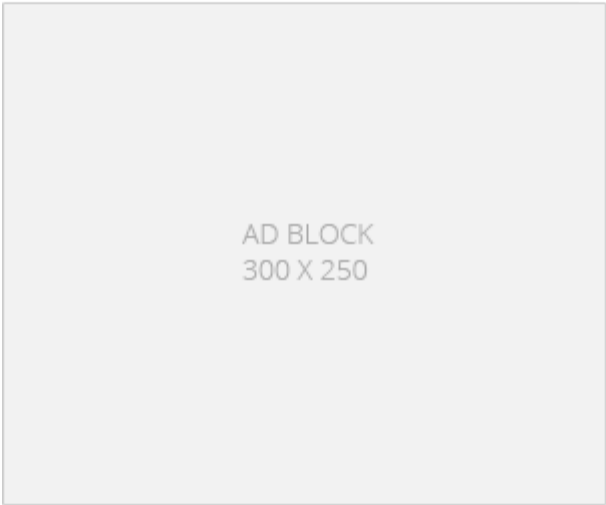
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## WCA death scandal: Grayling ordered assessment roll-out, despite coroner's warning

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**Ministers appear to have allowed a controversial disability benefits assessment to be rolled out to hundreds of thousands of long-term claimants with mental health conditions, even though a coroner had warned it was a threat to their lives.**

Employment minister Chris Grayling (*pictured*) and work and pensions secretary Iain Duncan Smith decided in the summer of 2010 that Labour's work capability assessment (WCA) could be rolled out to people who had been claiming long-term incapacity benefit (IB) the following spring.

But an investigation by Disability News Service (DNS) suggests that Duncan Smith and Grayling – who is now leader of the House of Commons – should have been aware of a legal letter written by coroner Tom Osborne in the wake of the suicide of a disabled man, Stephen Carre, in January 2010.

The letter – written under Rule 43 of the Coroner's Rules, which were updated in 2013 – said Carre's death was triggered by being found "fit for work", and it called for a review of the policy not to seek medical evidence from a GP or psychiatrist if the claimant has a mental health condition.

A coroner could only write a Rule 43 letter if he or she believed that the evidence they heard in an inquest "gives rise to a concern that circumstances creating a risk of other deaths will occur or will continue to exist in the future".

The WCA roll-out decision was key to the Conservatives' **pre-election pledge to "reduce welfare dependency"**.

In the run-up to the 2010 election, both the Conservative and Labour parties stressed the importance of reassessing the estimated 1.5 million people still claiming old-style IB.

And in late May 2010, Duncan Smith announced that the government would press ahead with plans to put all those currently claiming old-style IB through the WCA in order to test their "readiness for work".

Grayling and Duncan Smith made the decision that they would go ahead with the roll-out of the WCA in the spring of 2011, even though Osborne had written directly to the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), just before the 2010 election, with his warning about the assessment.

In the years since then, activists have highlighted scores of cases of people whose deaths have been linked to the WCA process, including those of **Nick Barker**, **Jacqueline Harris** and **Ms DE**.

Osborne, at the time the assistant deputy coroner for Bedfordshire and Luton, wrote on 30 March 2010 to Yvette Cooper, the Labour work and pensions secretary.

He told her that the trigger for the decision of 41-year-old Stephen Carre, from Eaton Bray, Bedfordshire, to take his own life had been DWP's rejection of his appeal against being found "fit for work".

Neither the Atos assessor who assessed Carre, nor the DWP decision-maker who subsequently decided that he was fit for work and therefore ineligible for the new employment and support allowance, sought information from his GP, his community psychiatric nurse or his psychiatrist.

Under the Coroner's Rules, DWP had just 56 days to respond to the coroner – taking the deadline for a response to late May 2010 – which Osborne pointed out in his Rule 43 letter.

But despite a legal obligation to respond, and explain what action they planned to take – or explain why they were not taking any action – ministers appear never to have replied to the letter.

That summer, Grayling appointed Professor Malcolm Harrington to carry out an independent review of the "fairness and effectiveness" of the WCA, and later told him that he wanted to go ahead with plans to roll out the WCA, despite Harrington suggesting that the roll-out **should be delayed by a year**.

Harrington has told DNS that he was never shown the coroner's letter.

Despite the coroner's conclusion that being found fit for work was the trigger for Stephen Carre's decision to take his own life, a DWP spokesman said: "Suicide is a tragic and complex issue and there are often many reasons why someone takes their life, so to link it to one event is misleading."

The spokesman said that a response was sent to the coroner on 4 May 2010, but has so far refused to confirm that this was merely an acknowledgement of the Rule 43 letter, or a holding response.

DNS has seen a letter sent to Peter Carre on 6 October 2010 in which the coroner said he had "yet to receive a substantive response" to his Rule 43 report from DWP.

The DWP spokesman pointed to the five independent reviews of the WCA, carried out by Harrington and Paul Litchfield, and to the "significant improvements" made to the assessment since 2010.

He said these improvements include "improving the opportunities people have to present medical evidence", and improvements to the process for people with mental health conditions, while the percentage of people with mental health conditions receiving the highest level of support "has more than tripled since 2010".

He said: "The WCA now has a much greater focus on what someone can do and on the impact of mental health conditions on someone's capability to work."

The DWP spokesman said claimants were "encouraged to provide all evidence that will be relevant to their case at the outset of

the claim, including medical evidence supplied by their GP or other medical professionals", while WCA assessors are "expected to seek further evidence" if it would help them award ESA without the need for a face-to-face assessment.

He said DWP decision-makers "assess all available evidence and seek more if required to reach their decision".

But he admitted that DWP was still in discussions with Maximus – which took over the WCA contract from Atos earlier this year – to "pilot new evidence-seeking processes for claimants with mental health conditions", more than five years after Stephen Carre's death.

Asked whether Grayling and Duncan Smith were shown the letter, he said: "I don't know. I can't answer that question."

He said he did not know whether anyone in the press office had asked Duncan Smith about the coroner's letter, since the questions were emailed to the press office last week by DNS.

Asked why the two ministers went ahead with the rollout of the WCA to incapacity benefit claimants early in 2011, despite the concerns raised in the coroner's report, the DWP spokesman said: "I can't give chapter and verse on exactly what decisions were made five years ago."

Atos refused to respond to requests for a comment.

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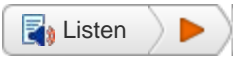


Row grows over Harrington’s WCA advice to Grayling

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BY JOHN PRING ON DECEMBER 20, 2013

NEWS ARCHIVE



Two government departments are at the centre of a growing row over claims a minister ignored the advice of his own independent reviewer so he could begin the reassessment of 1.6 million incapacity benefit (IB) claimants.

Professor Malcolm Harrington says he told Chris Grayling in the summer of 2010 that the controversial “fitness for work” test was not ready to be rolled out.



But he says that Grayling – at the time the minister of state for employment – ignored his advice and gave the go-ahead for the reassessment process to begin in February 2011, even earlier than originally planned.

That decision, say activists, led to anxiety and despair for hundreds of thousands of disabled benefit claimants, many of whom were found unfairly fit for work through the use of the work capability assessment (WCA), which tests eligibility for employment and support allowance.

The early rollout of an unfit test is also believed to have caused untold health relapses and cases of self-harm.

Grayling **insisted to MPs last year** that Harrington gave his blessing for the rollout to begin, claiming that he told him: "I believe the system is in sufficient shape for you to proceed with incapacity benefit reassessment."

This week, Grayling's former department, work and pensions, appeared to be rebuffed by his current department, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ), as civil servants scrabbled to clarify what advice he was given by Harrington in 2010.

A DWP spokesman told Disability News Service (DNS) that they could not find any record of the conversation between Grayling and Harrington, and so had contacted the MoJ press office.

The DWP spokesman said: "We both decided among ourselves that it was one for us to answer. The upshot was we were going to be dealing with it because it was our media inquiry."

But when asked whether the MoJ press office had asked Grayling about his conversation with Harrington, the DWP spokesman said: "I don't know."

When DNS approached the MoJ press office, a spokesman said: "Chris stands by what he said to parliament."

The MoJ spokesman denied that Grayling was therefore accusing Harrington of not telling the truth.

But he then admitted that he had not asked Grayling about the meeting with Harrington in the summer of 2010, or if he remembered the conversation about the rollout of the assessment process.

The spokesman said: "The accusation that was put to me was that Chris had misled parliament with this statement. All I asked him was, 'this is the accusation, do you stand by what was said to the House?'"

He has now agreed to ask Grayling about the meeting with Harrington.

As a result of the growing row – first sparked by the publication of an email conversation **between Harrington and disabled campaigner and blogger Sue Marsh** – Labour's shadow minister for disabled people, Kate Green, has called for answers.

She said: "I just don't know what was and wasn't said but if there is doubt about whether Grayling took Harrington's advice or

not, and doubt about whether he misled parliament and misrepresented Harrington's advice, we are entitled to get to the bottom of that.

"They commissioned Professor Harrington, they wanted his expertise. To disregard that advice is in my view pretty cavalier if you haven't got a good reason for doing so.

"If you commission expert advice and you decide not to take it, you have to have clear and transparent reasons not to do so.

"The WCA has been absolutely disastrous in terms of its execution over the last three years. If there were warning signs that it wasn't in a state to be rolled out to thousands of quite vulnerable clients – in some cases – I think that is disgraceful.

"If there were clear warnings that the assessment was not fit for purpose and should not be rolled out, to disregard that advice is disgraceful."

Marsh said it appeared, "as things stand", that Grayling misled parliament.

She added: "The coalition brought Professor Harrington in to advise them on employment and support allowance and work capability assessments.

"If he advised that the tests were 'inhumane and mechanistic', recommending that the national rollout should be postponed for a year, and they ignored that advice, then this is a very serious allegation.

"Chris Grayling needs to clarify immediately whether or not Harrington did indeed advise him to pause."

**19 December 2013**

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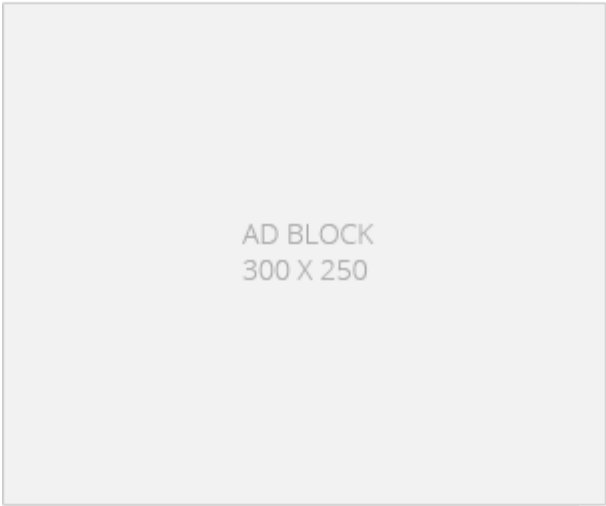
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He launched DNS in April 2009 to address the absence of in-depth reporting in both the specialist and mainstream media on issues that affect the lives of disabled people. [read more](#)

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# Diary of a Benefit Scrounger

A site to share information on Welfare cuts, illness, disability and general, current, political thought.

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Friday, 13 December 2013

## Breaking News : Government Reviewer Opposed Rollout of ESA

In 2008, Labour introduced a new out of work sickness benefit, Employment and Support Allowance, to replace the old Incapacity Benefit.

The new system of application and assessments was much tougher, and politicians originally hoped that up to a million people could be moved from the benefit.

However, by 2010, it was clear there were significant flaws in the process. People with mental health and fluctuating conditions were not being fairly treated and successful appeals against "fit for work" decisions soared to 40%.

Professor Harrington was asked to review the new benefit and make recommendations for improving it. As the election took place in 2010, crucially, only new claimants were being assessed. ESA was yet to be rolled out to the more complicated, and often longer term, Incapacity Benefit claimants, though trials were underway in Burnley and Aberdeen.

Most people claim out of work sickness benefits for short periods – perhaps to get through a sports injury, accident or one off surgery – and stop their claims within 2 years. However, this will always leave a few people with serious, life limiting conditions who will need to claim the benefit for longer periods. Over the years, those claims build up, increasing the proportion who need long term support.

When the coalition came to power in May 2010, they immediately announced that they would go ahead and start to reassess those already claiming Incapacity Benefit.

I could never understand this decision. Why would you take a failing benefit and roll it out to almost 2 million of the most vulnerable claimants? Not only that, but at first, just 25,000 people per month were being assessed, but the government constantly increased and increased the numbers until today, nearly 130,000 assessments are carried out every month.

Why? Why would you rush this group through failing assessments, ever faster, when backlogs kept on increasing, tribunals were overturning 40% of decisions that went to appeal and even legally, courts were starting to judge that the test discriminates against certain groups?

Unless of course you don't want the tests to be fair. If your aim is to remove a million people from the benefit, perhaps it suits you to make sure that as many of those existing claimants don't face a fair test? Since 2010, the government have repeatedly delayed improvements to ESA. Out of 25 recommendations made by Professor Harrington in his Yr1 Review, almost two thirds have not been fully and successfully implemented. An "Evidence Based Review" using new descriptors designed by mental health charities and those charities representing people with fluctuating conditions was initially rejected, then taken on, but although results were due in June, still, tests use the old descriptors to decide who qualifies for support. \*

The government repeatedly claimed that Professor Harrington had supported the national rollout of incapacity benefit claimants

**"Professor Harrington went away and made his recommendations to us, which we accepted**

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As though the universe just cannot bear to stop toying with me just yet, the very day I got a letter to say I'd been awarded higher rate...

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#esaSOS : YOUR HELP NEEDED URGENTLY! On 28 January 2013 the UK government is due to make a set of changes to the Work Capability As...

#### Open letter to Andrew Marr

Dear Andrew Marr On the Marr show this morning you said you had "a greater



in full and have implemented. He told me, "I believe the system is in sufficient shape for you to proceed with incapacity benefit reassessment." We set ourselves a goal to put his recommendations in place, improve the quality of the process and address many of the issues to which hon. Members have referred today by the end of last May, when the assessments in the incapacity benefit reassessment were to start alongside the existing process of assessing ESA new claimants. We did that, and we started."

1 Feb 2012 : Column 289WH Hansard Chris Grayling

However, Harrington was clearly an intelligent man who had made thoughtful and intelligent suggestions for improving the assessments. I could never understand why he agreed to put the most vulnerable claimants through a failing test.

So I decided to ask him.

It took me a while to track down his email address, but after pulling lots of strings, I was able to ask him outright.

This was Professor Harrington's reply :

**"To your question:**

**I NEVER---repeat---NEVER agreed to the IB migration. I would have preferred that it be delayed but by the time I said that, the political die had been cast.**

**I then said that i would review progress of that during my reviews.**

**The decision was political .**

**I could not influence it.**

**IS THAT CRYSTAL CLEAR?**

**Malcolm"**

I'd say it was fairly clear, wouldn't you?

Ian Duncan-Smith and others took the decision to push nearly 2 million people through a failing test as quickly as they could. Why? Was it so that they could remove as many people as possible from the benefit whether they needed it or not? Surely any failures to improve the test as recommended by Harrington, charities and campaigners couldn't have been deliberate? Delaying improvements until the IB cohort had been rushed through, the cohort this government and others are convinced are simply "scroungers" and "skivers"?

Instead, as we now see, delays have increased, successful appeals have risen, lives have been lost to the sheer inaccuracy and flawed design of the assessments and the human suffering is now clear for all to see.

To have taken the decision through incompetence is bad enough, but if it was taken deliberately and cynically, I can only hope the responsible ministers will be held to account. Over 200,000 incorrect decisions have since been overturned in law and appeals are taking up to a year to be heard in some areas.

When David Cameron came to power he said :

"The test of a good society is how do you protect the poorest, the most vulnerable, the elderly, the frail.

That's important in good times, it's even more important in difficult times. People need to know that if they have me as their Prime Minister and they have a Conservative government, it will be that sort of Prime Minister

Iain Duncan-Smith said :

"I say to those watching today and who are genuinely sick, disabled or are retired. You have nothing to fear.

This government and this party don't regard caring for the needy as a burden. It is a proud duty to provide financial security to the most vulnerable members of our society and this will not change. This is our contract with the most vulnerable."

I look forward to them explaining what made them change their minds.

understanding of disability" since your stroke. Yet w...

Time Limiting ESA - The Reality

Regular readers will remember how very hard I and others fought the Time Limiting of ESA proposed in the Welfare Reform Bill. For me, it ...

New Job

"I've agonised about how to write this post, but as with everything, honest and from the heart is always best. Those of you w...

RIP Karen Sherlock

I just found out that Karen Sherlock, @pusscat01 has passed away. Here is here twitter profile : " Chronic Spoonie, lots wrong. ESA s...

The Big Benefits Row

Please share this article anywhere and everywhere you can. Thank you x As many of you may know by now, last night was the Big Benefits Ro...

ESA SOS - The Starting Gun

In a few weeks, I'm going to arrange for some very significant stories to break in the very mainstream press about ESA. I've been ...

I Support the Spartacus Report

So today, after months of work and planning we launch our Report PRESS RELEASE REPORT - RESPONSIBLE REFORM We did everything possible to...

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About Me



Sue Marsh

I have a rare form of Crohn's Disease. I was diagnosed 21 years ago and have had many operations to remove strictures (narrowings in my bowel that grow like tumours) I suffer daily pain, often

Blog Archive


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    - Open Letter to David Cameron
- NEW SPARTAC

Today, we must be our own media. Please RT on twitter, share on Facebook and help me to make sure that as many people as possible see this news.


\*Coincidentally, the evidence based review was released yesterday, as I was writing this article.  
[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/265471/wca-evidence-based-review.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/265471/wca-evidence-based-review.pdf)

Update; Patrick Butler at the Guardian speaks to Harrington - who strengthens and confirms the story above. It is now up to the DWP and Chris Grayling to explain the contradiction between Harrington's statements and what Grayling told parliament.


<http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/dec/16/ministers-ignored-advice-fit-for-work-tests>

Posted by Sue Marsh at 07:58  
 +13 Recommend this on Google

37 comments:

 **britishroses** 13 December 2013 at 08:22  
All involved need to be held to account in a Court of Law and the public should be told the truth!  
[Reply](#)


▼ Replies


 **Liz** 13 December 2013 at 12:08  
Saying it is one thing - can it be done? How can it be done? We are talking to each other - and that is brilliant - but how do we reach wider to the people who don't believe or understand what is happening?

 **westerby1** 14 December 2013 at 20:09  
Liz

Just tell as many people as you can. Do it online or face to face, whatever, just tell people what is actually happening. If all of us just told one person every week the news would rapidly spread to the rest of the public.

The Daily Mail and Telegraph etc websites are a good place to comment. You may get some abuse, but some right wingers do listen, and are quite shocked to hear that what they are being told by this government is a pack of lies. If you can change their mind that is a brownie point for sure!

 **BettysBlues** 16 January 2014 at 00:56  
What has shocked me is that even in the Support Group they don't leave you alone. having more than one serious long term illness/disability I got my second ESA claim form 9 months later. along with other stresses it has almost sent me over the edge. Apparently the DWP can send out another ESA50 after just three months after being awarded ESA. the incredible waste of money re-assessing all those who have permanent and severe disabilities makes my blood boil.

 **les perkins** 29 May 2016 at 12:02  
Many of us should be in the support group but even having 15 points at tribunal the dwp fails to consider its own rules re 29 /35"  
So after 1 yr ESA wrag the majority find benefits reduced or removed altogether  
-----  
You are too unwell to work Evident by being in ESA wrag  
if there is no likelihood for any improvement in your health then you are parked here for life  
-----;  
in my case the govt reduced ESA to £21 pw whist increasing my outgoings by £22 bedroom and council tax











vomiting, malnourished and weak. I take mega-strong medications every day including chemo-style immuno-suppressants, opiates and anti-sickness injections. Sometimes I am fed into my central vein by tube, other times I can enjoy a nice meal out. I have children that I often can't look after and a husband who often looks after me. Our lives are disrupted daily by the misery of a chronic condition.

[View my complete profile](#)

US REPORT  
Breaking News : Government Reviewer Opposed Rollout...  
Urgent Request from Scope  
"Ian Duncan Smith - In Deep sh....ambles" - YOU CA...  
The Autumn Statement in 2 Sentences  
Just watch this. Please

- ▶ November (9)
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- ▶ September (14)
- ▶ August (8)
- ▶ July (25)
- ▶ June (8)
- ▶ May (3)
- ▶ April (16)
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Blogroll

-  **Anna Raccoon**  
1 day ago
-  **Think Left**  
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-  **Politics and Insights - kittysjones**  
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9 months ago
-  **Ayes To The Left**  
10 months ago
- Sarah Hayward**

ESA Wrag claimants are clearly discriminated financially against  
Aged 61 worked for 34 yrs before being healed by the Tories  
-----  
Having several Debilitating Progressive Degenerative Musculoskeletal conditions and being retired medically in 2005 after 34 + yrs working  
I wasn't prepared for what I would face after ATOS  
Assessed March 2012 ZERO points  
DWP Mandatory reassessment rubber stamped the decision  
Took 11 months to go to tribunal had to spend money I didn't have to provide "evidence" multiple expensive phonecalls to various govt dept  
-----  
March 2013 Found MY esa WRAG REDUCED TO £21 PW  
not quite enough to pay the now mandatory bedroom and council tax £22  
-----  
Here's the thing  
ESA Wrag is for those who are too ill to work ( jobcentre agrees ) but the govt has decided might return to work at future date  
Have the same need as someone in the un " means tested " esa support group  
progressive degenerative  
won't improve  
-----  
Why is this not discrimination  
How can this be allowed that someone in my position must see out the rest of their life having benefits removed when they are no different health wise than those in the support group ?

[Reply](#)



**Trish Kindelan** 13 December 2013 at 09:32

This is the Tory Way. Arrogance at the root of all decisions. Cynical and judgemental throughout  
[Reply](#)



**Andy Platt** 13 December 2013 at 10:16

I think the difficulty with saying that Harrington 'opposed' the roll-out is that at the time, he very clearly said he "deliberately avoided having an opinion on that".

<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2011/sep/06/no-turning-back-work-capability-assessment>

There's a difference between 'not agreeing' to something and actively opposing it. There's also not having an opinion either way. Harrington seems to be issuing mixed messages and I can't help wondering if his slightly more anti tone now is influenced by being kicked off the review process.

Tbh, the bloke comes across as a bit of a buffoon.

[Reply](#)



**Lovejoy** 13 December 2013 at 11:32

No surprises there. As we've said from the start this is not about saving money, tackling fraud, seeing those who need the most help it, tailored support or any of the nonsense we've forced over the last 3 years this is about a war on the welfare state - nothing else.

[Reply](#)



**Admin** 13 December 2013 at 11:45

Oh dear, someone lied to you, what a shame. And as for Harrington? It's what you get when you deal with those people who think themselves intellectuals. And anyway people wanted DLA fought for and saved, WOW didn't do that so they-you are as bad as anyone mentioned Marsh.

BTW, how much have you and Frankin been paid by the various media sources for interviews?

[Reply](#)

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**Jacqueline Evans** 13 December 2013 at 12:11

And if I were Sue I'd be having you done for libel.  
You Admin, are not a supporter of the disabled, no-one with such an ego as yourself can care about anyone but themselves! Are you related to IDS in some way, or do you work for him...

1 year ago



**The eGremlin**

1 year ago



**Dawn Willis sharing the News & Views of the Mentally Wealthy » Doing What Comes.....unnaturally**

1 year ago



**Benefit Scrounging Scum**

1 year ago



**Jane Young**

2 years ago



**Funky Mango's Musings**

2 years ago



**Caron's Musings**

2 years ago



**Collected Walk**

2 years ago

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**Gilded Cage**

[We are Spartacus](#)



**Martin Holder** 13 December 2013 at 21:04

Sounds like you condone government lying? Are you a complete air-head or just plain ignorant? So the next time someone lies to you i'm guessing you will be happy? Ha ha, you mug.



**BettysBlues** 16 January 2014 at 01:06

It is very cynical to claim they are doing it for pay. for many of us it is a life and death issue. Sue Marsh and Frankin (not sure that's spelled right) have been absolute champions for those of us unable to deal with the media, and since they are both seriously disabled it is the very font of human kindness that makes them fight everyone's corner.

I just hope you don't have a nasty accident or develop a serious disability because then you might eat your words and find out the hard way what is happening. developing a serious illness as you age is quite common, and most people underestimate the possibility of that happening. it could be you, and it's much much more likely than winning the lottery.

I

[Reply](#)



**Jacqueline Evans** 13 December 2013 at 12:25

Could this Harrington not stand up in front of people and tell them that the Government lied (yet again), and that he NEVER said what they say he said?

[Reply](#)



**Nick** 13 December 2013 at 13:08

the bottom line is in that IDS can do what he likes as the public aren't interested by and large and thats always been the case and will never change

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**BettysBlues** 16 January 2014 at 01:09

the public are getting the picture. Anyone who does not have the wealth or assets to keep themselves and their family if they lose their job or god forbid, their health, is like a turkey voting for Xmas if they vote for this current shower of-----.

[Reply](#)



**MW** 13 December 2013 at 15:24

This is just another foot-note of this government wanting to change our lives in such a fundamental way that it is everyone for themselves - the rich can get richer, the poor can die or look out for themselves, and the disabled may as well head over the nearest cliff or be put down at birth.

No social security, no job security, no decent wages, no society what-so-ever.

Will it change.....

Vote in 2015 & see.....

I doubt it will make a jot of difference!

[Reply](#)



**roughdiamond33** 13 December 2013 at 15:49

So basically they ignored Harrington, blatantly lied and pushed ahead regardless and Harrington did sod all about it. He just rolled over and accepted it as a 'political' decision - disgusting and he has blood on his hands as well as the rest of them for that.

Wish I could believe the ministers responsible will be held to account but they won't. DWP and IDS appear to be untouchable - the NAO or DWP select committee have no teeth, as has been proved this week.

So where do we go from here and how do we hold them to account?

I know there are some really decent Labour MPs who are doing their bit and it's great that

Grahame Morris and John McDonnell have secured the WOW petition debate in the New Year, but I'm worried that the debate will come and go and things will continue to get worse in the meantime.

As this government tries to remove our right to protest I think its more important than ever to get out on the street and make our voices heard. There needs to be a huge national protest organised in the New Year which brings every anti-austerity and disabled activist group together in unity. It could be as big as the Save Our NHS demo in Manchester, if we can get the students, unions, and People's Assembly onside too.

[Reply](#)



**quantumcelt** 13 December 2013 at 16:53

Sadly this is just more preaching to the choir, the general public have been drowned in a bath of anti benefit propaganda. Those that don't actively despise claimants of any hue, the unemployed, sick, disabled etcetera, just don't care. I personally have been verbally abused on several occasions while using a mobility scooter, one nice middle aged woman informed me that she had mobility problems too, but continued to work, unlike myself and all the other "fucking scroungers who are ruining this country!". Legal challenges are a joke, even if a ruling goes against the government they just nip back up to parliament and amend the law they just broke, then carry on regardless. The deafening silence on the many welfare 'reforms' from Labour tells you all you need to know about how futile voting is. Sorry but I've just reached the despondent stage, the only future I see for myself and my disabled son is sitting in a wheelchair on a roadside begging for change.

[Reply](#)

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**BettysBlues** 16 January 2014 at 01:16

I really believe that Labour is the least of the evils. The Tories want to cut another £12 billion from working age adults, and many of us can't take any more cuts. As someone said upthread, the disabled may as well jump off a cliff - especially if the Tories get in again. Labour might not be great, but for people like me, well, I don't think I will want to live much longer if we have to endure another Tory led government. Please vote against them, they are both incompetent and evil.

[Reply](#)



**Martin Holder** 13 December 2013 at 20:49

We all know that come election time the government will be sliding up your path looking for your vote. Well when they come stinking up my doorstep i will ask them where they have been for the last five years when the disabled people have needed their care and support and i will tell them in a very colorful language to go away!!!

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**Jacqueline Evans** 14 December 2013 at 12:07

Re: Your earlier comment to me.  
I am totally against what this government has done to the disabled, the poor, the poorly paid, the pensioners etc.  
I myself am badly disabled so don't need lectures from the likes of you!  
I am NOT and never have condoned government lying!  
I am NOT and air head.  
I am NOT ignorant - far from it.  
I am NOT a mug - but you are!



**Martin Holder** 14 December 2013 at 13:18

Jacqueline, i am sorry you thought i was writing to you. My reply was to the Admin comment above yours, but as it came under yours i did wonder if you might think it was a reply to you. Hope you are not too upset. I totally agree with what you said. I was calling Admin a mug.



**westerby1** 14 December 2013 at 20:22

Martin, It is obvious that you were replying to Admin, under his comment there is an arrow saying replies followed by a reply from Jacqueline and one from yourself.

There is nothing under Jacqueline's comment to show any replies to her. It is Jacqueline who is wrong you have nothing to apologise for.



**Martin Holder** 15 December 2013 at 08:34

Thanks Westerbyl. It's ok, Jacqueline just mis-read the comment. Thanks for your help clearing up the matter. Stupid Admin got us arguing with the wrong people, is Admin a coalition supporter?



**Jacqueline Evans** 15 December 2013 at 11:53

My sincere apologies Martin. I was angry and upset, as many of us are due to what is happening, but that is still no excuse for being so nasty.  
I will always admit when I am wrong and I know I am and ask that you see it as a genuine mistake.  
Again, my sincere apologies.  
Jay



**Martin Holder** 15 December 2013 at 18:42

Thank you, it's ok, please don't worry. I really understand and i am glad you had the reaction you did. If i was you and thought my comment was to you, i would have said the same thing! Lol. X

[Reply](#)



**Jacqueline Evans** 14 December 2013 at 12:12

I am hoping that Scotland gets Independence as we won't ever have to put up with those from Westminster. We will also NEVER have a Tory party ever again.  
I see the difference in the NHS and the welfare system here and I see how we are being dragged down due to this coalition government. I may not like Salmond, but I do admire him for actually doing what's best for the people of Scotland.

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**westerby1** 14 December 2013 at 20:32

Jacqueline,

I think you owe Martin Holder an apology, his comment that you were annoyed about was a reply to admin, not you! In fact he has apologised to you even though he has done nothing wrong, poor man!

Under admin's comment there is an arrow saying replies, (ie more than one) underneath are admin's 2 replies, one from you and one from Martin. He was not replying to your reply to admin!

Take a closer look and you will see you made a mistake.



**MW** 19 December 2013 at 16:04

I don't blame you, & if I was in Scotland I would do the same. Wales will be left attached to England, stuck with a Westminster gov we didn't vote for. I wish Wales would have more 'umph' to stand up & be counted. At the moment we just sit on our hands & watch from the sidelines. Well that's how I see it!

[Reply](#)



**Jacqueline Evans** 15 December 2013 at 11:59

westerby !  
I have apologised to Martin and feel I need to apologise to all those who read the nasty comment I made.  
I feel really foolish and ashamed, and regret what I wrote.  
Kind regards  
Jay

[Reply](#)

▼ [Replies](#)

**Martin Holder** 15 December 2013 at 18:37



Thanks Jacqueline. Please don't feel foolish or ashamed, you were standing up for what you believe in, i am fine, it's ok. x



**Sue Marsh** 16 December 2013 at 17:56

Jacqueline, really, don't give it another thought. It's sad that a troll can leave a nasty comment, back off and leave us all to worry we've offended each other.

[Reply](#)



**Nichole Mercado** 17 January 2014 at 04:00

Interesting news. Politics sure can be tricky, and it seems almost everyone is playing dirty. Anyway, its politicians like this that gave [industrial security cameras](#) a bad name. It used to be only used for securing businesses, but now it's a different thing if it's used for government spying. I believe that it was for good intention, but they should find another way to implement strict surveillance.

[Reply](#)



**iParrot Post** 5 February 2014 at 12:24

iParrot Post is a global read and reporting news platform that enable users to post their account of events witnessed, worthy local and International news. iParrot Post is a breaking news portal.iParrot Post exists to provide independent news and information to the masses, comprised of news feeds from around the world. We enable our users and subscribers to submit local News that they see as important. It is also a portal to allow users and subscribers to comment and contribute to the News events of the day.

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**Jennifer Green** 10 February 2014 at 08:52

Avid travelers often find that planning their next travel destination is a tricky business. With their super long bucket list, it's a bit challenging to narrow it down and pick their next best itinerary. For more info visit: [handicapped travel](#)

[Reply](#)



**Trey Rulon** 1 March 2014 at 06:18

Thanks for sharing.  
For more info visit: [Leisure Options](#)

[Reply](#)



**m liansom** 9 March 2014 at 02:04

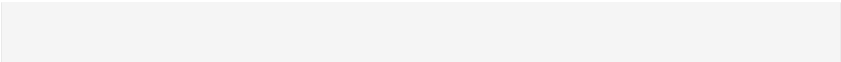
I study your all contain it is really very lovely, look for some relevant details here.  
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**Mahatma Gandhi**



"First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win."



TRENDING

Duncan Smith tells DNS: ‘I’m not going to be accused by you’ ...



NAVIGATE



YOU ARE AT: Home » Benefits and Poverty » Tory conference: PIP claimants will not be spared retests, DWP admits



Tory conference: PIP claimants will not be spared retests, DWP admits

5

BY JOHN PRING ON OCTOBER 6, 2016

BENEFITS AND POVERTY



**The government has confirmed that sick and disabled people who will soon be spared reassessments for out-of-work benefits will still face repeated testing for personal independence payment (PIP).**

Work and pensions secretary Damian Green's one key announcement during this week's party conference in Birmingham was that people with "the most severe lifetime conditions" would no longer have to face repeated assessments to determine their eligibility for employment and support allowance (ESA).

He said the government's duty was to support those disabled people who cannot work, and "sweep away unnecessary stress and bureaucracy which weighs them down".

Green (*pictured, delivering his speech*) added: "If someone has a disease which can only get worse, making them turn up for repeated appointments to claim what they need is pointless bureaucratic nonsense."

The announcement was widely welcomed, although disabled campaigners said the change would do nothing to change the essential unfairness and inflexibility of the work capability assessment (WCA) process.

They also said that the same group of working-age disabled people now set to be exempted from repeated WCAs should also be given an opt-out from PIP reassessments, a call backed by the Green party co-leader, Jonathan Bartley.

But a Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) spokeswoman confirmed that such claimants would still have to face repeated PIP assessments, even if exempt from further WCAs.

She said: "PIP is an independent benefit, completely separate to ESA/universal credit, with processes adapted for its claimants.

"Award rates and their durations are set on an individual basis, based on the claimant's needs and the likelihood of their needs changing.

"Regular reviews for PIP claimants are a key feature of the benefit, and ensure that benefit payments accurately match the current needs of claimants."

When DNS attempted to clarify this response, another DWP spokeswoman added: "PIP is a separate benefit to ESA, and reassessments will continue as part of current policy."

A third spokeswoman then confirmed that Green's announcement, and the change in policy, applied only to ESA reassessments and not to PIP.

DWP has also provided some details about which ESA claimants will be exempt from repeat WCAs.

A DWP spokeswoman said the criteria would be based on identifying claimants who have a condition that is: lifelong; severe (in “functional terms”); “often progressive and incurable”; with “no realistic prospect of recovery”; and results in high and “minimally fluctuating” care needs, “such that it would be unreasonable to expect the individual to undertake any form or amount of work or work-related activity”.

The exemption will only apply to claimants in the ESA support group – for those with the highest barriers to work – and not to anyone in the work-related activity group (WRAG), while the same criteria will apply to those who claim the equivalent of ESA through the new universal credit.

She said DWP would be “working with stakeholders” to develop those criteria, and it was “too early” to estimate how many people will be affected every year.

Disabled People Against Cuts said the move could potentially “save tens of thousands of disabled people a lot of stress, fear and uncertainty about their financial security”, but questioned why it had taken eight years for DWP’s “geniuses” to “work out there is no point in reassessing people who cannot get better”, and also called for it to apply to PIP re-assessments.

A DPAC spokesman said the announcement showed that the “fightback against the atrocities of austerity is starting to work”.

He said: “The Tories have realised that they now have gained a terrible reputation as persecutors of disabled people and their worst fear of widespread public revulsion [at this] is actually beginning to happen.”

Both the Liberal Democrats and Labour promised at their annual party conferences last month to scrap the WCA.

Sue Bott, deputy chief executive of Disability Rights UK, welcomed the announcement, and said: “We have long argued that such assessments are a waste of money and put disabled people with progressive conditions through unnecessary stress.”

But she added: “However, what is really needed is a complete overhaul of ESA alongside an improvement in support for disabled people who are looking for work.”

And she said plans to cut £30-a-week from new WRAG claimants from next April needed Green’s “urgent attention”.

Green also talked at length in his conference speech about the need to “tackle attitudes, not laws”, suggesting no change in his department’s reliance on encouraging employers to employ more disabled people – particularly through its much-criticised Disability Confident programme – rather than punishing those that discriminate.

He became the latest minister to praise Britain’s successful Paralympians – and their “celebration of what people can do” – and pointed to the example of Molly Hyndman-Cunningham, a disabled student who had just given a speech to the conference on her own experiences of work.

The second-year law student, who has a part-time job in Boots, had talked about the challenges of coping with her condition,

Ehlers-Danlos syndrome, and of how much she enjoyed being part of a team at work.

She told delegates: “I think it is essential that more people with disabilities are given the opportunity to work.

“I now feel reintegrated into society. It has improved my confidence and self-worth in a way I never thought was possible.”

But Hyndman-Cunningham also said that neither her university nor her employer knew about her impairment, so it was not clear how her experience demonstrated positive employer attitudes, as Green appeared to suggest in his speech.

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ABOUT

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Disability News Service (DNS) is run by John Pring, an experienced journalist who has been reporting on disability issues for nearly 20 years.

He launched DNS in April 2009 to address the absence of in-depth reporting in both the specialist and mainstream media on issues that affect the lives of disabled people. [read more](#)

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## DPAC's Response to the ending repeat assessments for severe, lifelong conditions

News

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This morning Work and Pensions Secretary Damien Green [announced](#) that disabled people with permanent or progressive conditions would no longer have to go through repeat assessments.

We need to see the detail before we can welcome this, and we know that DWP are masters of manipulating the detail of complex social security policy to disguise some of their worst misdeeds, so we will be scrutinising very closely when formal announcements are made.

Already people are starting to ask some awkward questions about this announcement. Does it cover PIP as well as WCA? What conditions are covered? Will the atrocious practice of frequent reassessments of people in mental distress continue, which can only be seen as deliberate harassment which can only lead to a worsening in people's mental health?

But for the people who now will be spared reassessment and uncertainty, of course it will be a huge relief. Potentially it could save tens of thousands of disabled people a lot of stress, fear and uncertainty about their financial security. Plus the announcement contains a public admission by Green that the WCA process is stressful and harmful to claimants.

But we can't help but wonder how it took the geniuses at the DWP eight sodding years, since the WCA was introduced by Labour, to work out there is no point in reassessing people who cannot get better.

Actually we think that this has more to do with reports from earlier this year that assessments of disabled people are [costing more than they save](#) and a need to reduce costs, than any sense of humanity from a DWP that we know and loathe.

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headed, but you shouldn't be hard-hearted."

Perhaps if Green didn't want to be seen as hard hearted, he shouldn't have [voted in favour of](#) Universal Credit, the Bedroom Tax, the Benefit Cap, limiting the annual rise in benefit payments to 1%, the ESA Wrag £30/week cut, and the closure of the Independent Living Fund (and those are just a few examples of his dark hearted voting record.)

This is of course just pre-conference spin to try to improve the Tories toxic reputation on their shabby treatment of disabled people.

If May and Green want disabled people to see them as anything other than dark hearted thugs in posh clothes, they will have to start by reversing a string of atrocities enacted on disabled people by a government in which both May and Green were cabinet ministers.

But what Green's announcement does show is that the fightback against the atrocities of austerity is starting to work. The Tories have realised that they now have gained a terrible reputation as persecutors of disabled people

and their worst fear of [widespread public revulsion](#) of this is actually beginning to happen.

Also this conference season we've seen both Labour pledge to [scrap WCA and "Punitive Sanctions"](#) (a welcome step in the right direction) and the Liberal Democrats to [scrap WCA and more](#). If you can believe any pledge the LibDems make any more after tuition fees and their enabling of the Tory led Coalition that caused disabled people so much harm.

And from Labour, again we need to see more detail, we need the emphasis to shift from the mantra of getting disabled people into work to a recognition that policy for disabled people must be about full inclusion in all aspects of society not just employment. And a recognition that many disabled people can't work. And we want from Labour an apology for bringing in the WCA in the first place and a full admission recognising the harm that they have caused.

But at least these policy shifts are sign that all the major parties are beginning to take disabled people's rights more seriously at long last, but both Labour and the Lib Dems have a long way to go and the Tories have the breadth of continents to travel before DPAC will be able to state that any of the major parties policies are adequate for disabled people.

So while we can take a little time off to celebrate a small victory, now is the time to pile on the pressure.

**We call on all of our members, supporters and allies to *fight even harder*.**

Lets force more concessions from May and Green, now that they are realising they are vulnerable to our fightback, and that we can toxify the Tory brand so thoroughly that they will be remembered for ever as the Party that made disabled people's lives a living hell.

If you can get to Birmingham to oppose the Tory conference – [here are the protests that DPAC will be running or tanking part in](#). Join us there.

But just as importantly, if you can't get to Brum here are the online activities we have [prepared to toxify the Tory Conference](#) online.

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Bob



Posted by Bob at 14:10

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1. **Stu** says:  
[October 2, 2016 at 11:11](#)

All them disabled murdered by the torys and there leader is a christian. Well for thing they will be going to HELL it to good for them

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2. **Cliff Sellers** says:  
[October 2, 2016 at 10:46](#)

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emphysema, degenerative spinal back pain, heart failure, at the stroke of a pen without offering any surgical alternative. With the added stress of insecurity & worry it appears the government are more concerned about the suicide rate than the suffering they are inflicting on disabled people.

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3. **Denise McKenna** says:  
[October 1, 2016 at 20:56](#)



Excellent response DPAC, my views exactly. Denise, Mental Health Resistance Network

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# DWP fit-to-work assessments cost more money than they save, report reveals

Government will pay £1.6bn in next three years to private contractors who carry out controversial assessments

Oliver Wright Political Editor | [@oliver\\_wright](#) | Friday 8 January 2016 |



Meg Hillier says taxpayers have been left to foot the bill for failure *Teri Pengilley*

The Government is spending more money assessing whether people are fit to work than it is saving in



reductions to the benefits bill, a damning official report has revealed

The study by the National Audit Office (NAO) found that the Department for Work and Pensions is handing over £1.6bn over the next three years to private contractors who carry out the controversial health and disability assessments.

But at the same time, the Government's own financial watchdog has warned that savings in benefits payments are likely to be less than a billion pounds by 2020 as a result of the new tests.

The NAO report also found:

- The cost of carrying out each employment and support allowance (ESA) test had risen from £115 to £190 after the controversial outsourcing firm Atos pulled out of its contract to run the tests last year.
- Benefit claimants are still waiting for more than six months before they are assessed during which time they are not entitled to full payments.
- None of the companies carrying out the tests met the Government's own quality assessment threshold – with reports including spelling mistakes and unintelligible acronyms.



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**Britons driven to food banks 'seen as collateral damage by DWP'**

The report found evidence that ministers set completely unrealistic targets for the number of ESA assessments that could be carried out each year.

As a result, there is a backlog of at least 280,000 new claims while ministers have been forced to suspend plans to carry out periodic reassessments of those already claiming the benefit.

“The Department is paying more for assessments, but providers are still not meeting expected performance levels,” said Amyas Morse, head of the NAO.

“The Department needs providers to complete the planned number of assessments so that it can achieve the significant benefit savings it expects to make over the next few years.” The report also found significant problems with the American outsourcing company Maximus which took over the contract to



carry out ESA assessments from Atos.

Only half of all the doctors and nurses hired to carry out the assessments completed their training against a target of 95 per cent, while average staff costs rose from £26,000 in 2014 to £44,000 last year.

Over the summer the company was carrying out just 37,000 face-to-face assessments a month compared with a target of 57,000. It had carried out 10,000 fewer paper assessments than it had promised the Government.

As a result of the NAO report Iain Duncan Smith and senior Department for Work and Pensions officials are likely to be called to explain the failures to the Commons Public Accounts Committee.

Its chair, Meg Hillier, said disabled people and taxpayers in general had been “failed” by the department’s inability to manage the assessments.

“The department’s approach has been unclear, its targets untested and consistently missed and future delivery is under threat,” she said.

“With the annual cost of assessments now expected to rise to a staggering £579m in 2016-17, taxpayers have been left to foot the bill.

“Contracting out the delivery of public services does not absolve the department from its responsibilities to ensure that taxpayers’ money is well spent,” Ms Hillier said. “The department needs to do more to ensure private providers deliver a better deal for sick and disabled people as assessments have a huge impact on their ability to access vital cash to live with dignity.”

Debbie Abrahams, Labour’s shadow minister for disabled people, said the Government was in a “cycle of optimistic targets, contractual underperformance and costly recovery”.



**Man has benefits sanctioned while waiting to start job with the DWP**

“Too many disabled people have been badly let down by these assessments and this research shows that it’s not only been costly for those who’ve been mistreated, but all taxpayers,” she said.

“It’s yet another example of incompetence from the DWP and a thorough overhaul of the systems is desperately needed.”

A Department for Work and Pensions spokesman said: “We welcome the NAO’s recognition that we have made significant progress to improve contracted-out health and disability assessments. We are determined to support more people into work and provide individuals who can’t with the correct support that they need – the effective assessment of people’s abilities is key to this.”

“To ensure that support is targeted correctly and that we achieve value for money, we operate a strict competitive contract tendering process and factor all costs into departmental spending plans. This also ensures that the quality of the assessments for claimants improves at the same time.” ●

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# Britons driven to food banks by poverty seen as 'collateral damage' by DWP, says Trussell Trust

Exclusive: Britain's biggest food bank provider says the Government has threatened the charity for speaking out on the issue

Jonathan Owen | Saturday 2 January 2016 | 



Volunteer Sandra Black packs food at the Trussell Trust Constitution Street food bank *Getty*

Hundreds of thousands of Britons driven to food banks by poverty in the past year are seen as



“collateral damage” by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), according to Chris Mould, chair of the Trussell Trust.

The Government has spent years in denial of the existence of food poverty and continues to threaten the charity for speaking out on the issue, he said.

The Trussell Trust is Britain’s biggest provider of food banks, with more than 420 around the country. But despite years of repeated attempts by the charity, Iain Duncan-Smith, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions who has accused the organisation of scaremongering, has never met its representatives, said Mr Mould.

“We’ve asked on many occasions over many years and we’ve always suggested that we’d like to have a conversation with his department about the issues that we see.”

He added: “The only time we’ve had access to the Department for Work and Pensions at any sensible process of dialogue was during the early part of the Coalition government in 2010-2011 when they were consulting on issues relating to the social fund and welfare reform.”

Lives are at stake, said Mr Mould, who ran the Central Police Training and Development Authority and NHS trusts in Wiltshire and Bedfordshire before becoming involved with the charity more than a decade ago.

“We are dealing with people who have been going hungry but, more importantly, have come to a point where they see no point in continuing to live. What makes me angry is that I’ve met too many people who have been driven to that place by inadequate implementation of existing public service and policy.”

He added: “There are many people who have told me that the food bank saved their lives and several instances of people where that’s absolutely true; they had reached the end of their



### **Food bank volunteers face growing battle as benefits crisis bites**

tether and they were planning to commit suicide.”

Food-bank use in Britain is at record levels. More than one million food parcels, each providing enough food for three days, were given out between 2014 and 2015, more than 400,000 of which went to children. In recognition of the growing problem, the Big Lottery Fund gave the Trussell Trust £748,423

last month. In more than 40 per cent of cases, the main reason for people needing food parcels is related to delays or changes to their benefits, says the charity. Although official figures are not yet available, food banks were busier than usual over Christmas.

Commenting on the DWP’s refusal to have a meaningful dialogue with the charity and its stance on the plight of Britons who cannot afford to eat, Mr Mould said: “I would imagine they see it as collateral damage as they implement new policy and they don’t intend to divert or adjust their policy, so it’s better not to hear. That’s how it feels.”

Attempts by officials to undermine the charity continue but are more subtle than tactics used in the past, he said. Last year The Independent revealed how a senior aide to Iain Duncan-Smith had warned Mr Mould that the “Government might try to shut you down”, because of the charity’s campaigning on food poverty. Asked if such threats persisted, Mr Mould said: “What’s happened is that the messages are passed through in a more subtle way, that’s all I can really say. What we hear is that we will never get access to policy makers in Government.” He added: “We get told that if we were to say less, and to be less regular in the saying of what we say, we would then get the chance to have conversations with Government departments.”

Food poverty in Britain is set to worsen in the coming years, he fears. “We have to face the reality that what we are seeing now is just the beginning,” he told the IoS. “The measure must



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be that when things go wrong, we fast-track putting them right. But we have a Government department that tolerates without shame situations where people have no access to financial support for months on end at times.

“If you were to take the same principle and apply it to the health service and say, ‘A tiny proportion of patients won’t get a good service’, and as a consequence they don’t get better and die, there would be a scandal. Because you would never be allowed to consider that that’s how you would operate a public service.”



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In a statement, a Government spokesman said: “Britain has a proud tradition of volunteering and of civil society and faith groups providing support to vulnerable people and this Government welcomes that. We know that the reasons for food-bank use are complex and often overlapping, so it is misleading to claim that it is driven by benefit delays. The vast majority of benefits are paid on time and improvements are being made year on year.”

He added: “We continue to spend around £80bn a year on working-age benefits so we have a strong safety net in place to support millions of people who are unemployed or on low incomes.” ●

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