



From cuts...

...to Resistance

**Disabled people's
experiences under
"welfare reform"**

2010–2014



**Inclusion
London**
Promoting Equality For London's
Deaf and Disabled People



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Front cover: Not Dead Yet protest against the Assisted Dying bill, July 2014. Photograph: Demotix

Back cover: Reclaiming our Futures demo for inclusive education, August 2013. Photograph: Christopher John Ball

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**“If you are vulnerable
and in need, we will
look after you.”**

David Cameron, 2011



**10,000 cuts and counting,
28 September 2013.**

Photograph: Charles Shearer, Snapstoughts



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Foreword

Since May 2010, a war has been raging against disabled people in the United Kingdom. The price of austerity paid not by the wealthy, or the bankers who caused the financial crash, but by those who did least to cause it and are least able to survive it.

Welcome to a Britain where dying men are declared fit for work, disabled people are forced from their homes by the Bedroom Tax, and a mother takes her own life by walking into a busy motorway. A family is forced to pay a tax on their dead son's bedroom. Families choose between heating and eating.

Welfare 'reform' has not saved the government a penny, but has made countless lives unbearable. A million visits made to foodbanks. Hundreds of thousands hit by the bedroom tax. A billion pounds cut from carers. Tens of thousands waiting months for disability benefit payments that never come.

Meanwhile, the private companies pillaging the welfare state have presided over assessments so cruel and wrong-headed that people have even taken their own lives. Draconian sanctions, which back up this new system, have driven families to destitution. Advice centres have been closed down, job centres deliberately pushed into conflict with their clients, the legal aid system ripped apart.

All the while, the corporate scroungers carry on evading their taxes and letting tax credits subsidise their poverty pay. And in another, parallel Britain, lives go on as normal.

That's why this collection of testimonies is so incredibly important. What have disabled people left to fight with but their stories and communities forged strong under stress?

With no-one listening, they have had to tell their stories again and again and again. Heartbreaking, enraging, important stories like the ones gathered here. Those stories are living testimony to the times in which we are living. And they are a call to action.

The government might have thought they were taking on the most vulnerable in society, but disabled people have put up the fight of their lives, built protests online and offline, and created grassroots campaigns fired by passionate self-belief.

Truth and testimony may be the only weapons disabled people have left to fight with. But in the end, they may just be the only weapons they need.

Ros Wynne-Jones
Daily Mirror Real Britain
columnist





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The beginning for Disabled People Against Cuts: disabled people led the October 2010 Right to Work protest outside the Conservative party conference

Context

“The scale and level of attack on disabled people since 2010 has been unprecedented. The freedoms and rights hard won by our movement over the past 30 years are all under threat, from benefit cuts and the dismantling of the welfare state to the crisis in social care, local service cuts and the closure of the independent living fund.”

Tracey Lazard, CEO Inclusion London

“Disabled people are enduring a vicious assault of cuts and hate propaganda from the austerity zealots in the coalition government who’ve been targeting disabled people, who they perceived as being the weakest in society. They were wrong. DPAC was formed to show them and everyone else that disabled people can and will fight back against oppression and will continue to do so as long as that oppression exists, and it’s an honour to be part of that movement for change.”

Bob Ellard, Disabled People Against Cuts

Disabled people will lose £28.3bn of support by 2018

Destination Unknown: April 2013

“Our research reveals that disabled people are bearing the brunt of the austerity measures”

Claudia Wood, Demos

“Why should disabled people be made to bear the brunt of a crisis that we had nothing to do with making? The Conservatives and Lib-Dems had no political mandate to single out people who face disabling barriers of all ages, our families and carers for the harshest and disproportionate treatment. This government is attempting to turn the clock back over 30 years. This is resulting in deaths, suicides, isolation, institutionalisation and unprecedented levels of poverty for many disabled people and their families. The impact of the changes introduced by the Coalition Government together with the cuts in local services are devastating. I believe they represent cruel and degrading treatment and I appeal to the United Nations to hold our Government to account for violating the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.”

Mark Harrison, CEO Equal Lives (formerly Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People)

Disabled people will pay 9 times more towards reducing the budget deficit than the average citizen; and the severely disabled nineteen times more.

Source: A Fair Society? How the cuts target disabled people: Centre for Welfare Reform

“The government’s focus on alleged fraud and overclaiming to justify cuts in disability benefits has caused an increase in resentment & abuse directed at disabled people”

The Guardian, 5 February 2012



Prior to 2010 even the most seasoned disabled people’s rights campaigner would have had difficulty imagining what the next few years had in store.

Back in 2005 when the last government launched the “Improving Life Chances of Disabled People” report, disabled people, rightly, complained that 2025 was too long away to wait for full disability equality.

Little did we think that within 10 years the UK would become the first country in the world to be investigated by the United Nations for grave and systematic violation of disabled people’s rights.

Soon after the Coalition government came to power George Osborne announced a target of cutting Disability Living allowance by twenty percent. A figure without correlation to the actual needs of disabled people and far above the 0.5% rate of DLA benefit fraud. It was a herald of things to come.

Increasingly horror stories began to emerge about disabled people wrongly found fit for work whose benefits had been stopped, left with no other means of income. Some took their own lives. Others were made more ill or died as a result of the stress.

Over the next few years the cuts came thick and fast affecting every aspect of disabled people’s lives from benefit cuts to the slashing of frontline services to the closure of the Remploy factories. The passing of the Welfare Reform Act brought in

a new swathe of attacks including the notorious 'bedroom tax' and changes to council tax support. The same group of people was being hit again and again and again.

Far from being all in this together, evidence clearly showed that disabled people – those facing the biggest barriers in society to start with – were being disproportionately impacted by austerity.

Research revealed that disabled people were being hit by the cuts nine times harder than the average person in the UK. For disabled people with the highest support needs that figure rose to nineteen times.

By the end of this Parliament disabled people will have lost more than 28 billion pounds in benefits and entitlements. That's 28 billion from people who had nothing to begin with: disabled people are twice as likely to live in poverty than non-disabled people.

Not content with leaving disabled people impoverished, the government has sought to justify what it is doing, with help from elements of the media, by whipping up hostility towards benefit claimants. Time and again Iain Duncan Smith, Secretary of State for the Department for Work and Pensions, has been pulled up for misuse and abuse of statistics.

We are told that we have a broken welfare system and that government reforms are targeting resources at those with the greatest need.

Context



Meanwhile what has really been happening under the Coalition government is that the rich have been getting richer while the poor have been getting poorer.

Despite everything throw at us, if the government thought disabled people would be an easy target, they were wrong.

Disabled people have a strong tradition of resistance. We fought our way out of the institutions to have the right to live in the community alongside non-disabled family and friends. We fought for accessible transport. For many of us our whole lives have been spent fighting against continuing discrimination, stigma and prejudice.

Since 2010 disabled people have been fighting back every way we can from lobbying MPs to research to the law courts to direct actions and protests.

We haven't been doing it alone. The Coalition attacks are not just against disabled people but against the whole 99%.

Disabled people have built alliances with anti cuts groups and the trade unions. In so doing we have raised awareness and understanding about disability equality, all the stronger for being grounded in the experience of shared struggle.

In contrast to traditional images of disabled people as objects of pity and victims, we have shown disabled people to be capable, organised and determined, not only within our own movement, but at the forefront of the wider anti austerity movement.



Liz Crowe — In Actual Fact

'From cuts... to resistance' is a tribute to all those who have suffered since 2010. Every day disabled people frightened, angry, in despair contact Disabled People Against Cuts to speak out and share their stories in the hope it will lead to change. The stories collected here are just a few out of thousands and thousands of similar terrible experiences.

This publication is also a celebration of our many victories since 2010 - against Atos, against the bedroom tax, against the discrimination of the Work Capability Assessment to name a few - achieved not by disabled people on our own as the "hardest hit" but as part of our wider communities united in opposition to social injustice.

'From cuts... to resistance' bears testament to the courage of disabled people and our allies, to the pursuit of a fair society and to the power of our collective strength.

As we head towards the May 2015 General Election we have another job to do, to mobilise our communities and to get our voices heard. It is on us to make sure that no future government ever again thinks they can get away with trampling on the rights and interests of disabled people in the way we have seen since 2010.

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Christopher John Ball — Blackburn, A Town and its People

10,000 cuts and counting 28 September 2013.
Photograph: Pete Riches



10,000 CUTS & COUNTING
SCRAP ATOS
END THE WORK CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT

IT'S ABOUT INDEPENDENCE, INNIT!

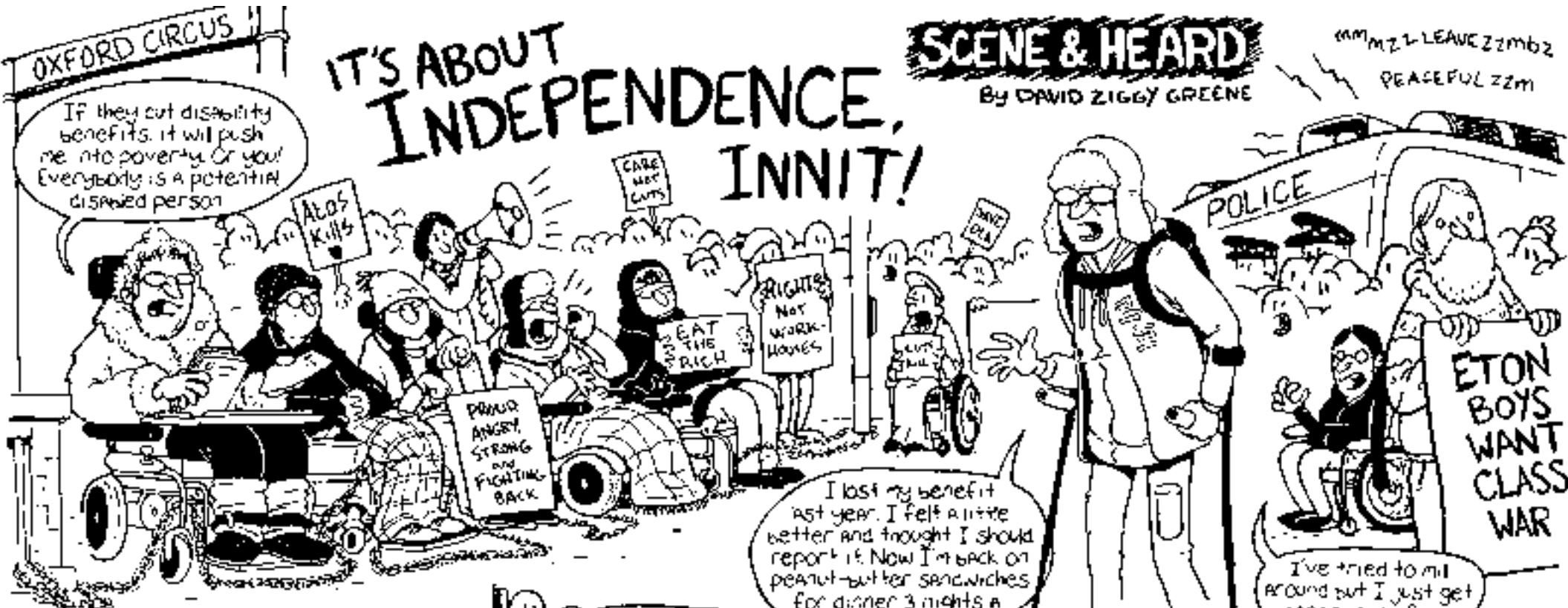
SCENE & HEARD

By DAVID ZIGGY GREENE

MM MZ L-LEAVE Zzm6z

PEACEFUL Zzm

If they cut disability benefits, it will push me into poverty. Or you! Everybody is a potential disabled person



I lost my benefit last year. I felt a little better and thought I should report it. Now I'm back on peanut butter sandwiches for dinner 3 nights a week.

I've tried to mull around but I just get arses in my face.

A lot of disabled people won't move to cheaper areas. They'd rather live in a room like Victorian times. They need to keep their societies together.

I lost benefit because I am unable to work. Benefit only sufficient for subsistence. But even if benefit was higher, I still could not go out for fun, recreation or socialisation.

I got rheumatic arthritis, fibrosis of the lungs, under-active thyroid and a pacemaker. I'm just not very well! *Stina*
But the £40 a week helps give me simple pleasures in life.

Fit for work

“The Department has not succeeded in incentivising Work Programme providers to support harder-to-help claimants into work. Almost 90% of Employment and Support Allowance claimants on the Work Programme have not moved into jobs.”

Margaret Hodge MP, Chair of the Committee of Public Accounts

“To ATOS: where to start? Let’s start with my son’s father who was sent to you through his work. He was very, very ill. He could not work because of his condition, which by the way you did not assess properly. In fact, I don’t think you did a proper medical on him! You told him that he was ‘fit for work’ and were signing him off sickness and that he would have to return to work after his last interview with him. He died. You, ATOS, called him to ask where he was as he had an appointment with you. I told you that he died the day before and you slammed the phone down on me. Not one word of condolences or sympathy for our loss. Just empty silence. Did you know what was wrong with him? Did you actually look at him properly? I think not! He worked hard all his life and was never on sickness till he began to get ill... So Rest in Peace my poor Davy. This government failed you. You were a hard-working man who tried his best to keep his family and home together. After putting into the system for all those years, the system failed you when you needed help!”

“My son was once fit for work. So he worked. He worked hard. He enjoyed working. He loved being fit and strong and healthy and able to work for a living. Then, just before his twentieth birthday, he was diagnosed with leukaemia.

Since then, he’s gone through years of intensive treatment and suffered the most horrendous side effects. His skin has thickened, his teeth have crumbled, his bones have crumbled leaving him in need of double hip and shoulder replacement operations. The worst times though were when he contracted life threatening infections, with no immunity he often wondered if he would make it to his next birthday, or even til the end of the week. Even after the bone marrow transplant he lived in fear that it would not be successful, and as well as internal bleeding, the side effects caused the inside of his mouth to disintegrate. Even rigged up to morphine 24/7 the pain was unbearable. ...

My son is looking forward to a time when he is once again fit for work. When he is once again strong and fit and healthy. He wants nothing more. He dreams of nothing more. In the meantime he receives disability benefits. But he has two arms, two legs and an ability to walk. So now he must face a work capability assessment. He’s dreading it.”



Photograph: Charles Shearer, Snapstoughts

Trevor Drakard, 50, had severe epilepsy after getting meningitis when he was five months old. He never went more than ten days without a seizure and would fall 'like a tree' to the ground. Heavy medication failed to control his epilepsy and he suffered a broken nose, cheekbone, and jaw, lost his front teeth and split open his head after hitting the pavement during seizures. His condition was judged so severe his employer Remploy deemed him unfit to carry on in employment. Atos put him into the work related activity group. Trevor was panic stricken at the thought he would have to engage in activity when he could suffer an attack at any time or lose his benefits. He hanged himself.

"I just got this information from a nurse friend of mine last night, a man who has type 2 diabetes and severe Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease was brought into hospital last night, aged 61, his ESA was stopped after being found fit to work.

It turns out he has been eating dried corn flakes for the last 5 weeks and has no electric on for 5 weeks. He has had no heating or even been able to boil a kettle for a hot drink. He was not even able to use his nebuliser without the electric.

The cold got to his lungs and his blood sugars have gone dangerously low as type 2 diabetics must eat 3 meals a day and have to keep blood sugar levels level. The nurses chipped in to get him a bottle of squash and some fruit. Apparently, this gentleman is very unwell at the moment. If the Tories and Lib Dems find people's hunger something to laugh at, will they also find this funny?

The sick and vulnerable will end up in hospital beds if they can't eat and stay warm, this man's situation is just a taste of what the future holds for thousands - people's health will suffer."



Photograph: Rowl Images

Cecilia Burns, 51, from County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, had her benefits cut following an Atos assessment. She was undergoing treatment for breast cancer. In an interview with the BBC she said: "I was treated badly. I've been working since I was 17, I've paid all my stamps, all my National Insurance... It has a financial effect on me but it's more [that] they're getting away with it. They are just treating you like a second class citizen. That's how I feel – that I don't count, I don't matter". Cecilia had her benefits reinstated but died just a few weeks later.

Leanne Chambers experienced a worsening of her mental health condition after receiving a letter from the Department for Work and Pensions calling her for an assessment. Her body was found in the River Wear five months later. She had taken her own life.

Linda Wootton had suffered complications from a lung and heart transplant patient. An Atos assessment awarded her nil points. Nine days later after being found 'fit for work' she died.

Karen Sherlock, who had spent her working life in the NHS, had diabetic autonomic neuropathy, gastroparesis and diabetic retinopathy. She was partially sighted with a heart condition, asthma, chronic kidney disease, B12 deficiency, anaemia, high blood pressure and was doubly incontinent. At her assessment she was found fit to take part in work related activity. Left without any money, Karen appealed and the decision was eventually overturned. She died 10 days later.



Photograph: Christopher John Ball

Edward Jacques's Atos assessment took just 23 minutes. His Employment and Support Allowance was stopped despite him suffering from HIV, hepatitis C, sciatica, severe depression, insomnia and dental pain. He died of a drugs overdose at home.

Robert Barlow worked as a government scientist before giving up his job when diagnosed with severe cardiomyopathy. In January 2012 he was found fit for work by Atos. His benefits were stopped three months later as was his access to free prescriptions. He felt too ill to challenge the decision. By the end of his life he could not walk and had poor eyesight. He was also penniless. He died after a fall.

David Barr, 28, took his own life after after he was ruled fit to work and told his money was being stopped. His father met with DWP officials who told him that the decision had been revisited following a review after his son died. They admitted to him that there were gaps in the medical history that they had for David. They said they should have made more of an effort to study David's medical reports. ATOS had ruled David was fit to work despite being on anti psychotic, sleeping tablets and anti depressants. His condition was recorded on his medical assessment as "anxiety and depression". David threw himself from the Forth Road Bridge.

Mark Wood, 44, had a number of complex mental health conditions, but an assessment found him fit for work and concluded his mental health was "normal". His benefits were stopped leaving him with just £40 per week to live on. 5 months later he died of malnutrition weighing just 35kg. His doctor said his body mass index was not compatible with life. A DWP spokesperson later confessed the decision was wrong.

Helen Mullins had a learning difficulty. She was also refused incapacity benefit because she had no official diagnosis of a medical condition. She was also refused Job Seekers Allowance on the grounds she was not fit for work. Helen and her husband Mark survived on his JSA payment of £57.50 per week, doing 12 mile round trips on foot to get food for the week from a Coventry soup kitchen. They were found lying side by side at their home in an apparent suicide pact. Apparently they could not face another winter living off handouts.



Photograph: Christopher John Ball



Liz Crowe — Atos Kills Armbands



Vince Laws — Atos Kills Postcards



No Bedroom Tax Protest

Two thirds of people hit by the bedroom tax are disabled and a further one in ten is caring for a disabled person.

Nearly a third of people affected by the bedroom tax say they have cut back on food and more than a quarter have cut back on heating as a result of the tax.

Source: National Housing Federation

DWP figures released in July 2014 showed 59% of people affected by the bedroom tax were in arrears.

1 in 3 disabled people are being refused a DHP. 9 in 10 disabled people refused a DHP said they have cut back on food and drink and/or household bills.

Source: Making Discretionary Housing Payments work for disabled people, The Papworth Trust (June 2013)

Axe the Bedroom Tax T-Shirt



Bedroom Tax

“My immediate recommendation is that the bedroom tax is abolished”

Raqual Rolnik, United National special rapporteur on housing. September 2013

“This is my story: I owned my own home before having to go to a women’s refuge when my boys were younger. I worked, paid my taxes, and was rehoused in a 3 bed house as my older son has post traumatic stress and sensory issues and autism and needs his own space. I am now being forced to pay 14% of my rent of move house. I am a single parent and sole carer for Tom. My son can NOT share a room with his brother...I myself have had mental health problems for years and have been on medication for a long time. Day to day life is a struggle. I am not sleeping or eating properly and constantly worry about my family’s future. If after the bedroom tax and other benefit cuts come into force and I can no longer pay my rent and bills and can’t cope my son would have to go into care costing the state many thousands of pounds.”

“I worked as a trawler man for 20 years, broke my back about 9 years ago...after 20 years in “active occupation” I spent 8 years coming to terms with being “lucky to be alive” and that I could become paralysed at any time. I only ever claimed basic Income Support due to sickness and low rate DLA. I was getting used to disability, starting to be of use in society, then I was hit with a new assessment. Told on 23rd December last year I failed a medical and money going to stop on 9th Jan...finally won appeal on June 25th. I didn’t get benefits reinstated until September because DWP so far behind. I had ot obtain further socil notes for July and August, despite winning appeal... When I was released from hospital after breaking my back I spent 12 months in a hostel waiting for a one-bedroom accommodation. I was then approached by housing and asked to consider a two bed house as they wer ehaving difficulty finding a one bed for me. The house was in a known problem area and previous tenants had moved after repeated targeting, but I accepted it. Over past 7 years together with housing, neighbours etc, we have turned house and street into nice close community with everyone looking out for each other. I now find that I am going to be evicted in April unless I can find £20 per week out of what will be by then a reduced benefit again.”

“The evidence demonstrates that the bedroom tax doesn’t work, that it will not save taxpayers’ money and that it is not making available more social housing”

The Bedroom Tax in Merseyside: 100 days on. July 2013

Stephanie Bottrill, 53, wrote a series of suicide notes before stepping out in front of a lorry. She was killed instantly. In one of those notes she wrote, "Don't blame yourself for me ending my life. The only people to blame are the Government, no-one else." Stephanie lived alone in a three bedroom house after her son and daughter moved out. She was told that under the bedroom tax she would either have to move to a smaller property or lose £80 a month in housing benefit. Unemployed, she could barely afford to feed herself, let alone pay the shortfall in rent. The smaller property she was offered was six miles away from her friends and family. Stephanie has a history of depression.

"We have now seen over 6 months of the bedroom tax... The first thing that is clear is that the majority... affected are sick and disabled people who were already living on low incomes. So, like so many of the welfare reforms, this is a measure that is principally hitting the most vulnerable people in society, making their difficult situations even worse. Most of the people we have seen are unable to work for health reasons, so were already living in poverty even before this measure came in."

Margaret Lynch, CEO, Citizen Advice Scotland

"I live in a council house in east Yorkshire with my disabled daughter. After separating from my husband in April I was £700 a month down with his money gone. The council then informed me I had £25.00 a week to pay rent because he wasn't living here, so I asked how can they work out I should pay rent when I am less money than before to be told that my daughter's benefit is classed as a wage.! And I had to pay £19 a fortnight council tax. So after assessing my incomings and outgoings it leaves me £47 a week to live on. Then a couple of days ago I had a letter telling me my daughter's benefits will be stopped in their opinion my daughter is capable to work and she has an interview with jobseekers... my daughter can't dress herself or go anywhere unsupervised as she is unsteady on her feet. She has had two broken ankles and 6 badly sprained ankles in the last 18 month. She has short term memory loss.. She was born with hydrocephalus, cerebral palsy and epilepsy... Now in April I have to pay for a bedroom that isn't used!"

“The bedroom tax will affect me even though I currently have zero income, it will affect me even though I’ve been trying to move into a smaller property since last year (before I even heard of the bedroom tax). Because of failures by Atos and DWP my income has been stopped, I have no one else to support me & I can only hope that the DWP reconsiders their decision to stop my benefit. You have to understand I didn’t choose to be injured and develop a chronic condition because the NHS failed to treat me injuries properly, I’d also like you to know that I have job offers & I have done both voluntary work and permitted work trials. Unfortunately a few hours work can trigger my condition for weeks... I want to work but my specialist has said I won’t get better even if I manage my condition well, he has said if it is aggravated it will get worse quicker and cost more for the state to manage.”

“My current partner moved in in 2001. He is agoraphobic with social phobias who also self harms. My son took his own life in Feb 2012. The ways the bedroom tax will affect me are my partner cannot leave the home so how could I possibly move? I can only very occasionally get him in the garden. The only 1 bed properties are bungalows which we don’t qualify for (too young) and high rise flats, he would be a prisoner in one of those, I spent 22 years in a high rise so I feel I’ve done my time. Because of my hubby’s social phobias he has a bedroom that he retreats to when he needs to shut himself away so we have made a bedroom like a living room for him. Of the loved ones I’ve lost all I have is memories(I am now crying while writing this). my son’s room is still his bedroom, I can feel him in this house I can see him in my mind in this house and I do not want this taken away. All I have left is memories and I can’t give them up!”

DPAC and UK Uncut evict
Iain Duncan Smith,
April 2013



Bedroom Tax

**DROP THE WELFARE
REFORM BILL**



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Assessment Delays

“Thousands of disabled people are waiting months & months for essential help which means taxpayers are facing a huge bill to deal with the enormous backlog of Personal Independence Payment assessments. If they continue at the current rate, the backlog could take up to 42 years to clear.”

Kate Green, Shadow minister for Disabled People: June 2014

“Applied for PIP end of August, had a face to face assessment on 15th November. DWP have still not received the report from Capita. I have a movement disorder –Dystopia, which affects my whole body. At times, I cannot speak, walk, or see due to spasms. My life is on hold. Cannot go out due to parking, getting in a wheelchair, using my walking aid, parking in a normal parking space is a joke! I have called Capita on several occasions to be told there is a backlog. My report is in the process of seniors waiting to be checked.”

Public Accounts Committee investigation found “significant delays, a backload of claims and unnecessary distress for claimants unable to access the support they need to live, and in some cases, work independently.”

From the 16 months April 2013 – Sept 2014, just under 40% of 529,400 claims for Personal Independence Payment had been processed

“Applied start of August 2013, had a letter from the DWP requesting details, all sent and received by the DWP before end of August 2013, and have heard nothing since. Phoned ATOS who said they received the details from the DWP in August 2013 but still no appointment or letter of acknowledgement from ATOS. Have phoned ATOS twice (last time was 7th Feb 2014) was told not to phone as it is a waste of time. I was in a queue, not near the top for an appointment and would have to wait my turn. The lady I spoke to was very abrupt and not in the slightest bit helpful. I have also seen the report that after the assessment it could take at least two months for ATOS to complete their reports, then DWP to decide, so it seems like whole process could take over a year to get a decision. Seems like the whole thing is not fit for purpose or maybe it’s another way of not paying anybody now.”

“Claimants are close to despair and even suicidal because of the chaos in the new benefit system, Personal Independence Payments, an insider has revealed”

Daily Mirror, August 2014

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GOLD**

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Gillian Chadbourne, in Burton, had a stroke in May 2013. Her husband Mark became her full time carer. They applied for a Personal Independence Payment for Gillian and Carers' Allowance for Mark. Gillian had a face to face assessment in September. By November they had still heard nothing. The couple had to move out of their family home and sell their clothes. They were reliant on food parcels to survive.

"I applied for PIP September 24th 2013. I started to call in January to check status of my claim. I called again on Monday 24th February 2014 and the DWP gave me the number for ATOS. I called them and they told me they were in process of getting an appointment for an assessment but there is a shortage of assessors for my area! Am so very distressed and anxious. I spent seven weeks in a psychiatric hospital last year. Am still under a psychiatrist and a CPN. I know my CPN sent supporting evidence in on 2nd January 2014. This is just terrible and am so worried; surely our doctors and health workers can assess us. They can make an honest decision because they have been treating us for so long. I am so worried am just do not know what to do. I feel like I am going backwards with my illness instead of moving forwards."

"I applied in June 2013. Had an assessment 30th August 2013 and STILL NO decision. I am at my wits end. I ring every week to be told the same thing, their report is still with our senior advisor (it's been there five months). We are understaffed. I have made several official complaints; a manager will ring me back and say the same thing. ALL I want is a decision."

Sanctions

“They tried to have me sanctioned for missing appointments when I had hospital appointments, of which I advised them. They denied receiving phone calls and never acknowledged emails.”

Fulfilling Potential? ESA and the fate of the Work Related Activity Group: Catherine Hale, 2014

“I’ve just been sanctioned for 4 weeks. I work 8 hours a week, have a reduced income from JSA, as they take my wages into account and I’m still job searching. The advisor who sanctioned me said I had not done the 20 job searches I was supposed to do. I had only done 10. This is because my job searches are for school and the schools had been shut as it was the six weeks school holidays.

This advisor was not even my regular one; she would not listen to me, and was very dismissive. My usual advisor was really upset by what had happened, but her hands were tied and she could not help me. I have filled in an appeals form but don’t hold out much hope for winning it. I can understand if I had done anything wrong previously, but I haven’t. This is tough tactics and if I could sign off I really would, but that little bit of money that I receive is so needed... I am a single mum.”

104,200 disabled claimants of jobseeker’s allowance were ‘sanctioned’ at least once between October 2012 - 30 September 2013 after the introduction of new rules.



Freud Must Go

“Of the family with a three week old baby, her father was sanctioned this morning for a year. The Job Centre said he came on the wrong day. He showed them the letter for the day to see them; the advisor had changed it to a different day and had not told him. Then as they sanctioned him they smiled at him and wished him a Merry Christmas. He cried on my shoulder, the family are affected by the bedroom tax, have no food, no heating, nothing. We applied for Discretionary Housing Payment for them, and hardship payments. We put the word around the local shops of his plight and his baby Chloe has a few toys for Christmas, baby milk, nappies, and the family have food for Christmas and we had a collection to keep the family warm but in the New Year have no idea what the future holds for this family.”

“Attending the Work Programme has aggravated my mental health to the extent that it is gradually getting worse, not better! This is due to the constant worry of whether or not my Work Programme adviser will make her phone appointments with me as whenever she doesn’t phone, I’m terrified that I might be sanctioned because of her.”

Fulfilling Potential? ESA and the fate of the Work Related Activity Group: Catherine Hale, 2014

Sanctions for Employment and Support Allowance claimants placed in the Work Related Activity increased nearly 580% between March and December 2013.



Equal Lives — Back to the Future Poster

“I explained to my Jobcentre adviser that I suffer severe anxiety and IBS and cannot always leave my home; I gave doctors letters but she said if I didn’t attend [Work Programme provider] she would sanction my money. I had no choice but to go as I cannot pay for food and heat already. I attended the twin training centre and had an anxiety attack. I had to leave and find my way home feeling very ill and frightened; a horrific experience.”

Fulfilling Potential? ESA and the fate of the Work Related Activity Group: Catherine Hale, 2014

“I got sanctioned because I was too ill to attend the activity for work programme. They now send me £16 per week which is taken for my bank charges. I’ve applied and been refused hardship payment and I’ve had no money or food in my flat for 4 weeks now. So I’m off to Asda shoplifting now because I’m starving. I’ve never been a thief but my own government have forced me to this. I have pancreatitis so if I do not eat I am in absolute agony. So for £10,000 per year they have stopped in my benefits it’s now going to cost them £400,000 a year to keep me in prison.”

“I signed on JSA in September, after finding a college course. I’ve been doing everything I can to find a job. I attend all my advisor meetings. Attend the courses they send me on and apply for jobs through my internet account. My advisor told me of a job in my account to apply for. When I got home my mum had her laptop in to be repaired. My library was not open, so I could not apply for two days, until we got the laptop back. When I did, the job had expired. I continued applying for other jobs and attended the weekly course. This week I found out by letter I had been sanctioned for 3 months for not applying for a job in my account. I’m in shock. I’ve never had a warning, or two or four week sanctions. Straight to this. My mum will be expecting her keep on Friday. She won’t be able to keep me as she is on income support. It’s nearly Christmas and I’m worried sick.”

David Clapson, a former soldier, had left his last job to care for his elderly mum. Before that he had worked for 29 years. As a result of missing one appointment at the jobcentre his benefits were stopped. He was diabetic and without the £71.70 per week from his JSA he could not afford to eat or put credit on his electricity card to keep the fridge working where he kept his insulin. Three weeks later David died from diabetic ketoacidosis caused by severe lack of insulin. A pile of CVs was found next to his body.

Six out of ten ESA claimants hit with a sanction are disabled people with a mental health condition or learning difficulty, according to DWP figures obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.



EDUCATION PERFORMANCE REPORT CARD

Name: Michael Gove & the Coalition Government
Period: May 2010 – July 2013

SUBJECT	GOOD	FAIR	FAILED
Supporting CHOICE of mainstream education			X
Making it unlawful to force disabled learners into segregated education			X
Providing disabled learners with the support they need to access mainstream education			X
Providing mainstream schools with the money and support they need to deliver inclusive education practice			X
OVERALL PERFORMANCE			X

Campaigners Comments:

It has been an awful year for Michael Gove and the Coalition Govt who, have failed disabled learners and their families by denying them a right to choose to be included in mainstream schools and colleges.

Michael Gove and the Coalition Govt must apply themselves with much more rigour in the new academic year, to their international obligations (UKPDC Article 24) to build the capacity of mainstream schools and colleges to be more inclusive.

Signed by: the Inclusive Education Movement

Education

M is a 13 year young disabled person living with his family in Hounslow. M has Special Educational Needs. He and his family want him to be included in a local mainstream secondary school but the Local Authority (LA) are refusing to support this “choice”. Instead the LA have registered M, against the wishes of M and his family, with a local special school without any explanation. As a result M is being home-educated by his family.

Despite the LA admitting that M is making progress they are still hounding the family because M is not attending the special school. M’s family took the case to a SEND Tribunal and were successful.

The LA continue to refuse to support M and his family in their “choice” to be in mainstream and have refused vital SEN support (SALT) for M, despite it being included in his SEN Statement, because he is not attending the special school. Where is the “choice” for young disabled people and their families if they want to be included in mainstream education?

Michael Gove Education Performance Report Card.
Photograph: Pete Riches



Reclaiming our Futures Protest

“If you educate disabled children in separate settings, how are they to know how to integrate into society properly when they reach adulthood? And if non-disabled children don’t grow up alongside disabled children, surely they’re going to perceive them as different.”

Hidden in Plain Sight: Inquiry into disability-related harassment (2011)

L is 10 years old and is disabled. L lives in Wandsworth with his family. L has a Statement of SEN and has always attended his local mainstream primary school. This has meant he has been able to go to school with his sister, make friends and feel part of his community. Along the way the school have learnt a lot. Sometimes it hasn't been easy but the school, L's peer group, L and his family have all benefitted from what has been a positive inclusive education experience.

Based on this experience L and his family are seeking a mainstream secondary school. The Local Authority (LA) are refusing to support this "choice" and on this basis none of the local mainstream schools are willing to offer L a place to start in September. L and his family want a mainstream education and the LA are doing everything they can to stop this happening and force L into a special school. L and his family are being pushed into taking a case to the SEND Tribunal because their "choice" is not acceptable to the LA.

"You are not representing the needs of children in mainstream education. You want to segregate disabled children."

Jonathan Bartley, parent of a disabled son, tackling David Cameron over Conservative plans to "end the bias towards inclusion"



Tara Flood, Alliance for Inclusive Education (ALLFIE)

Simone Aspis, ALLFIE. Photograph: Pete Riches





Tanya Raabe — Solidarity: Save ILF

Social Care

“Councils reveal £4.3billion funding ‘black hole’ in adult social care by end of decade”

Source: Local Government Association, 28 October 2014

Mohammad’s* social worker admits that had he been eligible for ILF he would have had a far better quality of life. He gets four 1 hour visits and 3 half hour double ups per week. There have been times where he has had to wait 7 days to open his bowels as there was not enough time to do all his personal care in the 1/2 hr slot during which a second person is available for hoisting and the care workers were rushing him. He has to pay privately to have people assist him to go out or run errands for him to manage domestically. They are now considering residential care - which he doesn’t want - he is in his mid-30s and used to be a chef. ***Not his real name**

2 in 5 disabled people aren’t getting basic needs met like washing, dressing or getting out of the house

Source: The other care crisis: Making social care funding work for disabled adults in England, 2013

“Before I was referred for funding from the Independent Living Fund I lived without having my most basic needs met, spending hours unable to have a drink or go the toilet, without dignity and without any quality of life, existing between TV and hospital. I spent weeks at a time in hospital going from one health crisis to the next... Through support from the Independent living Fund I have been enabled to go back to University and to enter employment... I am paying into the system in 2 ways – as a Trustee of a charity – and as an economically active tax payer, thanks to my paid work. Additionally, 7 other people are economically active through their employment as my Personal Assistants. In terms of saving money to the state you can also count on the fingers of one hand the number of hospital stays I have had since receiving ILF funding – and all but one of those stays were planned... Unfortunately in my job I see many people who are suffering the dreary lifestyle that I had once had as they have missed the chance to apply for ILF funding. One client says that she feels she is treated “worse than a dog – at least dogs get taken for a walk every day” – as she spends all but a couple of hours a week in bed. She doesn’t have a package flexible enough to have someone around to help her back to bed when her muscles no longer allow her to maintain her position in her wheelchair. The hour that she can spend in her chair, while the care worker is doing housework, she drives from room to room like a caged animal “just to make sure the other rooms are still there!”

Peter (not his real name) is a younger disabled person who was working full-time whilst still living in his parental home. He can travel around independently if all the conditions are favourable otherwise he is dependent on asking members of the public to assist or is relying on friends and family to help out. Under the RAS he has been allocated 4 hours assistance per day which once you take away up to 3 hours for getting up; going to bed and getting to loo leaves a maximum of 1 - 2 hours for everything else. This seriously erodes his capacity to hold down work, whilst at the same time government is actively encouraging people to work. His level of need would appropriately be met by a 24/7 support package but this is not possible on a package of £275 per week. He is forced to use his own money to fund some hours each week; neither this nor the dependence from friends and family are sustainable in the longer term. If the ILF had still been open he would have been eligible and, with match funding from the ILF, the LA would have contributed the required level.

Half a million older and disabled people who would have received social care five years ago now receive no local support.

Source: Political and Social Sciences Research Unit (2013)



Not Dead Yet



Not Dead Yet



Not Dead Yet

“I heard about the ILF a year prior to going to university so I thought that I could use it to help pay for the room. I was shocked to find out that the fund had been stopped that year. As a result of that, it became very difficult to pay for the carer’s room. A charity kindly helped to pay for half the cost of the room, and it was very stressful trying to find payment for the other half. Eventually I had to use my student loan to pay for the other half, when it should have been used for other expenses...

The absence of the ILF also meant not having enough money to pay for the amount of care that I at needed at university. My PA had to live with full time, but my local authority did not give me enough care hours. If I had the ILF it could have helped to pay towards my care.

Due to the local authority’s refusal to pay for the carer’s room and refusing to give me extra hours, my mum had to help with my care at the weekends to give my PA a break. This was frustrating for my mum and I because she had to drive down to the university every weekend, when she also the main carer for my Grandmother who has dementia. This made me very angry because I felt that I was not having the full university experience since I had to rely on the help of my mum a lot.

Having the ILF could have made life a lot easier and stress free for my family and I. This in effect contributed to extra financial worries during my time at university.”



Photograph: Paula Peters

LH has had severe arthritis since she was two years old – so now, at 51, that’s been 49 years with a degenerative illness leaving her with limited use of all her joints in her body and largely reliant on an electric wheelchair for mobility. “I have days and nights when I can wake up and I am very, very shivery, although I have a raging temperature. I feel so unwell I have nearly rang an ambulance on numerous occasions”. LH quotes, “when I have these days, I don’t like to be left on my own, because I’m often sick and very weak and prone to falling. Rheumatoid Arthritis is a disease that can flare up at any time. I woke up like this, this morning.” One of her flare ups was so severe she did not even have the strength to flush the toilet. She is on her own now, though, because “I’ve only got about six hours’ care a day”. LH has to get ready for bed at 5.30 pm most evenings as she does not have enough care hours for a carer to return later in the evening. LH quotes “I hate getting ready for bed so early especially during the summer months”. LH’s problem is her condition has deteriorated further and the closure of ILF has had a detrimental effect on her life. LH describes her local authority as “very supportive” but “my local authority keeps declining additional care hours, despite meeting their criteria of critical and substantial high level of care. LH has put her heart into her local authority home – she’s made it retro-bright and beautiful - and she hates the idea of being forced out of it and into a care home. Keeping her independence means battling for money for extra care hours (the local authority have recently turned down her application for more hours) and she juggles carefully the funds for care she has. Often alone and struggling.



Brian Hilton



Sarah is 25 years old and needs support because of an unpredictable illness that affects the movement and control of her limbs affecting her mobility as well as her ability to get around unaided (Indoors and outdoors), wash, dress and feed herself. It also affects her concentration and leaves her with severe fatigue. She receives a wash and feed support service from London Borough of Bromley Social Services. She only has support with personal hygiene three times per week and support to eat and dress seven days per week. She receives no other support to leave the home or socialise. She has been unsuccessful even with the support of a paid advocate to get more hours. Her dream would be to get daily personal hygiene support and to no longer be reliant on family and friends to leave the house, to socialise, do activities, go grocery shopping, go to hospital / GP / dentist appointments and one day be able to do some voluntary work or paid work. Had the ILF not been closed, these opportunities would have been open to her.



Stephen Lee Hodgkins



Employment Support

For every £1 spent on Access to Work, the Treasury recoups £1.48

Source: Getting in, staying in and getting on: Disability employment support fit for the future (June 2011)

For the past five years AtW has provided funding for full time interpreting for Ms Y. When she changed job in 2013, Ms Y was shocked to find AtW taking a less supportive stance than before. She described trying to get AtW to meet her access needs as 'a battle'. She found AtW were no longer supportive, and instead were rude, cold, lacked empathy and sensitivity, and often failed to respond to emails and questions. For two months Ms Y was left without any communication support at all, and was unable to do her job. In the end, AtW reduced Ms Y's communication support to 22 hours and reduced the hourly rate they would pay. Ms Y said that she agreed to this even though it did not meet her needs, as she is now scared of AtW. She worries that if she continues to try to get her needs met AtW will reduce her support even more. The effect on Ms Y has been that she has lost confidence... Ms Y was in line for a promotion at work, but now is struggling.

Mr B is Deaf and had been in receipt of AtW funding 100% for qualified sign language interpreter support for over 20 years. The most recent review of his support had been within the previous 12 months and had continued the same level as had been in place for 8 years. Out of the blue he received a letter from AtW saying that a review had been done, the number of hours' support per month was being reduced by 33%, the hourly rate had been capped at around 60% of the previous amount, and this reduction in support would be backdated to six months earlier. Mr B asked why the decision had been made without speaking to him, and why a reduction had been decided without checking that he still required the same number of hours' support ... Mr B asked AtW to honour the reimbursement of support costs for the previous six months on the grounds that he could not have known over the previous six months, when the costs were incurred, that his support would later be reduced retrospectively. AtW refused to pay the support costs, refused to explain why they were backdating the decision and refused to explain why they were reducing the support in light of the fact that it was being fully used.

"Access to Work has been very effective up until recently. It is literally in the last four or five months that my head has been blown by how this is running."

**Julie Fernandez, Work and Pensions Committee
Access to Work inquiry**

“On Friday 11 April I received a telephone call from someone at DWP AtW Payments section ... She informed me that my AtW claim had ended in February 2014 and that AtW would not be paying my February, March and April invoices - that meant I would have to find in excess of £2000. I explained to A that I would not be able to pay that bill and no-one had informed me that my claim had ended. (The last contact I had with AtW was in February, to request a change of details form because my taxi firm had been taken over. This was sent to me with no mention of my claim having ended earlier that month.)

The claimant rang AtW a second time and became so distressed about the bill of £2000 the call handler suggested she contact the Samaritans.”

George Scollan, 58, was found dead the day the Remploy factory where he had worked for 40 years was shut. George had become very depressed at the prospect of unemployment and had been bitterly disappointed at a recent job application being rejected.

“The collapse of Access to Work continues leaving nowhere to go for sacked Remploy workers”
johnnyvoid.wordpress.com (October 2013)



Invites you to
RALLY!

Speakers:

Geraldine O'Halloran (Stop Changes/ Inclusion London),
Jenny Sealey (Stop Changes/ Graeae Theatre),
Andy Greene (Disabled People Against Cuts - DPAC)

Wednesday 29th October @ 12pm

Find us at:
Old Palace Yard.

Following the final evidence session of the Work & Pensions Select Committee, (9.30am), come along and hear about the issues and our demands.
Find out what you can do to get involved.

Stop Changes to Access to Work Rally, October 2013

M's previous support package from AtW was stopped on 31st January 2014, but M was not informed and only found out when his interpreters informed him in mid- March they had not received their pay. M therefore employed his interpreters during the period from January to March in good faith and had no way of knowing there would be this problem. His interpreters are currently working without any guarantee of pay and are not receiving pay, in one particular case this means the interpreter is owed close to £6000 to the end of May and more now including work carried out this month. AtW have now agreed to backdate payments to cover the period from January to the present but only at the reduced hourly rate of pay and only for the reduced hours per week. This means that even when the backdated money is released by AtW and paid to the interpreters there will be a shortfall in the money owed to them for work already undertaken. M was not aware of this reduction at the time and the decision to backdate with the reductions has been made retrospectively.



Eleanor vs Maria Miller

MT holds a position as a youth forum co-ordinator within a Deaf and Disabled People's Organisation. On June 18th he received an email from an AtW adviser telling him that the level of his funding for support is appropriate to warrant reconsideration under the 30 hour rule, and although his current package was not due to end until 2nd June, any changes made would be backdated to the date of the Minister's announcement concerning the 30 hour rule review on 15th May. MT had contacted AtW five weeks previous to receiving this email and had heard nothing since. Having employed support at his approved level since 15th May he is now in a position of potentially facing a significant short fall between the costs of his support and the amount AtW will fund following the Minister's announcement. MT cannot afford to make up the difference and neither can the organisation he works for. The retrospective implementation of decisions in this way is surely not legal.



Resistance

“Finally, the Government should not think that this issue or these people are going to go away because they are not: these people are mobilising. We now have a disability movement in this country of which we have not seen the equal before. Black Triangle occupied Atos offices in Scotland; members of DPAC—Disabled People Against Cuts—chained themselves in Trafalgar square. These people are not going to go away. They will be in our face—and rightly so. I will support them.”

John McDonnell MP, House of Commons debate on disability benefits and social care, 20 June 2012.

“The last four years have seen disabled people’s lives turned upside down under the pretext of austerity. As our quality of life is rolled back towards the dark ages it is paramount that disabled people don’t waste their votes at the next election. Enough is enough! Get out and vote!”

Kevin Caulfield, Chair, Hammersmith and Fulham Coalition Against Cuts

Liz Crowe — Bedding In

“What’s been great is the way disabled people have constantly escalated our tactics. From demos outside buildings to blocking roads, to taking the fight to government members’ front doorsteps and then onto occupying their departments, to assembling a camp under the shadow of parliament. We’ve fought the battle on our terms every time.”

Andy Greene, Disabled People Against Cuts

“Disabled people have a proud history of resistance and fighting back which goes back many years. Disabled people are worth the very best life has to offer, we are worth more than £2 per hour. We are worth decent access to healthcare, education, decent employment with the right support to do that job which incs access to work support, a decent salary so we can live, the right to independent living, we want to be equal with the same rights and access to services as everyone else and we will fight for those rights.”

Paula Peters, Disabled People Against Cuts

“Disabled people have refused to capitulate to the ongoing onslaught of their rights by the very nasty parties in power they have joined together to fight back and will continue to fight back until they win”

Linda Burnip, Disabled People Against Cuts



"In response to the attacks disabled people have united with other groups, anti cuts groups and trade unions, and in doing so we have spread a wider understanding of disability equality, access and inclusion in a way that no amount of formal training sessions or theoretical papers can ever do."

Ellen Clifford, Disabled People Against Cuts

"DPAC's campaigns against the disastrous impact of so-called "welfare reform" on the lives and living standards of disabled people have been an inspiration. DPAC embodies a new spirit of resistance and a revival of the disabled peoples' movement for inclusion and equality."

Peter Purton, Disability and LGBT policy officer, TUC

"The Government have chosen to punish the public for a crisis caused by the banks. Cuts to services for disabled people have been harsh and cruel. But they have picked a fight with the wrong people. Disabled People Against Cuts have led the fight against the Government's austerity agenda. By taking direct action, and by being willing to engage in civil disobedience, DPAC have pushed the anti-cuts movement to be bolder and more inclusive in its protests. DPAC have shown that those hit the hardest will hit back the hardest."

UKUncut

“Disabled people have been the hardest hit by austerity with attacks on benefits and services, and subject to degrading assessments and poisonous rhetoric that has led to an increase in disability hate crime. But what has been inspiring has been the way disabled people have organised, protested and campaigned. There are lessons we can all learn from the dynamism, solidarity and courage of these activists.”

Mark Serwotka, PCS general secretary



“The cuts to the welfare state and public services are completely unnecessary, and have coincided with tax cuts for the richest and for big business. This is an ideological attack to cut and privatise the welfare state — and it is this gross injustice that has provoked so many to take part in resistance. Nowhere has this been more inspirational than the actions taken by Disabled People Against Cuts.”

Andrew Fisher, author *The Failed Experiment ... and how to build an economy that works*



ATOS QUILTS £500M WORK CAPABILITY ASSESSMENT CONTRACT EARLY

The Guardian, 27 March 2014

COALITION SPLIT OVER CONTROVERSIAL 'BEDROOM TAX'

Channel 4 News, 5 Sep 2014

VICTORY FOR DISABILITY CAMPAIGNERS AS CROSSRAIL BOSSES AGREE TO £19M STEP-FREE INVESTMENT

London Evening Standard, 3 Oct 2013

GEORGE OSBORNE IS WARNED OF DISASTER OVER WELFARE REFORMS The Telegraph, 25 Sep 2011



DISABLED BENEFITS TEST FIRM ATOS 'MUST BE SACKED', SAYS LABOUR'S LIAM BYRNE

The Huffington Post, 22 Sep 2013

BEDROOM TAX: DRASTIC U-TURNS, PARTIAL CONCESSIONS AND SPIN

The Guardian, 14 March 2013



VICTORY! MINISTER FINALLY PROMISES ACTION OVER NORWICH DISABLED ASSESSMENT CENTRE WITH NO DISABLED ACCESS

EDP24, June 12, 2014

FITNESS-FOR-WORK TESTS UNFAIR ON PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, COURT SAYS

The Guardian, 22 May 2013



VICTORY IN BATTLE TO SAVE MENTAL HEALTH DROP-IN CENTRE LIFEWORKS IN CAMBRIDGE AS HEALTH CHIEFS ADMIT FAILINGS

Cambridge News, March 26, 2014

BEDROOM TAX HUMAN RIGHTS RULING COULD PAVE WAY FOR 420,000 TO LAUNCH SIMILAR APPEALS Daily Mirror, April 23 2014

Left: Photographer - Pete Riches

Centre: Photographer - Charles Shearer

Right: Photographer - DPAC

Excerpt from...

UK Disabled People's Manifesto: Reclaiming Our Futures

The aim of this manifesto — developed by disabled people and their organisations across the UK — is to map the key principles, demands and commitments that disabled people and our allies can use in campaigning and lobbying. It calls on the Westminster and devolved Governments to recognise and act on their responsibilities in fully implementing the United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD) effectively across the UK.



Nadia at Parliament

Excerpt from...

A Tale of two Models: Disabled People vs Unum, Atos, Government and Disability Charities

by Debbie Jolly

One of the main advocates of the bio-psycho-social model, Lord Freud (Westminster's Minister for welfare reform) claims that it is based on evidence. It is not. It is a right wing model led by profit and the market. It incorporates the worst aspects of neo-liberalism. It targets disabled people and ridiculously claims that we can think ourselves out of being disabled. Its underlying theme repeats the mantra that 'work will set you free'. But this is not about work, despite the endless rhetoric; this model is an ideological cover for attacking disabled people and reducing every single right to financial support that has been achieved. Additional fringe benefits are provided to the insurance market of Unum, to the profits of Atos and to the big Disability Charities who all capitalise on the new notions of risk being imposed on disabled people. We can identify a clear pattern for the construction of the bio-psycho-social model, and its advocates...

STRIP! - Vincent Laws

Give me an S!

S is your Spare Bedroom Tax.
10 million disabled people
in the UK, under attack.
S is the Shirt that they stole off my back!

Give me a T!

T is your Torture, your Tick-box Test.
70 'Fit For Work' people die each week
because your Work Capability Assessment's
up Cull Creek. Stop putting humans
through an inhumane test.
The disabled only protest
when they've nothing left to lose.
Iain Duncan Smith is the shit on my shoes!

Give me an R!

R is for Remploy, Redundancies, Recession,
I paid into your system
But you mis-sold me oppression.
You wish more employers would take us on
so take the lead Dave, and show what can be done.
Better still, Government, give the lead to us,
if the Disabled have to be on board
we'll drive the fracking bus!
I need another moat and a house for my ducks!
Mixed metaphors and the system socks!

Give me an I!

I is the Independent Living Fund,
It lets people live the lives that they own.
New claims were stopped in 2010
and it's death by Coalition in 2015.
Not-yet-disabled millionaires
are stocking up on shares
while stripping us of benefits.
First they take the services
that allow us independence,
then they'll stick us all in Care Homes
and trouser all the profits!

Give me a P!

P is for PIP, A Personal Independence Plan
It replaces Disability Living Allowance
but it's a scam.
500,000 people tricked
out of the help they currently get.
This Coalition are the goalpost shifters.
They've changed the definition of disability,
and that's a job for doctors not politicians.
Disabled people have had enough -
when the only option's destitution -
the gloves are firmly off!

Nicola Field — Unite the Resistance





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