



## **Disabled People Against Cuts**

### **Testimonies of ESA Support Group Claimants who have been called in for Work Focussed Interviews**

Prepared by the DPAC Research Team, January 2015

#### **Disabled People Against Cuts:**

DPAC is a grass roots campaign body. It was formed by a group of disabled people after the first mass protest against the austerity cuts and their impact on disabled people held on the 3rd October in Birmingham 2010, England. It was led by disabled people under the name of The Disabled Peoples' Protest. DPAC has over 20,000 members & supporters and an outreach of over 45,000 disabled people. DPAC works with many anti-cuts groups, Universities, Disabled Peoples' Organizations, and Unions

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## **Abbreviations Used**

ESA – Employment and Support Allowance – UK Government Sickness Benefit

BMA – British Medical Association

DWP – Department for Work and Pensions - UK Government Department

GP – General Practitioner (Medical Doctor)

HMCTS – Her Majesty's Courts and Tribunal Service

JSA – Job Seekers Allowance

MP – Member of Parliament

WCA – Work Capability Assessment – test for claimants right to claim the ESA Benefit

WRAG – Work Related Activity Group

## ***1 Introduction***

This document contains collected testimonies of people who responded to a request for information placed on the DPAC website on the [17<sup>th</sup> September](#) and [13<sup>th</sup> November](#) 2014. This call out for information was made by DPAC in response to concerns put to us by the [Welfare Foundation](#) that this practice of claimants in the ESA being called in for work focussed interview, without being told that this was not mandatory was causing great concern and distress in their area.

The purpose of this callout for testimonies was to discover whether this was a practice limited to a single jobcentre, or was more widespread and to get a feel for how frequently this is happening.

From the information we have received we believe that this practice is occurring in every part of England, with one example reported in Scotland. From the number of responses received over a short period, we believe this practice is quite frequent.

From the content of the testimonies themselves, there is evidence that this practice is causing stress to claimants who should not be contacted in this way. This practice by jobcentres seems to have no regard to the severity or type of impairments of claimants, with people selected seemingly at random, including those people with severe mental health impairments.

It is particularly shameful that the contact letters that we have seen do not inform people of their right to decline the work focussed interview. And in several cases, we have been told that these letters are sent out giving very short notice before an appointment. We conclude that there is no reason for this, other than to prevent claimants from seeking advice.

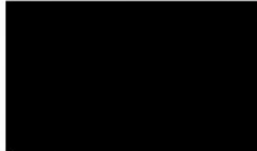
We conclude that this is nothing but harassment of claimants by jobcentres, which risks causing serious harm to, especially those with severe mental health impairments.

This practice is potentially dangerous and should be stopped immediately.

### 1.1 Example of such letters

The letters copied below were received by the person giving the first testimony in the section below – JT of Leicester

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Department for  
Work and Pensions

Bury St Edmunds Benefit Centre,  
Post Handling Site B,  
Wolverhampton, WV99 1NF

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Telephone: Tel: 0345/ 0845 608  
8545 Text phone: 0845 608 8551  
Date: 11/11/2014

If you get in touch with us, tell us  
this reference number:



Dear



Thank you for your request for information.

The details are as follows:-

You were awarded Employment Support Allowance Income Related

Claim start date 17/12/13

At a weekly rate of £123.70

Paid up to: 03/11/14

Any other information: Customer is in the Support Group

For any further enquiries please contact us on the above number.

Linda Gisbey

Benefit Centre Manager

Part of the Department for Work and Pensions



If you contact us, use this reference: [REDACTED]

**jobcentreplus**

Department for  
Work and Pensions

[REDACTED]

Leicester Charles St Jobcentre Plus  
Office  
2 Charles Street  
Leicester  
LE1 3JD

[www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

Telephone: 0345 6043719

Text Tel: 0845 6088551

12th November 2014

**Work-focused interview for Employment and Support Allowance  
claimants**  
**Appointment Details**

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Dear [REDACTED]

I have arranged an interview for you with your personal adviser to discuss the support available to you.

**Your appointment details for your interview are:**

**On:** 21st November 2014

**At:** 14:00

*Telephone interview with [REDACTED]*

**Place:** ~~Leicester Charles St, 2 Charles Street, Leicester, LE1 3JD~~

*Telephone interview*

**With:**

The interview could last for up to an hour.

**What will happen at the interview?**

You and your personal adviser will discuss the possibility of going into paid work, training for work, or looking for work in the future. They will tell you about the support available to help you with going back to work, and make sure that you have all the information available to help you make decisions about work that are right for you.

In the interview they will talk to you about:

- training to update your skills
- financial support available while you are working
- permitted work – which could help you try different kinds of work whilst still getting benefit

## 2 Testimonies of ESA Support Group Claimants who have been called in for Work Focussed Interviews

<p>15<sup>th</sup> November, Leicester</p>	<p>i am in the esa support group and was sent a letter about work focused interview,i rang the local office on charles street in leicester and was told it was mandatory that i attended. i explained that i had been in touch with welfare rights and they had said it wasn't. after much toing and froing with the woman i was talking to and the manger i was told it was mandatory that i attended and that i should speak to the esa. i rang the esa people who confirmed that i should not be asked to do this. they confirmed i was in the support group and even sent me a letter confirming this.they also sent an email to the jobcentre telling them to stop sending the letters out as it is a voluntary option and they weren't saying this. this was on the 11 of november. however on friday morning i got another letter off of the charles street jobcentre dated the 11th of november saying they would be ringing me to conduct a telephone interview. anyway i suffer from copd, ( i have a lung age of 118 and i am only 54 ) have a dvt in my right leg for which i have to administer injections of heparin every day have clinical depression and have attempted suicide on 5 occasions in the past, they must know this as i sent all my medical information in when i moved from incapacity benefit which i been on since 2005 to esa last december. i have quite a few other things wrong as well including i am agoraphobic and social phobia too.they have left me feeling very threatend</p>
<p>17<sup>th</sup> September, London</p>	<p>I received a letter about this a few months ago. A friend rang up the DWP and they were most unhelpful, it took ages to get put through to the Job Centre (about 2 hrs). Finally my friend spoke to someone who demanded to speak to me, who asked me “so how are you today?”. I was so terrified I was monosyllabic and this person ended up saying they were terminating the conversation. My friend grabbed the phone and explained to them that I was not fit to attend any interview and would probably be unable to communicate if forced to with a high risk of self-harm (I do self-harm to the point of needing plastic surgery). She also made my MH diagnosis and risk clear and referred to the psych report from ESA review. My friend asserted that with my being in the Support Group I was not required to attend any interviews and the Job Centre worker finally agreed that this was accurate and that I was not mandated to attend. My friend also got the worker to agree that I would not be consequently sanctioned or reviewed or suffer any other negative consequence for not attending the interview. The worker ended up saying that they “had no info on me” so were just checking if I needed any “help”.</p>
<p>18<sup>th</sup> September, Harrow</p>	<p>Hi, I understand you are interested in finding out about people who were called in for interrogation.</p> <p>I’m in the support group – after a tribunal – which was so controversial that the decision had been made before I even walked into the room – on rule 35 – My GP prettied it up a little but he essentially said “put her in the support group or she will kill herself” . So someone thought it would be a great idea to “invite” me for an interview.</p>

	<p>It was a Harrow job centre I don't know which (I think there are two),</p> <p>Also I had quite a time of it as the handwritten scrawl giving me a name and number was illegible - so several people managed to get tears or autistic meltdowns. Eventually my psychologist lost her rag at one of them and I was sent an official apology for the distress caused and confirmation that it was entirely optional and I wouldn't be penalized for not going.</p> <p>Fortunately for me I've got one of those combined health/social care mental health budgets - so I actually have some support and access to people who know the score - and even then I was passed around like a radioactive parcel!</p> <p>Nicola</p>
18 <sup>th</sup> September, Eltham S E London	<p>I've been in the support group for ESA for 6 months and my partner and I have received a letter from the job centre saying we have to attend work related interview otherwise our benefits will be affected. I thought support group people were exempt from such interviews. Please help. Thanks.</p> <p>I phoned job centre in Eltham S E London. Apparently my interview is voluntary but my partners isn't. It was not clear in the letter I received at all. I hope I get my benefits still considering I told them that there is no way I'm attending.</p>
18 <sup>th</sup> September, Cottenham, Cambridge	<p>I was asked to go to a work focused interview despite having been in the support group for the last 10 years at least. However once I'd explained why I didn't work, and the reasons behind why I wouldn't be looking for work in the near future, he understood and said I didn't have to attend the interview. I was shocked to get the call, but more because they had a current mobile number and medical information that was out of date in 2003! I wasn't threatened with sanctions though and he was very understanding.</p>
20 <sup>th</sup> September, Gravesend kent	<p>I have had a letter in to attend a meeting even though I am in the support group I told them I was not available as my health is poorly Bloody cheek</p>
21 <sup>st</sup> September	<p>I have also been sent this letter, the details of this "appointment" already written in &amp; telling me the date, time &amp; the name of the person who I'll be seeing?</p> <p>I'm in the support group &amp; was told that no more Dr's letters, interviews or appointments would be needed. I'm on DLA (HRC &amp; HRM) but currently in the process of switching to PIP.</p> <p>I can't cope with any more stress, I can't do it.. Not on top of the constant pain I'm in &amp; all these high level Opioids... it's all just an accident waiting to happen.</p> <p>When will the stress &amp; worry end? I don't feel very supported, I feel lost, lonely &amp; very, very scared indeed.</p>
21 <sup>st</sup> September, Liverpool	<p>Hi, I seen a link on 1 of the support groups about you wanting people to contact yourselves regarding ESA support group claimants getting the letters to attend a work focused interview at the local job centre etc.</p>

	<p>My partner had 1 such letter last week to attend the interview tomorrow (22nd Sep). Pretty much as your post says, she has to attend or could get sanctioned if she does not attend.</p> <p>We will go tomorrow, not through any real fear of risk of sanction but more to put them in there place. I'm a little unsure of how things will go for my partner (for which I will be going with her to ensure she is not intimidated, bullied or threatened) but I personally suspect they will try and force her into signing some form of JSA claimants like contract.</p> <p>I know this may be a little late, but is there any official link to a webpage on the DWP website that states ESA support group claimants don't have to attend these interviews I could print out and shove in here faces?. The same with signing these agreement contracts to if possible?.</p> <p>We are in Liverpool by the way as I notice you was asking people who contact you to let you know what areas people are in getting these letters.</p> <p>Will happily let you know how things go and what happens tomorrow.</p>
21 <sup>st</sup> September, Truro	<p>just got another FB message from someone in Truro with severe learning difficulties and severe depression, she's getting them from her local JCP, she has an advocate who has attempted to discuss on her behalf, but keeps getting thrown out by security</p>
20 <sup>th</sup> September, Derby	<p>I am in some confusion, at the DWP i was told i was in the Support group and i was told i could get help for my condition and i would not be required to look for work.</p> <p>But next i received an invitation to the Work focused group. There i was told i was not in the support group, i was in the work focused group, but did not have to actively seek work. However they insisted i had to complete a C.V and Cover Letter.</p> <p>They then proceed to attempt to put me through a Plan to get me to a stage where i could look for work. Yet they had no understanding of my condition at all and denounced and contradicted anything i told them about my condition which has no cure and no specific treatment. They told me they could help get me back to a point where i could start looking for work.</p> <p>This sounded reasonable until i realized they were not listening to medical or work history. They ignore the fact when i told them i was made redundant a year ago due to my condition.</p> <p>The trick here was to tell me i was in the support group, and send me to the work focused group where they told me i was not in the support group.</p> <p>I feel they re lying to me every step of the way to make me take each next step.</p> <p>I applied for DLA, in 2013 but due to chronic fatigue and Fibromyalgia, was not in a position to appeal.</p> <p>I applied for PIP in April 2014 and still have not been processed.</p> <p>I am highly educated and have an impressive C.V .I worked in Investment Banking and IT .</p> <p>I have always worked except for when my children were very young. I worked for 5 yrs before i was made redundant.</p> <p>I am 48 yrs old.</p> <p>I am not the type of person who feels comfortable not being able to work. I am about to lose my home so i an my kids will be homeless.</p> <p>They speak to me and treat me like i am not really trying and i don't know what i am talking about.</p>



	<p>I would meet your criteria if they still maintained i was in the support group as i was told initially. I feel i should be in the support group as they have admitted, they are unable to process me properly in the work related group due to my condition. They keep having to 'do things differently'</p>
<p>24<sup>th</sup> September, Livingston</p>	<p>In response to your request for information about those being 'invited@ to a WFI whilst in support group I write to advise of the circumstances in my case.</p> <p>December 2013 Began 2nd year Wrag and from lodged request for Mandatory Reconsideration of WCA conducted on paper by Atos and received appointment to Attend A4e for induction course in January.</p> <p>2014 After various changes to original appointment attended the induction course with an advisor which lasted 3 hrs. At that time made her aware that I had day hospital appointment for pain management course every Tuesday through until end of June 2014 and she stated that she wouldn't interfere with any of hospital treatment.</p> <p>Began Pain Management in February and 2 weeks into it received appointment for interview with new advisor. Attended and was told that regardless of hospital appts mandated to attend any appts made.</p> <p>From then on in addition to hospital on Tuesdays I had to go to various appointments at A4e for courses and interviews with advisors. Being barely able to walk and having extremely limited use of only one hand due to a very rare neurological condition, I needed to take a taxi to A4e offices 10 miles from home at a cost of £24 each time. Also, as patient transport was not available at times to suit my hospital appointments I paid a Red Cross driver £14 every Tuesday to take me to the hospital. My consultant at hospital was aware of the pressure from A4e during my time on the pain programme which included 6 weeks pain psychology. On one occasion I was to attend an A4e Inspire course. I asked the advisor what this entailed and she told me it was about positive psychology to motivate people and that although doctors tell people they are ill, that's seldom the actual case. Having a long career in law, I was immediately alerted to the implications of this especially as the course I was on was subject to my declaration to seek no other psychological (cognitive behavioural) therapy elsewhere. My consultant was less than impressed with this especially when research revealed that these sessions were run by A4e trainers who had acquired a "qualification" on the internet. However, in the event, the invitation to Inspire never materialised.</p> <p>At my last face to face interview with the advisor at the beginning of May she made it clear to me that I might as well get on with looking for a job as the dwp "would get me in the end anyway" and a few days later I received 3 appointments to attend their offices within the next 10 days. At that time the Decision Maker was in contact with me and I advised her of the problems all this had caused i.e. that it had indeed interfered with the intense demands of the pain programme, homework for that etc and the need to learn and practise stress management and relaxation and also that the cost of travel to 3 of their appointments and 1 hospital apt in a week was more than the ESA I was receiving. A couple of days later I was put in Support backdated to November 2013.</p> <p>Since that time A4e have continued to issue 24 hr warning texts for appointments the following day for various courses and wfis, followed up by telephone calls from the advisor requesting reason for non attendance. I explained to her the terms of the WP rules re Sanction Group but she had never heard of them and stated I was mandated until JCP told her otherwise. In response I stated that I had the paperwork necessary to keep me right and had no intention of attending on a voluntary basis.</p> <p>This situation has subsisted now since May but, to date, I haven't made an official complaint. The fact that I'm aware of JCP making the same demands on other people leads me to believe a complaint would be fruitless. I have however made my MP and Sheila Gilmore MP aware of the situation. I should point out I'm now over 60 with a long career in admin, banking and law and HR behind me and also had other skills working weekends prior to leaving school so there is little any work provider could teach me, a point which the decision maker has agreed with. In the circumstances, I believe that A4e are processing me still as a "voluntary" attender and claiming a fee from JCP accordingly as this will be most lucrative with me being in the group hardest to place.</p> <p>OTHER PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED AT A4e:</p>

	<p>At induction claimants are requested to bring their birth certificates.If they do not have them or refuse to hand them over A43 merely orders an Extract themselves.WP Guidelines state that this is unnecessary for identification(in any case who would want to hijack anyone's place on the WP !). In Scotland everyone's birth certificate contains full details including their mother's maiden name and details of parents marriage etc.These certificates are kept in the claimant's folder at A4e together with all other information from the claimant and DWP ie Nat Ins No etc making this a prime target for identity theft and when pointed out to them the advisors appear to have no knowledge of Data Protection Act.This is extremely concerning but its a case of No birth certificate = no benefits.</p> <p>The premises at their office at Livingston are accessible only via a heavy glass plate aluminium door into a block of offices and once in therea heavy wooden door is pulled outwards.Accordingly, invariably disabled people have to hang around outside until an able bodied person comes along to let them in.New claimants are not made aware of any fire safety and during a training session there can be 50-60 people in their office at a time.</p> <p>It was plain from things said to me and demands made by the advisor and from hearing conversations about other people when I was there (an open plan office with absolutely no privacy) that the staff have absolutely no awareness nor requirement for reasonable adjustments and merely treat those in WRAG and Support Group the same as an able bodied 16 year old.</p> <p>The Work Providers Guidelines give A4e and other companies the opportunity to flout the law and to treat claimants however they wishby allowing them to encourage and help them obtain employment "by whatever means you think necessary".Unfortunately, most claimants have absolutely no idea about their rights in such a situation.</p> <p>I can only speak to what goes on in A4e but, given my experience of them, I would welcome an investigation in the practises of all work providers who have the power to sanction claimants who can't or won't jump through the hoops they set up.</p>
24 <sup>th</sup> September, Crosby Liverpool	<p>I received a letter and questionnaire today off The DWP,stating my son who has learning disabilities,Aspergers,etc and was put into ESA Support group last year,that he would have to attend a work focused interview.....I am my sons appointee,in all matters regarding benefits etc....</p> <p>We live in Crosby,Liverpool, and would like to know what the best way forward is please???</p> <p>I do intend to get in contact with our local jobcenter,ASAP....</p>
26 <sup>th</sup> September, Blackpool	<p>I'm in support group and have got to attend to a work shop now first one beening on Monday the 6th October /13th/20th/27th/and 3rd of November iv been told if I do not attend I will have my money stopped Im on ESA it says I am mandated to undertake as part of work related activity action plan they made me fill in a survey at the interview then I had this next letter to say iv got to attend the next day I'm from Blackpool please keep my name anonamas thankyou</p>
27 <sup>th</sup> September,	<p>I had the first interview at the Job Centre then a work related meeting with a group of people, then an interview with a PA.</p> <p>I refused to go after that as my condition deteriorated quickly , I have since had another back operation, which has made my mobility worse.</p> <p>The job centre said if I didn't conform I wouldn't get any money, the PA agreed to do a 'phone interview because of my mobility and the fact I couldn't guarantee someone could be there to take me in my wheelchair. Parking near is a huge issue.</p> <p>I've been advised to appeal against their decision to put me in this group, but it's so much hassle, I waited 14 months for the appeal to go through after my interview with ATOS.</p> <p>I have to send sick notes in too, if not they won't pay me either. Where as before I saw ATOS I was permanently signed off.</p> <p>Sorry if this is too much information !</p>
26 <sup>th</sup> September, Lincoln	<p>Hi, yeah, I have been Requested to Attend an Interview a few Times, and I have Attended, I am in Lincoln, Lincolnshire Area, I have been doing it since I won my Appeal in May this Year. Mark</p>
27 <sup>th</sup> September,	<p>In wrag group, but was told by the lady at the job centre about a year ago that I would not need to attend further interviews, as she believed I was clearly not fit for work and should have been placed in the support group. I saw her mark my file. Today I've received a letter for an interview??? Not only is all this bullying sole destroying for everyone, it is a total waste of tax payers money.</p>

	Unless there is a miracle cure, I for one am not going to get better/fit for work, so why all this jumping through bloody hoops all the time!
27 <sup>th</sup> September,	I've been in the Support group for over a year. I've been in once for an interview with a PA. I refused to go in after that as my condition deteriorated and have had another operation, which has reduced my mobility even more. I am now waiting for another op too. I have to have a phone interview once a month and send sick notes in or they won't pay me. They are now saying about a home visit for an interview
26 <sup>th</sup> September,	I was sent one of the letters 18 months to two years ago it looked like a "you must attend or...." I phoned them after checking my status and told them I would not be attending as I was in Support group and it was just too much to deal with, they said OK, end of.
7 <sup>th</sup> November, Suffolk	Just to confirm I have been asked to attend wfi and I am in the support group. We were lead to believe we wouldn't have to attend these, but the job centre is asking me to attend one of these. As you can imagine this has caused much worry and stress. Would prefer our details to be kept private, we are from suffolk.
8 <sup>th</sup> November, Work Programme Provider Letters	I was sentenced to WRAG despite the fact that I am pushing 60 and seriously ill with a degenerative autoimmune condition that is likely to kill me sooner rather than later.  After the stress of the ESA/WCA process forced me to stop claiming at the beginning of this year (it was literally killing me, including triggering a suspected heart attack while being bullied in my local Jobcentre), I informed Avanta that since I was therefore no longer required to participate in the Work Programme I was withdrawing.  Up until then I had been granted telephone interviews due to being housebound and substantially bedbound, however they had left me 'parked' for the best part of a year with their never bothering to call, and leaving it up to me to make contact should I feel the need for their 'help'.  From the time that I withdrew from the WP, I have been deluged with letters summoning me to travel (about 18 miles return by taxi, the £20 fares for which are non-reimbursable) to attend interrogations and courses on a monthly, and even daily, basis. In every case sanctions have been threatened should I fail to attend.  Despite responding to each of these demands in writing, sent by recorded delivery, reiterating that I was no longer required to participate, (and pointing out their previous agreement of telephone contact only), each and every one of my communications have been ignored, and instead I am just be sent another computer-generated appointment, citing my 'failure to comply'.  Another curious thing about these appointments is that the letters are sent out by second class post and timed to arrive on a Saturday, and ALWAYS the appointment will be at 9.00 a.m. on the Monday morning following. Avanta is closed on Saturdays

	<p>with their answering machines set so that messages can not be left. Thus they carefully ensure that I am left no opportunity to seek advice/advocacy (which they know I would do otherwise) and can also not make direct contact to discuss the matter.</p> <p>Due to this, if I had still been in ESA a sanction would have been guaranteed, as they are well aware that I am too ill to travel and it is physically impossible for me to keep such appointments. In other words I am being set up.</p> <p>So not only does it appear that Avanta is now deliberately targeting the most vulnerable as 'sanction fodder', but it would seem that if they are retaining my name on their books and misrepresenting me as a voluntary participant, (including generating bogus paperwork to support that appearance) then there is nothing to stop them from fraudulently claiming public funds in respect of this.</p> <p>I wonder how many dead people are also still receiving these letters?</p>
9 <sup>th</sup> November,	i got a phone call saturday from job center saying to go in for interview, helping me get into work only been in support group 3 months
10 <sup>th</sup> November,	I got an appointment with work forced team when I am in support group my appointment is on 12/11/2014 will I need attend it my feet is getting double the size as now I am waiting for my orthotics insoles device to go in my shoes fit in it I am still waiting for it as my pain is getting worse please let me now if I still need to come for work forced interview my appointment is on 12/11/2014 please let me now soon as you get this in 1 hour time
11 <sup>th</sup> November, Lowestoft	i live in lowestoft in suffolk and am in the support group i received said letter yesterday and immediately reported this to my local DIAL All this after i was told i wouldnt be reviewed until 2016
12 <sup>th</sup> November,	On 07 November I received a DWP letter asking me to attend an informal work focussed interview on 08 November, it was not signed but printed "on behalf of manager" and a telephone number which constantly said the number was unavailable, I phoned benefits office and a gentleman told me he did not know why it had been sent as I was in the support group but would get someone to return my call within 2 hours. I received a phone call later by a lady I could hardly understand who told me it was to talk about helping me get back to work and when I told her I was too ill she was she seemed uninterested and unhelpful. Later that evening I managed to get through on the unobtainable number, explained my situation and was told the appointment would be cancelled and someone would be back in touch. I have read so many horror stories now that I am worried sick.
12 <sup>th</sup> November, Northampton	I am appointee for my brother who is in the ESA-Support Group. Have received a letter today requiring his attendance at an interview next Tuesday 18th November 2pm at Northampton, Lower Mounts, NN1 3LY with HELEN-POD 1 for a work focused interview for ESA claimants. The letter states ; If you cannot come to the interview, or feel that you have a good reason not to take part, please telephone the number at the top of this letter before the interview. (0345 6043719) I'm going to ring them tomorrow and tell them my brother is not required to attend this interview as he is in the Support Group and see what they say. Would value your advice on this.
7 <sup>th</sup> November, Northampton	Today 7th November I received a letter from ESA team that I have to attend an appointment on Saturday 8th November at 9.20 am, at the job centre as a requirement of my Employment Support Allowance and that if I didn't have good reason to attend my benefit may be effected. I was put

	<p>in the support for 3 years only 1 year as elapsed. I was put in the support group due to respiratory, mobility and depression due to past traumatic events. You are welcome to email me back as I think this is so wrong as I thought if I was in the support group I wouldn't be called in.</p> <p>Thank you for replying to my 1st email I sent, just giving you an update on what has happened since then. After becoming very distressed over the week-end I took my letter into Mind charity with a print out of your organisation and the letter that I had received from Northampton job centre plus. A support worker phoned the job centre in Northampton and explained to them I was in the support group and shouldn't be called into an interview unless I wanted to go in voluntary. He told them I wasn't well enough to go for interviews, they still tried to book me another appointment for the 17th November but then eventually agreed that won't be necessary for me to attend. Today I received another letter with the head line : <b>Work-focused interview for Employment and Support Allowance claimants</b> the letter state we have arranged an interview with you on the 17th November at 14.15 you and your personal advisor will discuss the possibility of going into paid work, training for work, or looking for work in the future. I don't know if this letter was sent before or after my support worker had spoken with someone at the DWP office in Northampton, I will be taking this letter to my support worker for them to clarify the situation. I won't be going into any interviews as I am not at all well also I have an elderly mother who is very poorly with heart failure I can't even support her at the moment because of my own health.</p>
14 <sup>th</sup> November, Norfolk	<p>Hello I am in the support group for esa I live in Norfolk .This morning at 11oclock I received a letter from the dwp stating that I need to attend a wfi at the local job centre .</p>
13 <sup>th</sup> November, Kings Lynn	<p>I have had a letter asking me to attend a WFI and I am in the support group. I rang them to cancel and they have tried to bully me into going to the interview. I explained I am too ill but they still kept on.</p> <p>I am in King's Lynn.I have been in the support group for just over a year.I explained to them my condition had not changed and that I had been retired from work by a specialiaist occupational Physician who sted that I was NO LONGER able to work before retirement age.I also told them my father has recently died and my mum has just been given about 4 mths to live and how I was feeling.They still continued to say it would be better if I attended etc etc.They said I was one of 130 people in the support group being asked to attend to get updates on help and that they now had more helpful information.It was left with them saying please try to attend.I am now worried they will reassess and I will be back to square one again with all the worry etc.I am in the contribution based support group.</p>
14 <sup>th</sup> November, Kilburn	<p>I am primary carer for a partner who is on ESA Support Group and was asked, through threat of sanctions, to attend such an interview as far back as 10th December 2013 at 11.15 am, to be held at Kilburn Job Centre Plus, London.</p> <p>I was very concerned about this as my partner had already that summer made an attempt upon her life, in no small part due to fears over welfare changes, and had been hospitalised at Hampstead Free in an ITU bed for a week. This letter sparked off more fears. I phoned Kilburn Job Centre Plus to inform them of their 'error' on 11th November when the letter arrived. The person I spoke to - called Daisy, was adamant that my partner had to come in, under threat of sanction. I stated that she did not as she was in Support Group. 'Daisy' said that this was not true and my partner was not in the Support Group but WRAG. I asked that she check the computers, she initially refused as DWP computers 'don't make mistakes'. I demanded</p>

that she check, having explained my partners state of mind and her suicide attempt PLUS I had letters from DWP clearly stating my partner was in the Support Group. She finally and somewhat reluctantly checked (after further threats of sanctions and insistence the DWP Computers were not in error) and had to back track as the DWP computer did indeed state that my partner WAS in Support Group.

It was then stated that my partner did not need to attend the work interview. I asked, fearful of a mistake occurring that resulted in my partner still being sanctioned, for a letter of confirmation. I was told, despite repeatedly asking, there was no such means of sending a confirmation letter - apparently a template wasn't in the computer - I did suggest that such a confirmation could be written by the time honoured means of a 'pen' but to no avail. I was told that no letter was needed as the DWP computer would see, when the appointment came up, that my partner was in Support Group and need not attend - my comments about not trusting DWP computers as they had already, despite being in support group, had already sent out the appointment letter were brushed aside. As I had ZERO faith in either Daisy nor DWPI got around this by sending a letter, via signed for delivery, to Daisy at Kilburn Job Centre Plus stating that I accepted her assurance my partner need not attend and that she would not be sanctioned.

I fear those who are without support may well end up sanctioned or forced into taking something up they need not do so as they are in the Support Group.

If this information is of use or you need more please do not hesitate to contact me at this email address

A copy of the letter - my partner's name etc redacted - pasted below.

*Dear Daisy*

*with reference to our telephone conversation on the morning of 11th November 2013 with regard to the above named person Ms X.*

*This letter is to confirm that Ms X does not now need to attend the appointment with you on 10th December 2013 at 11.15 am. This is because she is at present in the SUPPORT GROUP and not the WRAG as erroneously indicated in the letter from your offices dated 1st November 2013. This letter also acknowledges your assurances, during said phone call, that Ms X will not be sanctioned for non attendance and that the appointment is cancelled.*

*Ms X is a very vulnerable individual who, in times of stress etc will self harm or worse. As feared, she has acted upon her suicidal thoughts this year, in no small part due to worry over welfare, and spent time in hospital due to an overdose.*

*I am her primary carer and advocate for her as needed. I fear there is a danger that people such as Ms X could face sanctions simply for exhibiting the symptoms of their conditions. In times of stress Ms X can agree to things, that are not in her interest, simply to get out of stressful situations. She can also, if pressed and stressed, become violent. I will attend any interviews, appointments etc and advocate for her. I will also ensure she attends appropriate appointments and return correspondence as needed.*

*I thank you for your kind consideration of my letter and will be happy to answer any questions or provide information relevant to Ms X.*

	<p><i>All the best</i></p> <p>XXXXXX</p>
14 <sup>th</sup> November,	<p>I have been in a support group on Esa for 18 months and I have been asked for a pro-forma and I am being pressured to look for voluntary work. This has happened in the last 6 weeks, although I have been in the group for 18 months. I have mental health problems and have not worked for 20 years and I reach retirement age in a year.</p>
15 <sup>th</sup> November, Newark-on-Trent	<p>I received one of the WFI letters on Sat8/11/14. It stated that an interview had been arranged for me on Mon 17/11/14. Fortunately I know the rules and I have no intention of attending.</p> <p>I also believe that because of a recent "partial" victory regarding the backdated payment of SDP (5 years worth of payment) which was awarded by the ICE, I am now being "harassed" by the scumbags. I am in the ESA Support Group and I live in Newark-on-Trent.</p>
15 <sup>th</sup> November, Blackpool	<p>Mrs M. After a wca, was placed in wrag and her details were given to A4e. She only remained in the group for a few months and had telephone interviews due to her mental health condition and anti-social behaviour. A mandatory reconsideration moved her to the support group where she was continually contacted by phone and told that she MUST still engage in telephone contact with A4e. I contacted her local JCP who informed her this was not the case. A4e still persisted. I contacted the manager of A4E (Farren Southall) who told me it was in their contract, I asked her to show me where and of course, she couldn't. Mrs M was told they would no longer contact her. Several weeks later, the phone calls started again. Sadly, Mrs M had a melt down on the phone and told them to leave her alone. This has been happening for well over a year and the process started about 2013. Currently, she has had no further calls since May 2014 and is in Blackpool.</p>
12 <sup>th</sup> November, Doncaster	<p>Miss J- This lady was in wrag. A further wca found her "fit for work" was sent to Phoenix Enterprise. On Wed 12th Nov 2014, Phoenix first called. These are her words- I was told I had to attend Mon 17th. Thursday 13th I called back and told her that DWP had said that I didn't need to attend the appointment. I was told again that I must and it was mandatory and then in another conversation she said that I didn't need to attend the appointment but I would have to have weekly calls as it's a mandatory requirement. This lady I am sure is the reason I blacked out later that night and vomited all over. I had a similar experience when I had my breakdown with a mental health worker after a telephone conversation, but that ended in an attempted suicide. This lady was also told that the attendance at their offices was now mandatory as the Government had changed the rules. The really horrendous thing about this case is- She is not actually getting any benefit as she doesn't want to claim JSA as she is fearful it will jeopardise her tribunal hearing for ESA and they still tell her that she is mandated to take part in telephone calls..... This case is in Doncaster.</p>
15 <sup>th</sup> November, Plymouth	<p>Miss M- This lady lives in Plymouth, She is in assessment phase ESA and was told to attend JCP, these are her words about the situation- No I haven't signed anything. I just go in and they have told me about being able to earn £20 a week without it affecting benefit etc. I was supposed to go on a confidence building course but didn't make it due to illness. They left me alone for 2 months but called me back again. She has another appointment now on the 21st November 2014.</p> <p>My response- Is this the job centre doing this? Are they telling you that you have to attend?</p>

	<p>Miss M-Yes. My gp has done a letter for me to send to pip which has gone off as am waiting Mr and she feels they are being unfair and I will give a copy at my ESA appointment next week too.</p>
<p>14<sup>th</sup> November, (CAB Advisor), London</p>	<p>I can't shed any light on this exact situation, but I do have some related information which you might find helpful.</p> <p>I work as a volunteer at my local CAB office. Recently a client came in who was a single mother with a two week old baby. She was claiming Income Support but had been told by the Jobcentre to attend a work-focused interview and wanted to know if she had to go. The rules for Income Support are that work-focused interviews cannot be mandated until the child is over one. We suspected that the Jobcentre had made it sound mandatory whilst being aware that it was not. My colleague said that this was the second case of this type he has seen recently.</p> <p>Perhaps something similar is happening with people in the ESA support group? I would be interested to know myself what is going on here as if this is happening regularly I'm sure we will be seeing these people at the CAB offices too.</p>
<p>14<sup>th</sup> November,</p>	<p>I had lunch with my friend yesterday, she is in the support group. (since april this year) However she did have to go along to a meeting with a work provider, Ingenus....but now they ring her every 2 months and claim "this is a telephone call to see if things have changed", and each time she says no, but they still send a letter stating a time when they will call. Sometimes they call on the day stated, sometimes they do not bother and ring when they like.</p> <p>I really hope that my MP can help me, I will let you know of the outcome.</p> <p>My friend and I do feel that the whole situation surrounding disability payments and who gets them is becoming like a witch hunt.</p> <p>I reminds me of the evil Judge Jeffries (iain Duncan smith) in the 17th century.</p> <p>The old saying:</p> <p>If a witch gets thrown into the river many times and dies, they are innocent.</p> <p>If a witch gets thrown in the river and lives, they are protected by demon's and gets burned at the stake for being a witch anyway.</p>
<p>19<sup>th</sup> November, Eastbourne</p>	<p>Yes, I've got mine on Friday, 21st Nov, 2014, 11.00am, at St Annes House, Eastbourne, East Sussex</p>
<p>24<sup>th</sup> November, Farnborough</p>	<p>I too am in 'support group' but called for 'work-related' interview. The letter is the same as the one in the picture you give, except for (1) names, obviously; and (2) the whole section headed 'Do I need to come to the interview' is missing. I spoke with lady in central unit, not local one (Farnborough in Hampshire).</p> <p>She was surprised. She said that local office would call to clarify - no call yet received. By the way, you need to look again at suggested text for a reply letter - mainly style, but also 'effect' s/be 'affect'. I am using this:</p>



	I understand that as I am in the 'support group' for Employment & Support Allowance the above-referenced 'work-focused' interview is not mandatory and my non-attendance would not affect my benefit payments. I am therefore exercising my right not to attend the interview.
24 <sup>th</sup> November, Stamford, Lincolnshire	I attended an interview in Job centre Stamford Lincs on 22 Nov 14 where I was told I had to attend Work related interviews and I had to get my head round it. Was on Incap Ben for 20 years transferred to ESA wrag Oct 2013 and on appeal placed in support group Jan 2014. This is very frightening
26 <sup>th</sup> November,	I am currently in the support group and I believe that this interview is voluntary as per the form number 'F1 ESA Voluntary 01/13'. I am diagnosed with Hurthelle cell carcinoma of the thyroid and have been receiving and am now recovering from radiotherapy treatment for over a year and there will probably be further treatment to come. I am worried about this Interview as they may unlawfully bully me in to a situation that I can not sustain, I know that the DWP have confirmed that those in the support group only need to attend WFIs on a voluntary basis but they often ignore the small print of their own policy, I know that requests have been made to the DWP Central Freedom of Information Team asking how many claimants on ESA have been called in for 2013/2014 for similar interview requests but they declined to answer on the grounds of cost, so no surprise there.
28 <sup>th</sup> November,	Yes myself and my daughter are both in support group ESA , I got a letter asking me to attend work focse interveiw , I rang said I was in support group not fit for work and the lady on the end of the line said , ' o yes it's ok cos it's all voluary and canceled it , but when I canceled my daughters , they sent a new appointment so I explained she was not fit for work and they took her off their list too , we have to get the word out that they can NOT force anyone in support group to go and they will not and can not stop your money , but don't leave it and just not go , do ring up and cancele it by phone , hope that helps
27 <sup>th</sup> November, Malvern	Hi I'm on employment support allowance and I'm I support group and been told I got to go to job centre for a work related interview I rang them up and told me I must attend or my benefit gets stopped I'm from malvern Worcestershire
22 <sup>nd</sup> December, Lincoln	Hi. I am contacting you on behalf of my wife who is in the ESA support group, having previously being in receipt of IB.She was assessed to be in this group approx 12 months ago for an 18 month period. My wife has a serious mental health problem having had 3 serious breakdowns requiring Sections and several months of hospitalisation . She is on heavy medication which has stabilised her condition but she is susceptible to stress which can bring on paranoia and delusional thinking As a result of this she has not worked for the last 12 years . Bearing these facts in mind,today, she received an official letter from the job centre requesting that she attend an interview with her personal advisor,early in January.  Fortunately I logged on to your very helpful website and discovered that this should not be happening for people in the support group.and that many people throughout the country were getting similar letters.  As a result we contacted the job centre and raised a complaint about the letter and the misleading tone of compulsion that was implied. An apology was given by the advisor and it was confirmed that my wife would not have to attend an interview.  On the face of it Job Centre staff either do not understand their own

	<p>regulations or they are undertaking an underhand approach aimed at getting people into interviews and then off benefits. I suspect the latter to be the case, a situation that must be resisted at all costs to protect the rights of vulnerable people.</p> <p>Linda, Thanks for the response and the info. The job centre in question is the Lincoln office. Interestingly I have had two phone calls from the Job centre, the last at 9.00am this morning, offering their profuse apologies for sending out the letter which was an error and not a routinised procedure.</p> <p>Cheers Rick</p>
22nd December,	<p>type of interview im in the support group do or should I attend on the 31st dec ,I have serious osteoarthritis of the knees &amp; cannot walk far also im on dla high rate of the mobility &amp; middle rate of care</p>
19 <sup>th</sup> December,	<p>Hi</p> <p>I live in liverpool and am in the esa support group. I have severe mental illness problems ( bipolar / depression etc) I received a phone call two days ago on my mobile that has sent me in a spiral. It was a person from dwp on a withheld number. He told me I could either have this interview on the phone or I would have to come to the office.</p> <p>He then asked a barrage of questions and asked if I could do voluntary work. I was so shook up I can't even remember what I said or everything I was asked.</p> <p>When I told my career and mother they contacted dwp and they said they have no record of this.</p> <p>I can't even describe the effect this has had on my condition. I don't even know if this is real or a scam.</p> <p>Lorraine</p>
26 <sup>th</sup> December,	<p>Hi</p> <p>I recieved a letter asking me to attend my local job centre on 31st december for a work focus interview. I have been on esa since november 2014 to now, in this time i have NEVER been assessed i am still living on 140 fortnight but only recieve 100 fortnite because of paying back a budget loan and ct arrears. I have never ever been told im in any work related group, and im still on assessment rate. So i dont understand why i have recieved this letter to go for a work focus meeting and do i have to go?</p> <p>I had a op on 16 december where i had a knee laproscopy and a tibial transfer, so at the moment i am not mobile i cant even dress my self. I have been in pain and not been able to walk properly or bend down for about 18 months.</p> <p>Sharon</p>
29 <sup>th</sup> December,	<p>Hi,</p> <p>I have just found your website. I am on ESA due to anxiety and depression. I have been on it for about 3 years and have had two ATOS interviews, both of which said I was fit for work. I had two appeals and each time the appeal was upheld.</p> <p>I suffer from panic attacks, acute anxiety and depression. I am prescribed valium and mirtazipine for depression. In fact I had an attack a few weeks ago and an ambulance had to be called for me at the train station. I collapsed and thought I was having a heart attack or a stroke. The ambulance workers did tests on site and eventually got me into the</p>

ambulance. They eventually said that I had had a particularly severe anxiety attack.

I have now received a letter from DWP stating that my 'Personal Advisor' is requiring me to attend an interview at my local Job Centre in Bath. The interview is on Monday 29th Dec. at 10.20 am. It says if I don't attend my benefits may be affected.

I am now panicking at the thought that I could have had this interview cancelled or postponed. I don't know if I should call the number on the letter first thing on Monday. If I must attend I will need to have 2 x valium.

I know this is cutting it fine time-wise but I wondered if you could possibly get back to me first thing on Monday 29th? I have no-one who can accompany me to this interview this Monday. I have no family here and my friends are all away for Christmas.

Any advice would be greatly appreciated.

*Hi Mandy, sorry for delay in response.*

*You dont say if you are in the ESA support group or not or what the interview is for -is it a work focused interview or one asking for bank statements etc?*

Thank you for replying to me. Am not sure but I THINK I'm in the support group. The letter says 'I am your personal advisor. I am writing to arrange a meeting with you. Our records show your next appointment is due.'

Then it gives today's date and time of 10.20. I am allowed to bring someone with me (but I don't have anyone as I have no family here and my small group of friends have gone away to their families for Christmas holidays.) IN BOLD BLACK WRITING it says 'If you do not attend this meeting your benefit may be affected.' If I do have to go after telephoning them I will have to take diazepam beforehand.

I will call them at 8am and try to find out which group I am in. I haven't had an appointment since last December. However, I was bullied in June - someone made a false allegation against me and I had to attend a compliance interview which only made my symptoms worse. The DWP came back to me afterwards and said that my claim was fine and legitimate etc.

Thanks again for replying.

9<sup>th</sup> January,

Hi Everyone

I am in the support group , here is what happened to me. I received the letter from job center plus in December saying I would be required to take part in a phone interview to discuss my options on going back to work , also included in the letter was a printed sheet saying I was in the work group ?! I knew this was not true so rang the benefits line.

I spoke to a very helpful lady - she confirmed I was in the support group and would not be sanctioned fore not attending interviews. SO i then asked how this had all come about , why were job center plus contacting me and arranging interviews ? She replied "oh the records say you made contact with job center plus and asked for an interview " I was gobsmacked.

So it seems job center plus are now lying and making up stories to get people off the support group - I emailed my job center adviser with whom the interview was arranged explaining I would not be attending , would not be sanctioned and that I knew they had lied to trick me into an interview.

She did not reply (surprise surprise) and my money went in fine and I have not been sanctioned.

	<p>Be vigilant people - they are now willing to lie and make up stuff.</p>
18 <sup>th</sup> January,	<p>I'm my sons appointee after a serious accident left him physically and mentally challenged.</p> <p>He was finally put into ESA support group 4 months ago.</p> <p>I've just received a letter from the Jobcentre informing me that they've arranged an appointment for a 'Work Focused Interview'!</p> <p>What's all that about?</p> <p>I shall be phoning DWP and Jobcentre tomorrow to clarify my sons situation and the necessity of his attendance.</p> <p>Not happy!</p>
19 <sup>th</sup> January, Kings Lynn	<p>have just read the request for information on you web site.</p> <p>I am in the Support group and claiming contribution based ESA. I received a letter about 2 months ago saying that I must attend an interview which I attended, I was given another date for a month later, then another 2 a week apart, at the last one which was today I was told that I had to come in every week if the interviewee felt that was necessary, hence me trying to find out the law. I look forward to hearing from you with any advice you may have, many thanks,</p> <p>Neville</p>
19 <sup>th</sup> January, Birmingham	<p>Today I have been on the website and found it useful to know that the problem is being tackled as ESA support group claimants are being asked by Job centre plus staff to come and participate in Post work Programme Support interviews.</p> <p>I am an individual who suffers from multiple illnesses and disabilities. I am a sufferer of Anxiety and Depression, I have been attending CBT with Birmingham Healthy Minds for my Anger Management Therapy, I have Hypertension (high blood pressure), In my right leg Proximal Tibia I have a metal plate and ten screws, Upcoming is my surgery to my right knee and have been referred to a specialist. I have had two operations to my head to remove my Cysts and will be seeing a specialist consultant for my Tinnitus and hearing problems.</p> <p>OnFriday 09January2015 I received a letter to my home address in the name of <b>[Redacted]</b>?(which easily could have been binned) I still happen to open the letter out of suspicion that is it for me or is it just a mix up. Upon opening this letter dated 7/1/15 with my National Insurance Number saying that Notification of Office Interview and date stated which was handwritten to be Thursday 15/01/2015 11:20 with Helen. The letter stated more than enough to cause me problems with my health as I had my surgery to my head the day before. Out of urgency I called the Job centre office on numerous occasions and when I get through to speak to an advisor her behaviour was clearly unacceptable I tried explaining that I'm in the ESA Support Group and you should check my claim and medical records, She replied that they don't have access to them and finished the conversation for the fact that I asked her that if she was recording me I was too so at that point the phone went down. I was in total disgust and asked my partner that we should go into the Job centre. Upon arriving at the local Job centre I asked the front desk staff if I could speak to a complaints manager and shown him the letter pointing out that my name is <b>[Redacted]</b> and not</p>

	<p><b>[Redacted]</b>? The advisor says that they should have not contacted me as I'm in the Support Group. He had taken my mobile number and advised me that HELEN will speak to me to clear the misunderstanding. On my way home I get a call from Helen? says that I will give you another time and date for an Interview? The following couple of days</p> <p>I received two appointments centre dated as 21st January 2015 11:20 with Helen. 09th February 2015 9:30 with Helen. Post Work Programme Support as I have completed my time on the work programme?</p> <p>I will be attending Sparkhill Jobcentre Plus Office, <b>[Redacted]</b> Interview with my specialist reports and evidence that I'm fully in entitlement of my benefit which is ESA Support Group for the fact that I'm suffering from such illnesses and disabilities and have upcoming operations which take effect on day to day life. I hope the Advisor will take all my information into consideration and clear the misunderstanding. I have and I am going through serious problems in life. I was a victim of a very serious horrendous hate crime attack on Saturday 13th September 2014 which was sustained with repeated hitting to my head body and especially my right leg which the attackers knew that it had a metal plate and screws from a past injury. The attack was conspired by a woman and this same woman somehow got into my six year old girl school at lunchtime into the school grounds and called my daughter a BITCH? Very serious concerns have been raised upon this woman's behaviour, Local Authority's have been notified.</p> <p>I am a man who has four other dependants my wife, 8 year old daughter, Six year old daughter and a 20 month old boy I strive for their safety first. If I have to put it in words we as a family all have been ABUSED, HARASSED and VICTIMISED by the ill mannered acts of this woman.</p>
20 <sup>th</sup> January,	<p>I am in the Support Group and today received a letter saying an interview had been arranged with my 'personal adviser' which would last up to an hour.</p> <p>I am in the support group because I suffer with severe anxiety which prevents me from sitting still and both my Incapacity Benefit and ESA medicals were aborted by the ATOS assessors because I wasn't fit to be interviewed - so now I have been invited to a work-focused interview which is utter madness.</p> <p>I am also heat intolerant so can't sit in a heated room - and it's been arranged for the hottest building in town!</p> <p>I understood that those of us in the Support Group were exempt from having to look for work....???</p>
21 <sup>st</sup> January, “	<p>I received an interview appointment for a wfi for 21 Jan 15. I am in receipt of the support group component of (conts) ESA having been 'migrated' from IB ... a claim I have had running since the last century. The letter is the same F1 ESA Voluntary 01/13 that is mentioned by other contributors to this string. As a result of this letter I worried so much I could not sleep all night.</p> <p>I consider this disgusting behaviour by DWP/JCP since nowhere on the letter does it say that attendance is not mandatory and that benefit will not be stopped due to 'sanctions'. It is duplicitous harassment to send such a letter to seriously ill people and these missives are, clearly, deliberately misleading.</p> <p>I am recovering from cancer therapy and am deaf as a result. I am left with extreme fatigue and mental problems of depression and anxiety ; I</p>

completed the mental health parts of the ESA50 and have documents from Kings college dept psychiatry to back up my claims of mental illness.

My cancer recovery is confirmed to DWP by my GP on the ESA50. All this is well documented in my file and has been for nearly 20 years (though DWP tell me my back file is missing, probably destroyed). Non of this information is linked to the interview request, I suspect, and wouldn't be surprised that JCP have no information about my illnesses at all.

I have insisted that as a deaf person I am dealt with in writing only and specifically 'do not do phones' yet the letter arrived 3 days before the interview leaving no possibility to exchange letters and with the bland advice to phone if I could not attend\*. I have previously launched a formal complaint about this flagrant discrimination by the DWP against myself as a deaf person - and their willingness to ignore their customer charter which stated that I have the right to be dealt with by letter - but they just push the complaint from one person to another with no positive result.

An interesting twist to my story is that my wife happens to be a DWP decision maker. She was shocked by the letter and told me that neither she nor her team (in SE England) had any idea that such interviews were being arranged - no one had told them about it and they regularly told all support group members that they would never ever be bothered by Job Center plus. She told me that if attendance were mandatory and benefit were affected by non attendance then the letter would have to say so and that she saw nothing in the statute to support mandatory attendance anyway. She is looking in to it for both our sakes (if I find out whose 'initiative' these letters are I'll let you know).

(The 'benefits and work' website seems to suggest that a single interview is mandatory - with sanctions - for support group people but that you don't have to attend any further sessions - perhaps I misread it?)

Please do not publish my email name You can use my 'Benefits and work Aka 'Mr Tiredout' and edit as you see fit for your web page.

\* My wife did phone the given number to be met by a national advisor who she said was clearly embarrassed about it, didn't know and just gave out the number for the local job centre who also didn't know and their computers didn't work and there was hardly anyone in today and the person to ask wasn't there and they would phone back which they haven't.