Dear Professor Alston,

Thank you for taking the time to assimilate evidence concerning poverty related to the United Kingdom, under present governmental policies presently in place, a deliberate political ideology collectively known as 'Austerity Measures, linked to the national debt. This can also be linked to Lord Freud's Welfare Reforms of the Con/Lib coalition collectively dating from 2010.

It follows that the most vulnerable people in society will be affected by these polices, not least those with disabilities, of which I am one. There is no escaping the fact that such polices are deliberately designed to be punitive, to deny individuals the ability to function in society by being financially self-sufficient within the means of legitimate benefits to which they are legally entitled under the Welfare State.

In my own case, I was granted Disability Living Allowance when in it was introduced, *for life*, as it was understood from the beginning that my severe physical disability, which I had from birth, would never improve, but only worsen over time. I have so far personally received two identical letters from the Health Assessment Advisory Service, in the form of a Capability for Work Questionnaire in 2013, and 2015, concerning the extent of my disability. Consequently, I was place in the Support Group without interview. PIP, Personal Independent Payments have since been introduced to replace DLA, widely acknowledged to have been of no advantage, other than to allow the government of the day to tighten up eligibility to such an extent, it is practically impossible to claim. Assessors for the companies such as Capita, Atos, and Maximus who carry out this process, have the minimum of training, and in the majority are not healthcare professionals. The whole process has been reduced to a tick box exercise completed in a matter of hours. This has had a catastrophic impact. Many have been taken ill, have suffered heart attacks, but not been permitted to seek medical attention during the interview, with the threat of Sanctions if the process is not completed there and then. Many have died, during, and after their assessment. Those with terminal conditions have been declared 'fit for work', and have since died. The Department of Work and Pensions does everything in its power to fail a claimant’s entitlement to their legitimate benefits. Comments made during 'assessment' have come to light such as 'why haven't you killed yourself yet'? 'When did you catch cerebral palsy'? One individual was told to 'stand on their head' for a joke, another was compelled to wet herself as she was not permitted to leave the room during the assessment, and was threatened with Sanctions if she did. One assessor was found to be making assessments without the claimant being present. He was disciplined, but not fired.

It is generally accepted that the 'hostile environment' recently started with the *Windrush* generation of migrants, but I do not believe this to be so. It has been actively used against those with disabilities long before that, following the Welfare Reforms of 2010. It is self evident that there has been an orchestrated campaign since then in the mainstream media, to deliberately disenfranchise, to alienate, to misalign, and this has achieved the desired result in changing the general public's perception of the vulnerable, as 'benefit scroungers'.

In addition to the changes concerning DLA/PIP, a 'Bedroom Tax' was also introduced, for which I am liable. I appealed this since I use this room to store my mobility, and medical equipment used on a daily basis, but the appeal was refused. Even though such appeals have been upheld in court in other parts of the U.K., there has yet to be a test case that renders such a charge null and void throughout the country. This sum is taken out of my Housing Benefit entitlement, but fortunately, at present, is recompensed via Discretionary Housing Benefit. The notification that accompanies this benefit states clearly that it is only intended to be granted in the short term, whilst alternative arrangements can be made, (for single bed accommodation). Since I am very lucky to live in rented, adapted accommodation that is wholly suited to my needs, I still receive this essential top up. However, I do not take it for granted, and every financial year I must check that it is still in place. If not, this would have a serious effect on my finances, and my ability to keep a roof over my head, be self sufficient, and continue to live independently in the community. In Scotland, there has been a recent decision to deduct this same money from an individual's benefit entitlement.

More recently there has been more bad news affecting people with disabilities. At their discretion, local Councils throughout the U.K. can choose to charge for social care. Plymouth City Council have decided to impliment such measures. (In my view to make up for the shortfall in finances due to the ever restricted annual grant from central government. Such a deliberate course of action also has very severe consequences for society as a whole, as it affects those services which we already fund as citizens via the Council Tax. This of course affects all forms of direct service provision, from social work, to libraries, other public amenities, the emergency services, the Police, etc).

The Caseworker to my Constituency MP Luke Pollard, has told me personally duly a surgery visit that at the start of the next financial year, Plymouth City Council will receive no funding whatsoever from central government. This will apparently leave a financial shortfall of £3 million per week...

Despite the severity of my disability I worked in the competitive mainstream workplace for twenty years, assuming ever greater responsibilities from a succession of jobs, from Stage Door Keeper/Telephonist at the Theatre Royal Plymouth, to Producer at the  BBC, until I was retired on medical grounds in 2000. In that time, I have paid my share of taxes, and National Insurance contributions. Yet, despite all of this, I am now required to pay for the personal care I now require, *but have already paid for previously, as stated*This, and in addition, I pay a social care precept as part of my Council Tax.

Plymouth City Council have, without either my permission, or knowledge conducted an 'audit' of my finances via the DWP, and decreed that I must forgo over £200 per month from my ESA benefit to pay for my care. These monies to be paid to an agency that is hardly fit for purpose, hardly regulated, all of these now private concerns, (no longer Council run), hell bent on breakneck expansion, and maximum profit. Their carers, all of whom are on zero hours contracts, are given no travel time, are given additional calls regardless of their stated availability, are frequently late, (and so never catch up on their calls), and are, for the most part, exhausted. Sickness, and absenteeism are high, there is barely any continuity of care, (a regular care team who know, in my case, my intimate, and complicated care routine). The best leave within a very short time, disillusioned and spent, and consequently the staff turnover is huge. Even the few that are dedicated, and love their job know that ultimately, they could earn more money per hour stacking shelves in a supermarket. Training is minimum.

In addition, and to date, 50,000 adapted Motability vehicles have been confiscated from those, the majority of whom depend on these for their essential mobility and independence, even the ability to keep a job, and remain in employment. Grotesquely, those that implemented this policy, remain as Patrons of the Motability Charity. Though no longer able to work, the ability to drive remains one of my few remaining abilities, and enjoyments. My own vehicle is at risk if my transition from DLA to PIP does not go well, I could be  refused my legitimate benefits entirely, and become destitute, through no action, or fault of my own. It is now not uncommon to see people with disabilities on the streets... All of this from the seventh richest economy on the planet. It is unconscionable, it is unforgivable. It is, deliberate neglect, the unravelling of our society, our Welfare State, our NHS. The present government seek to 'Incentivise' people with disabilities into employment by deducting £30 a week from their legitimate benefits. Yet there are few employers who will give these people the chance of a job, especially during a recession, and during 'Austerity'. The government have since closed down all the Remploy sheltered employment facilities, (established after the Second World War, to give disabled veterans jobs).  In any case, there is a huge debate that continues to rage, (prompted by Lord Freud himself), as to whether this group are deemed fit to earn a living wage.That people with disabilities are not seen as being 'profitable'.

In summary then, from a personal perspective:

* I am under a continual and unrelenting strain. It is already a matter of medical record that I am unable to sleep, my mental health is suffering, and I have come to view my individual longterm outlook as bleak.
* I live in very real fear of a ring on my doorbell, or the daily arrival of the post.
* I dread the compulsory transition from DLA to PIP that I have yet to undergo.
* I dread going outside. I have so far been involved with two Road Traffic Incidents, once of which led to a hospital admission. Sometimes I can't in case as I am barricaded in my flat due to vehicles parking on the lowered kerb. Offending are frequently verbally abusive.         Disability hate crime is on a rapid rise. In October 2017, disability or transgender hate crimes increased by 53%. Hate crimes for the same period, show that hate crimes against disabled children have in creased by 150% in two years, (BBC). The clear up rate as a result of these crimes is 1%...
* There is no longer a Social Fund, this has since been abolished. There is currently nowhere to turn if in a financial crises due to Sanctions for example.
* There is no longer any representation in Law to challenge bad decisions regarding legitimate benefits, which can be curtailed or stopped at any time following review. Access to Legal Aid has been abolished.
* There is absolutely no aspect of a disabled persons daily life that has not come under the most intrusive, and intense scrutiny. My local NHS continence team, already having conducted a review with me, rang a few months later to request another. I was baffled as to the necessity for this, It turned out that they wanted to review the specification of the incontinence pad, that they themselves had prescribed. They used a word that was unfamiliar to me, but essentially it meant 'off tariff'. meaning that it was now considered over prescribed, and no longer appropriate to my needs. They wanted to give me a cheaper alternative, which was not as expensive. In order to justify I my original prescription should remain in place, I, (and my GP), had to explain that I was frequently left in bed for twelve hours at a time. That the quality of urine produced over that time also depends on how high my blood sugars are. (I also have Type1 diabetes). The higher the BSL the more urine, since the body is trying to excrete excess sugar. In an event, due to my incontinence, it is not unusual to have to run the washing machine up to two times a day. Inferior incontinence pads would also mean that the bedding would also have to be washed daily also, an almost impossible task to manage.

Yet it doesn't have to be this way. Billions of pounds in Corporation Tax could, (and should) be clawed back into the Exchequer from the likes of Apple, Costa, Boots, Cadbury's, etc, many of which are now managed off shore in tax havens protected by the government. In addition it has come to light that HMRC, refuses to charge the rich and powerful with tax evasion to 'avoid damaging their reputation', (evolvepolitics.com). As of the first quarter of 2018, the current UK government debt amounted to £1.78 trillion. Where has the money gone?

Well known within the disabled community via protest groups on line, but seldom, if ever covered by the mainstream media, following a recent Freedom of Information Request from disability campaigner Gail Ward. The DWP have since admitted that 111,450 claimants  have died between March 2014, to February 2017. There is  increasing evidence of rising deaths from suicide. It can be argued that this is all part of a wider, and deliberate government plan, that amounts to genocide, or eugenics, call it what you will, it still amounts to premeditated murder by design.

**I give my full consent that my submission be included in Professor Alston's current study, in his current capacity as UN Rapporteur**

David Bennett

14.09.2018.