

Call for written submissions – Visit by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from 5 to 16 November 2018

I submit as an individual who is disabled and living below the poverty line, in Wales, UK. I am involved with many disability groups, NGOs and various public-sector bodies, as an individual who inputs to committees and forums on various disability and / or access issues.

A. General

The UN's Committee on the Rights of Disabled People (UNCRPD) found that the UK Social Security Reforms led to 'grave or systematic violations' of the Rights of Disabled People. [Report 16th Aug – 2nd Sept 2016 (16th Oct 16)]. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) also concluded that their rights had regressed in at least 9 areas since 2010 and disabled people were still being treated as 'second class citizens' [<https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/being-disabled-in-britain-executive-summary.pdf>]. A further report led by Oxford University found that "Over 50% of households included a disabled person, consistent with the definition used in national surveys. 75% experienced ill health in their household. Mental health conditions affected people in 1/3 of households" and that "50% [of people] had gone without heating for more than four days in the past 12 months, 50% couldn't afford toiletries, and 1 in 5 had slept rough in the last 12 months. Over 78% of households were severely, and often chronically, food insecure." [<https://www.trusselltrust.org/what-we-do/research-advocacy/oxford-university-report/>]

The Special Rapporteur should visit Wales in view of the recent "Research by BBC Wales News shows that of the more than 100,000 DLA claimants reassessed for PIP in Wales, almost 30,000 - 29% - were disallowed." [<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-45100070>] and that some of the most disadvantaged areas of Wales have been the hardest hit by disability, as well as, welfare cuts.

The Special Rapporteur should meet with representatives from:

The EHRC Wales <https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/commission-wales>,

Disability Wales <http://www.disabilitywales.org/>

Mark Isherwood (AM), Cross Party Group on Disability, Mark.Isherwood@assembly.wales

Frank Field (MP), House of Commons inquiry into disability benefits (25/10/17)

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/pip-esa-assessments-17-19/>

and

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/336/33603.htm#_idTextAnchor003

Disability Rights UK (DR UK) <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/>

Black Triangle <http://blacktrianglecampaign.org/>

Disabled People Against the Cuts (DPAC) <https://dpac.uk.net/>

John Pring, Disability News Service <https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/>,

CanCook Liverpool <http://www.cancook.co.uk/>

Centre for Welfare Reform <https://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/our-work/antiausterity.html>

Benefits and work <https://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/about-us>

Disabled Living Foundation <https://www.dlf.org.uk/node>

Joseph Rowntree Foundation <https://www.jrf.org.uk/>

The Trussell Trust <https://www.trusselltrust.org/>

Sir Ernest Ryder, Senior President of Tribunal Service <https://www.judiciary.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/speech-ryder-spt-ucl-may-2018.pdf>

People's Assembly(PA) <http://www.thepeoplesassembly.org.uk/>

Shelter <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/contact-us/>

John Bird, Big Issue <https://www.bigissue.com/>

The Resolution Foundation <https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/about-us/mission/>

B. Austerity

Austerity is not necessary; it is a political ideology. Parallels can be taken from the 1940s, when opposite economical policy was put in place after WWII, from whence the NHS was born. Austerity has never taken poorer people in the population out of poverty.

Cambridge University's Professor Lawrence King, [contributor to the BMJ Open study which states that public spending cuts are linked to 120 000 excess deaths in England Nov 2017] said: "Austerity does not promote growth or reduce deficits – it is bad economics. It is also a public health disaster. It is not an exaggeration to call it economic murder."

<https://www.bmj.com/content/359/bmj.j5332.full>

It also recognises the 'Effects of health and social care spending constraints on mortality in England: a time trend analysis' <http://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/7/11/e017722> (Oxford, Cambridge, KCL)

The UNCRPD Report on The UK (Oct 2016) has been wilfully ignored by the Government. The Government refuses to take adequate account of the impact on vulnerable groups and make efforts to minimise negative effects for those groups and individuals, otherwise another UN Report would not be necessary.

The effects of austerity have been disastrous on poverty and inequality levels in the UK in the last decade. Numerous reports have been commissioned but people are still suffering.

<https://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/cs-true-cost-austerity-inequality-uk-120913-en.pdf>

<https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/inequality-and-mental-illness-comment-lancet-psychiatry-professors-wilkinson-and-pickett>

<https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/equality-trust-responds-budget-2017>

<https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/government-must-now-take-action-discrimination-and-inequality>

<http://www.poverty.ac.uk/tags/inequality>

<https://www.newstatesman.com/politics/uk/2016/06/un-declares-uk-s-austerity-policies-breach-international-human-rights>

Yes, the Human Rights of individuals experiencing poverty have clearly been affected by austerity measures. The most obvious example is 'Benefit Sanctions' dealt out to welfare claimants for often outrageous reasons. It is widely reported that people who have, for example, been in hospital at the time of a welfare appointment (among various other legitimate reasons) have had benefits removed due to missing that appointment. This in itself contravenes Human Rights, by taking away entire livelihoods, thus, homes and means of staying alive. [Articles 3 and 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.]

- 'More than a million disabled people are now living without the social care they need. The Conservatives' ongoing assault on disability support spreads far beyond this [the loss of 50,000 mobility cars]. The notorious "fit for work" tests force severely ill people to look for jobs and then sanction them if they're in too much pain to get out of bed, while benefit delays push cancer patients to food banks, and the bedroom tax threatens bed-bound disabled people with eviction.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/may/15/theresa-may-cathy-britain-disabled-people>

Benefit sanctions have been cited in law as causing death. David Clapson is a case in point.

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/sep/09/david-clapson-benefit-sanctions-death-government-policies>

Further, the National Audit Office doesn't find any proof that sanctions are value for money:

<https://www.nao.org.uk/report/benefit-sanctions/>

Public Services have been decimated by austerity cuts to local government.

The cost of the cuts: The impact on local government and poorer communities:

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/cost-cuts-impact-local-government-and-poorer-communities>

Austerity's £18bn impact on local services: <https://www.ft.com/content/5fcbd0c4-2948-11e5-8db8-c033edba8a6e>

The effects can be seen throughout the sectors: Disability welfare cuts (IFL, PIP etc); Social Services; Mental Health Provision; school, library and community centre closures; fewer doctors, nurses, police firefighters... the list is infinite.

“Since 2010, Whitehall has lost around 100,000 people and the wider public sector a further 300,000.”
<https://www.theguardian.com/public-leaders-network/2015/jun/15/tories-impact-500000-public-sector-job-cuts>

“Over the next five years [to 2020], around 500,000 more jobs have to go, according to the basic arithmetic of austerity: the [Office for Budget Responsibility](#) predicted a total of a million lost jobs over the decade from 2010.” <http://obr.uk/>

Many alternatives to austerity policies could have been implemented by governments in the last decade.

Expanding social housing would have provided quality jobs, putting money back into the economy, as well as having lowered the amount of homelessness, lessening the welfare bill.

Investing in green / sustainable energy would have also provided quality jobs and tackled the possible fines for not meeting emissions targets.

Investing in the NHS would have provided meaningful and vital jobs, while keeping the population in better health, again lessening the welfare bill.

Investing in proper education and vocational training, if done well and financed properly, generally enables the poorest members of society to become more engaged within their communities.

Keeping people poor and inequality high has never and will never benefit the general population, whether rich or poor.

C. Universal Credit

Frank Field’s report on Universal Credit, Work and Pensions Committee

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmworpen/336/33603.htm#_idTextAnchor003

clearly shows problems relating to the goals of the government, for example: “14. The baked-in six week wait for the first payment in Universal Credit is a major obstacle to the success of the policy. In areas where the full service has rolled out, evidence compellingly links it to an increase in acute financial difficulty.”

It has been well documented that moving 3 million people onto Universal Credit, which will affect 750,000 disabled people, including hundreds of thousands of people with mental health problems, is likely to cause hardship among already vulnerable people.

<https://www.mind.org.uk/media/23924038/mind-briefing-on-universal-credit-and-managed-migration.pdf>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/jul/05/disabled-people-could-slip-through-net-in-universal-credit-move-says-charity>

D. New Technologies in the Welfare System

It is well known that poorer, disabled and older members of society are less likely to have internet access or are unable to use the internet. Job Centres no longer provide internet access in many places. Many libraries and community centres, where internet access could have been accessed, have been closed during the ten or so years where public-sector provisions have been cut beyond recognition.

While Ofcom <https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about-ofcom/latest/media/facts> states that one in nine people had access to the internet at home (2018), it is not indicative as to who may be able to use it.

According to the Office for National Statistics “Across all age groups, the proportion of adults who were recent internet users was lower for those that were disabled, compared with those that were not.”

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/businessindustryandtrade/itandinternetindustry/bulletins/internetusers/2017>

New Data Protection Laws (2108) should now legally limit what claimants can be asked to post on-line. I am a vulnerable person living alone (who does not use social media) and do not wish my personal details to be widely available and I should not be forced to make them public.

E. Child Poverty

According to End Child Poverty there are now “More than half of children now living in poverty in some parts of the UK” and “The figures also show that some of the most deprived areas of the UK have seen the biggest increases in child poverty since the coalition’s last local child poverty figures for December 2015. Increases of 10 percentage points¹ in some areas demonstrate the growing crisis of child poverty in the UK.”

<http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/more-than-half-of-children-now-living-in-poverty-in-some-parts-of-the-uk/>

<http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2018/>

Somewhere between 25 and 30 % (approx.) of children in Wales are living in poverty.

This is the 21st century... what is going on?

F. Brexit

Does anyone know the implications of 'Brexit' on anything?

Jan Underwood

Aug 2018

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sxtremepoverty@ohchr.org until **Friday 14 September at 18:00 GMT.**"