

Up until 3 1/2 years ago I was a Chef of a Contract Catering company and has been a a chef paying taxes in the U.K. for about 19 years.

I slipped over in the kitchen at home and fractured a vertebra and prolapsed 2 discs which did not go back into place. I've had various surgery's including Metal Plates put into my back and a bone graft done on my spine.

Over the years the DWP have almost pushed me to the point of suicide I've stood over motorway bridges just crying and the only thing stopping me was the fact I have a son.

Firstly when i applied for benefits originally the process was long winded and the humiliation of the forms is disgusting. I filled in the forms and 8 weeks later got a medical .But despite all of this and barely being able to walk I was enabled fit to attend Work Related Activity (WRA) . Despite having extreme painful conditions I went to the first meeting for my WRA at Seetec my first appointment I was told I had to attend every day or my money would be sanctioned. I left the place feeling sick as there is no way I could physically make it there tomorrow, never mind every day. So I couldn't go to Seetec and within 2 days I had a letter to say all my benefits were Sanctioned.

At this point I felt lost and isolated as a disabled person as my only life line was the money I got, and I couldn't physically go to Seetec this was before I'd even had any surgery I was in agony I couldn't even stand up straight.

This made me go to the doctors as I was very stressed and wanted to know if I could get any help from him . He signed me off from Seetec and for about a year I had to attend Seetec once a month for about 15 mins and was assigned a reasonable staff member. I literally only went in to sign the boxes and did no job searches as my advisor , my doctor, and Surgeon number 1 said I couldn't do it despite this it was easier than going through the humiliation of another medical exam.

14 months later roughly I received another 35 page form to fill out on my condition which was still very bad so much so I was booked in for surgery in the December which I clearly stated in the form.

A month or so later I was asked to go for a medical which was booked 5 days after my surgery date, I rang them and told them and they said they would postpone in definitely as I obviously couldn't come for a medical (I basically had to learn to walk again) So I was booked in for surgery and in December I had the first major operation. I had previously had injections into my spine, but this was to remove the disc and to patch up the fracture with a bone graft.

When I got out of hospital I had a letter from the job centre to say as I hadn't gone to the medical they had made the decision anyway to place me back in the WRA.

Again panic hit me I could barely walk from surgery and my surgeon was telling me I had to lay flat in a back brace for 12 weeks and I couldn't even sit upright without help I was taking Morphine and Oxycodone for the pain and i was being told by the job centre i was fit to do WRA .

So I didn't go to Seetec and got sanctioned for a couple of weeks but Seetec advisor saw sense and between her and my surgeon a mandatory reconsideration was written by them as to why decision was wrong. I also made a official complaint as it turned out the medical that I didn't go to and told them I couldn't go to was performed in my absence (I kid you not) the ASOS "medical professional " a Physiotherapist had filled out her questions as if I was at a medical that I didn't even attend and that was why the decision was made to place me into WRA as appose to the Support Group from a medical that I was too sick to attend !!

The decision was quickly changed to put me into the support group but not before I had to threaten to expose the ATOS advisor as a fraud which is illegal.

Another year went by and I had to have further surgery to remove some metal work that had trapped nerves leaving my right leg numb.

Had the surgery and was sent for another medical with ATOS they have declared me fit to work again despite my surgeon and drs saying I cannot twist my back I'm also wearing a cast over top half of my body which I was wearing at the medical.

Because of this I've had no money at all from ESA for 4 weeks now and no housing benefits for the same.

I have appealed but because I had surgery through the NHS I've been waiting 6 weeks to see my surgeon who I need to get evidence of how far I'm allowed to walk !!

Again Battery low would love to discuss further as there's so much I've had to Leave out

Many Thanks finally feel some one is listening to our sides of the story about how this government is treating disabled and the elderly .

Stuart Oates