

An arbitrary cap on the number of children the Government will support is not only cruel, but is bad policy – Abrahams

Debbie

Abrahams MP, Labour's Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary, commenting on a letter from the Social Security Advisory Committee addressing the Government's policy to limit child tax credits to two children, said:

"The Social Security Advisory Committee is right to raise very serious concerns over Tory plans to limit child tax credits to two children.

"An arbitrary cap on the number of children the Government will support is not only cruel, but is bad policy.

"Requiring survivors of rape to justify themselves in this way constitutes an unacceptable extension by the Government into deeply sensitive areas of women's lives.

"That's why Labour is calling on the Tories to scrap this pernicious policy before it takes effect in April."

ENDS

Press release: Prime Minister's Official Spokesperson appointed: James Slack

From:

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James Slack will be the new Prime Minister's Official Spokesperson.

James Slack has been appointed as the Prime Minister's Official Spokesperson.

He will replace Helen Bower, who is taking up a new role as Director of Communications in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.

[Greens, Disabled People Against Cuts and bereaved mother call for inquiry into deaths of benefit claimants](#)



10 February 2017

The Green Party, Disabled People Against Cuts and a mother whose son died after his benefits were cut have called on the Government to launch an independent inquiry into the deaths of benefit claimants.

An letter [1] to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Damian Green MP, calls on the Department for Work and Pensions to launch an independent inquiry into the methods used to assess benefit claimants and their entitlements, to determine "whether these procedures are fair and proper or if they are, in fact, contributing to the deaths of claimants".

The Green Party has also compiled a dossier listing 50 people who died while claiming benefits. The dossier includes the death of Mark Wood, whose mother Jill Gant co-signed the letter to Damian Green.

Wood starved to death in 2013, aged 44. A doctor had said Wood, who had Asperger's syndrome, obsessive compulsive disorder and mental health problems, was completely unfit to work. Yet despite this Wood was found fit for work and his benefits were cut, forcing him to survive on about £40 per week. Four months later he was found dead, weighing just 35kg. [2]

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party, said:

"It is unacceptable that in the fifth richest country in the world people are starving to death, like Mark Wood, or taking their own lives, as Michael O'Sullivan did, because their benefits have been cut. The social security system should be an ally, not an enemy of those who need help.

"Britain is a caring nation. We should be proud to look after each other and take every measure possible to ensure people receive the support they need – starting with an independent inquiry into the deaths of benefit claimants."

Mags Lewis, disabled spokesperson for the Green Party, said:

"We urgently need an independent inquiry into the deaths of people receiving benefits to find out if the methods used by the Department of Work and Pensions to assess claimants are fair or if they are, in fact, contributing to the deaths of some of claimants.

"Until this has taken place it is impossible to feel confident that lessons have been learned from the tragic loss of those who have already died while claiming benefits – or that others will be kept safe in the future."

Linda Burnip, co-founder of Disabled People Against Cuts, said:

" As the UK Government has been found guilty by the UN of committing grave and systematic violations of disabled people's human rights we feel a public inquiry into deaths which have been linked to the discredited Work Capability Assessment regime must urgently be initiated by the government and Department for Work and Pensions."

Jill Gant, mother of Mark Wood, who starved to death four months after his benefits were cut off in 2013, said:

"I believe an enquiry is absolutely essential because the Work Capability Assessment is not fit for purpose for the most vulnerable, particularly those with mental health problems, like my son Mark who died of starvation aged 44 because his benefits were stopped."

Notes:

1.

The Green Party
The Biscuit Factory
Room 202, A Block
100 Clements Road
London
SE16 4DG

The Rt Honourable Damian Green MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Caxton House
Tothill Street
London
SW1H 9NA

Dear Secretary of State,

We are writing to ask you to launch an independent inquiry into the deaths of people receiving benefits. Such an inquiry should be tasked with examining the methods used to assess claimants and their entitlements. It should determine whether these procedures are fair and proper or if they are, in fact, contributing to the deaths of some of claimants – who have the highest support needs which should be met by society.

As the evidence continues to mount that this is the case, The Green Party has compiled a dossier highlighting the stories of fifty individuals who died since 2008, and where there is good reason to believe their treatment at the hands of your department has been a factor in their deaths.

Treatment such as the suspension of benefits to David Clapson who went on to die just three weeks later from diabetic ketoacidosis, after the fridge used to store his insulin stopped working when he couldn't afford to top up his electricity card. Many of these fifty examples cases coroners, in their verdicts, have expressed grave concern about the methods employed by your department.

We want to ensure that all pertinent questions have been asked, and that any relevant lessons have been learned. At present it is impossible to feel confident this is the case.

The more time passes without an inquiry, the longer concerns will remain and questions will hang over the procedures used by your department to handle benefits. We urge you to use your power to end that uncertainty.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Bartley, co-leader of the Green Party

Mags Lewis, disability spokesperson for the Green Party

Linda Burnip, co-founder of Disabled People Against Cuts

Jill Gant, mother of Mark Wood, who starved to death four months after his benefits were cut off in 2013.

2.

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/mark-wood-sweet-and-gentle-44-year-old-man-with-mental-health-problems-starved-to-death-after-9161749.html>

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Press release: De-listing for misleading on-line business directory

The winding up of the company follows an investigation by the Insolvency Service.

Go-Rise cold-called prospective customers and offered a service promoting their businesses in an online directory. The company also claimed it would use keywords to improve the customer's Google ranking.

The investigation found that the company's telesales staff made false and misleading claims when selling the company's services including that they were calling from or on behalf of Google and that contracts between the company and customers were due for renewal when no such contracts had been entered into.

In contrast to the representations made to customers during the telesales call the company took no steps to submit keywords to Google Adwords to improve the ranking of customers. In addition, the company's website – on which the business directory was sited – was password protected for significant periods meaning that it could not be accessed by general web users.

Commenting on the case, Colin Cronin, Investigation Supervisor with the Insolvency Service, said,

The online business directory service sold by Go-Rise Ltd provided no commercial benefit whatsoever to the company's customers because the directory could not be accessed by the public due to it being password protected. Neither did the company make any arrangements with Google Adwords to provide keywords in order to promote the businesses of its customers. The company obtained payments from customers when it had no apparent intention of providing the services promised to them.

We have now investigated a number of such companies and what they have in common is offering a directory listing which is of no use to the customer because it is not promoted and is often password protected, thereby completely defeating its purpose.

What is more disturbing is that many of the customers who have purchased such directory listings are subsequently contacted – perhaps months or even years later – by bogus Court officials claiming that the customer is liable for a debt arising from the directory listing and that bailiffs will attend imminently at the customer's trading premises to seize possessions to the value of the debt. Customers are thus coerced into making further payment for a fictitious debt.

I would therefore urge any business which is contacted by cold-call and asked to purchase an online directory listing to make full enquiries into the service being offered before entering into any

agreement.

Notes to Editors

Go-Rise Ltd – company registration number 09396604 – was incorporated on 20 January 2015. The company's registered office is at 4 Market Street Lane, Blackburn BB2 2DE.

The petition to wind-up Go-Rise Ltd was presented under s124A of the Insolvency Act 1986 on 1 December 2016. The company was wound up on 27 January 2017 and the Official Receiver has been appointed as liquidator.

Company Investigations, part of the Insolvency Service, uses powers under the Companies Act 1985 to conduct confidential fact-finding investigations into the activities of live limited companies in the UK on behalf of the Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy (BEIS). Further information about live company investigations is [available](#).

The Insolvency Service, an executive agency sponsored by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS), administers the insolvency regime, and aims to deliver and promote a range of investigation and enforcement activities both civil and criminal in nature, to support fair and open markets. We do this by effectively enforcing the statutory company and insolvency regimes, maintaining public confidence in those regimes and reducing the harm caused to victims of fraudulent activity and to the business community, including dealing with the disqualification of directors in corporate failures.

BEIS' mission is to build a dynamic and competitive UK economy that works for all, in particular by creating the conditions for business success and promoting an open global economy. The Criminal Investigations and Prosecutions team contributes to this aim by taking action to deter fraud and to regulate the market. They investigate and prosecute a range of offences, primarily relating to personal or company insolvencies.

The agency also authorises and regulates the insolvency profession, assesses and pays statutory entitlement to redundancy payments when an employer cannot or will not pay employees, provides banking and investment services for bankruptcy and liquidation estate funds and advises ministers and other government departments on insolvency law and practice. Further information about the work of the Insolvency Service, and how to complain about financial misconduct, is [available](#).

By virtue of the appointment of the Official Receiver all public enquiries concerning the affairs of the company should be made to: The Official Receiver, Public Interest Unit, 2nd Floor, 3 Piccadilly Place, London Road, Manchester, M1 3BN. Tel: 0161 234 8531 Email: piu.north@insolvency.gsi.gov.uk

Contact Press Office

Media enquiries for this press release – 020 7674 6910 or 020 7596 6187

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[SNP arrogance on drug-driving putting many at risk](#)

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10 Feb 2017



The Scottish Conservatives are urging the SNP to start tackling the issue of drug-driving in Scotland after falling behind the rest of the UK on this issue.

At a Road Safety Scotland conference, it was announced that since English drug-driving laws came into effect two years ago there had been a four-fold increase in the number of drivers being charged with drug-driving.

Despite the evidence clearly highlighting that the introduction of the legislation saw improvements down south, when asked in yesterday's First Ministers Questions, the SNP continued to swerve questions on why similar provisions are yet to be introduced in Scotland.

The SNP's continued dismissal suggests that it is reluctant to utilise English law, which is impeding Scotland's ability to deal with this serious issue.

Scottish Conservative shadow justice secretary Douglas Ross said:

"It's wrong that Scotland is so far behind the curve, compared with the rest of the United Kingdom, on this important issue

"The SNP knows that as a result of the changes in England and Wales, the number of motorists charged with drug driving rose significantly and convictions have improved.

"Those driving under the influence of drugs should not be anywhere near the wheel – they not only put their own safety at risk, but others too.

"The SNP's sheer stubbornness is preventing Scotland from finding a way to deal with drug-driving in the best possible way. "The evidence already exists that changes in England and Wales have had the desired effect and the SNP must act on this now."

Scottish legal news article that clarifies the success of the English success of drug-driving laws and Scottish Government plans:

<http://www.scottishlegal.com/2016/02/15/no-plans-for-drug-driving-laws-in-scotland-a-year-after-successful-introduction-in-england/#>