ARGUMENTS TO SUPPORT REMOVAL OF BENEFIT SANCTIONS

I am writing to urge your Investigative Committee to remove benefit sanctions from the JSA/ESA procedures.

The introduction of this degrading, poverty inducing, and unfair procedure is contrary to the Over-riding duty the Government has to provide for the welfare of its (most vulnerable) people. Benefit sanctions go against the will of our post-war Nation to provide for the Health, Happiness and Freedom of its people following the Beveridge Report. With measures such as these we, as a Nation are slipping back into the Pre-Welfare state of reckoning the country’s worth based purely not profits and not the welfare of its people.

**Benefit Santions have doubled since 2006** (Webster 2014)

**49,000 LONE PARENTS & 182,000 ADULTS WITH DISABILITIES** WERE SUBJECT TO BENEFIT SANCTIONS BETWEEN 22ND OCT 2012 AND 30TH JUNE 2014 (Government Statistics).

Of these totals some **3,471 Lone Parents and 18,197 Disabled People were subjected to Higher Sanctions and had their benefits stopped for 3 months to 3 years!**

What kind of society are we that we allow procedures like this that remove the INCOME SAFETY NET from people who are struggling to bring up children alone and adults who have mental impairments (the highest category subject to Sanctions!) and physical impairments.

While benefits are being stopped, people are resorting (as they did in Victorian times) to charities and societies like the Trussell Trust food Banks across the UK to stop themselves from literally starving.

BETWEEN 1ST APRIL 2013 AND 31ST MARCH 2014 **582,933 adults received food/assistance from the Trussell Trust AND ADDITIONALLY 330,205 CHILDREN RECEIVED FOOD/ASSISTANCE FROM THE TRUSSELL TRUST.**  We are in the 21st Century now and we should not have any children in the UK who have to resort to Food Banks for their survival. This Government should be ashamed of itself; it is breaking it’s commitments under the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child and by not providing basic benefits (by making sanction decisions – which are arbitrary and unfair – see below) it is reneging on the whole premise of the Welfare State AND IS CONTINUALLY SUBJECTING CITIZENS ON BENEFITS TO DEGRADING TREATMENT (HRA Art 3).

Between 2008 and 2013 these economic factors have come into play which have made people on benefit (and others on a low income) worse:

* Food, other goods Transport and rental costs have gone up over 20% - the Rowntree Foundation estimates this figure to be 28%.
* Fuel costs have risen by 60%

Benefits such as JSA and ESA even when they are not being sanctioned do not meet today’s living costs for people and families relying upon them. They have not kept up with the rate of inflation or the rising costs of living as detailed above. People claiming these benefits are literally living on a hand to mouth basis and any sanctions imposed are going to induce debt through failure to be able to cover household bills and starvation.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation, research into the Minimum Income Standard, evidences that people’s ability to afford basic goods and services has declined, as the cost of essential goods has risen by 28% since 2008.

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/topic/mis?gclid=CLWF9PfivcICFSoKwwodl5YANw>

Politicians are using benefit claimants as an economic scapegoat, which is untrue and unfair – once again we are heading into pre-Welfare State waters whereby people are becoming distinguished as either “deserving” or “un-deserving” poor and Benefit Sanctions are being used as punishment when people are being judged as “undeserving”! This is wrong, unfair an unjust and is leading to dire consequences such as the death of David Clapson the diabetic ex-soldier who died starving and destitute because he missed a meeting.

Politician using incendiary remarks to harden public attitudes:

George Osbourne’s 2012 incendiary remark was to encourage both Government and public attitudes to harden towards benefit claimants and to thus ‘justify’ sanctions:

“Where is the fairness, we ask for the shift worker leaving home in the dark hours of the early morning who looks up at the closed blinds of their next door neighbour sleeping off a life on benefits?”

I would urge this enquiry to delve deeper into the so called justifications for giving people benefit sanction these have been documented by many MP’s who have had their constituents complain to them about unfair, inhumane, idiotic and unjust judgements being made by people who are paid by tax payers money to PROVIDE WELFARE ASSISTANCE NOT PUNISHMENT:

People have had their benefits sanctioned for

* attending a family funeral
* not looking for work in the two weeks prior to a new job which has just been secured starting
* not being able to attend a job centre appointment because of it clashing with a job interview

these and many more idiotic, unjust, and stupid decisions which go against all the principles of our welfare state can been seen at:

[**http://i100.independent.co.uk/article/the-11-most-senseless-benefit-sanction-decisions-known-to-man--x1dmkd2\_Me**](http://i100.independent.co.uk/article/the-11-most-senseless-benefit-sanction-decisions-known-to-man--x1dmkd2_Me)

**I urge you to act to stop benefit sanctions being used as part of the Benefit Procedures.**

**AS THE 1946 “LAND OF PROMISE” FILM SAYS:**

**“It is in your hands right now, yours by the Constitution of this Country.”**