**Anger over ‘utter hypocrisy’ of Iain Duncan Smith knighthood**

Furious disabled activists have denounced the government’s “utter hypocrisy” in awarding a knighthood to Iain Duncan Smith, when his policies at the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) have been responsible for the deaths of countless benefit claimants.

Duncan Smith, who was recognised in the new year’s honours list, the first issued by prime minister Boris Johnson, was work and pensions secretary from 2010 until 2016, and was responsible for the introduction of both universal credit and personal independence payment.

Years of evidence shows that decisions taken by Duncan Smith as work and pensions secretary – including those related to incapacity benefit reform – are closely linked to the deaths of many disabled benefit claimants.

Only last month, Disability News Service (DNS) published [a 12,000-word article](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/dwp-the-case-for-the-prosecution/) calling for a criminal investigation into alleged misconduct in public office by Duncan Smith and other senior DWP figures.

There was anger, frustration and disbelief this week from disabled activists, campaigners and claimants and disabled people’s organisations when the knighthood was announced.

Paula Peters, a member of the national steering group of [Disabled People Against Cuts](http://dpac.uk.net/), said Duncan Smith had been rewarded for “10 years of heinous cruel welfare policies that have condemned a generation of kids to grinding poverty” and have caused the deaths of thousands of disabled people.

She told DNS: “We must push all the harder to hold this man to account and get him to face justice for the countless benefit deaths that he oversaw while head of the DWP.

“Rewarding him with a knighthood while disabled people have died is a huge punch in the guts.”

[Disability Wales](http://www.disabilitywales.org/) said: “The utter hypocrisy of Iain Duncan Smith being awarded a knighthood is staggering.

“He was the architect of deeply cruel welfare reforms that has damaged the lives of tens of thousands of disabled people.”

Ex-serviceman Loz Argyle said on Twitter that he felt “physically sick” when he heard of the knighthood after spending years supporting fellow injured veterans and losing two of them to Duncan Smith’s cuts to disability benefits.

Such was the anger at the knighthood [that a petition](https://www.change.org/p/uk-government-and-parliament-we-object-to-iain-duncan-smith-receiving-a-knighthood?recruiter=28263986&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=facebook&utm_campaign=share_petition&recruited_by_id=83e2ea00-dcf6-012f-bbc3-404067ca6a7a&utm_content=starter_fb_share_content_en-gb%3Av13&fbclid=IwAR0InP3gUYlYVtyVc2SiYrCLhv0XvQ04lGrrqyFZDPEn6Oem1IRO2sYCypw) set up by NHS psychiatrist Dr Mona Kamal Ahmed, calling for the decision to be reversed, has already been signed by nearly a quarter of a million people in less than a week.

She describes in her petition how she has sat in accident and emergency departments with “people diagnosed with chronic mental illness who have been driven to panic attacks, acute relapses of their depressive illness and to suicidal ideation” because of anxiety caused by fitness for work tests and the prospect of cuts to their benefits.

She said this had “intensified with the chaos and uncertainty” of universal credit, which was “causing hardship to millions” and for which Duncan Smith was culpable.

Another DPAC steering group member, [Ellen Clifford, said](https://www.facebook.com/imajsaclaimant1/videos/1086635568351279/UzpfSTEwMDAwODMxMjA0NTc0MTpWSzoyNzQzNDUxNDg5MDQ0NDIx/): “The awarding of a knighthood to Iain Duncan Smith is the latest in a long line of insults heaped on those who suffered and lost their lives as a result of the Tories’ war on disabled people.

“It shows utter contempt for those who Duncan Smith so cruelly targeted as the architect of welfare reform, welfare reform that the UN held responsible for [causing grave and systematic violations](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/un-confirms-that-uk-governments-treaty-violations-were-both-grave-and-systematic/) of disabled people’s rights.”

Disability Labour said it was “appalled and disgusted” by the knighthood, and it backed calls for a criminal investigation into Duncan Smith’s actions at DWP.

Kathy Bole, a [Disability Labour](https://disabilitylabour.org.uk/) vice-chair, said: “Giving him this honour is a kick in the teeth to every disabled person who has not been given the benefits they are entitled to.”

[Pam Duncan-Glancy](https://twitter.com/GlasgowPam), a disabled Labour parliamentary candidate at last month’s general election, said on Twitter: “Work round the clock as a nurse, get a salary that means you still need to use a food bank.

“Create a system that kills people by design, get an Honour for your public service to the country. This is peak 2019.”

Disabled journalist [Dr Frances Ryan](https://twitter.com/DrFrancesRyan) said: “The honours system is an antiquated relic based in inequality and deference but knighting IDS is a particular low.

“If you’ve been hurt by his policies, know this: you matter. He deserves no honour. You are worth a hundred of him and all his ilk put together.”

Disabled campaigner [Liane Gomersall](https://twitter.com/ligomersall) said on Twitter that the knighthood was “a scary indication of the future”.

She said: “He waged war on disabled people, shredded social security, punished single mothers, evicted people whose carers sleep in the spare bedroom and wasted billions on Universal Credit.”

Other disabled campaigners to speak out included Helen Sims, who said the knighthood was a “reward for all the fear, hardship, misery and death DWP policies have caused”.

Another, who tweets at [@imajsaclaimant](https://twitter.com/imajsaclaimant), said: “His honour is more than just an annoyance, it’s an insult. Thousands have been hurt as a direct result of his policies.”

And [@quinonostante](https://twitter.com/Quinonostante) said honours should not be awarded to “those whose biggest legacy is poverty/homelessness and death”.

But there was at least one dissenting voice.

The [Conservative Disability Group](https://twitter.com/The_C_D_G) welcomed the award, and said on Twitter: “Many congratulations to @MPIainDS on his much deserved Knighthood in the #NewYearHonours.

“His commitment and dedication to social justice and unwavering belief in democratic principles receives the recognition it deserves – #WellDoneSirIain.”

**2 January 2020**

**Book exposes ‘horrifying’ levels of abuse faced by disabled people on public transport**

A new book by a disabled researcher has detailed the “horrifying” levels of disability hate crime that take place every day on public transport across the UK.

David Wilkin says the results of his research are “sometimes startling and almost always distressing” and illustrate the “ongoing hostility faced by disabled people using public transport in the UK”.

As part of his research, Wilkin interviewed more than 50 survivors and witnesses of disability hate crime on various forms of public transport, as well as putting questions to local authorities and public transport providers, and interviewing transport staff.

He concludes that abuse and humiliation are “everyday occurrences” and range from “name-calling to psychological and physical violence, serious assault and serious sexual assault”.

In his book\*, [Disability Hate Crime: Experiences of Everyday Hostility on Public Transport](https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9783030287252), Wilkin writes about how, as an autistic child, he avoided school for almost five years because of the bullying and hostility he faced in getting there via public transport and at school.

He describes his journeys to school on bus and train in the 1970s as “tortuous” and says he was “ridiculed, spat at and beaten up”.

He was also attacked at school, writing: “My head had been used as a football in the playground, and a cricket bat swung at it in an experiment to see how much damage could be done to it.”

He says: “As I know to my cost, to be a victim of a hate attack is to have your very identity challenged and ridiculed.

“Everything that you are, or have striven to achieve, becomes the target of someone else’s mission to humiliate, frighten and destabilise you.”

Dr Stevie-Jade Hardy, deputy director of the University of Leicester’s Centre for Hate Studies, says Wilkin’s book provides “an unflinching, harrowing and nuanced account of the hostility, harassment and violence faced by disabled people on public transport”.

Wilkin worked for more than 30 years in public transport, and after retiring he completed an MSc in criminology and began focusing on disability hate crime on public transport, and was appointed as the lead coordinator of the [Disability Hate Crime Network](https://www.facebook.com/groups/disabilityhatecrimenetwork/).

In his book, he examines the impact of disability hate crime on individuals, which he says often causes “profoundly alarming psychological disturbance across a range of victims and witnesses for protracted periods of time.”

Of those he spoke to, nearly half changed their lifestyle to avoid future incidents, while the “vast majority” were met with “indifference, ignorance or an inability to help” by transport staff.

He also found that fellow passengers “overwhelmingly ignored” the incidents, with support given in only four per cent of cases.

Even more concerning, he said, was that other passengers often assisted the principal offender, taking their side against the disabled person.

He writes: “On 71 per cent of occasions on buses and trams and on 23 per cent of occasions on trains and Tubes, formerly non-offending passengers joined in the abuse against the victims, allying themselves with the initial abuser.”

In the book, Wilkin includes a series of personal accounts by the disabled people he has interviewed.

One of them told him: “He moved to the middle of his seat, I asked him to move and he completely ignored me. I asked again and he opened his legs to prevent me sitting there and called me a scrounger.”

Another said: “I couldn’t believe it; he unfolded my wheelchair in the bay and threw it off of the bus. I was trapped and humiliated. I was totally isolated. The driver got it back for me. But I felt so vulnerable, alone, fucking low and shit.”

A disabled woman told Wilkin how she was waiting for a ramp to be deployed so she could leave a train, as platform staff were not there to meet her.

But fellow passengers behaved “like a pack of wolves”, with one woman saying that “if they didn’t arrive soon they should just push me off” and telling her how disabled people were “always looking for preferential treatment”.

Instead of defending her, other passengers were “baying at me thinking it was a great idea”.

Another disabled person told Wilkin how she had politely asked a mother to move her pram and sleeping baby from the wheelchair space in a bus because she needed to get to work.

The mother then called her “an evil disabled bitch” and when the driver asked her to move or fold the pram, she sighed and told her: “Why weren’t you just killed at birth?”

Some told Wilkin how they had been called a “sponger”, “parasite” or “scrounger” or were the subject of other remarks about benefits.

Wilkin writes: “My research found that almost all staff were unwilling to help or simply did not know how to help. The reporting of incidents was chiefly fruitless.”

He concludes that the UK government, regulators and most – but not all – local authorities give a low priority to addressing disability hate crime on public transport, despite their public sector duties under the Equality Act.

[*Disability Hate Crime: Experiences of Everyday Hostility on Public Transport*](https://www.palgrave.com/gb/book/9783030287252) *is published by Palgrave Macmillan*

**2 January 2020**

**New government provides details on five disability policy pledges**

The new Conservative government has described how it plans to fulfil the five major disability policy pledges it included in its general election manifesto.

The details were included in [a briefing document](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/queens-speech-december-2019-background-briefing-notes) published alongside last month’s Queen’s speech by prime minister Boris Johnson.

They cover social care, a new national disability strategy, hospital parking charges, funding to move disabled people out of long-term hospital settings, and disability benefits.

There are also brief details on the government’s plans for reforming the Mental Health Act.

The new national disability strategy will be published later this year, and the government said it would be “ambitious” and would support disabled people “in all aspects and phases of their life” including housing, transport and education.

There will also be a green paper looking at how the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and its benefits system “can best help disabled people”.

The briefing document commits the government to a further reduction in the disability employment gap, following the reduction of 5.6 percentage points over the last six years, although it makes no mention of any target.

But it repeats the last Conservative-led government’s pledge to increase the number of disabled people in work by one million between 2017 and 2027.

The briefing document also confirms the manifesto pledge to double the minimum length of a personal independence payment (PIP) award from nine to 18 months – which will cost about £310 million over four years – unless the claimant tells DWP their needs have changed.

This measure should reduce the number of repeat assessments claimants are forced to undergo.

On social care, the government repeats its pledge to provide an extra £1 billion funding in every year of this parliament, and to consult on a two per cent precept that will allow councils to raise another £500 million for adult social care in 2020-21.

It also confirms that it has no plans for long-term reform of the social care system in England other than to “urgently seek a cross-party consensus”.

Although the briefing notes focus on the costs of social care for older people, they also point out that more than half of public spending on adult social care is on service-users under 65.

They also confirm that the government will spend £74 million over three years to provide further capacity in community settings for autistic people and people with learning difficulties who are currently in long-term hospital settings.

Meanwhile, the housing, communities and local government secretary, Robert Jenrick, has announced that the government will continue to pay local authorities the Former ILF Recipient Grant, which was due to end in March.

It will be paid at £160.6 million for 2020-21, the same level as 2019-20.

The four-year grant was agreed in February 2016, with the government agreeing to provide £675 million over four years to local authorities in England.

The announcement of the grant was a significant victory for disabled activists, whose direct action protests had ensured that the plight of former Independent Living Fund (ILF) recipients remained a high-profile issue after the fund’s closure on 30 June 2015.

The recipient grant was not ring-fenced, so councils were not forced to spend it supporting former ILF-users, but it has allowed thousands of disabled people with high support needs to continue to live independently since ILF’s closure.

Disabled activists had raised concerns that the four years of funding were due to end in April, with ministers previously refusing to say if an extension was being considered.

The Queen’s speech also promised to end hospital car parking charges “for those in greatest need”, including disabled people.

Health and social care secretary Matt Hancock said later that, from April, all hospital trusts in England would be expected to provide free parking to groups including holders of blue parking badges, and outpatients who have to attend regular appointments to manage long-term conditions.

Hancock said: “Currently, the situation varies from hospital to hospital.

“Instead, from April, across the country those with the greatest need – such as disabled people, parents staying overnight with sick children in hospital, and NHS staff working nightshifts – will no longer have to pay for parking.”

On mental health, the government says it will produce a white paper early this year, which will respond to the review of the Mental Health Act that reported in December 2018, and will be followed by new legislation “when Parliamentary time allows”.

The review was criticised for falling “significantly short” of recommending full human rights for people in mental distress.

The government says it needs to modernise the act to ensure that people in England and Wales “have greater control over their treatment and receive the dignity and respect they deserve”.

It promises that those subject to the act “will receive better care and have a much greater say in that care”, while it will “reform the process for detention, improve care and treatment whilst someone is detained and give them better support to challenge detention”.

The government also promises to improve the legal treatment of people with learning difficulties and autistic people and make it easier for them to be discharged from hospital.

**2 January 2020**

**Rail industry and government under attack over ‘outrageous’ access exemptions**

Furious disabled campaigners have attacked the government and transport providers after operators were given permission to continue using more than 1,000 inaccessible rail carriages – about eight per cent of the national fleet – after missing a deadline set 10 years ago.

Service-providers have been told by the Department for Transport (DfT) that they can continue to use the inaccessible carriages for as many as six more years, although many exemptions are for a much shorter period.

There have been different views among transport and access experts and campaigners on how long the industry has had to ensure all its services are accessible.

Many say the original Disability Discrimination Act in 1995 put the industry on notice that it would need to ensure its services were accessible to all disabled people, although the legal deadline for the rail industry to provide accessible trains for every passenger and every journey by 31 December 2019 was set a decade ago.

The new Conservative government has admitted that providers have been given permission to continue to use about 1,200 inaccessible carriages through temporary exemptions from the legal deadline.

Operators were supposed to provide accessible trains for every passenger and every journey by the end of 2019.

DfT said the 1,200 carriages represented about nine per cent of Britain’s fleet – although industry figures suggest it is nearer eight per cent – but has refused to apologise for its failure to ensure the deadline was met.

Alan Benson, chair of [Transport for All](https://www.transportforall.org.uk/), the user-led charity which campaigns on accessible transport in London, said the extensions were “outrageous and convey the message to disabled people that their rights to travel are not a priority.

“These standards have not been imposed at the last minute; they were negotiated by industry, government and disabled people 25 years ago.

“Compromises were made to make them reasonable and achievable, yet a lack of effort and focus by the industry is being given a free pass by government, flying in the face of the [government’s] Inclusive Transport Strategy.”

He said the promised access improvements “offer benefits for all passengers that we should be taking for granted such as effective audio/visual announcements.

“The last-minute nature of these approvals, which has avoided scrutiny, seems disingenuous and raises questions on the efficacy of the monitoring framework on this legislation.

“This needs to change and we will continue to inform, educate and challenge the UK transport sector to address the barriers in place and ensure that disabled people are not isolated and ignored.”

Accessible transport campaigner [Doug Paulley](https://twitter.com/kingqueen3065?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor) said the exemptions were “shocking” and that it was “a disgrace” and “an insult to disabled people” that the rail industry had missed the deadline.

He said the blame was shared between train operating companies, the government, Network Rail, train manufacturers and rolling-stock companies.

He said: “At the end of the day, all we’re asking for is to Boldly Go where All Others have Been Before; to the same access to the same variable, sometimes substandard, service ‘enjoyed’ by the rest of the population.”

[The Association of British Commuters](https://twitter.com/ABCommuters) said the exemptions had to be seen in the context of the government’s “regressive approach towards rights and regulations” and that DfT was letting many companies “off the hook” with its exemptions.

Transport minister Chris Heaton-Harris told the Rail Delivery Group (RDG) – which represents the companies that run Britain’s railways – [in a letter](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/heavy-rail-fleet-accessibility-compliance-time-limited-dispensations) that he will allow about 1,200 inaccessible rail carriages to remain in service temporarily to avoid causing a “disproportionately negative effect” on passengers.

But he said it was “deeply frustrating that disabled passengers will still be waiting into 2020 to see accessibility improvements to some services”.

[A letter](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rail-vehicle-accessibility-metro-systems) from a second transport minister, Baroness Vere, reveals that Transport for London (TfL) has asked for exemptions for up to six years for some of its London Underground lines.

RDG said there were currently about 14,800 rail carriages on the network.

RDG’s chief executive, Paul Plummer, blamed manufacturers for the delay in ensuring all of them were accessible to disabled passengers.

He said: “The rail industry is committed to making the railway more accessible so that everyone benefits from being able to travel by train.

“We are replacing half of the nation’s train fleet new for old and upgrading hundreds of existing carriages to make journeys more accessible.

“We are very sorry that problems with the manufacturers of new and upgraded carriages mean some have been delayed.”

TfL said it was “truly sorry” for missing the deadline but had “invested significantly to make more than two thirds of our trains fully accessible and more than 200 Tube and rail stations step-free”.

A TfL spokesperson said that “upgrading and replacing Tube trains requires significant funding and for new trains, for example on the Piccadilly line, this also means significant government funding for a new signaling system as well as funding for the trains themselves.

“We also need significant time to plan and co-ordinate the introduction of new or upgraded trains, so that Tube services are not affected at the same time.”

Peter McNaught, director of asset operations for London Underground, said it would be “investing in upgrading the remaining trains as soon as possible, starting with the Bakerloo line in January and the Central line later in 2020.

“We’re also introducing new accessible trains along the Piccadilly line from 2024 and have a programme to deliver many more step-free stations.”

But Anthony Smith, chief executive of the independent watchdog Transport Focus, said: “It is almost 2020 – no-one should struggle to get on a train or find an accessible toilet.

“Passengers will be astounded to learn that the rail industry has not met this deadline when it has had a decade to prepare for these changes.”

Heaton-Harris said he accepted that delays by manufacturers in delivering some new trains had affected the ability of the industry to meet the 31 December deadline.

But he said the exemptions would only be allowed if the companies provided “evidence that the introduction of new or refurbished vehicles remains on track”.

Heaton-Harris said: “The industry must urgently address the issue of providing accessible rail carriages and replacement bus and coach services.”

[It is the third time](https://www.disabilitynewsservice.com/ministers-allow-transport-industry-to-break-access-laws-again/) the government has granted public transport providers temporary exemptions from access laws in the last few weeks.

The two previous exemptions related to rail replacement vehicles and home-to-school bus and coach services, as Disability News Service revealed last month.

**2 January 2020**

**Douglas Campbell: Tributes to ‘mobility champion with a kind heart’**

Tributes have been paid to Douglas Campbell, who spent more than half a century campaigning for “proper independent mobility” for disabled people, and who died in the early hours of Boxing Day.

In addition to his campaigning work, he spent more than 20 years in professional practice as a chartered accountant, mostly working for himself, before joining The Disabled Drivers’ Association (DDA) in 1995 as its executive director.

After DDA merged with The Disabled Drivers’ Motor Club in 2005, he spent four years as a trustee of the new organisation, Mobilise – now renamed Disabled Motoring UK – three of them as chair.

He also spent four years at [The Disability Resource Centre (DRC)](https://drcbeds.org.uk/) in Bedfordshire, leading its direct payments support service.

He ran his own disability consultancy firm for more than 20 years, specialising in personal mobility, parking and access issues, and offering management consultancy for small and medium-sized charities.

He was awarded an OBE in 2002 for services to the mobility of disabled people.

Among many other roles, he worked as an Expert by Experience for the Care Quality Commission, inspecting care facilities, and was a member of the council of governors of Milton Keynes University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust.

[Helen Dolphin](https://www.linkedin.com/in/helen-dolphin-mbe/), an expert on blue badge and disabled people’s parking issues and chair of the [Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee’s](https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/disabled-persons-transport-advisory-committee) personal mobility working group, who worked with Campbell at Mobilise, said he had been an “inspiration” to her.

She first met him about 20 years ago when she was interviewing him for ITV Anglia about parking for disabled people.

She said: “We became great friends from that day onwards and when the position came up at Mobilise he encouraged me to apply and became my boss for the next few years.

“It is because of Douglas that I got into campaigning for disabled motorists and he was always a great source of knowledge.”

She said their last conversation was about his concerns that removing the European Union symbol from blue parking badges would make them difficult for disabled people to use across Europe.

She added: “He was an inspiration to me as well as a good friend and I will miss him terribly.”

Melanie Hawman, DRC’s chief executive, said: “We are very sad to hear of the passing of Douglas Campbell OBE who worked diligently to raise awareness of disability rights, particularly with regard to travel and parking.

“Douglas was an avid campaigner for disabled people, their families and their right to have exactly the same opportunities as everyone else.

“He worked tirelessly in a voluntary capacity and also as a service manager for The Disability Resource Centre in Dunstable.

“During his tenure he oversaw the implementation and growth of the direct payments support service, which allows people to have choice and control in managing their care needs themselves.”

She said this was something Campbell was “very passionate about”.

She added: “Douglas was a champion with a kind heart and will be fondly remembered by the board of trustees and the staff at The Disability Resource Centre.”

**2 January 2020**

**News provided by John Pring at** [www.disabilitynewsservice.com](http://www.disabilitynewsservice.com)