

**CONCLUSIONS OF STEVE GRIFFITHS' COMPASS THINKPIECE
OCTOBER 2010**

**'DARK TIMES FOR THOSE WHO CANNOT WORK – NO
COMPETENCE, NO COMPASSION IN INCAPACITY BENEFIT
REFORM'**

- There is a substantial body of unacknowledged evidence that the case presented by the two main political parties that there are a million or more people receiving Incapacity Benefit who should not be is greatly exaggerated;
- since 1995, policies to drive large numbers either into work or onto unemployment benefits have resulted in unacceptably harsh consequences for too many people who are genuinely unfit for work;
- this case has been systematically denied, in spite of the evidence of official data and repeated findings of departmental and independent research;
- the policy has been counterproductive in health terms, and unjust for hundreds of thousands of the most vulnerable people in our community;
- the scale of ill health as a consequence of growing inequality has been recognised in many areas of public policy but denied in relation to unfitness for work since 1997 by nearly all Secretaries of State for Work and Pensions, their department, and their Opposition counterparts;
- academic research that has informed the dominant policy has been flawed and selective;
- an agenda has been pursued of privatisation of assessment, support and pressure without regard to the consequences for people suffering ill health;
- the treatment of a large body of the most vulnerable people in society, and its presentation by leading politicians and the media, amounts to a long-running, substantial and unacceptable democratic deficit; and
- that policy with regard to unfitness to work needs to be dismantled and reassembled with an ethos of robust and informed compassion, putting health support first, with appropriately targeted support towards employment, rather than biased assumption of capacity to work, blame, disqualification and inappropriate pressure.