

The Hardest Hit Demonstration

Speech by Mark Harrison, CEO, Norfolk Coalition of Disabled People (NCODP)

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- The Coalition Government has unleashed an all out assault on the rights and living standards of disabled people
- They are attacking hard won rights and trying to turn the clock back
- They must not be allowed to get away with this
- Disabled people face a triple whammy
 1. cuts and rationing of national benefits – DLA, closure of ILF, access to work fund
 2. massive cuts in local authority services that we depend on for our independence
 3. privatisation of the NHS which will result in a US style 2 tier system of healthcare with disabled people losing out
- Our rights have been won by disabled people campaigning, taking collective action, struggling often in the teeth of opposition from politicians, policy makers, professionals and charities
- We have got to where we are today with the help of allies – politicians, policy makers, professionals and charities that recognise disability as a struggle for equality and human rights
- Whilst we have come a long way and made a lot of progress however equality is still a long way off and if this Government has its way it is getting further away
- The Life Opportunities Survey, Office of National Statistics, December 2010 summarised this experience - “Many disabled people in Britain are living socially isolated, cash strapped lives and struggling to participate in normal activities”
- In Norfolk disabled people and our allies are campaigning against the cuts
- We commissioned research by an economist at the University of East Anglia (UEA). He found that the poorest half of

disabled people in Norfolk, around 100,000 people and their families, will see their living standards decline by a third over the next four years

- The cuts are both disproportionate and discriminatory against us
- I don't consider the Minister for Disabled People or the Coalition Government as allies – in fact the opposite – they are making disabled people pay for a crisis that is not of our making
- Maria Miller is not a minister for disabled people she is a minister **against** disabled people
- In the tradition of democracy and following the lead of the nurses on Andrew Lansley I now want to put a vote of no confidence in Maria Miller and the Coalition Government – they need to know the strength of feeling out here - all those in favour raise your hand, voices
- This is just the beginning – we must not rest until the cuts are reversed