Flawed benefits test is pushing people to the brink, warns mental health charity

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The British Psychological Society has today released a new report calling for fundamental reform of the Work Capability Assessment, the Government's fit-for-work benefits test.

The new report argues that the test fails to assess people's fitness for work accurately, and that people with serious mental illness are wrongly being found fit to work.

In response, Brian Dow, Director of External Affairs at the charity Rethink Mental Illness said:

"This deeply flawed system is causing huge distress, and pushing many vulnerable people to the brink. Indeed, in a court case earlier this year, judges said that it puts people with mental illness at a 'substantial disadvantage'.

"We welcome this report's call for major changes to the process, including using assessors who have specialist knowledge of mental health. But to really fix this test so that it no longer discriminates against people with mental illness, we need to see much more extensive reforms.

"Another huge problem is that people have to gather their medical evidence from their GP or psychiatrist, to prove that they are too unwell to work. That can be an almost impossible task if you're experiencing serious mental health problems, and so people are often being assessed without this crucial evidence being considered.

"Until these major problems are addressed, the system will continue to disadvantage people when they're at their most vulnerable. We're calling on the Government to overhaul the system from top-to-bottom, otherwise it will continue to punish many of the people it's meant to support."

ENDS

For more information or to set up an interview, please contact Brian Semple, Media Manager for Rethink Mental Illness on 0207 840 3043 or email brian.semple@rethink.org

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