



**Austerity's Victims: Living with a Learning Disability under  
Cameron and May**

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3 **Austerity's Victims: Living with a Learning Disability under Cameron**  
4 **and May**  
5 **by Neil Carpenter (published by Amazon Fulfillment, 2018). Pp 68. ISBN**  
6 **978-1984977601**  
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9 This book examines the impact of Austerity on a group of people who  
10 Carpenter feels are rarely mentioned in the public debates; people with  
11 learning disabilities. It begins with a description of people with learning  
12 disabilities and then goes on, in chapter two, to describe the Government  
13 Policies which were aimed at reducing spending. Carpenter outlines the  
14 negative impact of these cuts on disabled people in general.  
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17 In chapter three, Carpenter then describes the average UK income and  
18 spending for individuals across the UK. In chapters four to eight, he goes on  
19 to illustrate the differences between the standards of living of the 'average' UK  
20 citizen and people with learning disabilities living in the UK. He does through  
21 using five detailed case studies which examine the lives of people with  
22 learning disabilities who are living independently. He describes the changes  
23 in their funding arrangements over time and the impact of these changes on  
24 their lives. He makes comparison between reduced spending per week of a  
25 people with learning disabilities living in Cornwall in comparison with the UK  
26 average.  
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30 Chapter nine pulls together the key themes emerging from the case studies.  
31 Carpenter describes the changes in the quality and quantity of support that  
32 people are receiving and the negative impact of these reductions on people's  
33 quality of life. For some of those who feature in his book, questions were  
34 asked which enabled them to quantify the impact of the changed support on  
35 their quality of life. Self-reported satisfaction with their overall quality of life  
36 has reduced. Other people presented in the case studies described the  
37 impact of living with a learning disability and the impact of reduced support on  
38 their social inclusion and participation. For example, one man reports 'This  
39 isn't life. It's no fun' (p.46). Another man describes feeling lonely, saying 'No-  
40 one to visit. Nothing to do in the evenings – only the telly'.  
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44 The case studies are powerful and personal illustrations of the impact of the  
45 cuts on people's ability to take part in everyday activities and experiences.  
46 People's lived experience seems at odds with public perceptions of those  
47 living on benefits. For example, in the media, people with disabilities who are  
48 living on benefits are often portrayed as scroungers, with such views have  
49 been linked to abuse (Pilkington, 2012).  
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52 In the final chapter, Carpenter describes the impact of austerity on services  
53 for people with learning disabilities, describing the ways in which social care is  
54 currently being underfunded and how these cuts place limits on the quality of  
55 life of those in receipt of support. This is a highly personal account of the  
56 impact of austerity on the lives of people with learning disabilities living in  
57 Cornwall.  
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59 The issues that Carpenter highlight are in no way limited to Cornwall. Those  
60 interested in this area may also be interested in recent research (Malli *et al.*,

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2  
3 2018) in this area. Their systematic review on the impact of austerity on the  
4 lives of people with learning disabilities suggest a disconnect between the  
5 funding available to support the needs of people with learning disabilities and  
6 peoples support needs, with funding no longer being aligned to needs. They  
7 found similar adverse effects on quality of life, particularly around social  
8 support, with people and their carers becoming increasingly socially isolated.  
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12 Dr Jill Bradshaw  
13 Senior Lecture in Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities  
14 Tizard Centre, University of Kent  
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17 References:

18 Pilkington, D. (2012), " 'Scroungers' rhetoric over benefits fuels abuse says  
19 charities", *Independent*, 6 February, pp. 1, 1.  
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22 Malli, M. Sams, L., Forrester-Jones, R., Murphy, G. and Henwood, M. (2018),  
23 "Austerity and the lives of people with learning disabilities. A thematic  
24 synthesis of current literature", *Disability & Society*, DOI:  
25 [10.1080/09687599.2018.1497950](https://doi.org/10.1080/09687599.2018.1497950)  
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