



**For better
mental health**

Mind in Taunton and West Somerset

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday October 27th 2011



Taunton residents marching for The Hardest Hit

Chris Rugg and Bethan Fisher from Taunton headed to Bristol on 22nd October to take part in The Hardest Hit march, campaigning against cutbacks to disability benefits and services that will leave disabled people without vital support.

Chris and Bethan, who both have personal experience of mental health issues, went to The Hardest Hit march to represent Mind in Taunton and West Somerset and

urged others from Somerset to join them and speak out on behalf of disabled people across the country,:

The Hardest Hit campaign intends to send a clear message to government:

- Stop cuts to Disability Living Allowance: a vital benefit that helps disabled people live independently
- Make sure Employment and Support Allowance, which replaces Incapacity Benefit, has a fair and effective assessment process, does its job and supports disabled people
- Stop cuts to services that are vital to disabled people, such as day care services, transport services and respite care services

Bethan said: "As mental health advocates from Mind in Taunton & West Somerset we see the impact of the government's welfare reform on people with mental health issues nearly every day. Vulnerable people who have been unfairly assessed as fit for work and turned down for Employment Support Allowance contact us for support as a direct result of the additional stress, anxiety, depression, not to mention financial hardship it is causing them. We are supporting the Hardest Hit campaign to represent the huge number of people with mental health issues who feel let down by the system which should be supporting them, but is actually assessing them as not genuinely disabled and pushing them further into social exclusion".

This is, of course, an on-going issue. For more information on the march and how you can help please visit www.hardesthit.org.uk

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Photo – Bethan Fisher and Chris Rugg at Hardest Hit March in Bristol (Saturday 22nd October.) Mind TWS.

Notes to editors

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* Research by Demos and Scope found that changes to the welfare system brought in by the Coalition Government would find disabled people worse off by £9bn over the course of this

government. http://www.demos.co.uk/press_releases/disabledpeoplehitbywelfarecuts

1. **For more information please contact www.mindtws.org.uk**
 2. **To find out more about the Hardest Hit campaign visit www.hardesthit.org.uk**
 3. The Hardest Hit campaign is organized jointly by the Disability Benefits Consortium (www.disabilityalliance.org/dbc.htm) and the UK Disabled People's Council (www.ukdpc.net).
- Mind in Taunton and West Somerset is a local mental health charity based in Taunton and Minehead. We aim to provide high quality information and support services to local people experiencing mental and emotional distress.
 - Mind in Taunton and West Somerset runs an out of hours telephone helpline called Mindline, open Wednesday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday evenings from 8pm-midnight. Mindline's number is 01823 276 892.
 - More information about Mind in Taunton and West Somerset can be found on our website at www.mindtws.org.uk