Occupational-Related Cancer Fatality Report

Man with cancer dies before he could appeal DWP ruling he was ‘fit to work’

Phillip Balderson, 46, also had a number of mental health problems

A man with terminal cancer died before he was able to appeal a ruling by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) which stated he was “fit to work”.

Phillip Balderson, 46, had been working at a hotel in the Lake District but was diagnosed with oesophageal cancer in 2013.

He also had psoriatic arthritis and a number of mental health problems, including anxiety and OCD.

Despite this, the DWP summoned Mr Balderson to a health assessment in February and ruled he was no longer eligible for Employment Support Allowance.

Mr Balderson, from Burnley, was told he had to look for work. He began to appeal the decision, but died on 5 June before he could see the process through.

Phillip Balderson suffered from oesophageal cancer and a number of mental health problems

Phillip Balderson suffered from oesophageal cancer and a number of mental health problems (Cascade)

His partner, Rachel Stockley, 49, said: “He was getting Employment Support Allowance, that was all fine, but then his dad died and his mental health got worse. Phillip just went downhill from there.

“Then he got a letter to say he had to go for an assessment, and he was worried. “He was being judged by someone who was meeting him for the first time and that was that.

“He was complaining about pains in his liver before he had to go to his job centre appointment, and got worse before his assessment.

“I’m doing this for Phillip really because he was gutted. I think it’s disgusting, it’s terrible the way they treat people.”

His daughter Chloe Balderson, 23, said: “He had terminal cancer and they were trying to send him to work. The people at the job centre were disgusted.”

Mr Balderson’s family, with support from Citizens Advice, will appeal the decision at South Cumbria Magistrates Court in Barrow on 14 December. If it rules in their favour, any benefit payments will go towards the funeral.

Ms Stockley said Mr Balderson was “frightened” by his diagnosis and rarely spoke about it, adding authorities need to show “more concern” towards people’s needs.

Jamie Klingler from Reclaim These Streets speaks to the media in Clapham Common, south London, after a review by the Chief Inspector of Constabulary Sir Thomas Winsor concluded that Metropolitan Police officers “did not act inappropriately or in a heavy-handed manner” at the vigil.