



Welfare Conditionality

SANCTIONS, SUPPORT AND
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Social Security in Scotland Welfare Conditionality Findings

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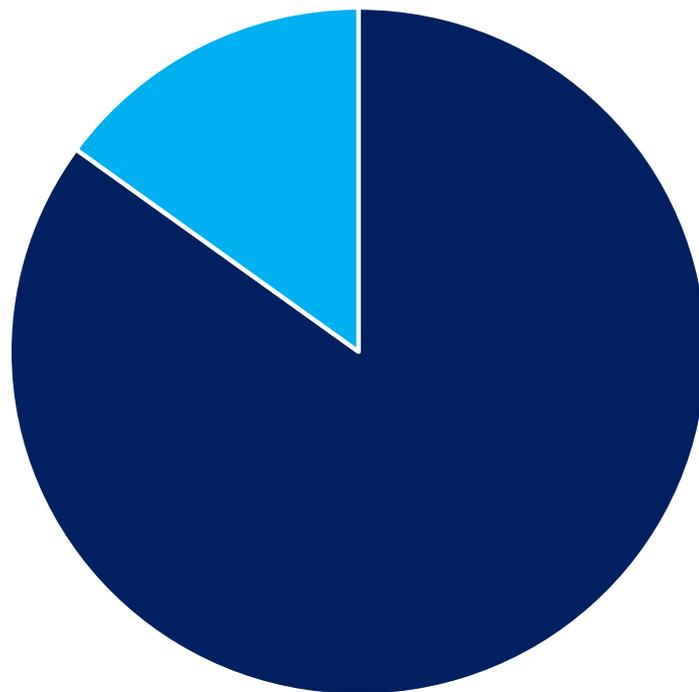


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Slice of Hope



■ UK ■ Scotland

Social security contrasts

	Britain-wide	Scotland
Values and aims	Deter 'dependency', punish 'wrong choices', 'welfare reform'	Ensure dignity, fairness, respect, rights-based, person-centred, 'social security'
Conditionality	Sanctions-based, largely without support	No sanctions
Delivery	Jobcentre Plus	Social Security Scotland
Out-sourced	Work and Health Programme (England & Wales) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixed provision - Retains for profits 	Fair Start Scotland <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Mixed provision - Retains for profits
Policy-making	Top-down, ideologically-led	Bottom-up, evidence-based, user-led <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2000 'Experience Panels'

Welfare conditionality: sanctions, support and behaviour change (2013-2018)

Twin aims:

- To consider the ethics and efficacy of welfare conditionality
- Fieldwork with three sets of respondents:
 1. Semi-structured interviews with policy stakeholders
 2. Focus groups with frontline welfare practitioners
 3. Three rounds of repeat qualitative longitudinal interviews with a diverse sample of (n. 134, 88 completed at least two interviews) welfare recipients who are subject to welfare conditionality

Welfare conditionality: sanctions, support and behaviour change (2013-2018)

- **Exploring welfare conditionality across a range of policy domains and groups**

Recipients of social security benefits (unemployed people, lone parents, disabled people, **Universal Credit**), homeless people, individuals/families subject to anti-social behaviour orders/family intervention projects, offenders and migrants

- **3 Locations in Scotland**

In and around: Edinburgh, Glasgow and Inverness

Findings

- **Little awareness of devolved Scottish social security and employability powers** (most interviews conducted before major reforms).
 - Disabled people tended to be very positive about the prospect of a devolved system.

I'm more confident in the Scottish Government because I feel as if the Scottish Government are trying to help people in poverty. I think that way, whereas the Tories, if you're not working they're not interested. (Disabled Man, wave c)

- **Welfare conditionality largely unnecessary and ineffective**
 - Throughout the sample and across the three waves of interviews, users were keen to work and made concerted self-directed efforts to improve their situation.

[wave a]... ESA WRAG [wave b]... I'm ill at the moment, I'm unable to work [wave c]... Unfortunately, my health hasn't allowed me to come to work so far but I'm hoping to get back at some point. (Offender, Male, Scotland, waves a-c)

Sanctions triggered profoundly negative outcomes

- **Counterproductive compliance**

*I found myself **applying for jobs that I wasn't going to get**. I applied for a job in the crematorium and I know I couldn't do it... it's demeaning for me to actually do that, apply for jobs that I know I'm not going to get. That if I did get to the interview stage I would go to the interview and say. 'Oh by the way, I can't do this job because **I can't work round my children.**'" (Lone father, Scotland, wave a)*

- **Increased poverty and risk of destitution**

[My gas and electric] fell into that much arrears... I was without heating for ages... I pawned everything I had... You're literally going, 'Do I eat or do I have light?' (Lone Parent, Female, Scotland, wave a)

Sanctions triggered profoundly negative outcomes

- **Movements into survival crime**

Drug dealing ... That sanction turned me to crime. (Homeless Man, Scotland, wave c)

- **Worsening physical and mental health**

[Being threatened with sanctions and being sanctioned] definitely made my situation worse... it depressed me; it affected my confidence and just made my health worse. (Disabled man, wave a)

Benefit sanctions

- **Sanctions often inappropriate or for minor transgressions**

I just got a sanction for that because [my daughter] had cancer and I always went to [hospital] appointments and that with her. I was late for a Jobcentre appointment, 'Why are you late?' I said I was at [hospital]. They said 'Well your daughter turned 18 three weeks ago, she's all right to go herself [now]'. I said it's still my child, she's going through that; but no they sanctioned me anyway." (Job seeker, female, Scotland, wave a)

- **Sanctions ineffective in moving people closer to/into paid work**

It is demeaning, condescending, it is painful, it is damaging, it actually makes your disabilities worse if you've got some disabilities. And it is completely unproductive. It doesn't get people work. Nothing in what they've done to me has assisted me in getting back in to the employment market. So these people are paid to torture me basically, for money I don't get." (Disabled woman, Scotland, wave a)

Support

- **Sanctions dominate reserved support systems**

It's a half-and-half situation [whether you'll get sanctioned]... I feel like it's only if the adviser you're seeing likes you or not. It feels like that sometimes. (Jobseeker, male, Scotland, wave a)

- **Self-help is surveillance**

Big brother is watching you! You're getting spied on. (Jobseeker, female, Scotland, wave a)

People are very much on their own to find work. (Lone mother, Scotland, wave a)

Support

- **Mandatory support is low quality and ineffective**

I never found anyone helpful at the Jobcentre in my experience. You know, it was more – it's a bit like a factory of getting people in and out. There doesn't seem to be any support going on there. (Lone mother, Scotland, wave c)

- **Support is low quality and ineffective**

*Although I am still unemployed [...] since I came off Universal Credit I feel a burden has been lifted off my shoulders and **I can do my job search without all the other stress** [...] I would like to thank all the staff at the [job club] for all their help and wish them all the best for helping people get back into work.” (Universal Credit, male, Scotland, wave b)*

Recommendations

- New cooperative Scotland-wide practice agreements to bridge the gap between the reserved and devolved social security and employment service systems
- New policy, governance, managerial and front-line priorities, practices and protocols to:
 - rebuild trust
 - enhance empathy and compassion
 - **reduce poverty**
 - **prevent rent arrears and eviction**
 - **lower risk of destitution; and**
 - **alleviate anxiety and depression**

Recommendations

- Action to ensure high take-up of reserved and devolved social security benefits and employability services:
 - investment to expand welfare rights advice and advocacy services
 - accessible and accurate information campaign and web content on how to claim benefits, avoid sanctions and make successful appeals
 - high-profile public information campaigns to improve understandings about the purpose and scope of Social Security Scotland and Fair Start Scotland.
- Scottish trials of wider approaches to **provide adequate income to prevent poverty** without behavioural conditionality.



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UK overview and 9 detailed final findings reports can be found at
www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/publications/



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