

Annual report 2014/15



Welfare Conditionality

SANCTIONS, SUPPORT AND
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Introduction

Professor Peter Dwyer
Project Director

Welcome to our annual report for the year to March 2015. The end of our second year allows us to mark a variety of achievements for the project. Completion of our 480 service user first-round interviews is in sight, and focus groups with a range of stakeholders are underway. Team members are making presentations to a wide range of audiences. This report details our progress to date.

Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change is a major five-year programme of research running from March 2013 to February 2018. It is funded by the ESRC Large Centres and Grants Programme.

The research has two core aims. The first is to develop an empirically and theoretically informed understanding of the role of welfare conditionality in promoting and sustaining behaviour change among a diversity of welfare recipients over time. The second, equally important, is to consider the particular circumstances in which the use of conditionality may, or may not, be ethically justified.

The main focus of our activities in Year Two has been:

- Completion of key informant interviews
- Completion of first wave interviews with welfare service users
- Focus groups
- Coding.

Follow our progress via Twitter and by subscribing to our email newsletter. You can also leave comments on our website (details opposite).



Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change

Department of Social Policy and Social Work
University of York
York
YO10 5DD
Tel: 01904 321299

@welcond
www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk

Communications & Impact Officer: Janis Bright
Janis.Bright@york.ac.uk

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Reporting Period	1 March 2014 to 28 February 2015
Name of Group	Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change
Director's Name	Professor Peter Dwyer
Start and End Date	1 st March 2013 - 28 th February 2018
Year of Operation	Year 2: 2014/15
Cash limit	£2,051,964 (Total RC contribution)

Research progress

A further 14 key informant interviews were completed, making a total of 43 interviews and completing this data set for the project.

Focus groups have begun (seven of a total of 24 have so far been completed). However, the decision has been taken to prioritise interviews with welfare service users as the larger and more challenging group to recruit. Therefore the majority of the focus groups will be conducted in Year 3.

Welfare service user interviews began in July 2014, and have formed the bulk of the fieldwork in this year. As at 25 February 2015 a total of 350 had been completed, 72% of the total interviews. The decision was taken to delay recruitment of the anti-social behaviour and Universal Credit groups, given the timings of various changes to legislation which needed to be captured in the baseline. These groups, along with the remainder of the other interviews, will be completed March – April 2015, allowing time to code and analyse the data before commencing the second wave of research in July 2015.

Nine consultation workshops were completed in Year 2 in Glasgow, Sheffield, London, Bristol and Peterborough. The workshops each focussed on a different policy area, and allowed welfare service users and welfare practitioners the opportunity to comment on the research instruments. A further eight consultation workshops are planned for the end of the project to feed back the results of the research to its participants.



Scientific impact

Our third Expert Panel event took place on 12 May 2015 at Sheffield Hallam University. The subject was 'Understanding behaviour change and the role of conditionality'.

The team heard presentations from Samuel Nguyen (Behavioural Insights Team), Dr Jessica Pykett (University of Birmingham), Prof Karl Taylor (University of Sheffield), Dr Will Leggett (University of Birmingham) and Prof Paul Hoggett (University of West England). The papers and discussions have informed the team in the design of the research.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation commissioned and published a paper entitled 'Welfare Sanctions and Conditionality in the UK'. The paper was authored by Dr Beth Watts, Prof Suzanne Fitzpatrick, Prof Glen Bramley and Dr David Watkins. The paper received positive comments from academics on their blogs, and was also referenced in Parliament by Stephen Timms MP.

The team wrote a series of briefing papers based on their findings from the first year of the project. These papers set out the 'state of play' in each of the policy areas being investigated. The briefing papers have been published on the project website, and each has also been highlighted with a blog post, which have received a lot of attention on social media.

Prof John Flint has published a paper in Housing, Theory and Society entitled 'Housing and the realignment of urban socio-spatial contracts'.

Prof Del Roy Fletcher published a paper in Social Policy and Society entitled 'Workfare – a blast from the past? Contemporary work conditionality for the unemployed in historical perspective'.

Dr Sharon Wright has published a paper in Policy and Politics entitled 'Conceptualising the active welfare subject: welfare reform in discourse, policy and lived experience'.

Prof John Flint has published a co-authored paper in Housing Studies entitled 'Rational Fictions and Imaginary Systems: Cynical Ideology and the Problem Figuration and Practise of Public Housing'.

Prof Suzanne Fitzpatrick and Dr Beth Watts have co-authored a paper in Housing, Theory and Society entitled 'Rights to housing: reviewing the terrain and exploring a way forward'.

Elaine Batty, Prof John Flint and Emily Ball (one of the project's PhD students) have submitted a paper entitled 'Intensive Family Intervention and the Problem Figuration of 'Troubled Families' to the Social Policy and Society journal.

Prof John Flint and Prof Del Roy Fletcher will be presenting a paper (co-authored with Elaine Batty and Dr Jennifer McNeill) at the Housing Studies Association annual conference in April 2015, entitled 'Gamers or Victims of the System? Welfare Reform, Hyper-Vulnerability and Cynical Manipulation.'

Prof Suzanne Fitzpatrick and Dr Beth Watts will be presenting a paper at the Housing Studies Association annual conference in April 2015 entitled 'The New Paternalists? Social housing and conduct conditionality in England and Scotland'.

Economic and social impact

Prof Peter Dwyer presented oral evidence to the House of Commons Select Committee inquiry into benefit sanctions in January 2015.

The team also presented written evidence to the committee. Written and oral evidence is published on the parliament website. The project's evidence will contribute to the committee's report which is due to be published in March.

Prof Dwyer was quoted in a blog post on the Guardian Website, following his evidence given to the select committee. The blog post was shared on social media over 4,000 times.

The team have written blog posts on a variety of topics over the year, and these have been widely shared on social media. The most widely shared have been on lone parents, sanctions statistics, disability, and social housing.

Twitter activity: our reach continues to extend with (to end January) 480 followers. Among these are organisations such as the YMCA, Methodist Church, Fawcett Society and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, all of which have produced reports on benefits and sanctions, as well as academics, the ESRC and individual service users. Team members have supported this activity via their own twitter accounts.

Prof Sarah Johnsen and Dr Sharon Wright gave evidence to the Fawcett Society's enquiry into the impact of sanctions on female jobseekers and lone parents. The report, 'Where's the Benefit' was published on 5 February 2015.

Sharon Wright is representing the project on a new Policy Scotland network on sanctions policy, evidence and practice launched in February.

The first edition of our project newsletter was sent to our mailing list of 230, including voluntary organisations, academics, government and

policy organisations, individuals and stakeholder organisations involved with our research, on 28 January 2015. The newsletter will be published six times a year and will highlight recent research activity, papers published and news and events around the project.

Capacity building

The team attended a two day training event in Newcastle in June 2014, to receive project-specific training in NVivo analysis software.

Dr Janis Bright has been appointed as Impact Officer for the project, and is developing the Impact and Communications strategy for the project. Her role involves managing the website and social media, writing press releases and web content, and liaising with press offices at all partner institutions and ESRC to ensure the project has maximum impact scientifically and societally. Janis joined the team in November 2014 and has been a valuable addition to the project.

Two new PhD students have joined the project; Helen Stinson is undertaking a PhD at the University of York entitled 'Coping with conditionality? An exploration of the impact of welfare conditionality on vulnerable people'. Her studentship is jointly funded by the White Rose Doctoral Training Centre and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Larissa Povey is undertaking a PhD at Sheffield Hallam University titled 'Female Ex-offenders and Welfare Conditionality'. There are now seven PhD students linked to the project.

The first PhD seminar will take place on 26 and 27 March 2015 in Edinburgh. This will be a valuable opportunity for the PhD students to present their research so far, and to discuss their research and the overall project with the team.

Knowledge exchange activity

Prof Peter Dwyer presented to representatives from the Korea Central Self-Sufficiency Foundation, Korea Institute for Health and Social Affairs, Korea Ministry of Health and Welfare, Korea Ministry of Safety and Public Administration. The event took place at the University of York on 31 March 2014.

Prof Dwyer participated in the 'Qualitative Longitudinal Panel in Migration and Social Network Research' at Humbolt Universität zu Berlin on 22-23 May 2014.

Dr Jenny McNeill presented a paper to the 'Vulnerabilities and Risks' stream in the Methodological Challenges seminar series for NatCen and University of Sheffield on 16 July 2014, in which she discussed the design and methodological challenges in research with vulnerable groups for the project.

Janis Bright was invited to present to the University of York's Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the launch of its knowledge exchange and impact strategy in February 2015. She is also contributing to the department's Knowledge Exchange committee.

Prof Del Roy Fletcher, Prof John Flint and Dr Jennifer McNeill have been invited to present findings from the project to senior policy makers and practitioners in Sheffield City Council in March 2015.

Prof Peter Dwyer has been invited to present to the Welfare Reform Impact Club event on 19 March 2015, organised by HouseMark and attended by social landlords from across the UK. Other presenters include representatives from the Department for Work and Pensions Universal Credit team.

Dr Beth Watts has been invited to present about the project at Edinburgh Napier University's Employment Research Institute's seminar series in May 2015.



International

Prof Peter Dwyer has been invited to the Australian National University in April 2015 to be a keynote speaker at their international conference, and to present evidence to the Australian government regarding conditionality. Dr Sharon Wright and Dr Alasdair Stewart will also be presenting papers at the conference.

Dr Watts has been invited to present on the 'normative' aspects of the project at the Italian Ministry for Universities and Research funded conference 'The impact of the financial-economic crisis on the guarantee of welfare rights' at the University of York Law School in September 2015.

As well as invitations to speak at events overseas, the project continues to attract the interest of universities internationally, including academics from the Netherlands and Spain, and policy influencers in Germany.

Impact and communications

Activities have included posting a series of blogs that, as well as attracting a general readership in their own right, act as gateways to detailed briefings for academics, policymakers and campaigners. News on each of these is tweeted, further extending our reach with the general public and specialist interest groups.

Our evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry in January 2015 and media campaign around it has attracted considerable interest, supporting our work in communicating key insights and evidence from the early stages of our research. By taking part in this inquiry we hope to have a modest influence on the outcome and any government action taken in response.

An initiative to contact those doing media work in our partner university departments resulted in several twitter 'follows' and re-tweets, a web news item by the University of Sheffield, newsletter distribution throughout a department of Salford University, and re-tweets by the Housing Studies Association.

Our email newsletter launched in January 2015 further supports our aim of distributing key research insights to a wider audience. We are using it in part to keep stakeholder organisations involved in our research in touch with developments, while our subscriber sign-up form available to all through our website is also attracting a new audience.

Among those who have signed up to date are individual service users, government policy advisers and voluntary organisations.

Individuals are also able to leave comments directly via our website, and several have taken the opportunity to comment on government policy. We continue to develop our site's accessibility and functions.

All of our dissemination and impact activities are logged and monitored, ensuring all key audience segments are reached.



Project funding

Initial award: £2,404,738

Additional income from ESRC

Year 1, 2013-2014	£54,216	ESRC PhD studentship, University of Glasgow, Oct 2013
	£54,216	ESRC PhD studentship, Heriot-Watt University, Oct 2013
	£54,216	ESRC PhD studentship, University of Sheffield, Oct 2013
	£54,216	Additional White Rose DTC studentship, Oct 2014)
Year 2, 2014-2015	£60,000	Additional funding awarded for the post of Impact Officer, 50% FTE
Total	£276,864	

Additional income from sources other than the ESRC

Year 1, 2013-2014	£51,618	PhD Studentship, Heriot-Watt, Oct 2013
	£51,618	PhD Studentship, University of Glasgow, Oct 2013
	£25,000	Match funding from Joseph Rowntree Foundation for collaborative White Rose DTC PhD studentship, Oct 2014
	£7,674	Commission from Joseph Rowntree Foundation for paper 'Welfare Conditionality and Sanctions in the UK', published Sept 2014
Year 2, 2014-2015	£51,618	PhD Studentship, Sheffield Hallam University, Oct 2014



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