



Welfare Conditionality

SANCTIONS, SUPPORT AND
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Welfare Conditionality and Anti-social Behaviour: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change

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Outline

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1 About the Study

The support of the Economic and Social Research Council is gratefully acknowledged

2 Conditionality and Anti-social Behaviour: Rationalities and Mechanisms

New Labour and ‘coercive welfare’

- **A belief that “everyone can change” and that the state can ‘grip’ families and make them change their behaviour**
- **Increasing focus on the take-up of support:**
- **It is possible ‘to make people who need help take it... households can be forced to take help’**
- **A belief that sanctions provide a very strong incentive to encourage those households to undertake rehabilitation when they have refused other offers of help**
- **A belief that such support is non-negotiable**

Policy measures

- ASBOs, Parenting Orders, Family Intervention Tenancies, Pilots of Housing Benefit Sanctions
- Based on set of prohibited behaviours (ASBOs) or required behaviours (Parenting Orders)
- Viewed as a contractual arrangement (as well as Acceptable Behaviour Contracts), balancing support with sanctions for non-compliance
- Family Intervention Projects: different models but focus on key worker model with holistic whole-family approaches
- Latter focus on early and supportive interventions (mirrored in the Scottish Government's approach)

Coalition Government and a rehabilitation revolution?

- Belief that ‘current measures impose stringent measures to prevent future ASB but don’t address underlying causes’
- Need for simple, clear and effective sanctions regime
- More rehabilitating and restorative rather than criminalising and coercive, but still ‘real consequences for non-compliance’
- Continuing belief that ‘sanctions provide a proper **deterrent** to the ‘persistent minority’ and that Parenting Orders can **compel** parents to attend programmes
- Recognition that some practitioners reluctant to use sanctions, relying on a voluntary ethos
- Reduction in ambition from ‘everyone can change’ to ‘government working with people who want to take the necessary steps’
- To provide support beyond the welfare support system and to reduce top down state intervention: ie, localised provision with greater role for community, voluntary and private sectors

Troubled Families Programme

- Troubled Families Programme: to ‘turn around’ the lives of 120,000 families during the 2010-2105 Parliament
- ASB one of four criteria for inclusion in the programme and payment by results partly determined by reductions in ASB
- Retrospectively supported by two DCLG research publications
- Five key intervention factors: a dedicated worker; practical hands on support; a persistent, assertive and challenging approach; considering the family as a whole and gathering the intelligence; and a common purpose and agreed action.

Anti-social, Crime and Policing Act 2014

- Existing measures/ powers consolidated to six new powers
- Broadening of the definition of ASB
- Powers easier to use, extended geographical reach and available to more agencies
- Crucially, new Injunctions to Prevent Nuisance and Annoyance and Criminal Behaviour Orders can **impose positive requirements** upon individuals as well as prohibitions (this was not possible with ASBOs or ASB Injunctions- it was possible with Individual Support Orders but these were not widely used).

3 Research Evidence

Previous research findings

- Importance of key worker role with assertive approach and ‘non-negotiable expectations’
- Importance of holistic whole-family approach, identifying and tackling underpinning issues
- Recognising centrality of relationships with family but also liaison and advocacy, not just direct support
- Recognising importance of crisis management, stabilising and ‘soft’ transformative outcomes as prerequisite for ‘hard’ and ‘measurable’ outcomes
- Concerns over limited time period for working with families, exit planning and longer-term outcomes
- Concerns over resources, access to expert services and flexibility of key agencies to support families
- Understanding voluntary and engaged ethos of many interventions

Contested research evidence

- Claim that evaluations of Family Intervention Projects have over-estimated positive outcomes
- Considerable controversy about Louise Casey's report on troubled families and arising conclusions and recommendations
- Critique that, despite all the research, there has been very little 'accumulated learning' about how to tackle ASB and troubled families

4 Understanding Interventions and Outcomes

Understanding interventions

- **Assessment**
- **Direct Support** (Emotional, practical, financial)
- **Liaison and Advocacy**

- **Engagement – assessment - support plan and contract - provision of support - exit planning**

Understanding all outcomes (not just 'hard' transformative ones)

- **Crisis Management:** reducing immediate risk or harm and responding to trauma
- **Stabilising:** maintaining environments, relationships and dynamics
- **Transformative:**
 - 'Soft Outcomes': improved self-esteem, mental and physical health, domestic environment and management, inter-family relationships
 - 'Hard Outcomes': Education (attendance and attainment); employment/training; reduced risky behaviour or ASB; prevention of eviction or entry to criminal justice system

5 Initial Findings from the ESRC Study

Indicative early findings

- Confirms existing evidence and evaluations
- Individuals/households with range of vulnerabilities, exacerbated by welfare reform
- Still need to address underpinning problems
- Chaotic and dynamic situations in which 'rational and future-orientated decision making' challenging
- Tension between ethos of support and use of sanctions
- Many individuals not fully aware of nature of interventions, forms of sanction or behavioural requirements
- Concerns about resources and extent to which expertise is being lost due to budget reductions
- Reduction of ASB as priority impacting on partnerships

Indicative early findings 2

- Complex relationship between sanctions and support
- Sanctions ineffective without any form of support (but not necessarily visa versa)
- Key role of key workers, including new role to negotiate sanctions regime
- Emphasis on employment sanctions rather than tackling underpinning causes
- Lack of joining up of different sanction elements (housing, ASB, benefits)
- Varied views on the extent to which threat of sanction acts as a motivation or catalyst for engagement in support

Further reading

Batty, E. and Flint, J. (2012) 'Conceptualising the Contexts, Mechanisms and Outcomes of Intensive Family Intervention Projects', *Social Policy and Society*, 11(3), pp. 345-358.

Department for Communities and Local Government (2012) *Working with Troubled Families: A guide to the evidence and good practice*. London: Department for Communities and Local Government.

Flint, J. (2011) The Role of Sanctions in Intensive Support and Rehabilitation: Rhetoric, Rationalities and Realities, *British Journal of Community Justice*, 9(1/2), pp. 55-67.

See also: www.welfare@conditionality.ac.uk for ASB and other briefing papers and more information about the study.



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