

# 'Welfare Conditionality for Disabled Benefit Recipients'

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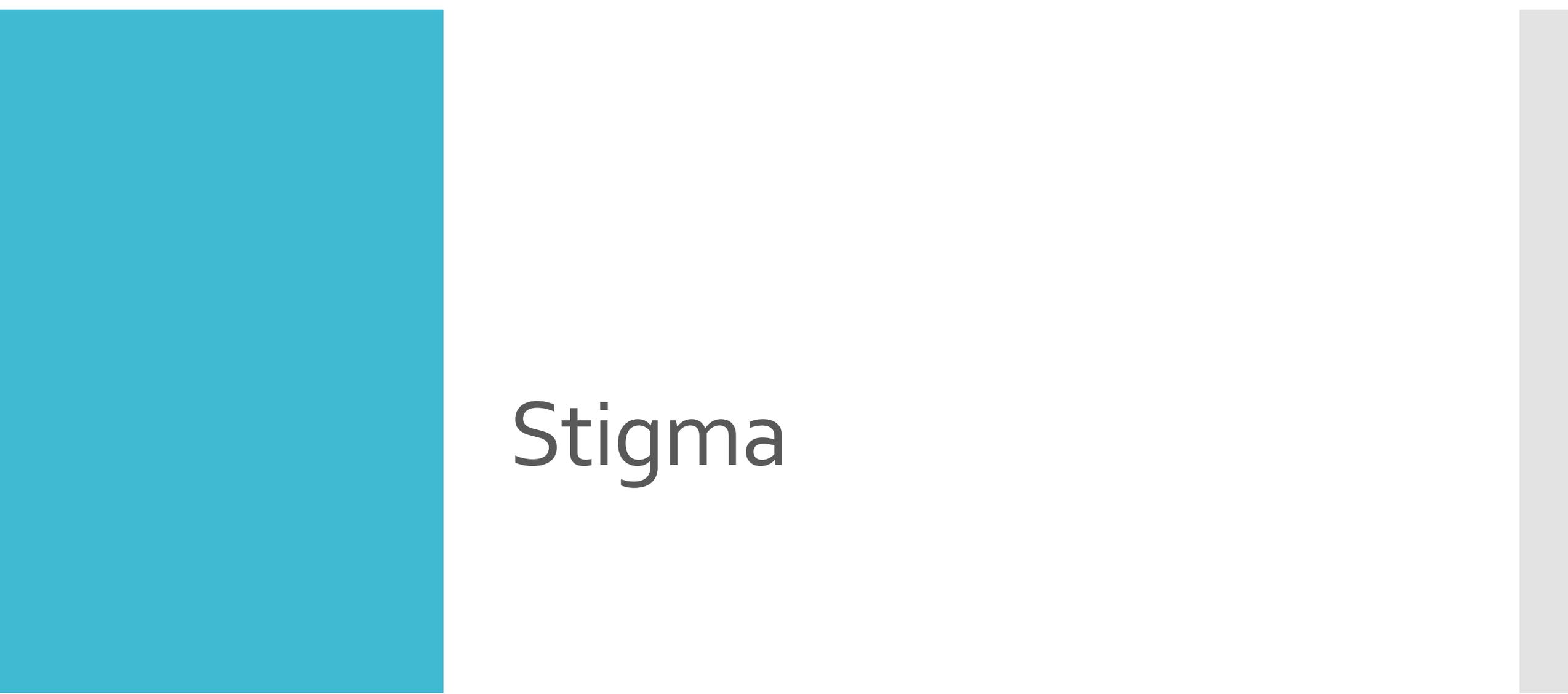
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## Overview:

- Aims to explore the **lived experiences** of welfare conditionality for disabled benefit recipient's.
- Gathers qualitative data through interviews with disabled people (Employment and Support Allowance, ESA). And welfare professionals.
- Considers notions such as: citizenship, identity and how policy is put into practice.

## Progress:

- Interviews with 35 disabled people with experience of claiming ESA.
- Interviews with 5 key informants (welfare advisors, disability charity workers).
- Fieldwork completed and transcribed, beginning to analyse findings.



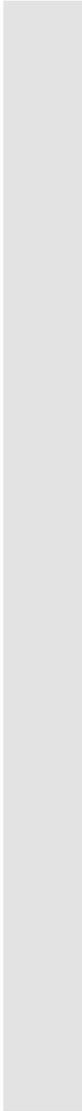
Stigma

- Baumberg, Bell & Gaffney (2012) look at stigma in relation to:
- Personal
- Social
- Institutional

*'[On public perceptions of benefit recipients]...because I don't have a job, [they think] I sit in the house and watch Jeremy Kyle all day and I just think you know I'm not working but I do a lot...I think people think we are scroungers and that we are lazy' (Sally).*

*'[On public perceptions of benefit recipients] Lazy, money grabbing, living on council estates with a dog called Myra Hindley, smoking drugs, drinking white lightning cider, renting telly's, broken windows, pebble dashed houses, skin heads, Nazis, scumbags basically' (James).*

*'disabled people would be seen as a bit of...well, shouldn't be seen, you know. There's that part to it. And also, as well, that you're faking it. Yeah. But also, as well, you tend to be like sort of classed as a second class citizen...I would say there has been a change in attitudes really, because a lot of TV programmes, you know, have a sort of like hold on people who have been classed as disabled, but they're actually not disabled. And I think that's sort of made it hard for people who are genuinely disabled' (Robert).*



# Dehumanisation

- *'An person with stigma is not quite human'* (Goffman, 1968).
- The process of claiming benefits can potentially dehumanise.
- By attaching a stigma to an individual or group of individuals this can dehumanise.

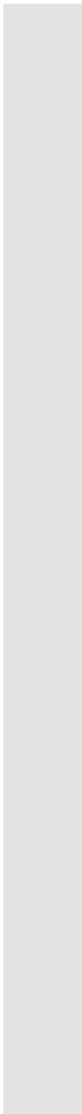
*'[He] came into the room, sat at his computer; there was barely even any eye contact. He was very cold, yeah, complete lack of empathy, lack of sympathy, anything, just, you know, like this, you know, I just don't even know, like this robot or something, you know, like, yeah, you've got a job to do but at the end of the day this is a person sitting in front of you, a person who is in pain, a person who is suffering, you know' (Katie).*

*'I sat there feeling about that big. I was just, like, excuse me, he was like can I seen them, so, you know, kind of, basically, like, you're telling the truth and I was mortified. I was sitting there thinking, oh, I feel so uncomfortable, this is like, I don't know, going to jail, asking me to drop your pants, and then as if that's not bad enough, they send you through the decision and they give you the paperwork that the interview is done...It said does the patient have any signs of self-harming, no, and I had like, you know, shown him my arm and it said no and I just thought are you actually kidding me, so you did that, made me feel just awful and then you've got no signs of self-harming' (Katie).*

*'It was like an automatic robot, that's how somebody described it to me and yeah it is. They've got no, like you know we are talking now, we've got eye to eye contact for them it's not it's like they're on the computer and it's not getting the best out of what they need' [On the WCA] (Maria).*

*'I asked for a private room because of my anxiety, I didn't get a private room and she put me in an island in the middle of a very big office...you think I have anxiety and you think that's the way you treat people with that condition' [@Work Programme Provider] (Steph).*

*[On Job Centre Plus] The woman that I dealt with was really patronising. I mean there was a huge distrust in me like I was doing everything that I was asked, I was filling out the booklet, I was applying for jobs and, you know, but to be honest I don't think it has anything to do with the individual, I think it's the system...I think it made the situation worse. At one point I mean it actually fed the depression, like at one point it got to the point where I had enough of being patronised and I was getting quiet upset and I was crying and the lady just said, oh please calm down otherwise I'll call security (James).*



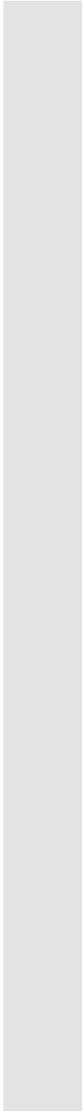
Shame

- 'Essentially it entails a negative assessment of the self made with reference to one's own aspirations and the perceived expectations of others, and is manifested as a sense of powerlessness and feeling small' (Chase, 2012).
- 'shame and stigma are intricately connected to the point whereby they can be treated as being almost synonymous' (Walker, 2014).

*'you feel sort of guilty and then you hear all these comments about people saying, oh people scrounging off benefits and things like that and it does sort of stick in the back of your mind and you feel like sort of, I don't know if alienate is the right word, but you feel sort of like an outcast. You feel sort of not inclusive with the rest of society' (Will).*

*'I felt a little bit ashamed telling people. Cos then they wanna know why you're claiming benefits, cos you look fine, like you don't look like you've got a disability, you know and I think people think when you've got mental issues you should be sitting in the corner eating crayons and things and that's not the case, but yeah I was I was a little bit kind of ashamed to admit that' (Sally).*

*'About us being scroungers, that really worries me a lot, I know it's not true you know because I do know stats shall we say, from all the disability sites. I don't want to let anyone else know because you can bet your bottom dollar here you tell somebody something and it's quicker than email, it's all around the community...They're even a couple of members of my family who are, well they read daily mail you know erm and the telegraph who I've heard through other family members say awful things about people who get disability benefits and I just, I mean I find that so upsetting' (Tracy).*



# Discussion