



Welfare Conditionality

SANCTIONS, SUPPORT AND
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Welfare conditionality: Sanctions, support and behaviour change?

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Professor Peter Dwyer, Dept. Social Policy and Social Work,
University of York, UK



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Today's presentation

1. Overview of the Welfare Conditionality project
2. Define welfare conditionality and consider its role in respect of behaviour change
3. The impacts of welfare conditionality
4. Effectiveness of sanctions and support in triggering and sustaining behaviour change

Evidence from First Wave Findings and a positive case study of behaviour change



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

Twin aims

- To consider the ethics and efficacy of welfare conditionality
- Qualitative fieldwork with three sets of respondents:
 1. Semi-structured interviews with 55 Policy Stakeholders
 2. 27 focus groups with frontline welfare practitioners
 3. Three rounds of repeat qualitative longitudinal interviews with a diverse sample of 480 welfare recipients who are subject to conditionality (i.e. 1,000+ interviews in total).

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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 claimants), individuals/families subject to anti-social behaviour orders/family intervention projects, homeless people, social tenants, offenders and migrants

- **11 Locations in England and Scotland**

Bath, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Inverness, London, Manchester, Peterborough, Salford, Sheffield, Warrington

Welfare conditionality?

- **A principle of (behavioural) conditionality**

Access to certain basic publicly provided welfare benefits and services should “be subject to the condition that those who receive them behave in particular ways, or participate in specified activities” (Deacon, 1994: 53)

- **Conditions of ‘conduct’**

“Behavioural requirements and constraints imposed upon different kinds of benefit recipients through legislation of administrative guidance” (Clasen and Clegg, 2007 :174)

- **Understanding welfare conditionality**

Sanctions and support (‘sticks’ and ‘carrots’) (e.g. Gregg, 2008)

‘Amorphous’ (behaving responsibly) – ‘concrete’ (tightly specified) conditionality (Paz-Fuchs, 2008)

Advocates: WC as tool for behaviour change

- **Passive unconditional benefits promote welfare dependency**

Unconditional entitlement to public welfare benefits and services are likely to promote idleness/unemployment and entrench welfare dependency among a section of the wider population (e.g. Murray,1984, 1999; Mead, 1986, 1997; Etzioni, 2000; Giddens, 1994.)

- **Behavioural conditionality provides the answer to irresponsibility**

Help people 'do the right thing' by (a) offering mandatory training /WFI's /support (**carrots**) (b) removing or reducing their rights if they don't engage with specified responsibilities (**sticks**)

- **Mix of rationales to justify welfare conditionality**

Contractualism, Paternalism, Mutualism (rf. e.g. Deacon 2004; Paz-Fuchs, 2008; Watts et al. 2014; Patrick and Fenney, 2015)

Deterrence, morality, utilitarian/fiscal, contractual/quid-pro-quo (Paz-Fuchs, 2008)

Adversaries: WC as the disciplinary welfare state

- **Builds from flawed individualistic assumptions:** causes and solutions to 'welfare dependency' located at the level of individual behaviour, wider structural factors secondary
- **A rationality mistake:** people may be unable to respond rationally to the 'carrots' or 'sticks' due to other ongoing issues in their lives
- **Punishing poor people:** 'coercive' contractualism' is illiberal; punitive paternalism harms rather than helps benefit recipients; limited mutualism focuses primarily on paid work with other forms of valid social contribution marginalised
- **Undermines entitlements based on need:** all should have minimum rights to basic social assistance welfare based on either citizenship or human rights

(e.g. Dwyer, 1998, 2004; Goodin, 2000; Freedland and King, 2003; Shildrick et al. 2012; Wright, 2012; Dean, 2013).

The purpose of welfare conditionality: behaviour change 8

- **Realigning the relationship between entitlement/support and conduct/behaviour (Handler, 2004; Betzelt and Bothfeld, 2011)**

“Conditionality embodies the principle that aspects of state support, usually financial or practical, are dependent on citizens meeting certain conditions which are invariably behavioural” (DWP, 2008 :1)

- **So what - conditionality is nothing new!**

The link between social rights and contractual obligations of citizens has long been explicit (e.g. Beveridge Report, 1942; Freud, 2007; DWP, 2008).

- **Social citizenship reconfigured: emergence of the ‘conditional welfare state’ (Dwyer, 1998-2016)**

From ‘creeping conditionality’ to ‘ubiquitous conditionality’

Intensified, extended and personalised conditionality

A distortion or a correction of social citizenship?

Sanctions

- **Negative impacts universally reported by WSUs**

[The hospital] were saying, 'You've lost weight.' I said, 'Well I can't eat. I've got no food, I've got no money.' (WSU, disabled man, England)

- **Disproportionate and inappropriate sanctions**

Because I didn't fill my book in properly, they didn't really explain to me properly how to do it. I am a bit dyslexic; I can't read or write practically. (WSU, offender, male, England)

- **Counter productive and negative consequences**

I got sanctioned for a month...It made me shoplift to tell you the truth. I couldn't survive with no money. I was homeless... So if I needed something I'd have to 'borrow it' from [supermarket]or something. (WSU, homeless man, England)

Support

- **Negative experiences of mandatory support widespread**

There's no support for me when I get there. All I do is sit there, sign and go out again. (WSU, Jobseeker's Allowance recipient, male, England)

- **Some limited good practice is evident**

It's down to the individual who they assign to be your [Work Programme] coach. I'm lucky enough that the person who is currently my coach is a brilliant person. He is really accommodating in the sense that he respects the fact I'm a lone parent. (WSU, lone parent, female, England)

- **The significance of support**

I don't know where I would have been if I didn't get the help that I did get. Things could have come out a lot worse. (WSU, ASB, female, England)

A pressing need to improving implementation

■ Lack of communication and understanding

17 years... we've always been secure tenants and suddenly we're a five year contract... 'We're doing that with all our housing now'... my husband is living on his nerves now thinking what's going to happen at the end of the five years? He doesn't need the stress or the pressure. (WSU, female, social tenant, England)

■ Flexibility in responding to additional barriers and needs

I need work that will fit around me, rather than me fit round it... I need rest periods... [not] standard business hours and like it or lump it... You know if you can't fit round that then tough. (WSU, disabled woman, Scotland)

■ Undermining the logic of conditionality

[through interpreter] Because he was new to the country he didn't know all the systems, how it went, so it was very difficult for him... But one day he missed his a appointment to sign and when he went the next day they sanctioned him for a month, he wasn't paid for a month so that time was very difficult. He'd not anything even to eat. (WSU, migrant, male, Scotland)

Conditionality: what sort of behaviour change?

- **Very limited evidence that sanctions move people toward paid work**

Before getting sanctioned I was all right; I had a laugh with everybody, everybody knew me. Then when the sanctions started kicking in I just changed; I couldn't be bothered, wasn't going out, I wasn't bothered about looking for a job. I just went right downhill. (WSU, lone parent, male, England)

- **Fear and compliance**

An HGV driver right, I had to apply for that but I don't drive. Now where's the logic there? (WSU, UC recipient, male, England)

In a rush but you're also panicking... constantly time watching, making sure you're not late because if you're late then that's it, sanction. Then it's a month of no money. (WSU, JSA recipient, male, England)

- **In work UC conditionality inhibiting paid work**

I was working at the time... 'What, you're going to fine me £70 for missing an appointment that I couldn't even ring you to tell you that I'd be late? (WSU, UC recipient, female, England)

John's story: positive Job Centre support

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Well I got made redundant and I started to dabble... doing a few things that maybe I shouldn't have to make a bit of money and to be honest it was quite exciting and it sort of all snowballed... I was dealing and selling drugs. You make a lot of money that's the problem

.... After I'd lost everything I had to then sign on again. My advisor this time was absolutely fantastic. I couldn't praise him up enough... I explained my situation. I said 'Look I'm a drug addict and I'm doing my best to get clean. I'm in recovery' and he was just really supportive. He wasn't on my case. He was encouraging; brilliant.

.... He hasn't just let me get away with it. He's been 'What about this training course? Go for that. That will really help you out in the future. If you want to get into support work do this training course or think about this'. He was really encouraging.

(John, wave a interview)

John's story: supported back into work

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Before I came here all I was interested in was drugs... I was at rock bottom, I had no family, no friends, I had nothing apart from the clothes on my back. I can honestly say that this place saved my life... Yes, I would have either been in prison or dead... I can't praise this place up enough. That's no exaggeration it's really just turned my life around completely

....I'm in paid work, yes, it's a year-long apprenticeship with an NVQ Level 3.... I've done conflict management training, motivational interviewing training, suicide assistance training, and I'm now a qualified first aider... I've been on Universal Credit training.
(John wave b Interview)

I was doing the apprenticeship in [city a] I applied for the [city b] job, and I was successful

....I've had a lot of support from my colleagues. You've got to remember, I've been through the criminal system, I've been through the drug system, I think, at some stage, there's always been somebody that's stood out and had that little bit of faith in me, do you know what I mean? It's normally people with lived experience that have been there, that have done it. You've got to remember, four years ago, I was doing a couple of grand's worth of drugs a week.
(John wave c interview)

John's story: 'personalised support' and the futility of sanctioning

When I signed on, I was completely honest and open about my past... 'Look, this is what I want to do. I'm now well into my recovery, I want to become a support worker, I want to become an outreach worker, in order to do that, I want to get the experience by volunteering. Then when an apprenticeship comes up, I want to apply for the apprenticeship because I know I'm going to get it.' I had complete confidence in my ability and he was absolutely brilliant. He could have sanctioned me on numerous occasions...

I didn't just go in and say, 'Oh no, I don't want a job, I want this job', I gave him a plan. I told him what I was doing every day. You've got to remember, I was working full-time but I just wasn't getting paid...

Jobcentre [location] and the security guards wouldn't let me upstairs because I was 15 minutes early. So, I went downstairs... just looking on the computers for jobs and about five minutes to go, they let me go upstairs and nobody come and took my card, my signing-on card. So, I was sat there for 20 minutes. Now, by the time somebody come and got my card, I was then 15 minutes late and the woman, when I went, she said, 'You're late', I said, 'Well, no, I'm not, I was downstairs 15 minutes early, the guys wouldn't let me up and when I come upstairs, nobody took my card'. She said, 'Well, I don't believe you'. I said, 'Well, come and ask the security guards'. She said, 'No, I'm sanctioning you'. (John wave c interview)

Conclusions: sanctions, support and behaviour change

- **Evidence that sanctions are effective in promoting paid work is at best limited**
 - Suspending people's benefit payments can lead to rent arrears and homelessness. While these consequences can encourage some people to look for employment they can undermine other's efforts to find work (Public Accounts Committee, 2017)
 - Our review of the available evidence suggests the Department's use of sanctions is linked as much to management priorities and local staff discretion as its to claimants' behaviour (NAO, 2016)
 - 'Gulf between rhetoric and evidence of the effects of sanctions' (Griggs and Evans, 2010)
- **Providing support *not sanctioning* is the key to changing peoples lives**
 - The availability of appropriate individual support is the common thread linking stories of successful transitions into work, or the cessation of problematic behaviour (Dwyer and Bright, 2016)



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For further information contact:

Fleur Hughes, Project Manager
Department of Social Policy and Social Work,
University of York, YO10 5DD, UK,
tel: +44 (0)1904 321299,
email: fleur.hughes@york.ac.uk

Website: www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk

Twitter: @WelCond



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