



Welfare Conditionality

SANCTIONS, SUPPORT AND
BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

Conditionality Mismatch: Universal Credit, in-work conditionality and the new coerced worker claimant

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Overview

- UC sample
- Social security after the 2012 punitive turn
- Universal Credit, in-work conditionality and the new coerced worker-claimant
- Conditionality mismatches

Universal Credit Sample

Welfare Service Users	Wave A: 58 (WB: 44; WC 41) 66% unemployed, 33% in work 40 men, 18 women
Wave A sanctions all	23 (15 once, 5 2-5 times, 3 >6 times)
Wave A sanctions in-work	7 (3 once, 2 2-5 times, 2 >6 times)
Locations	Bath, Glasgow, Inverness, Manchester and Salford
Focus Groups	3 , total of 26 participants
Policy Stakeholder Interviews	9

Social Security after 2012

- ‘dominant approach of combining mandatory self-help with sanctions and minimal support has taken a decidedly more **punitive turn**’ (Fletcher & Wright, forthcoming)
- 2012 ‘harshest ever’ sanctions (Slater, 2012)
 - generalised threat, easily triggered, rapidly escalating
 - duration one month to three years and open ended ‘until compliance’
- 2013 Day One Conditionality and Claimant Commitment
- Universal Jobmatch = ‘modern day panopticon with a disciplinary gaze that ensures self-administered surveillance and doubles as an online evidence-maker for sanctioning.’ (Fletcher & Wright, forthcoming)
- ‘Punishing the poor’ (Wacquant, 2009)?

Universal Credit (2013-onwards)

Jobseeker's Allowance	Employment and Support Allowance	Income Support
Housing Benefit	Working Tax Credit	Child Tax Credit

Reforming at cross-purposes?

Benefits for out of work adults JSA, ESA WRAG	Wage top-ups Working Tax Credit
Stigmatised	Respectable
To coerce out of work ' dependents '	To enable ' willing workers ' (employers)
Low rates to make unemployment uncomfortable	Rates intended to make work financially viable
Stick -based Disincentive built-in	Carrot -based Incentive built-in
Coercion aimed at moving 'off benefits' and 'into work'	Financial support to make paid work and child care possible
Harsh sanctions	No behavioural job search conditions
<p>UC Coerced worker-claimant Combined conditionality for out of work and in-work claimants Stick based</p>	

Conditionality mismatches

- **Mismatch 1:** between **UC requirements** to increase hours, pay and take on multiple jobs and **employer requirements** (LM opportunities, practices and expectations)

It is really difficult because they've got the pressure... to get a second job. They've got the pressure coming because employers don't want to employ them because they're not available. I think that is actually as much pressure as being out of work.

(FG3 Universal Credit, Scotland)

Conditionality mismatches

- **Mismatch 2:** between **employer demands for flexibility** required by employers and **JCP inflexibility** (e.g. appointments)

I was working at the time... it was something like, 'We're going to charge you £10 a day for seven days' and I said, '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?'

(Universal Credit recipient, female, Bath)

Conditionality mismatches

Mismatch 3: between strategy of ‘more work’ and outcomes
e.g. escaping poverty/progressing

- 44% of working poor work 40+ hrs per week (Bailey, 2016)
- 1/3 of those in exclusionary employment made no progress in employment over last 5 years (ibid)

Mismatch 4: between **heavy sanctions** and **minimal support**

- Sanctions often disproportionate to the ‘offence’
- Support insufficient for job retention or facilitating ‘more work’

Constantly on your case, constantly trying to sanction you. It's an absolute nightmare.

(Universal Credit recipient, female, Manchester)

Conclusions

- UC extends welfare conditionality (JCP appointments, requirements for claimants and partners, sanctions) to those in work
- In-work top-ups now have less capacity to offer a respectable route out of stigmatised benefit claiming than was previously possible under the Working Tax Credit system
- UC generalises the 'dependent' spoiled identity to workers who would previously have escaped it
- Conditionality mismatches mean that the main outcome of Universal Credit for in-work claimants is the creation of the new coerced worker claimant