



University
of Glasgow

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[Undergraduate degree]

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Dissertation:

'Sanctioning the Sick and Disabled':

**Has the Coalition government's reform of the sanctions regime driven claimants of
Employment and Support Allowance into sustainable employment?**

0602496

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ABSTRACT

The use of benefit sanctions for the sick and disabled has become an issue of increasing salience in the UK political agenda, with many ongoing debates questioning both their applicability and their effectiveness in terms of achieving increased employment rates. This paper seeks to add to these debates, by providing a critical assessment of the UK Coalition government's revised sanction policy, as implemented in December 2012, and the impact this policy has had on progressing sick and disabled claimants of Employment and Support Allowance off benefits and into sustainable work. The study adopts a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis of the relationship between benefit sanctions and job entry/retention rates with a qualitative investigation of ESA claimants' own experience with sanctions, as this triangulation of data is currently lacking within contemporary discussions. It argues that the employment situation of those on ESA is not positively dependent on the sanctions intervention as ESA claimants who have been sanctioned have moved into work far less frequently than their non-sanctioned counterparts. They have also been less likely to sustain in work within the first 13 weeks of employment. Contrary to the common narratives that would attribute these findings to ideas of a pervasive 'welfare dependency culture', the lived experience of claimants suggests that sanctions do not improve prospects to work, but instead are often self-defeating, serving only to distance claimants from the labour market. Findings therefore suggest a need for policymakers to better understand the complex nature of ESA claiming as involving health, employability, societal and labour market barriers to employment.

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ABBREVIATIONS

DWP -	<i>Department for Work and Pensions</i>
ESA -	<i>Employment and Support Allowance</i>
IB -	<i>Incapacity Benefit</i>
IB's -	<i>Incapacity Benefits</i>
JSA -	<i>Jobseekers Allowance</i>
SG -	<i>Support Group</i>
WP -	<i>Work Programme</i>
WRAC -	<i>Work Related Activity Component</i>
WRAG -	<i>Work Related Activity Group</i>

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

In launching the Coalition government's welfare reform White Paper in 2010, Iain Duncan Smith, Department for Work and Pensions Minister, promised to create a new contract for welfare claimants (Department for Work and Pensions [DWP], 2010), heralding the greatest changes since Beveridge. By ushering in a 'tougher' welfare regime that would finally ensure that everyone who can work is working, the Coalition would take the steps needed to address a pervasive culture of welfare dependency plaguing 'Broken Britain' (Patrick, 2011a). Committing to an ambitious reform agenda, the Coalition sought to effectively reduce the 'benefits bill' by a total of £18 billion by 2015 (Patrick, 2012a). In doing so it systematically embraced neoliberal principles and mechanisms of conditionality to further develop a highly conditional modern welfare state, characterised by expanding mandatory work programmes and the centrality of benefit sanctions to encourage, or some may say compel, benefit claimants off welfare and into work (Patrick, 2011b).

Although conditionality has been a longstanding feature of welfare entitlement in the UK, it is undeniable that the scope and scale of this policy framework has increased substantially. Today's 'conditional welfare state' extends beyond unemployed jobseekers to include those not traditionally expected to seek work as a condition of their benefit receipt (Dwyer, McNeil and Scullion, 2014); namely those assessed as being sick and disabled. With an estimated 2.51 million men and women of working age out-of-work and claiming incapacity benefits (IBs) (DWP, 2014), and costs for Employment an Support Allowance (ESA) expected to be over £13 billion by 2018/2019 (BBC News UK, 2014), policymakers have expressed determination to reduce the number of claimants, facilitate moves into employment and

alleviate the pressure of what was quickly identified as one of the largest fiscal risks facing the UK government.

In line with an overarching neoliberal agenda, the Coalition's policy response has become increasingly focused on the reform of disability benefit regulations to establish a more 'active' benefits regime via principles of conditionality (Lindsay and Houston, 2013); enforcing compulsory work-related activity for sick and disabled people under threat of benefit sanctions to drive increased employment. Consolidating and extending its commitment to a neoliberal ideology, a reformed and strengthened sanction policy has become the tool of choice for the Coalition, standing as the central tenet of their wider welfare agenda (Dwyer, McNeill and Scullion, 2014).

Current UK Policy: ESA

Within their current welfare package, the reforms of most relevance to the Coalition's agenda for the sick and disabled involve the full migration of all existing Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants onto ESA, and the revision of the ESA sanctions policy implemented in December 2012.

Launched by New Labour in 2008 to replace the largely unconditional IB, ESA was designed to focus on what disabled people *can* do rather than their incapacity to work (DWP, 2006). Individuals undertake a Work Capability Assessment (WCA) at the start of their claim and are placed into one of three payment groups: those found to have the most severe impairments are placed in the Support Group (SG), receiving a higher level of payment without conditions attached to its receipt; those assessed to have a limited capability to work are placed in the Work-related Activity Group (WRAG), receiving a lower level of payment conditional upon participation in work-related activity and facing sanctions for

noncompliance; with the third group constituting those who have been found ‘fit for work’, refused ESA and offered Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) (DWP, 2011). Tighter eligibility criteria have been implemented within the WCA under the Coalition, with all claims to IB reassessed and migrated to ESA by April 2014. This reform has seen large volume of ESA claims rejected, with most successful claims being directed towards the WRAG (Lindsay and Houston, 2013, p. 2), increasing the volume of claimants now facing the threat of sanctions.

Importantly, the Coalition has also extended the work-related conditions applicable to those placed in the WRAG (Patrick, 2012a), through mandatory participation in the ‘The Work Programme’ and a strengthening of the sanctions policy in place for noncompliance. From December 2012 disabled people in the WRAG have faced increased sanction levels and are now threatened with the removal of their full ESA personal allowance; £72.40 a week from a possible payment of £101.15 (2014 figures)¹. An open-ended sanction will apply upon initial noncompliance and will remain in place until claimants re-comply, after which the personal allowance will be removed for fixed periods of seven, 14 and 28 days for first, second and third ‘offences’ (DWP, 2012). Sanctionable offences include failure to attend a work-focused interview and failure to participate in work-related activity without showing good cause².

Sanctions in Scotland

The Scottish Government has been eager to see the devolution of welfare policy from Westminster, openly voicing opposition to the revision and extension of the ‘sanctions policy’ by the Coalition and raising particular concern over how they affect the most vulnerable (The Scottish Parliament Welfare Reform Committee, 2014). Although not automatically opposed to a benefits system that incorporates conditionality, the Scottish

¹ See Appendix 1, Box 2 and 3 – for comparison of previous and revised sanction policies.

² See Appendix 2 – Reason for ESA sanctions; monthly rate in thousands from October 2008 – December 2014

Government is consulting various committees on an improved or alternative policy suggestion that will refresh the employability framework currently supporting those most disadvantaged in the Scottish labour market with moves back into work (Scottish Centre for Employment Research and the ESRC Centre on Skills, Knowledge & Organisational Performance, 2014). Extensive research is being undertaken in Scotland to document the impact benefit sanctions are having on claimant groups; highlighting concerns over exacerbated poverty levels, links between welfare reform and increased food bank usage in Scotland and issues with ‘cost shunting’ from the DWP to Scotland’s third sector as reductions in DWP expenditure resulting from sanctions are effectively displaced to devolved local budgets which are now dealing with increased demands for support (The Scottish Parliament Welfare Reform Committee, 2014). However despite a number of recommendations made by Scottish committees in relation to the reform of the sanctions policy and delivery of employability provisions, the UK government has thus far been unwilling to hear them.

Aims and Objectives

Benefit sanctions are of high priority across the political agenda. Now more stringent, and being used more frequently under the Coalition than ever before³, concerns over whether this policy response is actually “fit for purpose” continue to promote much debate (Lindsay and Houston, 2013, p. 1). This paper will seek to address this issue by providing an assessment of the effectiveness of sanctions in Scotland, in relation to the overall policy goal of increasing employment outcomes among ESA claimants. As the Coalition’s revised benefit sanctions regime has been in force for 18 months, this will be used as the fundamental unit of

³ See Appendix 3 – ESA Sanction Decisions Over Time; Great Britain and Scotland

assessment to best measure the real time effects of this policy. The main objectives of this research are as follows:

- To critically review the current literature surrounding the issue of welfare conditionality for the sick and disabled, including a review of the policy development;
- To determine whether ESA claimants in Scotland, who have been sanctioned at least once, are entering and sustaining in employment at an increased rate and hence, whether sanctions are a driver for employment and so effective as a prime policy solution;
- To investigate what impact sanctions are having on claimants of ESA; the effect they have on claimants' engagement with employment-support and how they address barriers to work.

To best address the research aims the study adopts a mixed methods approach, combining quantitative data analysis of the relationship between benefit sanctions and job entry/retention rates with a qualitative investigation of ESA claimants' own experience with sanctions. This triangulation of data is currently lacking within contemporary debates and it is through my own position of employment with the prime welfare-to-work provider Working Links (currently delivering the main employability programme for people on health benefits) that I have been able to gain access to data and address this gap. Conducting this comprehensive analysis will seek to update current debates about the use of sanctions and their effectiveness as a central welfare policy for those with health issues (Weston, 2012).

Outline of Chapters

This chapter has presented a background to and summary of this research project. Chapter Two will discuss the central role of neoliberalism in UK welfare policy, linking this with the current reforms, and Chapter Three will provide a critical review of the current literature surrounding sanction-backed conditionality policy for the sick and disabled. Chapter Four will detail the methodological approach employed within this research and Chapter Five will present the results found from both the quantitative and qualitative research that was completed. Chapter Six will discuss the key findings of the study, providing an overall analysis of the research project and will position the findings within the vast body of literature. This chapter will also discuss the main implications for policy arising from the findings. Chapter Seven will provide a short conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

Policy Evolution: The Growth of Neoliberalism

The UK and other Anglo-Western nations have witnessed deep political shifts in relation to their welfare reform policies over the last 20 years, with profound economic, political and social changes in Western societies demanding significant changes in the organisation of contemporary welfare states (Dwyer, 2004, p. 267). The existence of a universal and needs-based entitlement to social assistance, the ethos behind the early welfare state, is now viewed by many to be corrosive and outdated, and is held responsible for the entrenchment of a 'welfare dependency culture' in modern society (Mead, 1997). Emerging in its place is the idea of a "new social contract" (Gilbert, 2009 in Savelsberg, 2011 p. 151), based upon a neoliberal model of citizenship that emphasises 'rights and responsibilities' and gives rise to an agenda of both duty and obligation (Patrick, 2012b). Such neoliberal policy in welfare drives the consensus that that life should be shaped by work and the unemployed have responsibility for tackling their own unemployment (Newman, 2011). The essence of the new welfare agenda is conditionality and reciprocity, where the right to welfare benefits is balanced and offset by the responsibility to make a productive contribution to society through work (Munoz, 2006).

The concept of neoliberalism is diverse, complex and contested, constituting what is both a 'rolling back' and a 'rolling out' of the state (Newman, 2011). In the context of this discussion, neoliberalism is taken to reflect the trend of prioritising market forces and competitiveness over the welfare state and redistribution. Challenging the idea of the 'welfare state', the dominant neoliberal approach to employment policy over the last 20 years has therefore focused on promoting the free market and improving the economy ahead of

securing social rights (Owen and Harris, 2012), conceptualising a ‘work-centric’ understanding of social policy where the responsibility to work is characterised as the primary duty of the ‘good citizen’ (Patrick, 2012b). Market participation is seen as the imperative for equal citizenship, operating to integrate the poor in society and reshaping the political landscape (Mead, 2005). Neoliberal policies identify work as being the only route out of poverty and so ‘workfare’ strategies involving sanction-backed activation, low benefits and flexibility in the labour market, are deemed to be the most efficient in embedding a work-ethic and delivering job outcomes. Importantly, within the neoliberal ideology, the responsibility of getting a job is placed on the individual, and so limits any dependency on the state (Newman, 2011).

The UK and Neoliberal Welfare Ideology

Such ideological ideas have found practical expression in contemporary UK welfare policy, with the dimensions of neoliberalism being of common place in the ‘politics’ of welfare reform. Since the mid-1990’s both New Labour and the Conservatives have been eager to adopt neoliberal policies to establish a new ‘welfare contract’ with recipients; rewarding work and making the right to benefit strictly conditional on participation in back-to-work activities (Patrick, 2012b). Consistent with their distinctive ‘Third Way’ approach to policy, successive New Labour governments implemented a series of neoliberal welfare reforms from 1997⁴ designed to move people receiving out-of-work benefits into the labour market (Patrick, 2012b). Adopting pro-active welfare policies, New Labour consolidated the ‘work-first’ and ‘work-for-all’ approach to welfare, incorporating mandatory participation obligations, employment programmes and benefit sanctions to transform a largely entitlement-based welfare system into an activation-style ‘workfare’ system (Savelsberg,

⁴ See Appendix 1 - for more detail on New Labour’s reform of sickness and disability policies.

2011). Support and enabling measures such as the Working Tax Credit⁵ scheme (DWP 2006) were introduced, allowing conditionality policies to be expanded and incorporating groups traditionally excluded from the responsibility to participate in paid employment; most notably lone parents and disabled people who were now expected to make some attempt to join the formal labour market (Patrick, 2012b).

The Coalition Government have followed a similar policy path in their welfare agenda, with the scope and scale of welfare conditions increasing substantially since 2010 (Watts, et al., 2014). Although sanctions were already in use under Labour, their usage was minimal, with the toughest sanctions being restricted to certain categories of recipients (Savelsberg, 2011). Now, as a result of the recent reform acts⁶, sick and disabled people in the UK are facing tightened eligibility and exemption criteria for health-related benefits, coupled with the identification of a range of new sanctionable behaviours with which they must comply (Salvesberg, 2011). The Coalition's commitment to a neoliberal welfare policy champions behavioural explanations for poverty and unemployment (Wiggan, 2012). Centred on theories of behaviour change, the Coalition has embedded 'conditions of conduct' in welfare via the demand for particular and compulsory patterns of behaviour from recipients (Clasen and Clegg, 2007). Arguing that the principle obstacles to increased employment participation is both attitude and behaviour, advocates of conditionality, such as Mead (1986, 1997) and Schwartz (2005), have supported paternalistic state intervention to enforce compliance with 'workfare' conditions for claimants 'own good', as voluntary acceptance of welfare obligations among claimants is unlikely. The solution for policymakers is therefore suggested to be a combination of 'help' (grounded in the intensification of behaviour monitoring and personal support from welfare advisors) and 'hassle' (emphasising greater mandated activation and threat of sanction) to instil and maintain work discipline amongst the

⁵ See Appendix 1 - for more detail on Working Tax Credits

⁶ See Appendix 1 - for more detail on the Coalition's reform of sickness and disability policies.

unemployed (Mead, 2007). The Coalition has adopted such ideas wholeheartedly, extending conditionality policy, via the implementation of the Work Programme (WP) and a more stringent sanction regime, to include the most vulnerable.

Asserting that “it is time to bring welfare into the 21st century” (Duncan Smith, 2010), the Coalition has marketed what they believe to be both a bold and innovative solution to Britain’s ‘broken society’, bringing an end to benefit claiming as a ‘lifestyle choice’. However, in favouring economic rationality and the intensification of punitive conditionality systems, the Coalition has actually demonstrated a renewed and deepened commitment to a neoliberal policy position, signifying less of a break with the past than merely the next phase in the evolution of the conditional welfare state (Wiggan, 2010). Despite ensuing debates surrounding the effectiveness and consequences of sanction-backed conditional ‘workfare’ policies (discussed in the following chapter), ideological principals of neoliberalism remain central to the organisation of contemporary welfare policy in the UK (Dwyer, 2004). Popular consensus on the need to revision the welfare project marginalises the voices of the workless and the wider criticisms of neoliberalism, limiting scope for the development of an alternative approach (Newman, 2011).

CHAPTER 3

Sanctions: Are they really fit for purpose?

Review of the Existing Literature

Given the widespread political support for the need to ‘re-vision’ the UK welfare project (Deacon and Patrick, 2011) and a general cross-party acceptance of conditionality principles, it is important to look beyond political discourse to find a critique of the current policy direction (Patrick, 2012a). In doing so it becomes possible to provide a more critical analysis of the Coalition’s sanction policy; identifying the impact sanction-backed conditionality has on sick and disabled people and an assessing what limits the effectiveness of this policy response in driving increased levels of employment.

Neoliberal policies focus on a supply-side labour market analysis: one that individualises the policy problem by placing the corrective lens firmly on the disabled person them self (Patrick, 2011c). This diverts attention from the many demand-side issues that contribute to the nature of disability claiming; including job availability, employer discrimination and the complex myriad of health, social and employability-related barriers sick and disabled people often face when seeking work (Houston and Lindsay, 2010). These issues are argued to be of central importance to the current debate as they are unlikely to be resolved by the mere extension of a supply-side sanction intervention (Lindsay, McQuaid and Dutton, 2007). Review of existing literature therefore seeks to explore the areas that are often neglected by political elites.

The Disability Benefits Problem

If policymakers are to find an effective solution to reducing the high rates of disability claiming in the UK, Houston and Lindsay (2010) argue that they first need to appreciate the true nature of the problem. These authors discount a “misleading and simplistic” behaviourist reading of problem (Lindsay and Houston, 2013, p. 5), focused on ideas of a ‘dependency culture’, disengagement from the labour market and the need for coercion. Instead they contend that the UKs disability benefits ‘crisis’ can only be fully understood as the outcome of three key combining factors; labour market processes, gaps in individuals’ employability and health problems (Lindsay and Houston, 2013, p. 3). They argue that each contributes to the overall disadvantage experienced by those on disability benefits, impacting on their ability to make a sustainable transition from welfare to work (Lindsay and Houston, 2013).

In relation to labour market processes, Houston and Lindsay (2010) argue that both the history and geography of disability benefit claiming in the UK clearly indicate the pivotal role played by job availability in determining the number of people claiming incapacity benefits (IBs)⁷. They cite evidence connecting periods of large-scale industrial job losses in the 1980’s and 1990’s with the sharpest rises in the number of IB claimants. Research by Beatty et al. (2010) supports this by identifying an almost exact match between the geography of IBs and the spatial pattern of industrial decline in the UK. Arguing that the sluggish demand for labour in these areas has kept numbers on IBs high, Beatty and Fothergill (2013) perceive the deficient demand for labour to be at the root of the UK’s high claimant numbers, not insufficient work incentives and a lack of activation measures. They state that disability claiming cannot be explained in health terms alone and instead suggest that the recent divergence from ‘unemployment’ to ‘sickness’ in Britain involves an element

⁷ Incapacity benefits (IBs) encompass all health-related benefit claims in the UK; whether this is claims to the previous Incapacity Benefit or to the current Employment and Support Allowance benefit.

of “hidden unemployment”, arguing that up to one million disability claimants would probably be in work in a genuinely fully employed economy (Beatty and Fothergill, 2013, p.21). Lindsay and Houston (2013, p. 238) agree, asserting that the current policy response in the UK has been cast in “too narrow terms”. If disability benefits are to be reduced there will need to be a focus on creating jobs and not simply on compulsory job seeking conditions. Demand-orientated economic policies and not supply-side measures will be required to address issues of inequality in the labour market. A growing economy with rising employment is arguably a prerequisite to achieving IBs rates far below those currently prevailing in many parts of the country (Beatty and Fothergill, 2013).

However policymakers should not conclude that malingering is at the root of the disability problem. Research evidence shows that both employability and individual characteristics are also important in explaining why some people are at greater risk of finding themselves at the back of the ‘jobs queue’ (Beatty et al., 2009, p. 961). A number of surveys conducted with UK disability benefit claimants confirm that they are more likely than most people of working-age to report multiple barriers to employment; including a low skills base, poor educational attainment, lengthy periods of unemployment, a lack of work experience and limited or no access to transport (Beatty et al., 2010, Green and Shuttleworth, 2010). Whilst these problems are significant predictors of benefit claiming in the first place, they are also heavily associated with reduced chances of regaining future employment (Lindsay and Houston, 2013). Supply-side policies involving activation and participation in work-related activity are intended to help improve people’s employability, however they fail to recognise that health and employability are not isolated issues. Barnes and Sissons (2013) therefore remain sceptical about the recent welfare reforms arguing that illness and disability themselves limit the employability of people on benefits. Survey evidence by Beatty et al., (2010) supported this, finding little to suggest a ‘learned dependency culture’ among

disability claimants, but strong latent desires to work that were being short-circuited by poor health and other barriers to employment.

Poor health therefore must not be overlooked as a component of disability benefit claiming. Although the underlying health of the population is not necessarily worsening (McVicars, 2008), long-term sickness is argued to remain widespread throughout the labour market; among those coping within the workplace, the unemployed and those claiming benefits (Beatty, et al., 2009). Survey research again shows that disability benefit claimants most consistently identify health limitations as their main barrier to employment (Green and Shuttleworth, 2010), with many reporting having to leave their last job through ill-health (Beatty et al., 2010). The severity of health-related limitations has also been identified as a significant predictor of a claimant's chances of returning to work (Kemp and Davidson, 2010), whilst analysis of national data-sets (Berthoud, 2011) has also demonstrated that disability and ill-health continue to affect long-term employment outcomes. Warren, Garthwaite and Bambra (2013) stress that the health problems faced by disability benefit claimants are consistently shown to be both real and complex, arguing that we must remember this if we are to fully understand the factors limiting their employability in depressed labour markets.

From this, Beatty, Fothergill and Houston (2013) conclude that although the current punitive welfare reform agenda may work to achieve the Coalition's target of getting 'a million people off benefits', many of these moves will not be into sustainable employment. Instead it will exacerbate the risk of poverty and long-term exclusion from the labour market for the most vulnerable in society, primarily those coping with complex health problems and residing in regions of economic depression. A 'work-first' activation policy that relies on compulsion and punishment fails to address the true nature of the problems faced by those trapped on

disability benefits and will therefore remain extremely limited as an effective solution to the so-called 'disability benefits problem' (Lindsay and Houston, 2013).

The Conditionality Debate

A particular debate surrounding the Coalition Government's welfare reform policy was recently published in the *Journal of Politics and Policy* in 2011 and is of great relevance to this analysis. Discussion over the extension of increased conditionality to the sick and disabled and its associated policy levers; namely sanctions (Weston, 2012), arose between authors who considered both the effectiveness and applicability of this policy in terms of addressing barriers to work and increasing employment levels.

Coming from a theoretical starting point informed by a social-model approach to disability Patrick (2011c, 2012a) offers a critique of the Coalition's approach, arguing that it will be largely ineffective in supporting claimants' transition from welfare to work as it has again been based on an incorrect analysis of the problem. She contends that barriers to employment are at the societal, and not the individual level, positioning the discriminatory attitudes of employers as being largely to blame for the underemployment of disabled people. Applied to employment, the social-model focuses on societal and structural barriers faced by disabled people seeking work (Patrick, 2012a) which operate to prevent and constrain their work opportunities and limit their employment aspirations (Roulstone and Barnes, 2005, in Patrick, 2011c). Patrick (2011c) argues that such barriers have been effectively side-lined by the Coalition as their welfare policy continues to neglect the many demand-side impediments to genuine inclusion of disabled people in the workplace in favour of supply-side measures and work-related conditionality. She argues that their policy reflects a dogged reliance on the medical-model of disability, individualising the 'problem' of disability by concentrating on

an individual's impairment(s) and work readiness. She therefore sees sanctions and conditionality as "blunt instruments" when applied to disabled people living in a society that continues to erect disabling barriers to their full participation and inclusion, arguing that transformation of the workplace, and not measures of compulsion, is required to enable the progression of disabled people into work (Patrick, 2011c, p. 275).

Mead (2011, p. 281) presents a divergent interpretation in response to Patrick, contending that people in receipt of disability benefits are "unemployed rather than truly incapacitated". Supporting the stance taken by the Coalition government, he situates the responsibility for being out of work and for re-joining the labour market on the individual, arguing that incapacity support has long been overextended. He refers to the easing of access to IBs during the 1980's and re-interprets Beatty and Fothergill's (2002) research evidence regarding the clustering of IB claiming around areas of industrial decline, arguing that people are shown to be making rational economic choices to claim the higher payments afforded by disability benefits rather than lower amounts on JSA and to stay on benefits when faced with the alternative of low-paid work (Weston, 2012, p. 4). Unlike Patrick, Mead (2011, p. 282) contends that "the benefit culture has undermined work" in the UK, as disabled people who could make a contribution to the community have been under no obligation to do so. He therefore asserts that a policy of sanction-backed conditionality is required to enforce a model of individual responsibility over a model of entitlement and so preserve a "common citizenship" among the dependent and non-dependent in society (Mead, 2011, p. 281).

Seebohm's (2011) response in this debate also challenges Mead. Focusing again on sanction-backed conditionality, she suggests that evidence relating to the effectiveness of sanctions is marginalised by policymakers who seek to justify conditionality via moral principles about how claimants should behave. Seebohm (2011) cites a report compiled by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2010) that found claimants with multiple barriers to work to be at the

greatest risk of sanctions, and yet sanctions were shown to do little to increase their motivation to work. Focusing on people with mental health problems, of which she contends account for over half of those claiming IBs, Seebohm (2011, p. 285) advocates that most do want to engage in paid employment however those facing multiple-disadvantages are the least likely to benefit from ‘workfare’ models of activation. Work completed by Weston (2012) also questions the empirical evidence on effectiveness of sanctions in facilitating moves into employment, concluding that they are often ineffective and unnecessary. Her analysis of Labour’s ‘work-first’ model of welfare, Pathways-to-Work⁸, highlights the importance of emphasising an ‘offer of support’ over an ‘obligation to attend’ if those furthest removed from the labour market are to engage effectively with ‘workfare’ interventions and address their complex barriers to employment. Seebohm (2011) asserts that sanctions do not create jobs or drive people into work, but instead exacerbate poverty and have a detrimental impact on crime rates, economic hardship and children. She argues against the justification of conditionality on moral grounds offered by Mead, stating that this is in fact harmful to claimants, their families and the wider public as those who cannot work are condemned as being both ‘workshy’ and ‘deficient’.

The Stigma of Welfare

Another key element in the current analysis is the significance of language surrounding sickness and disability claimants. Receiving popular support, the language of Conservatism has dominated the public discourse since 2010, communicated through the framing of terms such as ‘welfare dependency’ and ‘individual responsibility’ (Lens, 2002, p. 146). In particular, rhetoric has centred around theories of the ‘underclass’; identifying recipients of IBs as a ‘primary concern’ or ‘problem’, whilst increasingly framing the receipt of IBs

⁸ - See Appendix 1 - for more detail on the Pathways-to-Work programme

around popular concerns that many sick and disabled people are either fraudulently claiming or are abusing a careless administration (Garthwaite, 2011). Bambra and Smith (2010) contend that this political shift categorises people suffering from ill-health as being ‘disabled or not’ and so creates a dichotomy between those illnesses perceived to be ‘deserving’ or ‘undeserving’ of state support (Gazier, 1998). Such narratives of the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ poor are increasingly applied to sick and disabled claimants in the UK, being common place within social policy, political discourse and the media as those deemed ‘sick but able to work’ are regularly portrayed via negative rhetoric such as ‘feckless’, ‘work-shy’ and ‘unwilling’ (Garthwaite, 2013a). Wiggan (2012) discusses the importance of discourse in welfare reform, examining policy documents as a key source for understanding the privileging of particular ideological and policy preferences. His analysis of the Coalition government’s 2010 Green Paper, *21st Century Welfare*, and White Paper, *Universal Credit: Welfare that Works*, highlights the marginalisation of structural aspects of persistent unemployment within the documents, evidencing that these are again transformed into individual pathologies of ‘benefit dependency’ and ‘worklessness’ that favour the familiar neoliberal policy response of punitive conditionality and economic rationality (Wiggan, 2012).

Research conducted by Garthwaite (2013a, 2013b) indicates that the stigma now associated with claiming sickness-benefits works to deter disabled people from accessing the support they need, amplifying the risk of financial strain and hardship by leaving them detached from both welfare and employment. Baumberg, Bell and Gaffney (2012) support this with survey research, finding that around one in four respondents gave at least one stigma-related reason for delaying or not claiming state-support. This stigma of benefit claiming is also counter-productive to the future employment opportunities of sick and disabled claimants, as it bears influence on the attitudes of employers, affecting their response to those who present

themselves for work (Garthwaite, 2011). Like Patrick, Garthwaite (2011) contends that the Government's current welfare reforms remain centred largely on the supply-side of labour, targeting and highlighting the functional limitations of individuals with perceived impairments. She argues that the dichotomy between 'deserving' and 'undeserving' will most likely be exacerbated by ongoing welfare reform, as sanction-backed conditionality policies work to categorise and further marginalise the sick and disabled in society rather than raising their employment rates (Garthwaite, Bambra and Warren, 2013).

CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology

Research Design

This research project will assess how sanctions have impacted on employment and job retention rates among ESA claimants. Consistent with grounded theory there is no hypothesis; theoretical ideas will instead be allowed to emerge freely from the data and will be related to the set of concerns that have arisen from the literature (Bryman, 2012). The results will be used to determine whether or not the revised ESA sanctions regime, as implemented by the Coalition in December 2012, has been an effective policy solution in achieving an increase in the employment rates of the sick and disabled.

Research in this area has been largely conducted under the distinct paradigms of either quantitative or qualitative research methodologies. Quantitative research is grounded in a positivist philosophy, generating numerical data by which to conduct statistical analysis, whilst qualitative research is based on a constructivist philosophy, employed to gather information on meanings and experiences in order to better understand attitudes and behaviours (Heiman, 1999). This research project looks to move beyond the archetypal quantitative *versus* qualitative research argument: incorporating a mixed methods approach in its analysis in line with a pragmatic philosophy. In recognising the importance and usefulness of both research techniques, mixed methods research can help bridge the schism in methodology and so can enhance research findings (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004) by deepening our understanding of the research problem (Fielding, 2012).

Fielding (2012) outlines three key reasons for mixing research methods; convergent validation, analytical density and illustration. Convergent validation can also be termed ‘triangulation’ and is concerned with whether findings from different research methods agree. It is assumed that findings are more likely to be valid if they agree, and so improve the overall rigour of the research (Robson, 2002). By triangulating data, gaps and inconsistencies between methods can be determined and discussed (Pierce, 2008), giving a more reliable account of the social phenomena being investigated. The ‘analytical density’ rationale on the other hand uses mixed methods to extend the scope and depth of understanding (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Illustration flows naturally from this, and is about showing the *reality* of the research topic in publications. Where statistical data can at times be dry, an interview clip can work to bring the issue to life (Fielding, 2012). Fielding (2012, p. 127) argues that illustration through mixed methods can be particularly useful in the realm of policy debate as the resulting material can give policymakers a sense of the effects of policies in the ‘real world’. His justification of mixed methods links strongly with this study’s research problem, supporting the adoption of a pluralistic epistemological and methodological approach to provide a more comprehensive and robust analysis of the research question.

Quantitative analysis was derived from an original data set provided by Working Links, sampling ESA claimants actively registered on their Scotland Work Programme (WP) caseload. Primary analysis of this data set was employed and bivariate analysis was used to investigate whether an empirical relationship exists between the application of sanctions (independent variable) and subsequent moves into employment and job retention rates (dependent variables). Chi square tests were used to determine significance levels via SPSS.

A qualitative component was incorporated to further explore the quantitative findings and provide a better understanding of their meaning in relation to the research question. Given the

purpose of this research, the qualitative component utilised semi-structured interviews as they are well suited to the exploration of attitudes, beliefs, values and motives (Smith, 1975, in Barriball and While, 1994). Semi-structured interviews specify a set of pre-determined, open-ended questions that will ensure relevant discussion is generated in relation to the research aims (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006), yet grant the flexibility to change the direction of the interview and generate further questions as they emerge from the dialogue (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

Thematic content analysis was used to score interview transcripts and assess the frequency of references to particular themes within participants' responses. Content analysis is an empirically grounded method of analysis, exploratory in process and predictive or inferential in intent (Krippendorff, 2004, p. xvii). Used as a research tool it works to establish the occurrence of themes within a text, analyse their frequency and infer the associated meaning. This can be done manually or electronically. Given the size of the sample the use of software was deemed unnecessary on this occasion. A 'free coding' process was employed, assisted by a 'framework method' through which an index of central themes and subthemes was constructed to order and synthesise the data (Ritchie, Spencer and O'Connor, 2003, in Bryman, 2012, p. 579). Each interview transcript was read and re-read, coding phrases based on meaning, and categorising under the particular theme of interest.

The main issue with content analysis is that the results may be inferred subjectively from the researcher or be influenced by some other occurrence. The nature of this research did not permit the incorporation of second coder analysis, although this could work to strengthen conclusions in future projects. The triangulation achieved via the mixed methods approach in this paper does work to add validity to the findings (Olsen, 2004). A full and detailed account of the research methods and the research limitations is provided in Appendix 4.

Before any research was carried out the consent of Working Links was sought in writing (Appendix 5) and ethical approval was granted by the University of Glasgow (Appendix 6).

Participants

For the quantitative analysis, 1665 ESA claimants were sampled in the data set provided by Working Links. All claimants were unemployed, claiming ESA as part of the WRAG, aged 18-64, referred by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) and mandated to attend WP in Working Links, Scotland. Data included: recorded benefit sanctions of one week or more as applied by the DWP to Working Links' claimants from December 2012 to June 2014; confirmation of all job starts during the same period; and time spent in employment following a job start. No names or personal details of the claimants sampled are included in the results.

Eight face-to-face qualitative interviews were carried out, lasting on average 16 minutes and no more than 30. Each interview was recorded and later fully transcribed, ensuring anonymity in reporting via pseudonyms. Audio-recording allowed for a conversational rapport to be developed between myself and the participant, ensured no information was omitted and allowed for repeat playback to check for inconsistencies. An interview schedule was used to structure the interview however the interviews themselves were conversational, using language that was suitable to the claimant. Flexibility to explore narratives as they arose resulted in a varied approach from participant to participant.

CHAPTER FIVE

Results

Quantitative Findings

The key research question in this study rests on the identification of any significant relationship existing between the application of benefit sanctions and job entry/job sustainability rates amongst ESA claimants. Analysis provided the following results:

From December 2012 to June 2014, Working Links data identified that 473 of the 1665 sampled ESA claimants had been subject to at least one⁹ benefit sanction that had lasted a minimum of one week or longer, see Figure 1. This equated to 28.4% of the sample group being directly affected by a sanction decision.

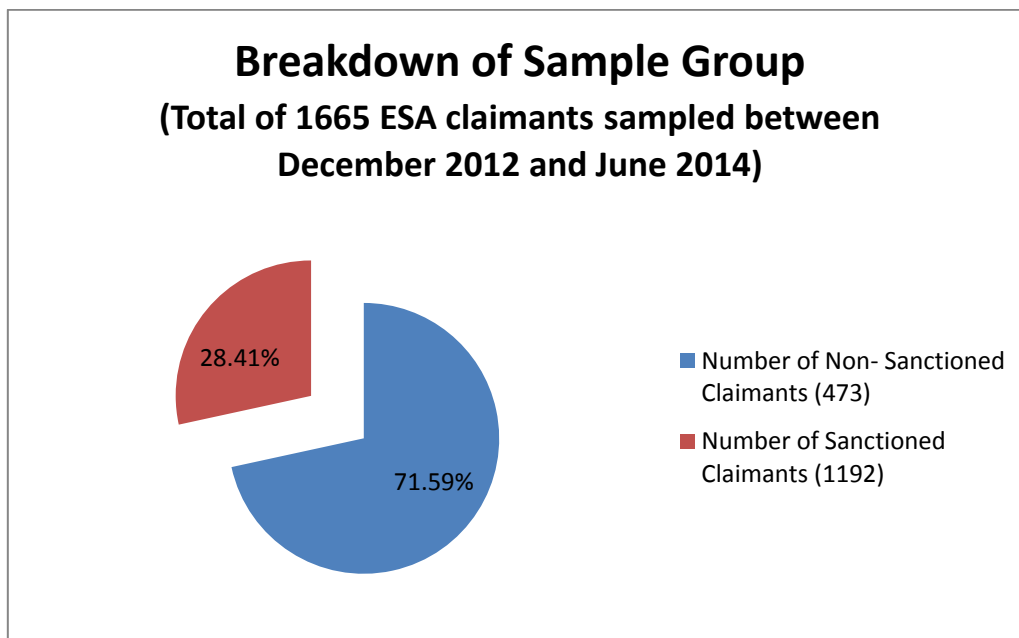


Figure 1 Total number of ESA claimants sampled, percentage of claim group who have been subject to a sanction decision.

⁹ Note that some claimants had been subject to multiple benefit sanctions.

Of those sanctioned, only 9.1% were recorded to have subsequently found employment following the initial sanction decision. This information is displayed in Table 1 and graphically in Figure 2.

Table 1 Number of ESA claimants subject to a sanction decision, percentage of claim group who have subsequently moved into employment.

Total No. of ESA Claimants who had a Sanction Applied	Number of Claimants	Percentage (%)
Started Work	43	9.1%
Did Not Start Work	430	90.9%
Total	473	100.0%

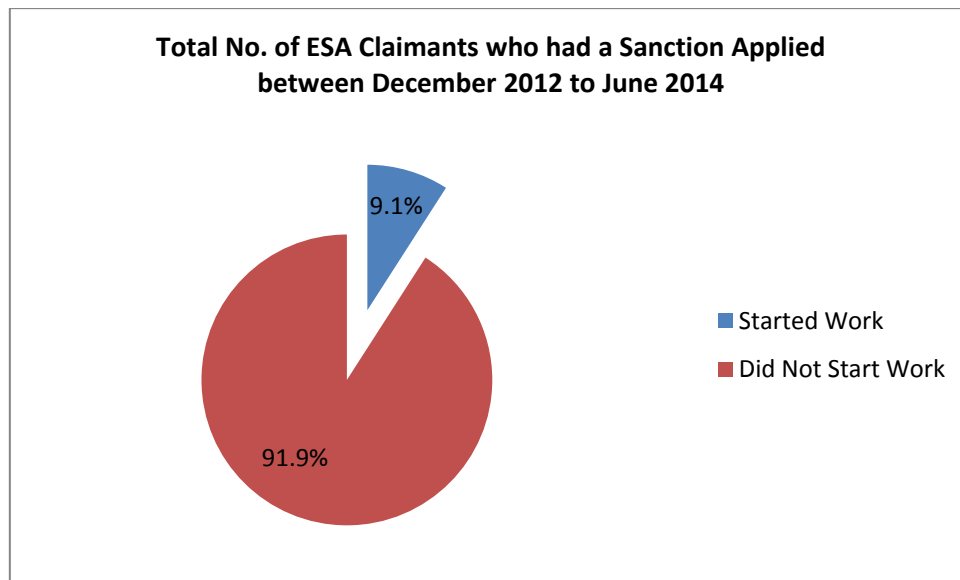


Figure 2 Number of ESA claimants subject to a sanction decision, percentage of claim group who have subsequently moved into employment

Data also shows that between December 2012 and June 2014, a total of 961 ESA claimants started paid employment, and of this group only 4.5% had been previously subject to a sanction. See Table 2 and Figure 3.

Table 2 Total number of ESA claimants who found employment, percentage of claim group who had previously been affected by a sanction decision.

Total No. of ESA Claimants Starting Work	Number of Claimants	Percentage (%)
No Sanction Applied	918	95.5%
Sanction Applied	43	4.5%
Total	961	100.0%

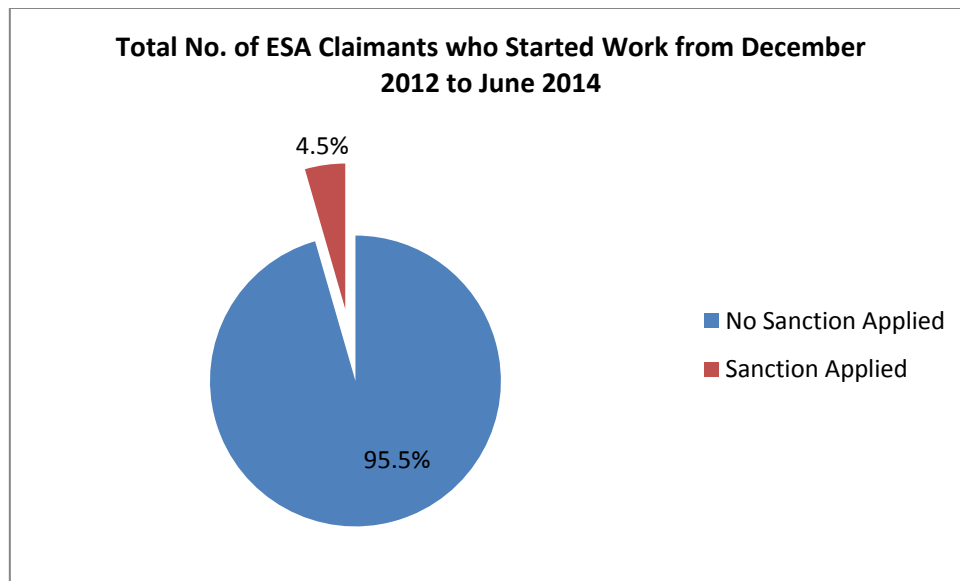


Figure 3 Number of ESA claimants who found employment, percentage of claim group who had been previously been affected by a sanction decision.

Crosstab analysis was completed, highlighting a relationship between sanction decisions and subsequent job entry rates, as presented in Table 3. A chi square test of association confirmed a statistically significant relationship between benefit sanctions and starting work ($\chi^2 = 640.15$; $df = 1$; $p < 0.01$).

Table 3 Crosstab analysis of ESA claimants, percentage of claim group affected by a sanction decision and who secured employment

Total No. of ESA claimants (Dec 2010-Jun 2014)	Started Work	%	Did Not Start Work	%	Total
No Sanction Applied	918	95.50%	274	38.90%	1192
Sanction Applied	43	4.50%	430	61.10%	473
Total	961	100%	704	100%	1665

A similar pattern was displayed when the data was analysed in terms of job retention. To assess whether a claimant sustained in work an initial measurement was taken at 13 weeks from the date they commenced employment. To determine whether those claimants who had been subject to a sanction decision were more likely to remain in long-term work another crosstab analysis of the 961 ESA claimants who started employment between December 2012 and June 2014 was completed. As detailed in Table 4, 46.5% of those who had received a benefit sanction subsequently fell out of work within the first 13 weeks, compared to 20.7% of those claimants with no previous sanction who failed to sustain in employment at 13 weeks.

Table 4 Crosstab analysis of ESA claimants who started employment, percentage of claim group affected by a sanction decision and who sustained/did not sustain in work at 13 weeks from start date

Total No. of ESA claimants starting work (Dec 2010-Jun 2014)	Sustained > 13 weeks	%	Did not Sustain 13 weeks	%
No Sanction Applied	728	79.3%	190	20.7%
Sanction Applied	23	53.5%	20	46.5%
Total	751		210	

A second chi square test of association confirmed a statistically significant relationship between benefit sanctions and sustainability rates in work ($\chi^2 = 16.03$; $df = 1$; $p < 0.01$).

Acknowledgement is given to the limited sample group involving ESA claimants who had both been subject to a sanction and had secured employment, however this does not discount the significant pattern identifiable throughout the data. Although the analysis presented cannot determine a causal relationship between sanctions and job entry, the data does indicate that ESA claimants who have been sanctioned do not frequently progress into paid employment and when they do, they are less likely to sustain when compared to those with no sanction imposed. The dynamics of this relationship are explored via the qualitative

findings. Analysis sought to understand why ESA claimants are being sanctioned to begin with, what triggers disengagement with work-related activity and how sanctions impact on their barriers to employment.

Qualitative Findings

Themes emerging from the interviews conducted were used to better understand how the Coalition's sanctions regime is effecting ESA claimants' progression into sustainable employment. They were also used to investigate the wider impacts of sanctions through the exploration of claimants' personal experiences. Of the eight participants interviewed, five had been sanctioned within the last 12 months and all eight remained under threat of sanctions as a condition of their participation in the WP. Several themes arose from the interviews, as coded against a thematic analysis framework (Appendix 7). In trying to understand why sanctions have had such a limited effect in driving the employment rates of ESA claimants, analysis identifies three key areas of interest; barriers to engagement, motivation to work and barriers to employment.

1. Barriers to Engagement

When discussing participants' personal experience with the current sanction regime, it became apparent that they were often unable to comply with the mandatory conditions of their benefit, as opposed to being generally unwilling or purposefully trying to avoid the conditionality regime. The main themes that arose in interviews identified important barriers to engagement in work-related activity that are negatively impacted by the effect of sanctions: health, awareness/understanding of the sanctions policy and finance as a driver of destitution.

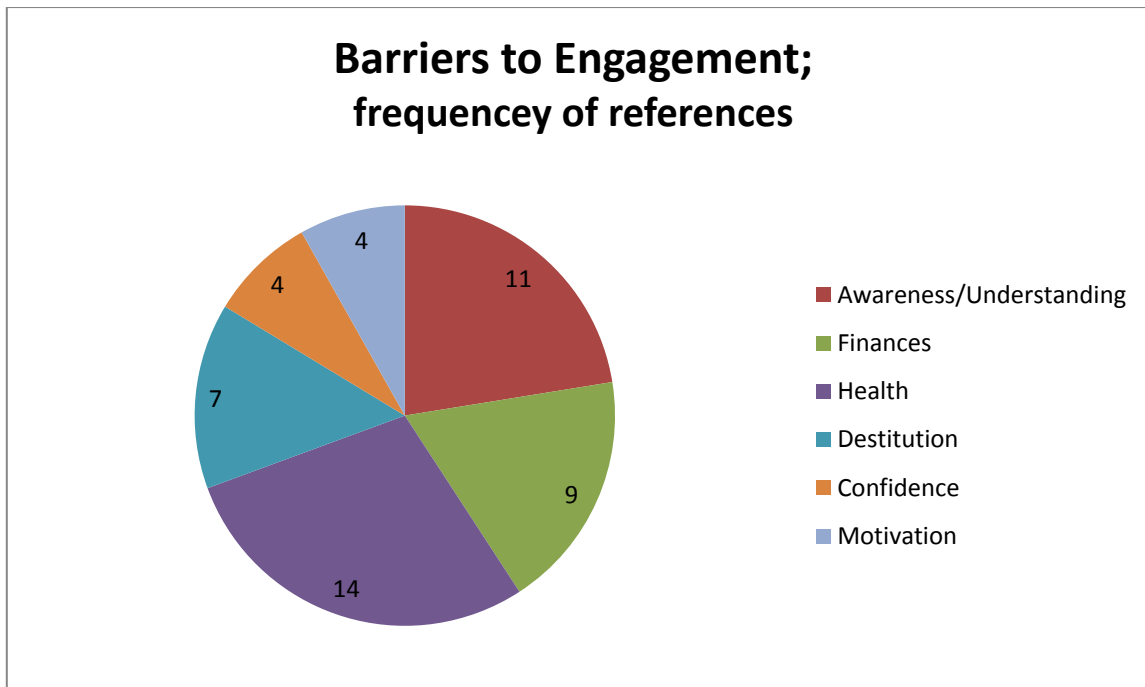


Figure 4 ESA claimants’ reported barriers to engagement; frequency of references.

a.) Health

A key theme that arose from the interviews was that sanctions, and the threat of sanctions, had a negative effect on respondents’ mental health, often increasing levels of both stress and anxiety. One participant spoke of how the anxiety surrounding sanctions “just made me worse” and how she felt she was “just worrying about [her] benefits all the time”. Another told of how they “panic” at the prospect of missing appointments:

“...I phone up on days to check if I have an appointment when I don’t, just ‘cause I’m so scared to miss it. It’s too stressful, the threat of losing your money and the hassle involved trying to get it back again.”

(David, 23, Injury at Work)

“You’ve always got that fear, that worry and anxiety that if you can’t make it in ... then the financial implications of it could leave me homeless... that just bring constant anxiety.”

(Donna, 41, Depression and Anxiety)

One participant spoke of the extreme affect her sanction had on her mental health:

“I felt I had no future, rock bottom so I was and so I tried to commit suicide. I took an overdose of my tablets with the drink...”

(Collette, 37, Alcoholic, Manic Depressive)

Participants stressed that their health condition often caused them to miss appointments, advising they had “good days and bad days” that weren’t always accommodated:

“...I plan to be at all my appointments, I mean I want to get back to work... but it’s my illness. My seizures are random, I can’t control them and don’t know when they’re coming so this makes it hard for me to plan my days... If I’ve had a seizure I can’t make my appointment.”

(Chris, 26, Epilepsy)

b.) Awareness and Understanding

When asked about their understanding of the reformed sanctions policy respondents demonstrated some basic awareness; however this information was rarely articulated to them directly by the DWP or their WP advisor prior to engaging in mandatory work-related activity. One participant had been sanctioned previously on another benefit and two had heard about the possibility of sanctions through word-of-mouth:

“I heard about sanctions, other people that came on my first day [on the Work Programme] were like, oh you know we’ve been forced to come here and they stop your money if you don’t...”

(Barry, 51, Diabetes, Depression)

Those who had experienced a sanction voiced concern over the lack of communication with the DWP during the process. Four participants advised they only became aware of the

sanctions procedure when they unexpectedly received a sanction on their own benefits, with two visiting the bank to find their accounts were “empty”. All sanctioned respondents reported various lengths of benefit suspension, ranging from three weeks to one year. They stressed that they were never specifically told by their advisor or the DWP when the sanction would be lifted:

“They told me they couldn’t say how long it would take... I went 5 weeks without money. I had no idea when my next payment would be or if I was cut off forever. That just caused me so much stress. I mean I couldn’t pay bills or plan anything, like even when I could repay folk if I borrowed from them...”

(Grant, 28, Anxiety and Paranoia)

Sanctions were not enforced universally and there was no ‘fixed penalty’. There was also a lack of understanding about what constituted sanctionable behaviours among participants, although most attributed this to missing appointments. Responses identified that reversals of suspensions upon re-compliance were far from prompt. Interestingly, of the five sanctioned participants, none had made any attempt at appealing the decision. One advised the process was “too complicated” and another believed that they had “no chance” of having the decision overturned. A further two participants were unaware they had the option to appeal a sanction at all.

c.) Finance and Destitution

Respondents who had been subject to a sanction told of how the resulting financial situation was extremely detrimental to their circumstance, making it increasingly difficult to participate in WP activity. When questioned, each participant felt they had no alternative source of income to support them through a sanction, although one did feel able to seek

assistance from a relative. Receiving a benefit sanction would place the majority of respondents in a state of crisis.

Four participants had sought help and support from local charities and other organisations¹⁰ during their sanction and one single mother told of the effect this had on her four dependent children:

“I’ve got four young kids... my child benefit and stuff pays the bills so I had nothing left for shopping... the Citizens Advice put me in touch with a food bank... I felt like a beggar who couldn’t look after her own kids. And my phone got cut off, my youngest is two, what if there was an emergency?”

(Karen, 40, Arthritis)

Another also spoke of how she lost her home as a result of her sanction:

“I was left destitute. I had no money and was made homeless as I couldn’t put anything towards the rent.... The landlord evicted me... I was hardly eating and ended up living in a homeless hostel.”

(Collette, 37, Alcoholic, Manic Depressive)

Four participants spoke of fuel poverty, with one advising that she was unable to heat her home, “wearing big jumpers to try and keep warm”. Food poverty was common, as participants told of how they had to go without food or visit friends/relatives for a meal. They each stressed that this made it almost impossible to even think about work preparation.

Importantly, rather than feeling encouraged to participate in the WP, some respondents spoke of their inability to attend following a sanction that had been imposed. Three participants told of how they could not afford to attend their WP appointment or medical appointments whilst their payment was suspended:

¹⁰ Agencies cited included the Citizens Advice Bureau, Life Link and One Parent Family Scotland.

“... I couldn't go out 'cause it was such a struggle. I could hardly scrape the money together to pay the electric or actually get to my hospital appointments, let alone appointments in here.”

(Chris, 26, Epilepsy)

Those who reported this also advised that missing a following appointment resulted in a subsequent sanction or an extension of their existing sanction.

2. Motivations to Work

No participant reported positive effects on their motivation to work stemming from their experience with sanctions. Where motivations were voiced, they were strongly linked to a desire for social inclusion and personal self-worth, whilst participants also distanced themselves from the stigma of being ‘workshy’ and ‘fraudulent’. Importantly finance was not a key motivator for this sample group.

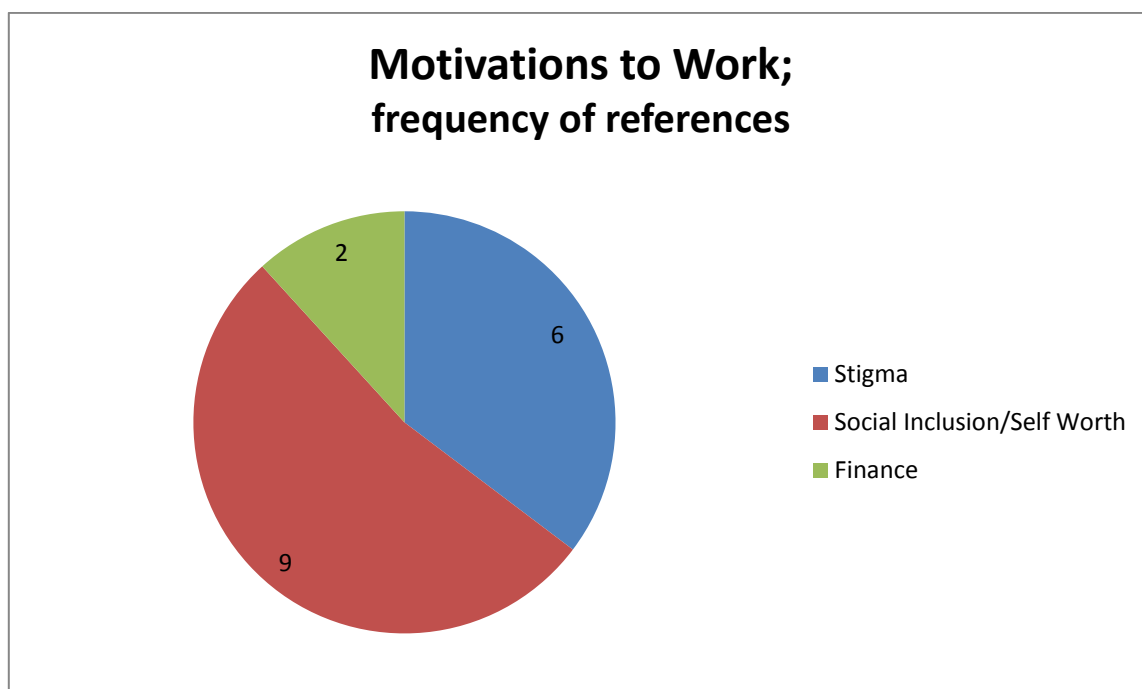


Figure 5 ESA claimants' reported motivations to work; frequency of references.

a.) Social Inclusion/Self-Worth

Improvements in health and feelings of personal self-worth were the greatest motivators for work. A desire for personal improvement and social inclusion was expressed by all eight participants:

“I want to get sober and get a job... that would give me a good chance to maybe get my boys again. The social work couldn't really argue if I was going out to work and holding a job down could they? I'd be a better mum.”

(Collette, 37, Alcoholic, Manic Depressive)

“My mum never worked and it definitely had an effect on me. I skived off too. But now I have my own son I want him to see me out working, so he can be proud of me and want to be like me you know?”

(David, 23, Injury at Work)

One participant spoke about feeling “more included in social circles”, whilst another said being back at work would put some “routine and meaning” back into her life. Two further participants acknowledged that being back out at work would give them “something to do” and would “get me out the house again” and so improve their health and well-being. Rather than being motivated by sanctions, one participant said she felt “frightened” and another felt that sanctions were used to push him into the first available job before he was ready.

b.) The Stigma of Welfare

Seven participants stated that they wanted to be in employment and in doing so actively distinguished themselves from those they felt were ‘deserving’ of sanctions:

“I thought that the threat was just in place to encourage those who were playing the system, not for people who are actually ill like me.”

(Grant, 28, Anxiety and Paranoia)

“I want to work, I mean I’m not a scrounger like those on the benefit programmes and in the papers having a million kids...”

(Chris, 26, Epilepsy)

This use of language mirrors recent portrayals of benefit claimants in government and media rhetoric as both ‘workshy’ and ‘fraudulent’, identifying the assumed dichotomy between those ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ of state support. Two respondents spoke of feeling “embarrassed” and “ashamed” about claiming benefits, both highlighting the fact that they had worked before and would still be working if they’re health hadn’t deteriorated.

c.) Finance

Interestingly, finance did not present as a key motivator for participants. Only two respondents made brief references to the financial benefits of working:

“I think I need to work now. I just can’t afford to live on what I am getting with prices going up for everything... I just walk around the shops looking at things I can’t afford. If I was working I would have the money to buy them... A job means more money.”

(Barry, 51, Diabetes, Depression)

Considerations of income and financial aspirations were greatly outweighed by the desire for improved health and increased self-worth.

3. Barriers to Employment

The focus of this study is to determine whether sanctions are effectively driving ESA claimants into sustainable employment. Importantly, no participant made any positive link between their experience with sanctions and their ability to work, nor did any participant report periods of employment since becoming engaged in the WP. However five respondents felt they had made some progress towards work and three reported actively applying for work. When discussing their main barriers to employment, participants identified concerns over health, employability and skills development, and labour-market processes.

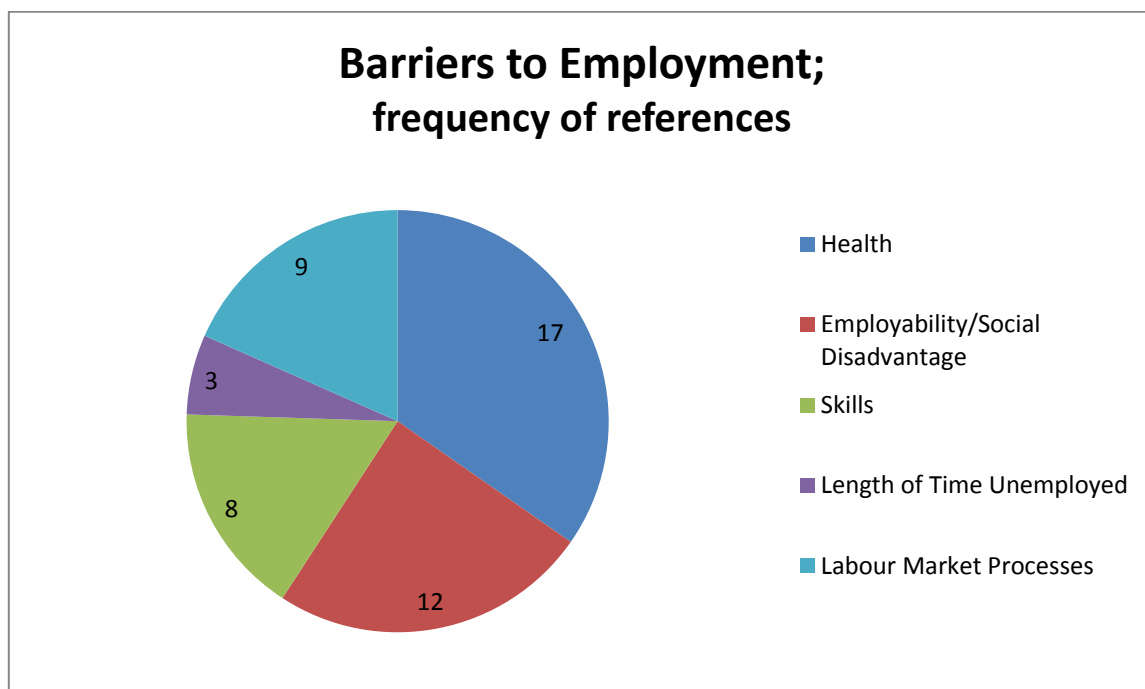


Figure 6 ESA claimants' reported barriers to employment; frequency of references.

a.) Health

As expected, the central theme to this study was poor health. Six respondents advised that they had left their previous job due to ill health and all participants emphasised that health was their biggest barrier to employment. All eight participants expressed that benefit sanctions would not improve their existing health condition:

“I want to go back to work, but I need to suss out what works around my health first... I’m thinking about self-employment and trying to do that. But cutting my money won’t make my arthritis better! Its support I need, not threats of my money being stopped if I don’t get a job quick enough. My arthritis will still be there even if they stop my benefit.”

(Karen, 40, Arthritis)

Where progress towards employment was reported, this was attributed to the personalised and effective relationship established with their advisor, and the involvement of specialised support that was arranged by them addressing condition management and employability:

“My advisor tied me in with Salus... she felt they would help me deal with my mental-health alongside what we were working on... They ran a 10 week course of 1-2-1 sessions with me... [Salus] got me started right away and looked at how I can prepare myself mentally for returning to work, giving me coping mechanisms ...”

(Donna, 41, Depression and Anxiety)

Participants stressed that their health needed to be supported alongside employability measures if they were to make any real progress towards work.

b.) Employability and Skills Development

Participants presented with a range of barriers to employment beyond poor health that required intervention/support; including lone parent status, addiction issues, youth unemployment, and social disadvantage. Poor health also overlapped with periods of long-term unemployment and a low skills base. Three participants were concerned about the length of time they had been out of work and gaps on their CV, attributing this to their condition, and felt that involvement in some element of skills or employability training would be required to make them marketable to employers:

“I’d like to do more training... I never got any grades at school so even if I could get a few certificates. I’m looking at doing my Food Hygiene course upstairs. That would be good for me to maybe get a wee job a café or something later... No one will hire me without getting experience.”

(Helen, 48, Depression)

Participants generally agreed that engagement in employability training would aid their progression towards work; including CV writing sessions, interview skills workshops and elements of permitted work, however suggested that they could only participate *if* they felt able to do so and their health condition was being properly supported. Two participants identified the need for better childcare options in facilitating moves back into work, whilst one advocated participation in practical work placements after engaging with this via Remploy a number of years ago.

c.) Labour Market Processes

Concern over potential employers’ willingness to recruit was another key theme in discussions. Six participants spoke about possible employer discrimination as a possible barrier to work:

“... I don’t know whether an employer would understand, there’s a stigma that goes with mental health. That makes me need to keep it to myself. I couldn’t let an employer know. But then, if I had a bad day or a really bad week they would wonder why my performance was so poor and probably just let me go.”

(Donna, 41, Depression and Anxiety)

“... when I tell them I’ve got epilepsy they just tell me where to go. No employer wants that hassle, not these days.”

(Chris, 26, Epilepsy)

Discussions evidenced that although many who are sick and disabled may want to find work, they feel limited by their health condition and the employers who would be willing to hire them. Three participants also stressed the need for job creation and better supported routes into work for people with long-term health conditions.

Summary:

In sum, these results suggest that sanctions are not a driver of employment rates for ESA claimants', but instead are negatively impacting their ability to engage in the WP and to subsequently move into sustainable work. Furthermore there is an inherent conflict between the perception of 'workshy' individuals in need of punitive sanctions to compel them off benefits and into work, and a group who feel unable to move into the labour market because of the complex barriers to employment they face and the inadequate support provided to them by welfare-to-work programmes. Full interpretation of these results, limitations of this study and the possible implications for current policy are discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Discussion, Analysis and Implications for Policy

From analysis of the results, statistics confirm that the employment situation of those on ESA is not positively dependent on the sanctions intervention. Addressing the main research gap, empirical analysis shows that individuals who have been sanctioned are not being driven into employment but are moving into work far less frequently than their non-sanctioned counterparts. A similar pattern is displayed when assessing job retention rates among ESA claimants who had secured employment, with those sanctioned prior to starting work ‘falling out’ of their job at a greater rate than those who had not been sanctioned (within the first 13 weeks of employment). The suggestion that sanctions are not an effective driver of employment for ESA claimants can be supported by the qualitative findings, as claimants experiencing sanctions report that they are less able to engage with work-related activity as a result. This impacts their chances of entering employment as they are unable make use of employment-support and address their complex barriers to work. Findings suggest that a more holistic delivery of employment services, and not a more stringent sanctions intervention, is required to make ESA claimants more employable and so facilitate moves from welfare into work.

Barriers to Engagement

Rather than incentivising people to prepare for work and move off benefits, the results suggest that sanctions are often self-defeating, limiting people’s progression towards employment by making it more difficult for some of the most vulnerable in society to engage in work-related activity. This evidence contradicts neoliberal thinkers, such as Mead (1997),

who assume that mandatory participation and sanctions will result in a desired behavioural change as welfare recipients rationally choose to comply (or not) with behavioural requirements, dependant on their financial situation.

This is firstly evidenced in the finding that sanctions (and the threat of sanctions) are having a negative impact on the physical and mental health of ESA claimants who already present with 'limiting' conditions. Feelings of increased stress, fear and reduced emotional well-being are predominant in this study, as they have been in work done by others, including Dorsett (2008) and Griggs and Evans (2010). Garthwaite (2013a) has also identified the complex relationship between fear, anxiety, increased medication levels and even suicidal feelings (Mind, 2011, in Garthwaite, 2013a, p. 12), stressing that if welfare reform is about getting people into work, rather than simply cutting expenditure, then improving and not worsening health should be an important first step in this process. However as evidenced in the interviews, the reformed sanctions policy actually prevents some ESA claimants from engaging effectively in the WP and progressing towards work, as it often worsens their very real, multiple and complicated health needs. As a result, claimants can become more likely to describe their condition as 'debilitating' which undermines any motivations they may have to work in the future (Warren, Garthwaite and Bamba, 2012).

Secondly, findings show that claimants are often being punished by sanctions for a lack of understanding as opposed to (deliberate) non-compliance (Griggs and Evans, 2010, p.6). This is identified by most respondents in this study, with similar concerns being reported by Oakley (2014) in an earlier review of JSA sanctions. No participant in this research reported actively choosing not to meet the conditions of their benefit receipt, instead stressing that health issues (which they regard as out-with their control) and poor understanding of 'sanctionable behaviours' were the main reasons behind missing appointments; undermining

the purpose of sanctions as a tool for behavioural change. A lack of communication by advisors and the DWP to explain when and why a sanction was being raised is therefore a major issue. Evidence from this research, and from previous findings in both the UK and the US, indicates that whilst welfare recipients are usually aware that penalties are part of the system, they often have little knowledge of how they can be imposed, avoided or reversed (Watts et al., 2014). As a result sanctions are often inconsistently applied to claimants and are enforced without question or appeal (Stanley, 2004, p. 41). Lee, Slack and Lewis (2004, p. 398) have argued that this should be concerning for policymakers given that their research found a greater likelihood of working and leaving welfare among recipients with a greater understanding of current welfare policy.

Thirdly, and most importantly, sanctions are also causing increased levels of hardship amongst those ESA claimants sampled, distancing them from the labour market rather than driving them towards it. Sanctions compromise a person's income, which in turn compromises their ability to participate in the WP, putting them at risk of longer-term harm and destitution (Seebohm, 2011). Although there has been no systematic assessment of destitution caused by sanctions in this study, this research identifies links with homelessness, fuel and food poverty and the impact sanctions can have on dependent children. The Scottish Parliament's Welfare Reform Committee (2014) assert that pushing people into a "cycle of decline" serves only to create new and detrimental barriers to employment for individuals that will factor into non-compliance. This is especially concerning for those already deemed the most vulnerable in society as they are often disproportionately affected by sanctions; young people, lone-parents, the homeless, substance-misusers etc. Research evidence from this study and from work done in the USA (Stanley, 2004) shows that sanctioned individuals do not easily move into the labour market, but instead face the increased risk of harmful side-effects, such as poverty and destitution, that arise from the disconnection from work and

welfare. Whilst neoliberal welfare policies are employed to offer people a route out poverty, the sanctions system is mostly self-defeating in the sense that worsening already complex and multiple barriers to employment is serving to actually distance people from the world of work (Barker and Lamble, 2009).

Motivations to Work

As with the research completed by Beatty et al., (2010) and Patrick (2011c), this analysis found little evidence of Mead's (1997) 'dependency culture' amongst the ESA claimants sampled. High profile political figures, including the UK Chancellor George Osborne, continue to suggest that welfare has become a 'lifestyle' choice for many (Garthwaite, 2013b, p. 12), despite the fact that UK welfare payments remain among the lowest in in northern Europe. Contrary to Mead's (2007) assertion that the non-working poor are lacking in work discipline and so require mandatory contractualist-duties to modify attitudes to work and enforce job seeking behaviours, almost all respondents in this research report a desire to work that is being short-circuited by poor health and other complex barriers to employment. ESA claimants sampled present with a generally positive attitude towards employment if they feel these barriers can be adequately addressed and supported.

Results from the interviews also identify a general willingness to engage in the WP when participants feel able to do so, acknowledging that participation may be beneficial to their future employability and well-being. Motivations to work are predominantly linked to a desire for social inclusion, a better family life and feelings of self-worth/self-esteem, not to financial gain or the threat of sanctions. Mead (1997) suggests that sanctions will drive claimants into employment as they are forced to make rational choices to find work as an alternative source of economic support, whilst Kalil, Seefeldt, and Wang (2002) also assert

that sanctions reveal welfare fraud by identifying those who do not truly need cash assistance. However, this study finds much evidence to the contrary as the employment rate of those sanctioned ESA claimants remains exceptionally low. The qualitative findings suggest that financial sanctions do not motivate employment trajectories because sanctioned participants still feel unable to work and have not addressed their poor health or other barriers to employment.

The results also show that participants work hard to distance themselves from the stigma of being ‘undeserving’ and ‘fraudulent’. The discursive tool of “bad-people-exist-but-I’m-not-one-of-them” as identified by Kingfisher (1996, in Garthwaite, 2013a, p.12) is consistent with the image held by participants, with this distinct dichotomy being apparent in most discussions. ESA claimants are mirroring language used in political rhetoric and media, actively questioning the integrity of the ‘sick’. Lens (2002) states that changing the current societal discourse on welfare requires challenging the myths about the type of people receiving public assistance and why. Rather than vilifying those unfortunate enough to be unemployed and of poor health, these findings identify the need to pay more attention to the narratives of those living on health-related benefits which evidence that poor health does not automatically mean a poor work-ethic (Garthwaite, 2013a). Public labels of ‘welfare dependency’ and the ‘undeserving’ that are associated with a sanctions policy serve only to reify the perception that recipients of welfare are different from the rest of society. This challenges the position of a neoliberal welfare project as a driver for both citizenship and inclusion (King, 2005).

Barriers to Employment

The findings in this study support the assertion made by Lindsay and Houston (2013) that sanctions are only likely to be effective if the root of the ESA problem is behavioural. A focus on the supply-side of the labour market implicitly suggests that those out of work are responsible for their own unemployment; despite much evidence to the contrary (Patrick, 2012b). All of the claimants interviewed in this study present with multiple barriers to employment that are effectively situating them at the ‘back of the jobs queue’ (Beatty and Fothergill, 2013). Although health is cited as the most predominant barrier to work, ESA claimants are also disadvantaged in terms of age, qualifications, skills, concentration in social housing, poor work records and long durations of unemployment and yet are expected to compete with the newly unemployed and those with higher skills levels in the market economy (Newman, 2011). This evidence was also found in the work conducted by Lindsay and Dutton (2010) via their assessment of claimants who participated in the previous Pathways-to-Work programme, concluding that ‘things outside health’ – poverty, family and addiction issues - prevented improvements in health and so limited claimants’ ability to progress towards employment.

When participants reported progress towards employment, this was attributed to a combination of interventions: addressing health issues, employability and skills development. It is clear that a more holistic approach by advisors, and not sanctions, will achieve increased success in engaging claimants effectively; sustaining their motivation to work and addressing their barriers to employment (Weston, 2012). Although personalisation of services is at the forefront of the current policy agenda for ESA these findings suggests this isn’t always employed in practice. A recent report by Riley, Bivand and Wilson (2014) suggests that despite the Government committing to increased expenditure to service ESA claimants on

WP, spending on interventions is estimated at 40% less than the levels first implied at tender. The report contends that this is because WP providers are spending more than they are being paid by the Government to support ESA customers and so are unable to sustain increased funding of holistic support. Bringing Government funding into line with the original intent would allow for increased levels of engagement with advisors and additional funded interventions to support condition management and skills development (Riley, Bivand and Wilson, 2014). Whilst ESA sanctions accounted for an estimated £4.3 million of Government savings in the year 2013/2014 (Webster, in Gibb, 2015), support for employment services provision in the UK remains comparatively low in European terms (Wright, in Gibb, 2015).

As discussed by Patrick (2012a), the results of this research also identify structural and societal factors impeding ESA claimants' efforts to engage in paid employment, including the concern over employer discrimination. The responses from participants identify the need to consider the 'social model' of disability outlined by Patrick (2012a), as societal barriers to employment receive as much attention in discussions as do individual impairment(s). This challenges the Coalition's current policy response, which emphasises the responsibility of the individual in explanations of unemployment. Findings suggest that interventions are required in both realms of labour (supply and demand) in order to ensure the successful delivery of reforms that have real potential to increase disabled people's participation in the labour market as supply-side policies can only go so far (Newman, 2011). This assertion supports the work completed by Lindsay and Houston (2013) and their identification of the relationship existing between labour market processes, gaps in employability and health problems, arguing that policymakers need to better appreciate the true and complex nature of the disability benefits problem if they wish to tackle it effectively.

Data on the longer-term impact of sanctions is relatively sparse however the ability to remain in employment is also found to be impacted by sanctions in the findings of this study. Those sanctioned prior to starting work are shown to be less likely to sustain in work when compared to those with no experience of sanctions. Gaining an understanding of this relationship was beyond the limits of this study, however, research completed by Arni, Lalive and van Ours (2009) can provide some insight. Their longitudinal research sought to consider the effect of imposing sanctions beyond welfare exits and identified that whilst the threat of sanctions do not necessarily affect subsequent employment stability, actual benefit reduction (as resulting from sanctions) lowers the quality of post-unemployment jobs, both in terms of job duration and in terms of earnings over time, making it easier for individuals to detach from the labour market and become involved in cycles of low-paid/poor quality work and unemployment. Sustainability and progression in long-term employment are central to the policy direction of Universal Credit, as for the first time claimants will be subject to ‘in-work conditionality’ to incentivise increased hours and rates of pay (Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion, 2015). If sanctions negatively impact a claimants’ ability to remain in work, then progression is unlikely and they will again be left facing the threat of penalties.

Implications for Policy

The study findings have identified important implications for both policy and practice. Firstly, the evidence presented suggests that the Coalition needs to better recognise the limited effectiveness of sanctions in engaging ESA claimants in work-related activity, motivating them to work and addressing their barriers to employment. Findings support the argument that sanctions are often unnecessary and self-defeating, resulting in financial hardship and destitution amongst the most vulnerable that hinders efforts to find sustainable

work. This research advocates the consideration of a new policy direction, involving integrated interventions in both the supply and demand-side of the labour market that will link health, activation and economic development strategies in models of welfare reform. Delivery of a more holistic provision of welfare policy will be more effective in supporting those presenting with multiple barriers to work than punitive systems of conditionality. Evidence suggests that failure to recognise the importance and complexity of health as a barrier to employment in the UK, or to incorporate it meaningfully in welfare policy, will see any process aimed at returning those in receipt of IBs to the workplace remaining fatally flawed (Warren, Garthwaite and Bambra, 2012).

Secondly, and in relation to political ideology, the findings suggest that neoliberalism and paternalism are generally misplaced in UK welfare policy as they imply an addiction to idleness that is generally not there (Dwyer, 2004). A desire to work has been evidenced both in this research and within the literature discussed, contrasting the language of ‘work-shy’ and ‘fraudulent’ welfare recipients that continues to dominate political discourse. What exists instead is a group who are eager to engage but face substantial socio-economic disadvantage and health inequalities, feeling dissatisfaction with the lack of effective support available to them. Rather than promoting ‘equal citizenship’ through employment participation (Mead, 2005), neoliberal policies have been shown to further exclude sick and disabled welfare recipients from society, as they fail to address the issues that are effectively distancing them from the competitive market economy to begin with. However, public attention continues to be diverted away from a failing neoliberal model of political economy. Long-standing elite preferences for a smaller state and the market reorganisation of public services are being repackaged as bold new developments in policy (Wiggan, 2012), limiting the scope for a political alternative. In practice, something more than an ideologically driven welfare choice that casts disability claimants as ‘work-shy’ rather than chronically ill will be required to

effectively support those claiming health-related benefits and progress them towards work. The failure to accept evidence and consider policy alternatives reflects a Government that is simply unwilling to listen to its critics (Dwyer, 2004).

Limitations and Future Research

Due to restrictions in access, this research was unable to sample sanctioned participants who had moved into employment as part of the qualitative component. Discussion of the longer-term effects of sanctions, in relation to job retention and job quality was therefore neglected. Replication of the research completed by Arni, Lalive and van Ours (2009) would therefore be valuable in this respect.

Full detail of the study limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed in Appendix 4.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Conclusion

With the Coalition approaching its fifth year in office, it is possible to make an assessment of its revised sanctions regime for ESA claimants; perhaps the most contentious component of its broader welfare reform agenda. This research has demonstrated the limited effectiveness of drawing on tools of compulsion in efforts to increase employment, as the Coalition's sanction policy is shown to have been largely ineffective in driving ESA claimants off welfare and into sustainable work.

In line with the research aims, this study has documented a clear upward trend in the rate at which benefit sanctions are being applied to ESA claimants in the UK following the Coalition's revision of the policy in December 2012, whilst for the first time, analysis of data collated via Working Links has allowed for a translation to be made between benefit sanctions and subsequent job entry rates/job retention levels. Statistical analysis identifies a significant relationship existing between sanction and job entry rates among ESA claimants in Scotland, showing that claimants who have been sanctioned at least once since December 2012 have moved into work at a much lesser rate than their non-sanctioned counterparts. The data also identifies a relationship between sanctions and the ability to remain in work, indicating that sanctions may be impacting negatively on job retention as ESA claimants who have experienced a sanction prior to starting a job are less likely to sustain in the longer-term.

Contrary to the common narratives that would attribute these findings to ideas of a pervasive 'welfare dependency culture'; encompassing 'work-shy' individuals who require punishment and compulsion to instil job seeking behaviours, the qualitative component of this research has gone some way in providing a more accurate explanation of why sanctions have had such

limited effect. Analysis of the lived experience of claimants suggests that sanctions do not improve prospects to work, but instead are often self-defeating; worsening existing health conditions, exacerbating financial hardship and destitution levels, facilitating social exclusion and inhibiting participation efforts. Rather than preparing ESA claimants for work, each of these factors combine to further distance them from the labour market.

The findings provide support for previous conclusions arising in the literature, identifying the complex nature of disability claiming as involving health, employability, societal and labour market barriers to employment. Advocating the need for more a holistic delivery of employability services, the findings discount a behaviourist reading of the disability benefits problem and assert that the strengthening of a neoliberal ideology is ultimately misplaced in welfare reform. Centred on an inaccurate assessment of the problem, sanctions have proved to be ineffective in terms of the Coalition's wider deficit reduction agenda and so are argued to be 'unfit for purpose'. Policymakers would be better served by considering 'what works' in facilitating moves into employment for the sick and disabled, looking closely at the evidence base rather than simply ignoring "politically inconvenient evaluations" (Newman, 2011, p. 92), even if this involves a bold divergence from the ideology that has driven welfare reform for almost 20 years. Ultimately, a lot more than a simple repackaging of a failing neoliberal policy will be required for the UK to really achieve full integration of sick and disabled people in the workplace.

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Appendix 1. *Table of UK Disability Policies and Interventions (1994-2013)*

Policies and Interventions related to tackling health-related worklessness in the UK (1994 to 2013) – adapted from Warren, Garthwaite and Bambara (2013, pp. 96-97, in Lindsay and Houston, 2013).

1994 Social Security (Incapacity for Work) Act

Introduced Incapacity Benefit, replacing Invalidity Benefit and the All Works Test, designed to tighten eligibility criteria.

Access to Work Programme – provided financial assistance towards practical aids, workplace adaptation, fares to work and personal support.

1995 Disability Discrimination Act

Since 1996 it has been unlawful to discriminate in recruitment, promotion, training, working conditions and dismissal on the grounds of disability or ill health.

(Restricted to employers with over 20 employees, reduced to 15 employees in 1998)

Abolished the 3% employment quota of 1944.

1998 New Deal for Disabled People Pilots

A package of different interventions including the Personal Advisor service, the Innovative Schemes and smaller projects such as the Job Finders Grant.

1999 Tax Credit Act

Introduced the Disabled Person's Tax Credit – a wage top-up for people with disabilities in low-paid employment (merged into the Working Tax Credit in 2002).

Welfare Reform and Pensions Act

Incapacity Benefit became means tested, Severe Disablement Allowance was age restricted and the Personal Capacity Test replaced the All Works Test.

ONE Pilot

People applying for benefits were given an advisor to discuss work options.

Compulsory after 2000.

2000 Workstep Programme

Assists with transition from segregated supported work into mainstream employment.

2001 Special Education Needs and Disability Act

Extended the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act to education providers (provisions in force from 2002)

New Deal for Disabled People National Extension

Introduced Job Brokers (public, PVS Vocational advisors).

Jobcentre Plus

Services of the Employment service and the Benefits Agency were combined.

2002 Tax Credits Act

Disabled Persons Tax Credit merged into the Working Tax Credit for all low-paid workers.

Permitted Work Rules

Allows benefit claimants to undertake paid work for up to 16 hours per week.

2003 Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (Amendment) Regulations 2003

Incorporates disability provisions of recent EU Employment Directives, removes small employer exemption. Came into force October 2004.

Pathways to Work Pilots

'Return-to-work' credit for new claimants leaving Incapacity Benefit, Condition Management Programmes and mandatory Work-Focused Interviews.

2004 Pathways to Work Extension 1

Job Preparation Premium paid to those on Incapacity Benefit undertaking return-to-work activity, extended to Incapacity Benefit Claims started in the last two years

2005 Disability Discrimination Act 2005

Extends service provisions to transportation. Definition of disability broadened to cover people with HIV, cancer and multiple sclerosis.

New duty placed on public authorities to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.

Pathways to Work Extension 2

Pilot measures extended to cover around one-third of the UK.

Job Retention and Rehabilitation Pilot

Examines retention in work comparing employment-focused support and health-based support.

2007 Welfare Reform Act

Announced the phase-out of Incapacity Benefit and introduced the Employment and Support Allowance from 2008. Established the Work Capability Assessment to assess entitlement to ESA.

Increased conditions placed on those receiving benefits.

All Work-Focused Interviews made mandatory.

Box 1.

From 2008, new claimants for disability benefits have applied for ESA – with all existing recipients of Incapacity Benefit were moved on to the new ESA benefit by 2013.

ESA divides claimants into one of two groups:

1. Those placed in the ‘Work-Related Activity Group’ are considered capable of progressing towards employment and are mandated to engage in activation programmes – previously participation was largely voluntary.
2. Those in the ‘Support Group’ are assessed as more sick or disabled. They are paid a higher rate of benefit and are excused from work-related activity.

An even stricter medical ‘Work Capability Assessment’ has seen the majority of claims for disability benefits rejected and most successful claims are directed towards work-related activity.

(Lindsay and Houston, 2013, p. 2)

Box 2.

Claimants who fail to attend a Work-Focused interview or to undertake Work-Related Activity without good cause will receive an open ended sanction which is lifted when the claimant re-engages.

The effect of the sanction is to reduce the Work-Related Activity Component (WRAC) of the benefit by 50% for the first 4 weeks of failure, which rises to 100% of the WRAC for any subsequent weeks. The WRAC as of 2011 was £28.15 per week. ESA Personal Allowance will remain in payment during a sanction (£71.00 per week as of 2011).

(DWP, 2012, p. 4)

2010 Equality Act

Merged previous anti-discrimination legislation relating to age, disability, gender, race, religion and belief, sexual orientation and gender reassignment into one piece of legislation. Set up the Equality Human Rights Commission.

Comprehensive Spending Review

Entitlement to Employment and Support Allowance (Work-related activity premium) restricted to a maximum of 12 months.

Abolished the mobility element of Disability Living Allowance for people in residential care.

2010 Welfare Reform White Paper

Outlined plans for new Universal Working Age benefit (Universal Credit) to replace Jobseeker's Allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support etc. Due to be rolled out between 2014 - 2017.

A new 'claimant contract' applied sanctions of 3 months, 6months and up to 3 years' benefit removal for those benefit recipients who refuse to take up a job.

2011 Introduction of the Work Programme

Establishment of a single 'Work Programme' to replace all Pathways to Work programmes. Providing activation for claimants of all working age benefits.

2012 Employment and Support Allowance (Sanctions) Regulations Amendment

Established a revised system of conditionality and sanctions regime for those ESA claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group – in force from December 2012.

Box 3.

For ESA claimants a lower level sanction will be imposed when a claimant fails, without showing they had good cause, to comply with a requirement designed to improve their chances of preparing for work.

There will be two parts to the sanction:

1. An open ended sanction which will be lifted when the claimant re-engages with requirements.
2. A fixed period of sanction which will follow re-engagement. The fixed period is 1 week for a first failure, 2 weeks for a second failure and 4 weeks for a third or subsequent failure.

Under the revised regime the sanctionable amount is being increased to align with the equivalent sanction to be introduced for claimants with limited capability for work under Universal Credit.

ESA claimants in the Work-Related Activity Group will be sanctioned 100% of the prescribed amount for a single person, £71.00 (2012), but will retain the Work-Related Activity Component, £28.15 (2012) and any premiums including DLA, SDA.

The revised sanction is designed to help encourage claimants to comply and actively participate in work-related activity.

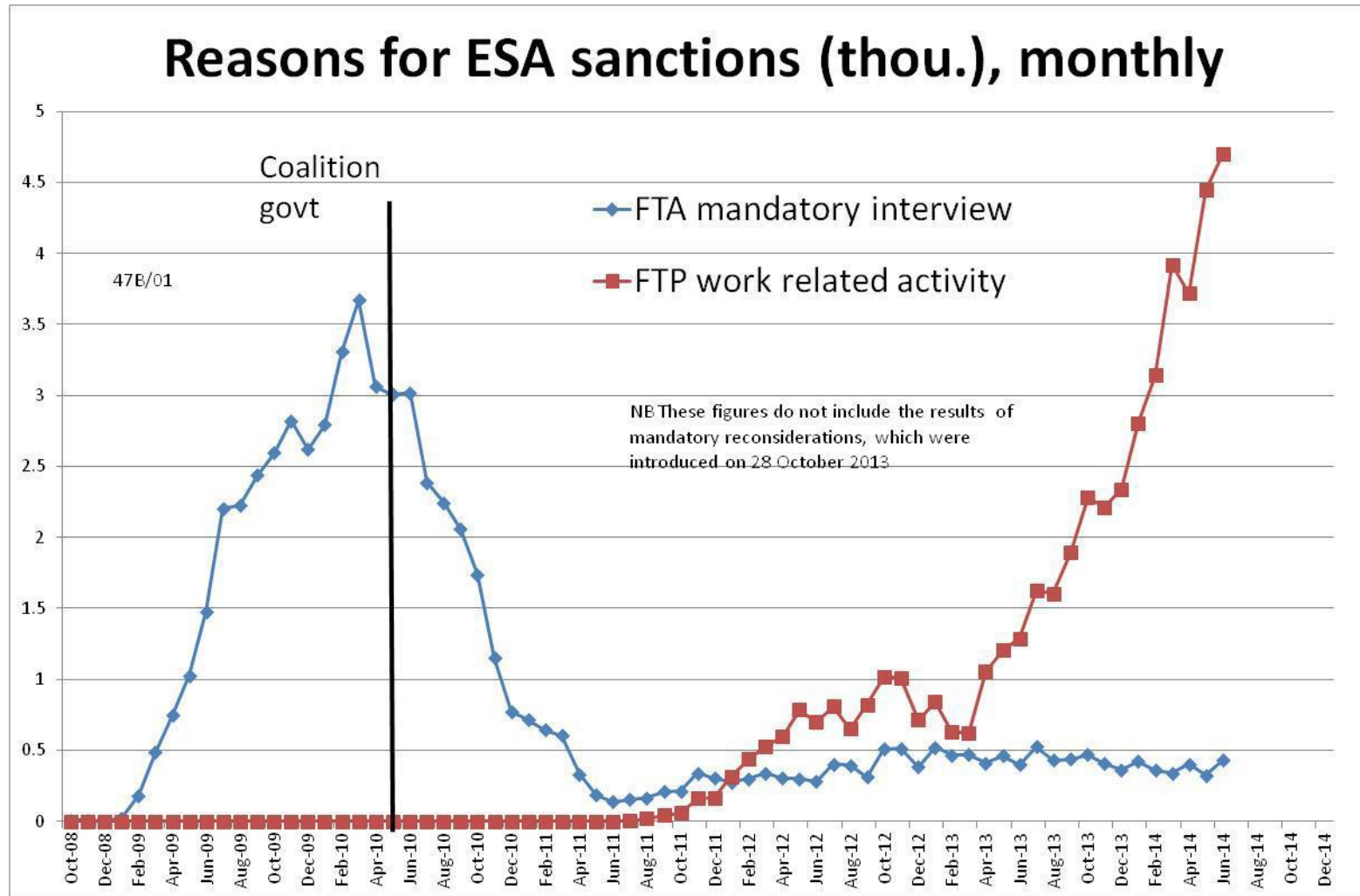
(DWP, 2012, p. 5)

2013 Introduction of Personal Independence Payment

Replacement of main disability benefit, Disability Living Allowance, for people aged 16-64. (Payments now made in relation to how a person's condition affects them and not the condition itself).

Appendix 2.

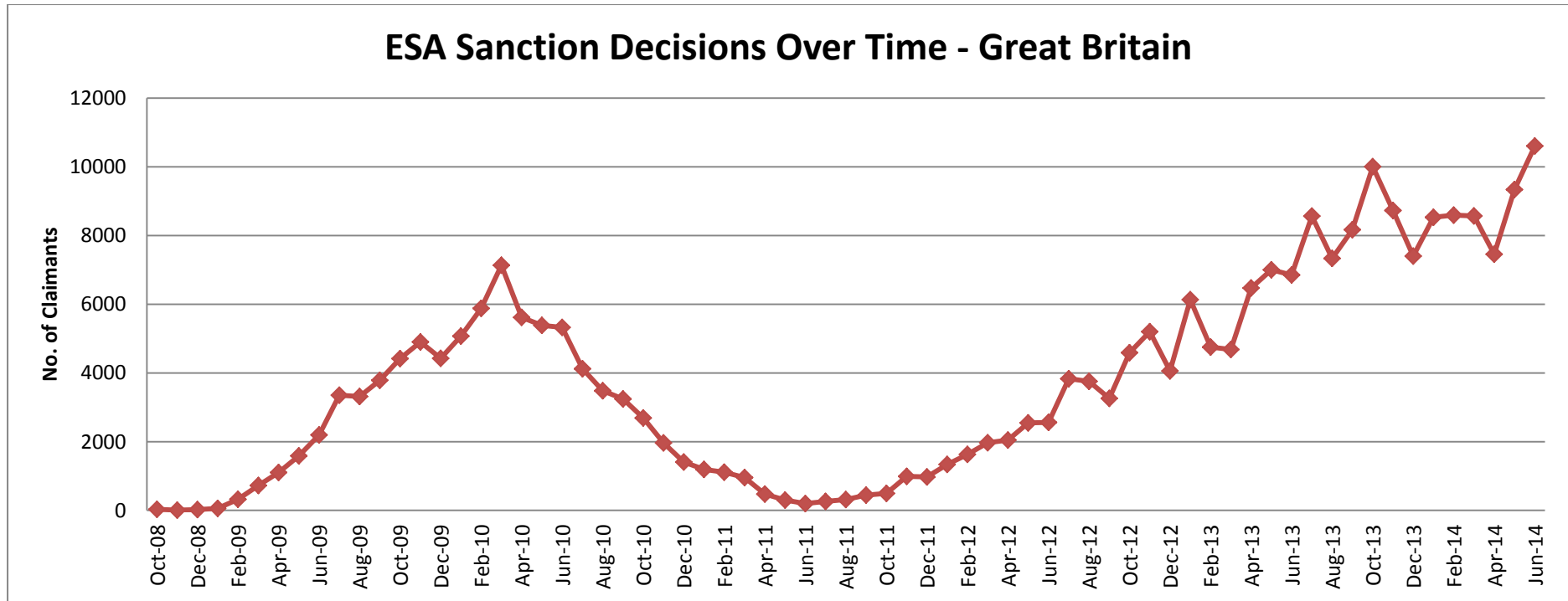
Reasons for ESA sanctions; monthly rate in thousands from Oct 2008- Dec 2014



Source: Webster (2014, p. 15) [pdf]. <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/CPAG-HofC-Wk-Pens-Sanctions-DW-evidence-Dec-2014.pdf>

Appendix 3.

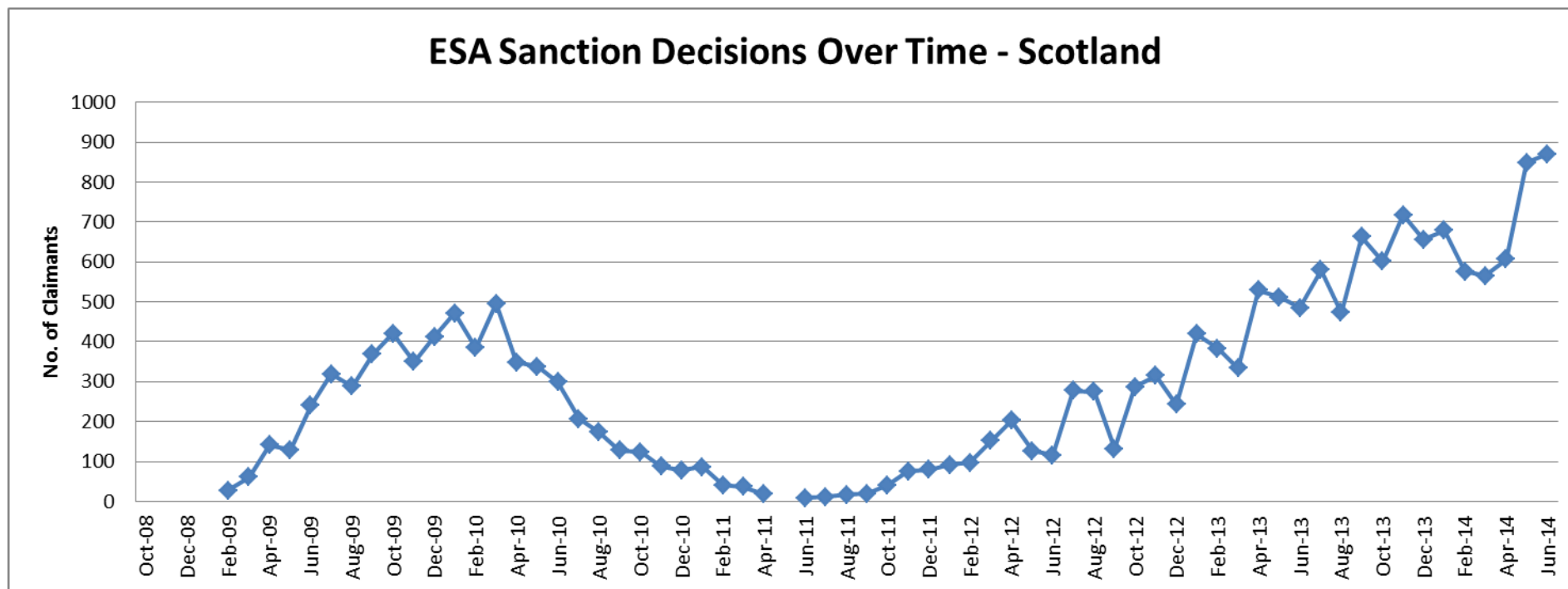
ESA Sanction Decisions over Time: Great Britain and Scotland



Number of benefit sanctions applied to ESA claimants over time in Great Britain

Source: DMAS and LMS, Department for Work and Pensions, Stat-Xplore, 25 July 2014.

<https://sv.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/views/#view=sancview4&selectedWafers=7&selectedColumns=0>



Number of benefit sanctions applied to ESA claimants over time in Scotland

Source: DMAS and LMS, Department for Work and Pensions, Stat-Xplore, 25 July 2014.

<https://sv.stat-xplore.dwp.gov.uk/views/#view=sancview4&selectedWafers=7&selectedColumns=5>

Appendix 4. *Methodology: full description of the research methods; including materials, procedure, research limitations and personal reflection.*

Materials

As the researcher, I designed an interview schedule (Appendix 8) by constructing a series of semi-structured, open questions that would elicit elaborate responses from participants and gain insight into participants' experience with sanctions and the effect they had upon their progress towards employment. Additionally, a plain language statement (PLS) (Appendix 9) and consent form (Appendix 10) were created and issued to participants prior to engagement in this study. Interviews were recorded on a visible hand held recording device and were deleted after transcription in accordance with the information sheet and consent form guidelines.

Procedure

Quantitative analysis of the data set was carried out, making use of SPSS to test for any significant relationships existing between benefit sanctions, job starts and job retention among a sample of 1665 ESA claimants.

For the qualitative component, purposive maximum variation sampling identified eight participants who agreed to be interviewed and audio recorded (four males and four females, gender was not controlled for the purposes of this study). Participant ages ranged between 26 and 53. Again, all participants were unemployed, claiming ESA as part of the WRAG, referred by JCP and mandated to attend WP. Due to my own time and travel constraints the interview sample was limited to eight and taken solely from the Glasgow office. Glasgow is Working Links' largest WP delivery area and so was deemed to be a representative sample area in relation to the research question. All participants in the research have been assessed

by the DWP to have health issues that are acting as a barrier to employment; these include both physical disabilities and mental health issues. Although this makes them a vulnerable group, these health conditions are not 'debilitating' and so all participants were able to give informed consent. The type of participant and their presenting health issue was unintentionally varied and represented the nature of the Working Links ESA claimant base. Importantly claimants were assured that they were not required to participate as a condition of their benefit and that nothing they said to me would be disclosed to their advisor or have any effect on their involvement in the Work Programme. Anonymity in the reporting is ensured through the use of pseudonyms.

Potential participants were identified via caseload reports and randomly invited to participate in the qualitative component of this research project following an advisor interview in the Glasgow office. Over two weeks a total of 12 people were asked to take part until eight willing participants were identified. Participants were issued with the PLS and asked if they would prefer it to be read aloud to them (to ensure those with literacy issues or visual impairments were not overlooked). They were each given adequate time to read the PLS and opportunity to ask any questions before the interview commenced. Claimants were made aware that their participation was entirely voluntary and no incentives were offered. Once agreed, participants were asked to read and sign the consent form. They were interviewed individually in a private room within the Glasgow office, which was deemed both a safe and comfortable environment for participants to confidently share their experiences (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006). Interview rooms are glass and visible to the office, allowing for observation to ensure safety. Confidentiality of their feedback from their consultant was reassured before any discussion proceeded.

After the interviews were completed participants were reminded about asking any further questions and were also directed to the contact numbers provided on the PLS they were taking away. Audio recordings were transcribed into Word documents using pseudonyms to ensure anonymity (see Appendix 11) and recordings were then deleted in accordance with ethical guidelines. The interviews were manually coded against a thematic analysis framework (Appendix 7).

Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

As with other research in this area, the main limitation arises in the difficulty of separating out the distinct impacts of work-related conditions, the sanctions that enforce them and accompanying forms of support on job entry rates (Watts et al., 2014). Work to unravel this complex relationship will be of the utmost importance to the ongoing conditionality debate.

In relation to the identified aims of this research, the question addressed is believed to be both specific and relevant to the field of study. It has been tested empirically and sought to achieve triangulation through the incorporation of both quantitative and qualitative methods to increase validity. However, when considering reliability and validity in research, both the quality of data and the appropriateness of research methods must be considered. Although the rationale of the research design sought to address the main research gap in this field, the methods chosen do present some specific limitations.

In relation to the quantitative methods, limiting the sample group to Scotland presents issues when generalising results across the rest of the UK. Bryman (2012, p. 176) states that the primary concern of quantitative research is to allow for findings to be generalised beyond the confines of the particular context in which the research was conducted and so the completion

of comparative research in other areas of the UK would work to address this. Also, although not deemed necessary in relation to the research aims, this project also failed to control for any confounding variables within the sampled group; namely in terms of claimants' demographic characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity and length of time unemployed. Considering the impact of such of such variables on job entry rates again presents an interesting avenue for future study, and is one currently being researched by members of the Policy Scotland Welfare Reform Network. The time restrictions involved in this research project also prevented the incorporation of a control or comparison group; for example a JSA group, to identify whether the revised sanctions regime had a different impact on employment rates for claimants not presenting with health issues. Again this would work to strengthen the validity of the results in relation to the research question if included in future research.

As statistical analysis does not permit inferences of causality, a qualitative component was employed to elicit more detail and a more comprehensive explanation of the complex issue being researched. Given the research aims, it was deemed appropriate to make use of interviews as the main qualitative research method as when I have spoken informally to claimants in the past they have generally been forthcoming with the information they provide about their circumstances and experiences. Additionally, I have had extensive interview training via my current employment and so felt confident in my ability to use them effectively.

However a general critique of qualitative research methods suggests they are subjective, difficult to replicate and are non-generalisable (Bryman, 2012). Given the time constraints involved in this study, only eight participants were sampled for interviews, restricting the generalisability of the study. Qualitative research can raise concerns over validity and reliability, based on the fact that it is open to subjective scoring, interview bias and expectations. I was the only one to interpret the data and so acknowledge the impact this may

have on the reliability of the findings, however the use of audio recording and transcription would have allowed for further interpretations by other researchers if this had been permitted and the triangulation achieved by incorporating mixed methods does work to strengthen the validity of the findings.

Personal Reflection

The main concern with this research may be my current position of employment within Working Links. Being immersed in the culture of the welfare-to-work industry I have views and attitudes towards the use of sanctions that may hinder my ability to remain neutral in my interpretations. Also, given that participants were aware of my position of employment with Working Links, I may have been recognised as a Consultant in Glasgow and so the power relations within the interview situation may be inferred as structurally unequal. In the presence of such power, it is possible that individuals will change their behaviour as they feel the pressure of 'expectancy' to answer appropriately rather than truthfully (Pierce, 2008), feeling an element of distrust and fear of repercussion.

In trying to minimise these concerns, I ensured that I did not include any claimants that I was currently, or had previously been, engaged with in this study. Given my relationship with them as part of the WP this would have been unethical and may have biased responses. Although those asked to participate in the research were made aware of my position of employment in Working Links, we were not engaged in any formal capacity and none knew me by name. To address issues of power balance, interviews were conducted on my day off and I wore casual clothing to limit the influence of my employment role. I also stressed that any information shared with me would be strictly confidential and would not be referred back to their own advisors or affect their participation in the WP with Working Links in any way.

Participants were informed of the purpose of the study. Despite having some pre-conceived ideas about what I would hear in the interviews, I was conscious of bias and worked hard to limit the use of any leading questions. Interviews were successful in that they elicited in-depth responses, however although conversational in nature there was a degree of 'question-and-answer' involved in the format. Given the nature of the research, and the ability for discussions to venture too far off topic, I felt this was somewhat unavoidable.

Appendix 5.

Working Links Consent



John Dolan
Working Links
Portland House
17 Renfield Street
Glasgow G2 5AH

31/07/2014


To whom it may concern,

I, John Dolan, on behalf of Working Links, have reviewed the following information in relation to the proposed research to be carried out by Stephanie Wright within Working Links as part of her MA Politics Undergraduate dissertation with the University of Glasgow, (Appendix overleaf). Working Links is happy to support this research, as we have done before with a previous Masters Student dissertation. We agree to the following:

- I acknowledge that this research is for Stephanie's Undergraduate Degree Qualification and is not commissioned by Working Links.
- I am aware that before undertaking any investigation with Working Links participants, Stephanie will have been granted ethical approval by The University of Glasgow ethics committee.
- I have read the consent forms and the information forms that will be will distributed to participants, and agree for these to be used.
- I understand that all information given from participants will be anonymous and that clients will not be identified in any reports given to Working Links.
- I accept that Working Links will not receive copies of the transcripts or raw data gathered by Stephanie Wright.
- I acknowledge that Working Links has agreed to provide Stephanie with statistical data relating to sanctions within the Scotland CPA in recent years.
- I acknowledge that Working Links will receive an executive summary of the findings as well as a copy of Stephanie's dissertation.
- I agree to allow Stephanie to carry out her research in the Working Links office based at Portland House, 17 Renfield Street, Glasgow, G2 5AH.
- John Dolan will act as the organisational contact for Working Links in relation to this dissertation.

I understand that should I have any questions/concerns before, during or after the research is completed, that I can contact Dr. Karen Wright for further information at:
karen.wright@glasgow.ac.uk or 0141-338-8832

Yours sincerely,


John Dolan
Scotland Lead Operations Manager
Working Links



COLLEGE ETHICS COMMITTEE FOR NON CLINICAL RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

EAP - APPLICATION FORM FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

This application form should be typed, and submitted electronically. **All questions must be answered.** "Not applicable" is a satisfactory answer where appropriate.

(Instructions: In Word format, click on shaded area within box to enter text, boxes will expand as required).

Applications should be submitted **at least one month in advance** of the intended start date for the data collection to allow time for review and any amendments that may be required.

1 Applicant Details

1.1 Project Title Increasing Benefit Conditionality for the Sick and Disabled; Has the coalition governments' reform of the sanctions regime worked effectively to progress claimants of Employment and Support Allowance into sustainable employment?
1.2 Name of Applicant Stephanie Wright
1.3 School/Subject/Cluster/RKT Group Politics
1.4 Student I.D. or Staff Number 0602496w

2 This Project is:

Staff Research Project <input type="checkbox"/>	Postgraduate Research <input type="checkbox"/>	Submit application through Research Ethics System https://frontdoor.spa.gla.ac.uk/login/
Postgraduate Taught <input type="checkbox"/>	Undergraduate <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Submit application via email to School Ethics Administrator: see College ethics website for contact http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/info/students/ethics/whotocontact/
(Programme Convenors Only) Full Course Project within a PGT or UG Programme <input type="checkbox"/>		Submit application via email to School Ethics Administrator: see College ethics website for contact http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/info/students/ethics/whotocontact/

2.2 Programme Title: *Student applicants only*

Undergraduate Dissertation

2.3 Ethical Risks: *Application will NOT be considered if this section is blank*

Supervisors should complete section **2.3a**
2.3b

Staff applicants should complete section

2.3a COMMENTS FROM SUPERVISOR: (All Student Applications) *Comment on the research ethics risks involved in the project*

I have checked this application and approve it for submission for review to the Ethics Committee.

Supervisor's Name **Date**

Risk Assessment: (UG and PGT applications only). *Does this application qualify for a low risk review or fall within the applicable programme parameters? Please refer to **Low Risk Research Guidance** on College ethics webpages for clarification.*

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/info/students/ethics/forms/>

YES NO

2.3b RISK ASSESSMENT FROM STAFF APPLICANT: (All Staff Applications) *Comment on the research ethics risks involved in the project*

2.4 All Researcher(s) including research assistants and transcribers (where appropriate)

Title and Surname	First Name	Phone	Email (This should normally be a University of Glasgow email address)
Miss Wright	Stephanie	07966108925	0602496w@student.gla.ac.uk
Miss Wright			

All Supervisor(s) Principal First (where applicable)

Title and Surname	First Name	Phone	Email (This should normally be a University of Glasgow email address)
P: Miss Wright	Karen	0141 330 8832	karen.wright@glasgow.ac.uk

2.5 External funding details

Note. If this project is externally funded, please provide the name of the sponsor or funding body.

Sponsor/Funding Body:

3 Project Details

3.1a Start date for your data collection and end date of data collection involving human subjects. Refers to data collection for the research covered in this application.

From: (dd/m/yyyy) 11/08/2014

To: (dd/m/yyyy) 21/09/2014

3.1b Proposed end date for your research project. This should be when you expect to have completed the full project and published the results - (e.g expected date of award of PhD, book publication date)

To: (dd/m/yyyy) 02/03/2015

3.2 Justification for the Research

Why is this research significant to the wider community? *Outline the reasons which lead you to be satisfied that the possible benefits to be gained from the project justify any risks or discomfort involved.*

The welfare reform policy introduced by the coalition government has had a major impact on sick and disabled people in the UK. The increased benefit conditionality attached to Employment and Support Allowance payments now requires people with recognised health conditions to participate in work related activity in the aim of progressing them back into paid employment and off benefit caseloads - ultimately reducing the overall UK welfare bill. In 2012, the government revised the sanction regime applicable to ESA claimants, using this to make participation in such work related activity compulsory for those assessed as part of the 'Work Related Activity Group'.

The proposed research will aim to assess the effectiveness of the new sanction policy framework, by analysing whether sick and disabled people, who are currently engaged in compulsory work related activity via the government's Work Programme, believe that the threat and/or application of benefit sanctions have encouraged

them to return to paid employment. With a clear upwards trend in the application of ESA sanctions, gaining information about the experiences of those sick and disabled claimants feeling the impact of the revised sanction policy on the front line will be invaluable when considering the future of the sanctions regime proposed under the move to Universal Credit. The research will also look to explore further implications of applying sanctions to the benefits of sick and disabled claimants, ones that go beyond discussions of employment, considering how suspension of benefits may impact their finances, their family and importantly on their health.

The cost of ESA is one of the largest fiscal risks currently facing the government. If the coalition's sanction policy is shown to be ineffective in relation to achieving the policy aim then evidence of this may encourage the government to consider alternative policy suggestions when addressing the disability benefits problem. Although the participants may be considered a vulnerable group, interviewing those being directly affected by this policy will help to identify any gaps that need to be addressed when meeting the needs of the sick and disabled and supporting them into employment. The participants themselves will benefit from the outcome of this research as it will give them a voice in the conditionality debate whilst identifying any practical issues with the policy that may be having a negative impact on those it is targeting.

3.3 Research Methodology and Data Collection

3.3a Method of data collection *(Tick as many as apply)*

Face to face or telephone interview <i>(attach a copy of the interview themes. This does not need to be an exact list of questions but does need to provide sufficient detail to enable reviewers to form a clear view of the project and its ethical implications.)</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Focus group <i>(provide details: themes or questions. This does not need to be an exact list of questions but does need to provide sufficient detail to enable reviewers to form a clear view of the project and its ethical implications. Also information on recording format)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Audio or video-recording interviewees or events <i>(with consent)</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaire <i>(attach a copy)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Online questionnaire <i>(provide the address/ or paper copy if not yet available online)</i> http://	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant observation <i>(attach an observation proforma)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other methodology <i>(please provide details – maximum 50 words)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.3b Research Methods

Please explain the reason for the particular chosen method, the estimated time commitment required of participants and how the data will be analysed *(Use no more than 250 words)*.

--

For the quantitative component of this research, data will be gathered from Working Links in relation to the number of sanctions recently applied to claimants of ESA, and the number of those claimants who have subsequently moved and failed to move into sustainable employment.

Semi-structured, face-to-face interviews will also be used in this research, each lasting no more than 30 minutes. The research will seek to include 8-10 participants. Access to participants will be facilitated through my employment at Working Links, who have consented to the research being carried out as part of my dissertation. Claimants of ESA will be identified within the Working Links caseloads, all of whom will be issued an invitation to participate in this research. Participation will be on an entirely voluntary basis and will have no effect on their involvement with Working Links.

The semi-structured interviews will cover 12-15 questions. This will provide a schedule addressing specific questions that need to be considered in relation to this research topic whilst also leaving room for scope to further explore participant responses if required. Given the controversial nature of the topic it is likely that individual responses may create a need to divert from the question structure on occasion.

The data will be analysed using thematic analysis in an attempt to identify recurring themes arising across participant responses that relate to the effectiveness of the reformed sanction regime and their own experiences under the new policy framework. The data will be recorded with participants, coded and then analysed. I do not plan to use computer software in my analysis.

3.4 Confidentiality & Data Handling

3.4a Will the research involve: **Tick all that apply*

Participants consent to being named?	<input type="checkbox"/>
De-identified samples or data (i.e. a reversible process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Subject being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Anonymised samples or data (i.e. an irreversible process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Complete anonymity of participants (i.e. researchers will not meet, or know the identity of participants, as participants are part of a random sample and are required to return responses with no form of personal identification)?	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any other methods of protecting the privacy of participants? (e.g. use of direct quotes with specific, written permission only; use of real name with specific, written permission only): <i>provide details:</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3.4b Which of the following methods of assuring confidentiality of data will be implemented?

**Tick all that apply*

Note: The more ethically sensitive the data, the more secure will the conditions of storage be expected to be.

Location of Storage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
---------------------	-------------------------------------

Storage at University of Glasgow	
Stored at another site (<i>provide details, including address</i>) My home address. 124 Ladyton Estate, Alexandria, G83 9DN - on a password protected computer file.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Paper Data to be kept in locked filing cabinets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Data and identifiers to be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Electronic Access to computer files to be available by password only	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Other Any other method of securing confidentiality of data in storage: <i>provide details:</i> Recordings of interviews will be made on an electronic recording device. They will be stored only until the data has been fully analysed, after which they will be disposed of securely.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

3.5 Access to Data

3.5a Access by named researcher(s) and, where applicable, supervisor(s), examiner(s), research assistants, transcribers

3.5b Access by people **OTHER** than named researcher(s)/Supervisor(s), examiner(s), research assistants, transcribers

Please explain by whom and for what purpose:
--

3.5c Retention and Disposal of Personal Data

“(personal data means data which relate to a living individual who can be identified –

(a) From those data, or

(b) From those data and other information which is in the possession of, or is likely to come into the possession of, the data controller, and includes any expression of opinion about the individual and any indication of the intentions of the data controller or any other person in respect of the individual.” Data Protection Act 1998 c.29 Part 1 Section 1

The 5th Principle of the Data Protection Act (1998) states that personal data must not be kept for longer than is necessary based on the purpose for which it has been collected. Please explain and as appropriate justify your proposals for retention and/or disposal of any **personal** data to be collected.

<i>Where appropriate (and it normally will be appropriate) explain when and how the data you have collected will be destroyed.</i>
All personal data will be destroyed at the end of my research project - March 2015. Electronic files will be securely deleted, as will electronic recordings. Any printed transcripts will be shredded.

3.5d Retention and Disposal of Research Data

(For **Postgraduate and Staff Research** University of Glasgow Research Guidelines expect data to be retained for 10 years after completion of the project) Please see University Code of Good Practice in Research for guidance, <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/postgraduateresearch/pgrcodeofpractice/>

Please explain and as appropriate justify your proposals for retention and/or disposal of **research** data to be collected.

***Publication of the research will be held by the University as required. All research data, both audio and text files, will be destroyed after submission.

3.6 Dissemination of Results.

3.6a Results will be made available to **participants** as: (Tick all that apply)

Note: Intended method of dissemination ought normally to take account of the age, capacities and situation of participants.

Written summary of results to all <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Copy of final manuscript (e.g. thesis, article, etc) presented if requested <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Verbal presentation to all (information session, debriefing etc) <input type="checkbox"/>	Presentation to representative participants (e.g. CEO, school principal) <input type="checkbox"/>
Dissertation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other or None of the Above <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Please explain</i>

3.6b Results will be made available to **peers and/or colleagues** as: (Tick all that apply)

Dissertation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Journal articles <input type="checkbox"/>
Thesis (e.g. PhD), <input type="checkbox"/>	Book <input type="checkbox"/>
Submission <input type="checkbox"/>	Conference Papers <input type="checkbox"/>
Other or None of the Above <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Please explain</i> Dissertation will be available as required. A written summary will be made available to Working Links.	

3.7 Participants

3.7a Target Participant Group (Please indicate the targeted participant group by ticking all boxes that apply)

Students or Staff of the University <input type="checkbox"/>	Adults (<i>over 18 years old and competent to give consent</i>) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Children/legal minors (<i>under 18 years old</i>) <input type="checkbox"/>	Adults (<i>over 18 years who may not be competent to give consent</i>) <input type="checkbox"/>
Young people aged 16-17 years <input type="checkbox"/>	

3.7b Will the research *specifically* target participants with mental health difficulties or a disability?

YES NO

If YES, please explain the necessity of involving these individuals as research participants

This project aims to investigate how recent changes in government welfare policy are specifically effecting the sick and disabled in Scotland. Participants in the research will have been assessed by the DWP to have health issues that are acting as a barrier to employment; these can include both physical disabilities and mental health issues. Although this makes them a vulnerable group, these health conditions are not completely 'debilitating', and so all participants will be able to give informed consent.

3.7c Number of Participants (*if relevant give details of different age groups/activities involved*)

The qualitative component of this research will look to include 8-10 adult participants. Age will range from 18 to 64 years. All participants will take part in a 30 minute face to face interview. Given time constraints the number of participants will be limited, however the chosen sample size should provide valid results in relation to the research topic.

Participants will be claimants within the Glasgow Working Links office and will be active referrals on the Work Programme. They will all have an current claim to the ESA benefit, having been assessed as part of the Work Related Activity Group. Glasgow is the largest catchment area for Work Programme referals in Scotland. Participants will therefore be likely to come from different surrounding areas, providing a representative sample of the chosen research group.

3.7d (i) Explain how you intend to recruit participants.

The sample group will be identified through Working Links active caseload - from their Glasgow office only. At their next appointment, each claimant will be issued with an invitation to participate in this research project. I hope to have 8-10 claimants agree to take part in this project. Participation will be on a voluntary basis only. It will not be connected with their participation on the Work Programme. Informed consent will also be gained from each participant.

3.7d (ii) Incentives

If payment or any other incentive (such as a gift or free services) will be made to any participants please specify the source and the amount of payment to be made and/or the source, nature and where applicable the approximate monetary value of the gift or free service to be used. Please explain the justification for offering payment or other incentive.

No incentives will be offered.

3.7e Dependent Relationship

Are any of the participants in a dependent relationship with any of the investigators, particularly those involved in recruiting for or conducting the project? *(For example, a school pupil is in a dependent relationship with their teacher. Other examples of a dependent relationship include student/lecturer; patient/doctor; employee/employer)*

YES NO

If YES, explain the relationship and the steps to be taken by the investigators to ensure that the subject's participation is purely voluntary and not influenced by the relationship in any way.

Please note that I will not be inviting claimants from my own caseload at Working Links to participate in this research. This will involve any claimant with whom I have been engaged with as their employment advisor as part of my current job role.

3.7f Location of Research

University of Glasgow	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outside Location <i>Provide details of outside locations, including as much information as possible.</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interviews will take place within the Glasgow Working Links office: Portland House, 17 Renfield Street, 3 rd Floor, Glasgow, G2 5AH.	
This is a familiar environment for all potential participants as they attend regular appointments in this office each week. Interviews will take place in a private room on the 3 rd floor as agreed by Working Links management.	

4 Permission to Access Participants

4.1a Will subjects be identified from information held by another party?
 (eg. a Local Authority, or a Head Teacher, or a doctor or hospital, other organisation or Glasgow University class lists)

YES NO

If YES describe the arrangements you intend to make to gain access to this information including, where appropriate, any other ethics committee that will be applied to.

I will gain access to my participants through the Welfare to Work provider Working Links. I have been in employment with this company for 4 years and have sought full consent from John Dolan, the Lead Operations

Manager for Scotland. This has been provided in writing.

4.1b Permissions/Access

Permission is usually required to gain access to research participants within an organisation (e.g. school, Local Authority, Voluntary Organisation, Overseas institution)

Is this type of permission **applicable to** this application? YES NO

If Yes:

Is evidence of this permission **provided with** this application?

YES NO

OR is it to follow?

YES NO

(If this is the case, this should be forwarded to Ethics Administrator as soon as it is available.)

4.1c Does this application involve the survey of University of Glasgow students?

YES NO

*If YES, separate permission to survey students needs to be obtained prior to any such survey being undertaken. Normally this permission should be sought from the **appropriate authority after** ethical approval has been granted. (See application form notes for detail). Once obtained, a copy of this permission should be forwarded to the Ethics Administrator.*

4.1d Is this application being submitted to another ethics committee, or has it been previously submitted to another ethics committee?

YES NO

(If YES, please provide name and location of the ethics committee and the result of the application.)

5 Informed Consent

If you require information on the age of legal capacity please refer to the Age of Legal Capacity (Scotland) Act 1991 available at: <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1991/50/contents>

5.1a Have you attached your Information Sheet (also known as Plain Language Statement (PLS)) **for participants?**

The Information Sheet is written information in plain language that you will provide to participants to explain the project and invite their participation. **Contact details for Supervisor** if applicable and **College Ethics Officer MUST** be included. Please note that a copy of this information must be given to the participant to keep.

YES NO

If NO please explain

5.1b How will informed consent by individual participants or guardians be evidenced?

Note: In normal circumstances it will be expected that written evidence of informed consent will be obtained and retained, and that a formal consent form will be used: A copy of which should be should be provided.

If written evidence of informed consent is not to be obtained a **substantial** justification of why not should be provided.

(Note: Please ensure that you have checked the box for all types of consent to be used, eg signed consent form for interviews/ implied for questionnaires.)

Signed consent form <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Recorded verbal consent <input type="checkbox"/>
Implied by return of survey <input type="checkbox"/>	Other <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Provide details</i>

*Justification if written evidence of informed consent is **not** to be obtained and retained:*

6 Monitoring

Describe how the project will be monitored to ensure that the research is being carried out as approved (e.g. give details of regular meetings/email contact).

This research project will be monitored through a series of meetings with my supervisor, Ms. Karen Wright; Karen.Wright@glasgow.ac.uk

7 Health and Safety

Does the project have any health & safety implications?

YES NO

If YES, please outline the arrangements which are in place to minimise these risks

8 Insurance

Have you checked that this research does not come under the exclusions to the University insurance cover for research?

YES NO

The University insurance cover is restricted in certain, specific circumstances, e.g., the use of hazardous materials, work overseas, research into pregnancy and conception and numbers of participants in excess of 5000. All such projects must be referred to Research Strategy and Innovation Office before ethical approval is sought. Advice or authorisation given must be included with this application.

Please visit:

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/rsio/forstaffcampusonly/researchgovernanceframeworkandclinicaltrials/section4insuranceandindemnity/> for information.

9 Protection of Vulnerable Groups and Disclosure

Does this project require PVG clearance?

YES NO

If Yes, evidence that this has been obtained **MUST** be provided with this application.

If application for PVG registration is currently in progress, please provide details here:

The Protection of Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007 came into effect on 28 February 2011. This replaced the previous Disclosure Scotland checking system for individuals who work with children and/or protected adults. The University is a Registered Body under this legislation.

Please consult the University Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme webpages

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/humanresources/policies/p-z/protectionofvulnerablegroupsscheme/> for guidance.

10 UK and Scottish Government Legislation

Have you made yourself familiar with the requirements of the **Data Protection Act (1998)** and the **Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002**?

YES NO

If NO please explain

(See Application Guidance Notes for further information. In addition visit <http://www.gla.ac.uk/services/dpfoioffice/> for guidance and advice on the Act).

Please ensure you have read the [eight basic Principles underlying the Data Protection Act 1998 \[DPA\]](#) that protect the rights and freedoms of individuals with respect to the processing of their personal data.

The **Freedom of Information Act 2002 [“FOI”]** provides a general right of access to most of the recorded information that is held by the University. The Act sets out a number of exemptions/exceptions to this right of access.

11 Declarations by Researcher(s) and Supervisor(s)

The application will NOT be accepted if this section is blank

- The information contained herein is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, accurate.
- I have read the University’s current human ethics guidelines, and accept responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application in accordance with the guidelines, the University’s Code of Conduct for Research and any other condition laid down by the University of Glasgow Ethics Committee and the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee.

(Full details of the University’s ethics guidelines are available at: <http://www.gla.ac.uk/research/aimsassessmentandpolicies/ourpolicies/ethicshomepage/>)

- I and my co-researcher(s) or supporting staff have the appropriate qualifications, experience and facilities to conduct the research set out in the attached application and to deal effectively with any emergencies and contingencies related to the research that may arise.
- I understand that **no** research work involving human participants or data collection can commence until ethical approval has been given by the either the School Ethics Forum (UG & PGT students only) or the College of Social Sciences Ethics Committee (for PGR students and Staff).

This section MUST be completed to confirm acceptance of Code of Conduct. If there is no scanned signature then please type the names and date into the boxes below.

Signature

Date

Researcher (All applicants)	Stephanie Wright	22/06/14
Principal Supervisor (Where applicable)		

End of Application Form

Applications should be submitted electronically as follows:

➤ **Postgraduate Research Student (PGR) and Staff applications submission:**

Please upload the completed form, along with any other required documents by logging in to the Research Ethics System at - <https://frontdoor.spa.gla.ac.uk/login/> this will then be considered by the College Research Ethics Committee.

PGR students are required to upload their application which is then forwarded to their named supervisor for approval and submission to the Ethics Committee.

➤ **Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Student (UG & PGT) applications:**

Should be sent to their **School Ethics Forum (SEF)** via email to their local administrative contact. Please see contact details on College ethics website.

<http://www.gla.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/info/students/ethics/>

For these student applications, there are two options for submitting Supervisor approval:

- 1 The student e-mails the application to their supervisor, who checks it and submits it to their local SEF contact (UG and PGT only)

Or

- 2 The student e-mails the application to the SEF contact and the supervisor sends a separate e-mail to the appropriate administrative point of contact giving the details of the application and confirming approval for the submission.

Appendix 7.

Thematic Analysis Framework

Thematic Analysis: Personal Experience with Sanctions				
Construct of Interest	Themes	Sub Themes (if present)	Number of References	
<i>Barriers to Engagement</i>	Awareness/Communication		11	
	Finances		9	
	Health and Personal Well-Being	Physical/Mental Health		14
		Destitution		7
		Motivation		4
		Confidence		4
<i>Barriers to Employment</i>	Found Work		0	
	Barriers to Work	Health		17
		Employability/Social Disadvantage		12
		Skills		8
		Length of Time Unemployed		3
		Labour Market Processes		9
	Effective Interventions	Health		9
		Training		7
		Personalised Support		13
		Flexibility		8
<i>Motivations to Work</i>	Personal	Stigma		6
		Social Inclusion/Self-Worth		9
	Financial			2

Appendix. 8 *Interview Schedule*

Initial Factual/Closed questions:

- age
- gender
- dependants
- Reason for claiming ESA (recorded diagnosis)
- length of time claiming ESA
- length of time participating in mandatory 'work related activity'
- length of time registered unemployed (including time spent on other benefits)

Open-ended questions looking at ESA claimants experience under the reformed sanction regime

Health conditions

- What barriers does your health condition(s) present in relation to being able to go to work?

Experience with benefit sanctions

- Are you aware of the government's current sanction regime and how this affects you?
- Since engaging in the Work Programme, have you had any sanction decision(s) imposed on your benefits?
 - If so, what was it imposed for and how long did the sanction last?
 - How long ago was this?
 - How did the sanction affect your motivation to find employment?
 - How did the sanction affect you beyond the limits of finding employment?
(Prompts may include discussion of finances, day to day living/housing issues, family commitments/children and health)
- If you have not been affected by a sanction decision, do you feel that the prospect of future benefit sanctions has any effect you?
(or on your health?)

Progression towards employment

- Have you had any periods of paid employment since being engaged on the Work Programme?
(If so, what was the nature of your job, how long did this last and why did the job come to an end?)

- Has the threat of benefit sanctions encouraged you to take part in work related activity?
- Have benefit sanctions (the use, or the prospect of) had any effect on your motivation to try and find a job?
- Do you think that the prospect of benefit sanctions will help you to make a return to sustainable work?
- What, if anything, motivates you to try and make a return to work?
- Do you feel that you are able to work now or that you will be in the future?

Alternative Interventions

- Do you feel that you have made any progress towards getting a job since being instructed to complete work related activity?
- What, if any, interventions have been most effective in helping you to progress towards getting back into work?
- Do you feel that there is anything else that could be put in place to support you in making an eventual return to work?

Appendix 9. *Plain Language Statement*



Plain Language Statement

1. Study title and Researcher Details

Increasing Benefit Conditionality for the Sick and Disabled;

Has the coalition governments' reform of the sanctions regime worked effectively to progress claimants of Employment and Support Allowance into sustainable employment?

This research is being carried out by Stephanie Wright, a student of the University of Glasgow, as part of an Honours Degree qualification and although the researcher is an employee of Working Links, this research is not connected to, or commissioned by, Working Links. Any participation in this study does not affect the services provided to you by Working Links. Similarly, if you choose not to participate, this will not affect the services provided to you by Working Links.

2. Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to participate in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

3. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this study is to assess the effectiveness of the newly reformed sanction regime, as rolled out in December 2012, in motivating unemployed people with ill health and disabilities to move off sickness benefits and make a return to sustainable employment.

4. Why have I been chosen?

This research is looking at how the reformed sanction regime has impacted on the motivations of sick and disabled people to engage in work related activity and make an eventual return to employment. You have been asked to participate as you are a current claimant of Employment Support Allowance an have been assessed as part of the Work Related Activity group, are currently participating in the Work Programme and are subject to the reformed conditions of the sanction process.

5. Do I have to take part?

No. Your participation is entirely voluntary and even if you do agree you can withdraw at any time without giving a reason.

Participants are also not obliged to respond to any questions posed at interview that they would rather not answer.

6. What will happen to me if I take part?

You will be asked to take part in a conversation about your experience with ESA conditionality and your experience under the current sanction regime. This is expected to last approximately 30 minutes and you are free to finish the interview at any stage without giving a reason. The interview will be recorded, but as soon as the notes are taken the recording will be destroyed. Your consultant will not have access to this recording.

7. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Yes. The information you give me is anonymous and no one will know that it is from you. We will not record your name, national insurance number, date of birth or any other identifying features in the data.

Anonymised quotes might be included in the report resulting from this study.

8. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The results of the study will be published in my undergraduate dissertation submitted to the University of Glasgow.

Working Links will receive a report which will include anonymised quotes from participants. You will not be identifiable from any quotes used.

9. Who has reviewed the study?

The project has been reviewed by the School of Social and Political Sciences Ethics Forum.

10. Contact for Further Information

You can ask me questions at any time before the interview starts. Also, at the end of the interview you will be given the opportunity to ask any questions you may have and you are also free to contact me at any time after the study has been completed:

Stephanie Wright

E: 0602496w@student.gla.ac.uk

You might also contact my supervisor;

Ms. Karen Wright

Adam Smith Building

University of Glasgow

Glasgow G12 8QQ

T: 0141 330 2000

E: Karen.Wright@glasgow.ac.uk

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of the research project you can contact the convenor of the SPS Ethics Forum, Sharon Wright; Sharon.Wright@glasgow.ac.uk

Please note that an alternative version of this statement with larger font is available upon request.



Consent Form

Title of Project:

Sanctioning the Sick and Disabled;

Has the coalition governments' reform of the sanctions regime driven claimants of Employment and Support Allowance into sustainable employment?

Name of Researcher: Stephanie Wright

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I agree to the interview being audio recorded.
4. I understand that all data will be anonymous and nothing that can identify me will be included in the report arising from this research and that. I agree that a pseudonym will be used in all presentations and publications.
5. I understand that this research is for an Honours Degree qualification and is not commissioned by Working Links.

6. I understand that my participation or non-participation will have no effect on the services provided to me by Working Links.

7. I understand that none of the information I provide will be passed on to my consultant.

8. I understand that any information I disclose will not be passed on to a third party unless is it is seen as a perceived threat or harm to myself or others.

9. I understand that at any time after the study I can contact the researcher to ask further questions.

10. I agree to take part in the above study.

_____	_____	_____
Name of Participant	Date	Signature
_____	_____	_____
Researcher	Date	Signature

Appendix 11. Example Interview Transcript – Donna

Initial Factual/Closed questions:

- Age **41**
- gender **Female**
- dependants **None**
- Reason for claiming ESA (recorded diagnosis) **Depression and Anxiety**
- length of time claiming ESA **6 years**
- length of time participating in mandatory ‘work related activity’ **6 months**
- length of time registered unemployed (including time spent on other benefits) **6.5 yrs**

Open-ended questions looking at ESA claimants experience under the reformed sanction regime

Health conditions

- What barriers does your health condition(s) present in relation to being able to go to work?
I think the unpredictability of it. Sometimes you get up and you feel fine, you want to take on work and then there’s other times when you are just totally demotivated. That makes me lose a bit of confidence when thinking about being in the work place because I don’t know how my performance would be or how I would be with other people. I don’t know whether an employer would understand, there’s a stigma that goes with mental health. That makes me need to keep it to myself. I couldn’t let an employer know. But then, if I had a bad day or a really bad week they would wonder why my performance was so poor and probably just let me go.

Experience with benefit sanctions

- Are you aware of the government’s current sanction regime and how this affects you?
Em, I wouldn’t say I was fully aware no. But coming to the courses here I’d learned from other people that sometimes if you don’t make your appointments or you are not sticking to the terms of the programme with Working Links then your money can be stopped. But I wasn’t every given any papers to say what these conditions were.
- Since engaging in the Work Programme, have you had any sanction decision(s) imposed on your benefits?
No.
- If so, what was it imposed for and how long did the sanction last?
- How long ago was this?
- How did the sanction affect your motivation to find employment?
- How did the sanction affect you beyond the limits of finding employment?

- If you have not been affected by a sanction decision, do you feel that the prospect of future benefit sanctions has any effect on you?

Oh very much so, I think if I was to be sanctioned then I would be in a very very very difficult situation because I'm in a private let and the cost of my rent and all that is so much more than it would be if I was in with a housing association. The financial impact would be absolutely massive.

Does the worry about this have any effect on your health?

It makes it worse. You've always got that fear, that worry and that anxiety that if you don't make it in or if you don't stick to any of your agreements then the financial implications could leave me homeless. I'm worrying about how to get involved with social housing in case this happens, and all the difficulties that come with that just brings that constant anxiety.

Progression towards employment

- Have you had any periods of paid employment since being engaged on the Work Programme?

No

- Has the threat of benefit sanctions encouraged you to take part in work related activity?

No. I didn't even know before I came to the Work Programme that these things would happen. And in actual fact I was really glad that there was someone there to support me because I was so lost about where to go that I was grateful to be sent here and would have taken part in the programme regardless. I want the help. I don't feel I've been forced.

I think that the sanctions policy can actually work to the advantage of people with mental illness, getting routines, having to be at a certain place at a certain time can have a benefit. But I can see as well how it might exacerbate people's symptoms and make things worse. I can't say that it something that has helped me.

- Have benefit sanctions (the use, or the prospect of) had any effect on your motivation to try and find a job?

Em... no. I think when you are depressed and of so low mood, it takes away that fear. But when you are coming round and getting a bit more active then yes there is that element that does frighten you a little bit. Part of me would rather be in a job and not have to deal with the worry of having your benefit stopped you know. But I would like a job anyway, certainly when my health does improve, so it wouldn't just be off the sanction threat.

- Do you think that the prospect of benefit sanctions will help you to make a return to sustainable work?

No. I think this would set me 10 steps back definitely. I think I would be in a dyer situation if a sanction was to be put on me. I mean I have so many payments coming

off my ESA, utility bills that have mounted up and a social fund loan. If I was to have a sanction with that coming off my money then I would be in a very very difficult circumstance and probably think that my situation would get much worse, or go back to the way I was a while ago.

I think I would feel let down and unsupported actually. I would lose faith in getting help from the programme which would make me less likely to attend or participate fully if I had to attend.

- What, if anything, motivates you to try and make a return to work?

I think my health would improve if I was working. I'd be doing something and in a routine and would have goals to set myself. Financial gain would come next. I've spent a long time on a very low income and so I don't have any of the pleasures that money can buy or the cash.

- Do you feel that you are able to work now or that you will be in the future?

Em... I think a gradual step back into full time work would help me. But there is a definite want to get back to work. That's a goal I have.

Alternative Interventions

- Do you feel that you have made any progress towards getting a job since being instructed to complete work related activity?

Yes, I definitely say that the support from my advisor and the assistance from Catherine from Salus on the health side that my advisor set up for me, has most definitely made a difference for me. Sarah is great. I feel she knows best how to push me on when I feel lost but without going too far. I trust her more than I've trusted my GP and a psychiatrist to keep me moving forward. I've never had so much help, and I do finally feel that I am making some progress now which is great.

- What, if any, interventions have been most effective in helping you to progress towards getting back into work?

- *My advisor tied me in with Salus, they similar to the NHS and she felt they would help me deal with my mental health alongside what we were working on. I'd see both my advisor and Cathy separately but in the one office. They ran a 10 week course of 1-2-1 sessions with me, once a week I saw Cathy. She got me started right away and looked at how I can prepare myself mentally for returning to work, giving me coping mechanisms and stuff. I've used to have to wait months on the NHS. The psychologists and psychiatrists I've seen before are too focused on digging up the past. This looked at moving forward which I felt was important for me.*

- Do you feel that there is anything else that could be put in place to support you in making an eventual return to work?

Em... maybe a bit farfetched but if I could get support with the housing issue, like if it was all combined with some sort of welfare support to help me get a more affordable place to stay then that would help as I wouldn't be as worried. My health would vastly improve if I had better housing. Because even if I was to be in employment I think I would still struggle with what's required in a private let.

I also think that advice in the workplace would help. Try to get rid of the stigma that goes with mental health and proactivity on that side would help. Because I also feel a bit awkward going into a workplace where there's other people around about what's wrong with me and you always have that fear that people may judge you. A focus on awareness needs to be more important.