

Institution: University of Salford		
Unit of Assessment: 20		
Title of case study: The Welfare Conditionality (<i>WelCond</i>) and Sanctions, Support & Service Leavers (SSSL) projects: improving domestic and international social security policy and practice		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: August 2013 – August 2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Prof. Lisa Scullion Philip Martin	Professor of Social Policy Research Assistant	July 2006 – Present June 2014 – Present
Period when the claimed impact occurred: August 2013 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact		
<p>The Welfare Reform Act 2012 and subsequent introduction of Universal Credit (UC) is widely recognised as the most fundamental reform of the social security system since its inception. When fully implemented, UC will cover approximately 7,000,000 people in the UK. Research evidence and recommendations provided by Prof. Scullion into the impact of these reforms on marginalised populations - including military veterans, migrants and disabled people - have informed debate and achieved demonstrable policy and practice influence at national and international level. Specifically, recommendations directly influenced responses from the UK Government and devolved administrations as well as the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to the implementation of social security. This resulted in a reduction in the waiting period for UC first payment (from 6+ weeks to 5 weeks); the introduction of a benefit sanctions warning pilot; and a GBP5,000,000 UK Government investment to enhance its Armed Forces Champions network. Salford's research also informed the development of the UK's first ever <i>Veterans' Strategy</i> and Ministry of Defence <i>Holistic Transition Policy</i>.</p>		
2. Underpinning research		
<p>Prof. Scullion has played an instrumental role in two significant projects that have directly impacted on social security policy and practice: (1) <i>Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change [WelCond]</i> (2013 – 2018); and (2) <i>Sanctions, Support & Service Leavers [SSSL]</i> (2017 – 2019).</p>		
WelCond project 2013 – 2018		
<p>The <i>WelCond</i> project involved 13 researchers, two support staff and eight PhD students, across six universities: Glasgow (Co-I Prof. Wright), Heriot-Watt (Co-Is Prof. Fitzpatrick/Prof. Johnsen), Salford (Co-I Prof. Scullion), Sheffield (Co-I Prof. Flint), Sheffield Hallam (Co-I Prof. Fletcher), and York (PI Prof. Dwyer). <i>WelCond</i> created an international interdisciplinary focal point for research on welfare conditionality [3.1]. Three linked elements of qualitative fieldwork underpinned the research and generated extensive original data: 54 semi-structured interviews with policy stakeholders; 27 focus groups with frontline welfare practitioners; and an innovative repeat, qualitative longitudinal panel study (<i>the largest ever project of its kind</i>). This panel study was undertaken with welfare service users across a range of policy areas and target groups who were interviewed up to three times over a two-year period (Wave A, n=481; total interviews=1,082) in 11 locations in England and Scotland [3.1].</p>		

Impact case study (REF3)

Prof. Scullion contributed specifically to research/analysis focusing on the policy areas of migration [3.2, 3.3] and disability [3.4], as well as to the Universal Credit (UC) research within the project. The findings [3.1 – 3.4] highlighted significant concerns in relation to:

- The ineffectiveness of welfare conditionality in facilitating movements off social security benefits and into the paid labour market
- The extreme financial hardship, worsened mental and physical health and negative behavioural outcomes triggered by benefit sanctions
- Deficiencies and inconsistencies in the mandatory support provided by DWP
- The impact of reforms on vulnerable and marginalised groups within this system.

WelCond recommended a fundamental review of the conditionality system; an immediate end to the sanctioning of disabled and vulnerable people; and a rebalancing of the social security system towards providing appropriate and meaningful support and away from applying sanctions.

SSSL project 2017 – 2019

Building on the *WelCond* project, Prof. Scullion led the development of the SSSL project in collaboration with the University of York (Co-I Prof. Dwyer). This project represented *the UK's first ever research* to focus on veterans' experiences of the social security system [3.5]. Two linked elements of qualitative fieldwork underpinned the research, generating further original data: 20 semi-structured interviews with policy stakeholders; and qualitative longitudinal research with veterans (Wave A n=68; total interviews=120). The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP), as a government department, has made commitments to the Armed Forces Covenant, which aims to ensure that veterans do not experience disadvantage when accessing public services. However, the findings raised significant concerns around inconsistencies in the DWP support provided to veterans; the lack of understanding of Service-related impairments by Work Coaches and benefits assessors; and the difficulties faced by veterans who are being moved to UC. SSSL made a series of recommendations [3.5], including:

- Jobcentre Plus (JCP) offices should have at least one designated individual who takes a leading role in supporting military veterans
- The DWP to undertake a comprehensive review of the Armed Forces Champion role
- The needs of veterans should be tracked by consistent recording procedures within the DWP
- The provision of enhanced support to veterans, particularly in the transition from legacy benefits to UC.

3. References to the research

3.1. Dwyer, P., Batty, E., Blenkinsopp, J., Fitzpatrick, S., Fletcher, D., Flint, J., Johnsen, S., Jones, K., McNeill, J., **Scullion, L.**, Stewart, A. and Wright, S. (2018) *Final findings report: Welfare Conditionality Project 2013 – 2018*, York: Welfare Conditionality Project. Available at: http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/40475_Welfare-Conditionality_Report_complete-v3.pdf

3.2. **Scullion, L.** (2018) Sanctuary to sanction: asylum seekers, refugees and welfare conditionality in the UK, *Journal of Social Security Law*, 25(3), pp. 158-172. Available at: <http://usir.salford.ac.uk/id/eprint/49566> (REF2)

3.3. Dwyer, P., **Scullion, L.**, Jones, K. and Stewart, A. (2019) The impact of conditionality on the welfare rights of EU migrants in the UK, *Policy & Politics*, 47(1), pp. 133-150. <https://doi.org/10.1332/030557318X15296527346800> (REF2)

3.4. Dwyer, P., **Scullion, L.**, Jones, K., McNeill, J. and Stewart, A. (2020) Work, welfare, and wellbeing: the impacts of welfare conditionality on people with mental health impairments in the UK, *Social Policy & Administration*, March 2020, 54(2), pp. 311-326. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12560> (REF2)

3.5. **Scullion, L.**, Dwyer, P., Jones, K., **Martin, P.** and Hynes, C. (2019) *Sanctions, Support & Service Leavers: Social security benefits and transitions from military to civilian life*, Final Report.

Available at: <https://www.fim-trust.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/20190610-FiMT-Final-Report-WEB.pdf> (REF2)

Journal papers **3.2**, **3.3**, and **3.4**, were subject to double blind peer review with international representation on the editorial board. Reports **3.1** and **3.5** derive from the following grants:

- Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) (2013 – 2018): ‘*Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change (WelCond)*’ Centres & Large Grants Programme, overall value GBP2,463,000 (University of Salford value: GBP145,658)
- Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) (2017 – 2019): ‘*Sanctions Support & Service Leavers: Welfare conditionality and transitions from military to civilian life (SSSL)*’, overall value GBP171,995.

4. Details of the impact

It is widely acknowledged that the welfare reforms of the last decade have had a negative impact on some of the most vulnerable members of society. The introduction of Universal Credit (UC) in 2013 marked a fundamental reform in the social security system and at full scale will serve approximately [7,000,000 people in the UK](#). Given the large number of claimants, it is imperative that the impact of the reforms is evidenced through research. The *WelCond* and *SSSL* projects have been at the forefront of this evidence base and have directly influenced social security policy and practice in the following significant ways:

***WelCond* project 2013 – 2018**

As Salford Co-I Prof. Scullion was part of the project management team and was involved in all aspects of delivery, including data collection and analysis, report writing, dissemination as well as policy briefings and presentations to Ministers, with particular focus on the policy areas of migration and disability, as well as UC **[3.1 - 3.4]**. Overall, *WelCond* generated **331 engagement activities**, **166 publications** and **94 influences on policy and practice [5.1]**. Details of the key impacts are outlined as follows:

Changes to the benefit sanctions regime

- In October 2015, as a direct result of our findings, the **DWP introduced a benefit sanctions early warning pilot [5.2]**. This gives benefit claimants warning of the intention to sanction and provides them with sufficient time to evidence why they were unable to meet the conditions of their claim.
- Between 2015 and 2018 Prof. Scullion’s input into written evidence submissions have **directly informed and been widely cited in the reports of seven Westminster or UK level inquiries**: Work & Pensions Committee (W&PC) 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018; Public Accounts Committee (PAC) 2018; Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) 2016; Equality, Local Government and Communities Committee (ELGCC), National Assembly for Wales (2017) **[5.2]**.
- In 2018, drawing on *WelCond* evidence and subsequent recommendations **[3.1, 3.4]**, the W&PC inquiry report (pp. 30-34 and 38-40) called for **disabled people to be exempted from conditionality and sanctions**, with the Chair of the W&PC Select Committee confirming that ‘*there was no evidence that conditionality contributed to improving employment outcomes for disabled people*’ and concluding that ‘*the government would be unwise to press ahead with in-work conditionality in the absence of any evidence of its effectiveness*’ **[5.2]**.
- Some 20 organisations cited our findings in their submissions to the 2018 W&PC inquiry, including Disability Rights UK, the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Scottish Government **[5.2]**.

Changes to the implementation of UC

- The 2016 W&PC ‘*UC in-work progression in Universal Credit*’ report cited our evidence on nine occasions. Based on our recommendations, new measures were brought in by the Government around **additional training for Work Coaches** and expediting the publication of sanctions and research trial data **[5.2]**.

- Between 2017 and 2018, our findings [3.1] were cited in four Westminster debates on UC, specifically by Patrick Grady MP, Neil Gray MP and Debbie Abrahams MP [5.3]. Based on our recommendations, **four significant changes to UC were announced by the UK Government**, namely: reducing the waiting period for first payment (from 6+ to 5 weeks); increasing advances for new claimants; offering advances to claimants sooner; and extending loan recovery times [5.2].

Direct influence on approaches of devolved administrations

- In September 2016, following the publication of our First Wave Findings, a motion to the Scottish Parliament triggered a parliamentary debate, initiated by the convenor of the Social Security Committee and focusing specifically on our findings [5.4]. The Minister for Employability and Training concluded the debate by confirming that our research had *'helped to shape our [Scottish Government] thinking'* and *'provides clear evidence that [...] the current UK Government's benefit conditionality and sanctions regime causes suffering'* [5.4]. The Scottish Government consequently explored ways to mitigate the effects of sanctions so that its new employment support programmes did not form part of the UK Government's sanctions regime [5.4] and has subsequently **used its devolved powers to end compulsion and sanctions**.
- In September 2017, Prof. Scullion (along with Prof. Wright, Glasgow) gave oral evidence to the National Assembly for Wales' Equalities, Local Government and Communities Committee inquiry on *Making the Economy Work for People on Low Incomes*. The Committee Chair confirmed in a letter that *'As a direct result of the evidence [Drs Wright and Scullion] gave, we wrote to the UK Government outlining our concerns about a number of elements about the implementation of Universal Credit'* [5.4] and **called for a pause in the rollout of UC** until the problems identified by our research had been addressed. The Chair also confirmed that he had *'no doubt that [...] we will again seek to draw on the excellent work of the Welfare Conditionality project'*, as the National Assembly for Wales develops future policy [5.4].

International recognition

- In 2018, Prof. Scullion (along with Prof. Wright, Glasgow) presented *WelCond* UC findings to OECD senior staff in Paris. One OECD Economist stated that this presentation had *'challenged the views of a number of OECD labour market experts'* and provided *'invaluable input into the upcoming OECD Economic Survey of the United Kingdom, which aims to provide a balanced assessment of the Universal Credit system'* [5.5].
- In 2018, following written and in person submissions, both the *WelCond* and *SSSL* outputs [3.1, 3.5] were cited in the final report of the UN Special Rapporteur's Inquiry into Extreme Poverty and Human Rights in the UK. The Rapporteur noted *WelCond's* evidence *'was very valuable in terms of helping me to hone my understanding of the system further and confirming the views that I had been able to form'* [5.6]. The UN report **adopted the *WelCond* recommendations for an independent review of sanctions** and the need to rebalance the social security system towards support [3.1].

SSSL project 2017 – 2019

The SSSL project, led by Prof. Scullion [3.5], has had significant influence across the UK Government's DWP and Ministry of Defence (MoD) and received the annual FiMT Research Award 2020 in recognition of its *'significant impact'* [5.7]. Specifically, the project has contributed as follows:

MoD/DWP develop benefits guidance for Service Leavers

- In 2018, in response to our interim findings and recommendations, the MoD and DWP committed to working collaboratively to provide **consistent guidance on the benefits system on MoD bases** as part of Service Leaver support [5.8].
- In 2019, in response to our final recommendations [3.5], the MoD committed to production of a **dedicated benefits guidance pack for Service Leavers** [5.8].

- In 2019, SSSL findings were **used within the MoD Joint Service Publication (JSP) 100**, which is the authoritative document for tri-Service holistic transition policy and procedures [5.9, pp. 2-3].
- In 2019, our research was **directly cited in a House of Commons Defence debate on veterans** and their negative experience of UC [5.10].

Direct contribution to UK's first ever Veterans' Strategy

- In 2018, following the publication of the SSSL interim findings, Prof. Scullion was asked to join the MoD *Veterans' Strategy Academic Advisory Group* and contributed directly to the **development of the UK Government's first ever [Strategy for our Veterans](#)** by providing comments on drafts of the Strategy and specific input in relation to social security to inform the revised Strategy, as confirmed by the Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Covenant Team [5.11].

Investment to increase the DWP Armed Forces Champions network

- With reference to impact on DWP policy and practice, a **GBP5,000,000 investment from the UK Government in the 2019 Spending Review** is directly attributed to Prof. Scullion's work: the Armed Forces Lead (DWP) confirmed that the research '*certainly caused the department to have a very close look at the way it supported veterans, and provided a well-researched evidence base to make some changes to the way we delivered that support*' [5.12]. The money was used to **increase the number of DWP Armed Forces Champions within UK Jobcentres**, along with appropriate training and job description for that role, to ensure consistent support to veterans [5.12]. This was a recommendation of the SSSL project [3.5] and represents a significant investment, particularly in the context of austerity.
- On 10 November 2020, Prof. Scullion met with the Minister for Welfare Delivery to **brief him on the findings and recommendations of the SSSL project**, following which he confirmed in a letter that '*your report has provided us with some really useful insight into veterans' experience of the benefits system*' [5.13].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

5.1. Researchfish: impact data (August 2020) [*WelCond project*]

5.2. UK Westminster Parliamentary Inquiries: written evidence submissions and outcomes (January 2015 – September 2020) [*WelCond project*]

5.3. UK Westminster Parliamentary Debates: citing project research and subsequent Government announcements (17 January 2017; 24 October 2017) [*WelCond project*]

5.4. Devolved UK Administrations (Wales and Scotland): Letter from National Assembly for Wales (March 2019); Televised and written evidence to ELGC Committee (September 2017); ELGC Committee report (May 2018); Motion to Scottish Parliament (September 2016); Speech in Scottish Parliament debate (September 2016) [*WelCond project*]

5.5. E-mail Correspondence: Economist, OECD (8 July 2019) [*WelCond project*]

5.6. E-mail Correspondence: UN Rapporteur (26 November 2018) [*WelCond project*]

5.7. E-mail Correspondence: Forces in Mind Trust, on confirmation of FiMT Award 2020 (9 March 2020) [*SSSL project*]

5.8. MoD and DWP Slides: presented at Interim Findings launch (19 April 2018) [*SSSL project*]

5.9. MoD (2019) Joint Service Publication 100 Defence Holistic Transition Policy Part 1 & Part 2 Combined: Directive and Guidance (October 2019): project referenced pp. 2-3 [*SSSL project*]

5.10. Screenshot: Veterans: Universal Credit, oral answers to questions, Defence, House of Commons (8 July 2019) [*SSSL project*]

5.11. E-mail Correspondence: Ministry of Defence Armed Forces Covenant Team (4 September 2018) [*SSSL project*]

5.12. Letter Correspondence: DWP Armed Forces Lead (16 October 2020) [*SSSL project*]

5.13. Letter Correspondence: Welfare Delivery Minister (10 November 2020) [*SSSL project*]