

Supplementary written evidence submitted by Public and Commercial Services union (PCS) (SAN0161)

Introduction

1. Helen Flanagan (PCS DWP vice-president) and Mark Serwotka (PCS general secretary) were grateful to give evidence before the select committee on 21 January.
2. During the course of that evidence, Helen and Mark made reference to targets given by DWP management to jobcentre and other DWP staff in relation to sanctions for both JSA and ESA claimants. This supplementary evidence provides documentary evidence of the pressure being put on jobcentre staff to make referrals for sanctions and for decision-makers to make adverse decisions on those referrals.
3. In the run-up to Mark and Helen appearing before the select committee, and in the immediate aftermath, members have inundated us with evidence about the pressure put on staff and the existence of targets – both of which are skewing the role of our members in jobcentres and polluting the relationship between jobcentre advisers and claimants. We have included a sample of this evidence – with redactions to protect both operational staff and junior management – but we also include unredacted documentary evidence from senior departmental managers too.
4. The evidence presented focuses on the two key job roles: that of the jobcentre plus (JCP) adviser in making a referral to sanction; and that of the DWP decision-maker who makes the decision on that referral.
5. Given that many of the emails, letters and memos in this evidence are internal correspondence they contain a high level of departmental jargon, we include a glossary of abbreviations and acronyms at the end of this evidence.

Pressure on JCP staff

6. Below is an email sent from an Adviser Team Manager to staff questioning what they consider to be a low level of referrals (DMAs) by their team. Given the claims of ministers and senior DWP officials that there are no targets for referrals, this message sits uneasily:

Sent: 29 October 2014 22:29

Subject: DMA

All,

I have just received [REDACTED]'s DMA breakdown for the office for last week, I am very disappointed to see that as a Team we sent up 7 DMA referrals (across all areas), how can this be correct? there are members of the Team that didn't send of any DMA last week, as discussed in my last 1-2-1's with you, appropriate DMA is an important part of your role, I really cannot believe that 7 referrals is an appropriate level.

It is not fair on claimants who have DMA taken by Adviser's or on Adviser's who are challenging claimants, if not all Advisers are been consistent, which is clearly the case on our Team.

This week I'll be expecting to see more appropriate levels of appropriate DMA been taken and consistently across the Team.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Adviser Team Manager [REDACTED] Department for Work
and Pensions | [REDACTED] | www.dwp.gov.uk
| E_M_A_I_L_B_L_O_C_K

It should be noted that the email was at 10.30pm, out of the office, when the manager would not have had access to the customer records – and so purely looking at numbers. It is clear the manager has been set a higher target or 'expectation' as they refer to "appropriate levels" of referrals. The reference to 1-2-1s is strongly linking the number of referrals with performance: if advisers don't make enough referrals they will penalised in their 1-2-1s.

7. A similar message, forwarded to us from another JCP district, was sent in November – this time praising a higher rate of sanction referrals, but still encouraging it ever higher:

From: [REDACTED] JCP MANAGER
Sent: 03 November 2014 12:54

[REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: DMA Last Week

All,

I've just seen last week's DMA results for our Team, I'm very pleased to see performance has increased across the Team and we are now making more appropriate DMA referrals, last week as a Team we sent 12 which is an improvement on the previous week.

However, given the above there are still members of the Team that have not sent any DMA referrals last week, as I have stated before we need to be consistent across the Team, please ensure that all appropriate DMA doubts are sent to the DMA DM's for a decision to be made.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Adviser Team Manager [REDACTED] Department for Work
and Pensions | [REDACTED] | www.dwp.gov.uk
| E_M_A_I_L_B_L_O_C_K

8. As we reported to the committee in our oral evidence (21/01/15) one of our members recently told us "This is not the job I signed up for. I want to get people into employment, not trip them up". Unfortunately, it seems that the Claimant Commitment is seen by management as a tool to trip claimants up. As a high level of compliance is responded to with dismay rather than contentment, as the email below shows:

From: [REDACTED] JCP MANAGER
Sent: 14 August 2014 14:27
To: [REDACTED]

Cc:
Subject: OFFICAL_1-2-1's

AA,

I have booked your 1-2-1's in with me as detailed below, if there are any problems with dates/times booked please let me know. Thank you [REDACTED] for booking these for me.

[REDACTED]	22/08/14	09.00-10.00am
[REDACTED]	26/08/14	11.20-12.20pm
[REDACTED]	26/08/14	09.15-10.15am
[REDACTED]	26/08/14	15.00-16.00pm
[REDACTED]	27/08/14	12.00-13.00pm
[REDACTED]	28/08/14	09.20-10.20am
[REDACTED]	28/08/14	14.00-15.00pm
[REDACTED]	29/08/14	11.00-12.00pm
[REDACTED]	29/08/14	14.00-15.00pm
[REDACTED]	01/09/14	09.20-10.20am

In preparation for your 1-2-1's next week (w/c 18/08/14) I will be spending a large amount of my week undertaking QAF's and observing your interviews.

As discussed at the Team meeting yesterday, please could you ensure you bring with you to your 1-2-1 evidence of what you have been doing and any particular good work that you have done during July and August, this should be relevant to your Key Work Objectives and show how you are meeting these.

Side points:

I have been looking at some performance data this morning with [REDACTED], which we will be discussing further during your 1-2-1, however a particular point I have noticed is from 01/07/14 until 12/08/14 (nearly 6 weeks), the Team conducted 1578 interviews. DMA action was taken 60 times, this means that in 96.19% of interviews our claimants satisfied their Claimant Commitments and did everything that was required of them to satisfy their obligations for claiming JSA, is that really accurate and a true reflection of our Claimant group?

The JCP manager clearly believes that it is impossible that 96% of claimants can be complying with their Claimant Commitment.

9. A similar message from another jobcentre reveals that compliance with the Claimant Commitment will only result in stricter conditionality to achieve a lower rate of compliance. An individual team member is also praised for achieving a very high rate of off flow – confirming that unusually high rates are welcomed, while unusually low rates (of sanction referrals or off-flow) are the subject of performance management measures:

From: [REDACTED] JCP [REDACTED]
Sent: 26 June 2014 14:04
To: [REDACTED]

Subject: DMA
Importance: High

Hi All,

I just wanted to highlight the following:

As a team we have not had any appropriate DMA referrals since 09/06/14 and a total of 2 for June compared to 7 in May.

Collectively you have seen undertaken 916 interviews from 01/06/14 to date and only 2 customers have not met their claimant commitment.

If all of your customers are meeting their commitment easily, then challenge them further to undertake more jobsearch activity.

Off Flows:

The team has achieved 39 off flows for May 2014 cohort with [REDACTED] having a whopping 11. Well done.

Can you please consider appropriate DMA for all interventions.

Cheers

[REDACTED]
Work Services Manager | Department for Work and Pensions | Jobcentre Directorate | [REDACTED]

It is also worth noting that the target is simply for "off flow" rather than for off flow into work – and that off flow targets are being used alongside demands for higher rates for sanction referrals.

10. Evidence from a jobcentre adviser member (see email below) suggests that there is a "national expectation" for an 18.1% referral rate for sanctions – as well as providing further evidence of management action to drive up referral rates.

From: [REDACTED] JCP [REDACTED]
Sent: 04 December 2013 08:49
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Pips,m Targets etc feedback

Hi [REDACTED]

Can this stay anonymous please...

I am off for a few weeks but in [REDACTED] district after my recent DMA meeting to discuss referrals, sanctioning claimants and upping our target to meet the national 18.1% expectation, our office against most of our staff's wishes have devised a tracker. This tracker staff feel is a name and shame or potential pip in waiting if you don't sanction someone and add it to the tracking sheet which the whole office has access to. Also there is a saving target which I know the media if they got hold of it would have a field day. I have been asked by my ATM to forward any emails from the union to them if they are asking about DMA or the subject we having been discussing off/on the last few months.



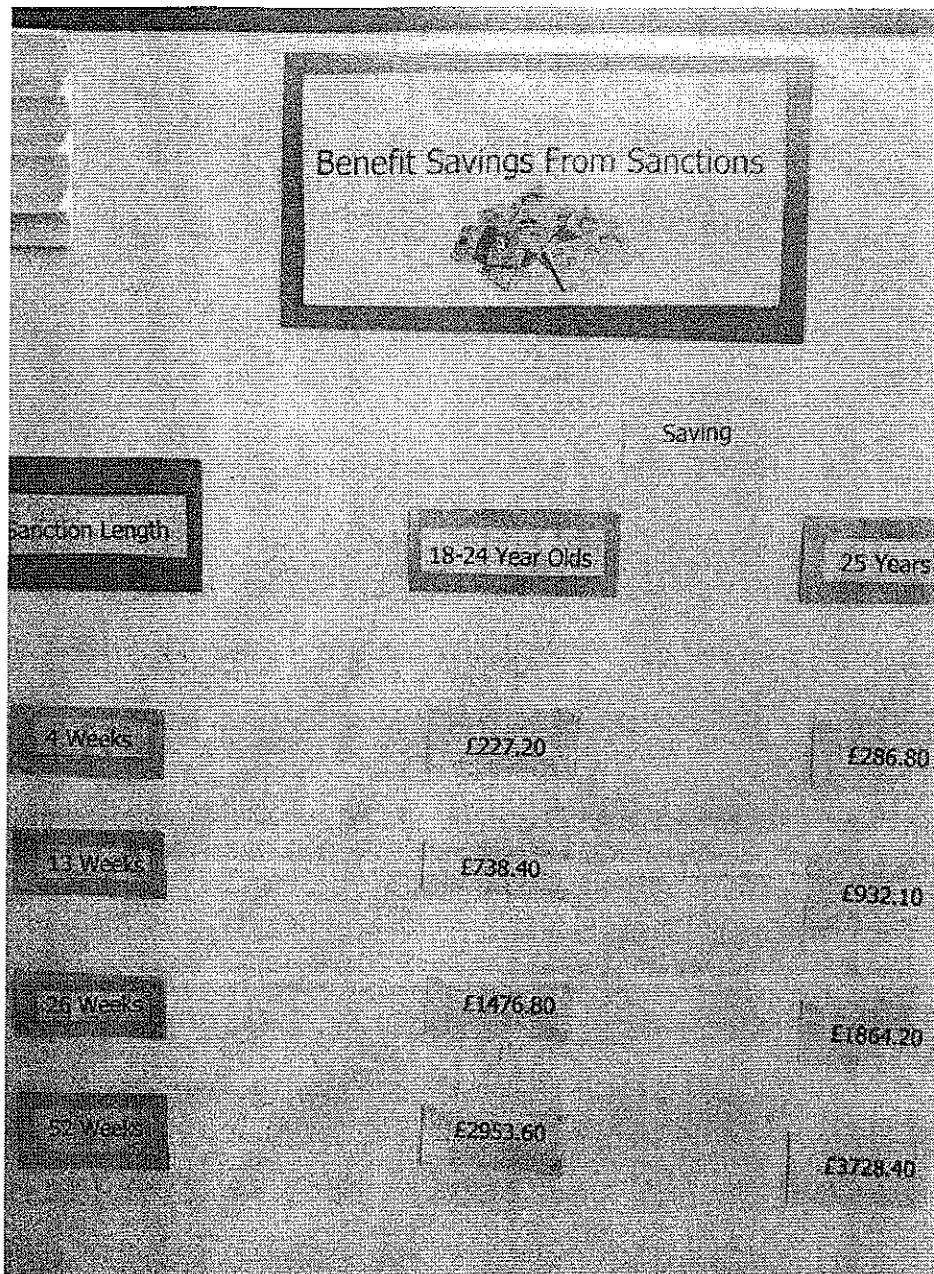
Thanks
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Jobcentre Plus | Jobcentre Directorate
[REDACTED] Jobcentrepus | [REDACTED]

www.dwp.gov.uk

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11. Jobcentre staff attending a regional briefing this month (January 2015) were told whether their individual jobcentres had met off-flow targets for ESA and for JSA at 26 weeks, 39 weeks and 52 weeks, as well as for Income Support. They were told whether their jobcentre was rated 'red' (bad) or 'green' (good) against each target.
12. The union has provided representation to members who have been given a 'must improve' box marking for not meeting individual off-flow targets or making sufficient DMA referrals – despite ministers repeatedly stating that there are no targets. In these cases there is no assessment of the caseload of these JCP advisers to check if they have made any incorrect decisions, only an assessment of their DMA referral rate (and how it compares to colleagues). This is a Kafkaesque situation in which the department denies any targets as it penalises its own staff for not meeting these targets.
13. At the regional briefing meeting referred to above staff were told that off-flows helped produce AME savings and figures would be produced "so that offices can see how their performance translates into monetary savings for the country."
14. This experience is not unique. In November 2013, we were sent this photo by a member of a board in a staff area of a London jobcentre – emphasising to staff how sanctions save money:



We believe this is part of creating a climate in jobcentre workplaces that sees benefit claimants as a cost to be reduced, not people to be helped and supported.

15. The pressure on staff in turn results in pressure on claimants. One JCP work coach emailed us on 12 January to say, "to have mass customers on daily signing is crazy, we don't have the staff to deal with the demand, the interventions that take place are purely to inconvenience someone."
16. Unfortunately the above is not just an example of poor management at one JCP but is systematic and deliberate. A memo (see Annex 1) from Sandra Lambert, Central England Director in the Work Services Directorate (covering 149 jobcentres) states in point 7 using 'hassle factor' in interventions. Previously JCP staff have reported to us terms being used including 'botherability', 'pester power' as well as advice to arrange

interviews to 'frustrate' claimants off benefits – as referred to in our original written evidence.

17. Another rep, from the south west of England, told us that "I have spent the last few years defending members who are being harassed by conditionality, given personal improvement plans and 'must improve' box markings. At every meeting I have conditionality hammered home to me, let alone all the misery it causes the claimants we are supposed to be helping".
18. An appraisal form used for jobcentre staff who are not making sufficient referrals in appended in Annex 4. No such form exists for staff whose referral rate is above average. As we stated in our written evidence (para 22): "Individuals can be placed on 'Performance Improvement Plans' (PIPs) for not making "enough" sanction referrals. Staff are also issued, or threatened with, a 'must improve' marking as part of their end year review. In recent pay awards this has meant that they would not receive a non-consolidated payment as part of the annual DWP pay award. Those who are put through formal performance procedures for not making 'enough' sanction referrals would receive no pay rise at all".
19. In our members' survey, 76% reported they had seen an increase in food bank referrals. We have frequently raised this issue with management and have been told that "Food banks do not form part of benefit policy and DWP does not monitor their usage, or have any plans to do so."
20. In October 2013, the department proposed that jobcentres ran a "Conditionality Week" to emphasise the new regime. After complaints from staff and their union the department withdrew the proposal. However, some districts went ahead with the backing of senior departmental managers (see letter in Annex 2) and ran schemes that included cash prizes for staff for solving conditionality-related anagrams (including 'idiots in stink locally' – an anagram for 'skills conditionality') or other such initiatives to make conditionality seem 'fun'. We believe such activity is at least in bad taste and representative of a management culture endemic in the department that is removed from the reality of the policy and focused only on driving higher referral and adverse decision levels

Pressure on ESA claimants

21. Our members are also concerned about the emphasis on conditionality and sanctions in training – even for ESA claimants – as the email below demonstrates:

From: Sent: 13 January 2015 11:42

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: [REDACTED]

Hi [REDACTED],

Thanks for this.

Although at the moment, I do not have any specific examples, I think that we need to address the issue of structural issues that may be causing inappropriate sanctions.

~~For example, none of the training material that has been delivered since October 2013, when the new sanctions regime became law, mentions the safeguards in the legislation for ESA claimants and vulnerable claimants. The law protects such claimants by mentioning proportionality and reasonable expectations. This applies to JSA claimants as well. The training that I attended was heavily skewed in favour of enforcing sanctions and wasn't balanced. I have often mentioned a Select Committee Memorandum to managers that clearly states the policy intent to protect vulnerable claimants. It seems the implementation of the policy has not gone according to plan.~~

Only yesterday, we were told that we have a challenge in the form of getting one ESA off flow per POD per day! Although this was not directly related to sanctions, there is a link, in that this kind of unrealistic edict could drive perverse behaviour in the form of inappropriate EA letters and ultimately sanctioning people. It also changes perceptions in a subtle way so that people begin to be judgmental about people on benefits. This then leads to a broader question about whether people are applying the Civil Service Code in their daily work.

22. We have raised our concerns with management about the harassment of ESA claimants and we copy our correspondence from December 2014, which raises concerns about inappropriate wording in letters that is outwith the legislation (see Annex 3) and is another example of 'hassle factor' thinking.
23. We have also received evidence that jobcentres are being set targets to place ESA claimants on work experience schemes – which is resulting in an increase in placements within the DWP because many employers are reluctant to take ESA claimants. Many members tell us there is nothing worthwhile for claimants to do on these placements – but they are having to provide them to hit a target. The email below provides evidence of this target:

I am writing to you all about the IS and ESA WEX challenge.

I know [REDACTED] has spoken to you about getting WEX starts and I also know you have some plans in progress however I have just had the figures up to and including Friday 19th September.

To date we have no starts for [REDACTED] at all; [REDACTED] have 1 ESA start only and [REDACTED] have 1 ESA and 4 IS starts so far.

As you are aware Work Experience is a factor in getting our claimants into work. The delivery of this challenge is not optional – there is an expectation for us to deliver two starts of each type every week. I appreciate that this is difficult, particularly taking account of the client group, however we must deliver and internal placements are within our gift.

You do not need to sell this as Work Experience. I know the mention of work can immediately but up a barrier with this client group. IS and ESA WEX meets the criteria if you deliver either a one day taster or a few short days. You can sell it to the claimant as an opportunity to see what it is like to work in an office so that when they are ready to return to work they will know whether office work is something they will be interested in. I will share with you what some other offices are doing. Some are holding a GIS to do the induction followed by a bit of shadowing across the office for one whole day. Some are having the claimants in the office as a small team for three days (3 hrs. per day 10.00 to 13.00) starting on a Wednesday so that the ISA WEX starters are inducted first and settled. The first day is the induction done by the same person who does the ISA inductions, the second day is shadowing AICS, Floor and WSR then on the third day the team are given a small list of names and phone numbers for ISA Claimants who have attended the Jobcentre during that week and they have to ring them and complete a four question insight template. Once the calls are done they then transfer the results onto a template. I can get the templates for you if this is the approach you wish to pursue.

These are simple ideas to get give the claimant a flavour of what it is like to work in an office. You can talk about WEX proper with them at a follow up interview.

I need each of you to identify claimants suitable for a little taster and to get two ESA and two IS claimants taking part in this each week starting from this week. To be clear ... I need two starts on ESA and two starts on IS from each site by this Friday, 26th September.

Please let [REDACTED] know as soon as you have identified suitable claimants so that he can support you in getting them into the office this week. We can not have another week where we do not deliver in this area of performance.

Thanks you for your hard work so far with this client group. I am confident that you will be able to deliver this challenge for us.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] | Customer Service Operations Manager | Department for Work and Pensions |

[REDACTED] | www.dwp.gov.uk | Please

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24. At the January 2015 regional briefing referred to above, staff were also told to "take a 35-hour jobsearch approach to ESA customers using Claimant Commitments".

Pressure on decision-makers

25. A letter from Neil Couling and Jason Feeney on 1 July 2013 announces a target for 80% of referrals to result in a sanction (see Annex 5). A further note from Jason Feeney in 2014 reinforces the 80% target for sanction referrals to result in an adverse decision (see Annex 6, 80% target mentioned in top section)
26. As a union we are receiving several messages similar to the one below which reveals that this 80% adverse decision target (that referrals become a sanction) is being used to pressure decision-makers into making adverse decisions regardless of the individual case:

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 14 January 2015 07:47
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: [REDACTED]
Sensitivity: Private

Hi [REDACTED]

As a LMDM [REDACTED] BC we are very closely monitored around sanction rates. Each week every DLMDM is given a print out of the percentage of Sanction decisions we are making. This is clearly a bullying tool in order to bring LMDM's into line with Senior Managements requirement for 80% of referrals to be a Sanction. In 1-2-1 meetings these UDR Stats are strongly focussed on by Line Managers who are too frightened not to keep raising the Management stand that we MUST ACHIEVE 80% SANCTION RATE. This smacks of a Bullying Culture Akin to that widely reported in the news recently about the same tactics within Lincolnshire NHS Services.

We are being forced into making adverse decisions and conducting perverse behaviours in order to hit our unachievable targets, all in order to achieve an 80% rate of sanctions. I am confident this is the same throughout LMDM offices as we are all managed by the same people at the TOP.

27. A member in an area already working on Universal Credit confirms to us that the target exists for UC claimants too, as confirmed by Mike Baker, Universal Credit Operations Director.

Conclusion

28. The evidence we have provided in this supplementary evidence reflects that inappropriate referrals are being made due to pressure on jobcentre staff (afraid of being given a poor box marking – at a time when the department is making cuts – and afraid their pay award may be affected, at a time when pay freezes and caps have hit staff pay over consecutive years).
29. Decision-makers are receiving a high rate of inappropriate referrals, yet are now faced with targets to impose a sanction in 80% of cases – and if they fail to meet this target will be subject to the same performance management procedures as their jobcentre colleagues

30. Our reps repeatedly raise with senior management evidence of targets, 'expectations' and pressure on staff – all of which is skewing the role of our DWP members and polluting the relationship between jobcentre advisers and claimants. We very much hope the committee's report will bring pressure for a fundamental rethink of sanctions policy.

Andrew Fisher
PCS National Policy Officer
28 January 2015

Sandra's Central England Firelighters "14 Asks"



Every Jobcentre should be able to say:

***"Everyone here is working hard, using
all means available, to find work"***

1. **Efficient use of space** – crowded forum areas, queues waiting to come in as claimants know they will hear about jobs and get work.

2. **Efficient use of IT** – the computers (don't call them IADs or WADs) need to be in use all the time

3. **Efficient use of staff** – sessions that run one after the other

4. **Efficient use of time** – we must achieve 1/3, 1/3 and a 1/3 with our PWPS claimants, but most importantly with our Daily Work Search Reviews.

5. **Efficient use of resources** – we have to achieve 50% of our pre Work Programme customers on weekly contact.

6. **Efficient use of staff** – embed the culture of "Show Me" with our people. Work Coaches asking claimants to sit with them at the computers and show what they have been doing. We also need to operate "Show Me" between WSM's and Work Coaches so that everyone within the team can operate digitally and tackle those who shy away from working with claimants at the computers.

7. **Quality of interventions** – interventions can range from purely being a "hassle factor" contact to a cohort of customers being called in together to do job search. We need to do quality interventions and use claimants to help each other.

8. **Quality of interventions** – involve employers more in our daily/weekly interventions and to help with 35 hour job search.

9. **Quality of interventions** – make the most of our links with our external partners i.e. can they help us run group sessions, have they got a regular presence in our offices?

10. **Quality of interventions** – we need to embed the culture that 'Looking for Work is a Full Time Job' and check that claimants understand this and that their CC reflect this.

11. **Quality of interventions** – we don't want to hear comments like "we've got too much to do", "Signing on Frontline" we need to hear "do you want to join my cohort group session?"

12. **Quality of interventions** – there are now 3 products available on CSL, "Getting a Job is a Full time Job", "Digital Jobs Market" and "Universal Jobmatch" 3 others will follow which are "Work Search Activity", "Interviews – how to prepare" and "Keeping the Job". We must ensure that all our people complete every module by end of December 2013.

13. **Quality of interventions** – we must continuously explain change and why we are doing it so our people understand rather than see it as extra work, etc

14. **Quality of interventions** – roles to be aligned.

Annex 2: Letter from Paul Williams re: Conditionality Week

Department for Work and Pensions
6th Floor, Caxton House, Tothill Street
London SW1H 9NA
Telephone [REDACTED]



Department
for Work &
Pensions

Paul Williams
Labour Market Operations Director
[REDACTED]

ER ref: 478-13e
To: TUS

Date: 01st November 2013

Reference: 131014 Conditionality Week

The National Conditionality week was indeed postponed by Neil however as I explained in my last letter, Districts are free to engage their staff in ways that they feel supports the business.

In this instance the District Manager decided to continue with a local approach to encourage staff to engage with conditionality, presenting the subject in a novel way. This was intended to support the proper application of the conditionality rules and not in any way detract from the seriousness of the messages.

I do agree, as mentioned in my previous reply, that the offer of financial rewards linked to this area was ill advised and was stopped as soon as I was made aware. I reiterate that at no point was an incentive offered in relation to referring or sanctioning a claimant's benefit.

With regard to your comments about the lack of reply from your letter ref 130516 I apologise if we have missed this. I am in the process of checking what diversity data is collected and will come back to you shortly on this matter.

Kind regards,

Paul Williams

Annex 3: TUS letter to DWP management re: ESA claimants

DWP Operations Trade Union Side.

Trade Union Side Office
26 Victoria Road
KIRKCALDY
KY1 1EA

Telephone 01592 647525



Public and
Commercial
Services Union



HR Officer (Employee Relations)
Jobcentre Plus
Kings Court
SHEFFIELD

3rd December 2014

Your ref:

Our ref: 141203 Benefit Reviews for ESA claimants, ESA Group Sessions

Dear [REDACTED]

Benefit Reviews for ESA Claimants

It has come to our attention that ESA customers are being invited to attend Benefit Review interviews in Jobcentres in Central England. This includes claimants in the Support Group. Originally this was being done on overtime on Saturdays but now appears that this is happening during normal working hours. This was raised previously in our letter 141107 Central England Work Services Overtime and when we met with Paul Williams on 19th November.

Originally some letters were issued to claimants that implied that non-attendance could affect Benefits. This has previously been raised with Central England management by CETUS who were given an assurance that more appropriate wording would be found for the invitation letters. Unfortunately letters have been issued with amended wording that Operations TUS still does not feel is acceptable.

The most recent version of this letter that we have seen states:

Why it is essential that you attend this interview

This interview has been arranged because your circumstances may have changed and we need to ensure your payments are correct.

We believe that this message can still convey the sense to vulnerable claimants that these interviews are mandatory and that their benefits could be affected if they do not attend.

Mandatory interviews are not supported by ESA legislation and giving the impression to potentially vulnerable ESA claimants that this is the case is a morally dubious activity and has the potential to cause serious reputational damage to the Department.

Furthermore we do not believe that the Benefit Review approach is appropriate and that the name "Benefit review" is misleading. If it was a genuine benefit review the interview would be conducted within the Benefit Centre network (they already have Benefit Integrity Centres and Performance Measurement to undertake these reviews), and there is a real risk of customers being given wrong information, as Jobcentre staff are not adequately benefit trained. This is not a supportive measure designed help claimants find work but seems to be more about intimidating claimants. We believe that this activity could be conducted by Compliance colleagues who have the appropriate training but only if there is a doubt about the claim. This action has the potential to upset vulnerable claimants which may lead to them harming themselves or staff working in Jobcentres.

PCS members who have worked extensively with this group of claimants have informed us that they believe that this approach undermines the relationships they have made and trust they have developed and can jeopardise the progress they have made in preparing claimants for work.

We do not believe that it is appropriate to use this approach with Claimants who are in the Support Group for ESA. In particular we have seen correspondence which states *"that we can call Claimants in with Psychosis and should attempt to call them in the afternoon as hopefully they will have taken their medication in the morning. The Claimants in the Support groups can be called and just gently advised that we are here if they need any help or support"* This cavalier approach puts at risk both staff working in Jobcentres and vulnerable claimants and again seriously risks the reputation of the department.

The Operations TUS therefore asks that the practice of using the Benefit Review to interview is ceased and that the misleading letters are withdrawn.

Staff working in Jobcentres should be able to conduct the work that Jobcentres are resourced for; namely getting claimants into, or closer to, employment. Using the Jobcentre budgets to fund the activities described above would appear to be a misuse of resources.

ESA Group Sessions

Evidence has emerged that Jobcentres throughout Central England have been setting targets for the number of Work Experience placements that need to be

achieved for ESA claimants. This appears to have driven perverse behaviour in as much as work coaches have been instructed that if an ESA claimant has attended a Group Information Session it should be recorded as Work Experience on their tracker. This appears to the Operations TUS a perverse practice designed to create a false impression of the number of meaningful Work Experience Placements achieved.

TUS requests that this practice is ceased and that only proper, meaningful placements are recorded.

Yours sincerely

Brian Nairn
DWP Operations TU Side Secretary

Annex 4: Performance Improvement Plan appraisal form

Restricted - Deliver

Name: XXX
Grade: Band C / Band B
Role: Personal Adviser / Assistant Adviser

Area for improvement

Jobseeker's Conditionality is not being consistently addressed and tested at every interview;

In discussion with my Manager I agree that the number of Jobseeker's Conditionality doubts I have raised is significantly out of kilter with my colleagues, and not reflective of the number of claimants I coach, my local labour market and my claimants' characteristics;

Performance in previous weeks has been:

w/c	ASE	Avail	RE	JSD	Total
6 May 2013					
13 May 2013					
20 May 2013					
27 May 2013					

To put this performance in context, the table below shows the total performance of other members of the team in a similar role.

w/c	Colleague 1	Colleague 2	Colleague 3
6 May 2013			
13 May 2013			
20 May 2013			
27 May 2013			

Actions to improve my performance

1. I will set high expectations for JSA claimants by agreeing stretching and achievable Jobseeker's Agreements that include:
 - o Ensuring that the claimant fully understands their responsibilities whilst claiming JSA.
 - o A number of steps consistent with job search being a job in itself;
 - o Agree SMART actions;
 - o SMART actions are underpinned by a Jobseeker's Direction; and
 - o Matching claimants to appropriate vacancies.
2. I will robustly test conditionality as the first and top priority for every intervention to identify if the JSA claimant has met the agreed high expectations set out in their Jobseeker's Agreement. Only after conditionality has been established will I progress the intervention.

Robustly testing conditionality will include:

Restricted - Deliver

- Interviewing JSA claimants on their signing days so that I can test ASE conditionality;
 - Checking that the steps the JSA claimant has taken are reasonable given their JSAG and skills e.g. applying for a HGV driver would not be an acceptable step if the claimant does not have a driving licence;
 - Checking that where the JSA claimant has written "No suitable vacancies" that there were no suitable vacancies. If you quickly identify suitable vacancies that were live at the time of the claimant's job search then "no suitable vacancies" is not an acceptable step;
 - Following up on all Jobseeker Directions and matched vacancies at every subsequent intervention.
 - [add or edit as appropriate]
3. I will raise a doubt to an independent Labour Market Decision Maker every time that I identify that a JSA claimant has not met our agreed high expectations set out in their Jobseeker's Agreement.

How I will demonstrate that I am delivering what is expected of me

The test for if I have improved my performance is: My line manager is assured that I am consistently and robustly applying Jobseeker's Conditionality at every intervention.

It is my responsibility to demonstrate to my line manager that I am consistently and robustly applying Jobseeker's Conditionality at every intervention.

To provide this assurance to my line manager:

1. I will review my performance with my line manager through weekly 121s.
2. I will bring evidence to my 121s that I have:
 - Set high expectations for JSA claimants by agreeing stretching and achievable Jobseeker's Agreements;
 - Robustly tested conditionality at every intervention; and
 - Raised a doubt to an independent Labour Market Decision Maker every time that I have identified that a JSA claimant has not met our agreed high expectations.
3. In addition, at my 121s my line manager will review:
 - If during QAF (XX times per week) I am delivering the actions agreed above; and
 - The number of Jobseeker's Conditionality doubts I have raised within the context of the number of claimants coached, our labour market, claimant characteristics, and the performance of other members of staff.
4. To Support me my manager will:
 - (Complete as appropriate)

Restricted - Deliver

Review period end date: XXX

Staff Signature:

Staff name: XXX

Date: XXX

Line Manager Signature:


Line Manager's name: XXX

Date: XXX

Annex 5: Neil Couling and Jason Feeney letter

Conditionality & Sanctions

Page 1 of 2

 Department for Work & Pensions	Neil Couling Jason Feeney
	Work Services Benefits Director Director
	1 July 2013

Dear colleague

“Conditionality - A Fair Deal”

We are writing to let you know about “Conditionality - A Fair Deal” and how you can get involved.

Labour market benefit conditionality sits at the heart of getting people jobs and is essential for the move to Universal Credit. We need to fully use existing rules now to make sure that current benefit claimants do all they can to find work. “Conditionality - A Fair Deal” aims to help make sure we all understand and apply those rules fairly but robustly across DWP. We do everything we can to help people find work, but equally we must expect the same of claimants. This isn't about punishment, it is about encouraging people to job search relentlessly until they are successful.

A range of activities are already underway or in the pipeline as part of this initiative. This includes a short survey aimed at advisers and decision makers and a review of all the information on the [Conditionality Hub](#).

We are also planning a “Conditionality Week” from 30 September - 4 October. This will be followed by an “Appeals Week” from 7-11 October. Although this seems a long way off, we wanted to give you early notification so you can start to plan.

There will be lots of ideas and materials to support you to help get the conversations going. However, the onus is on you to discuss with your colleagues and start planning local activities. You have told us, for example, that we need to get better at working collaboratively across our directorates and with our providers. So we would encourage Jobcentre Advisers, Labour Market Decision Makers and Work Programme providers to host joint activities. This will help us get a better understanding of each other's roles in conditionality, improve ways of working together and drive up the quality of referrals.

With the move to UC beckoning it is also the time to ask ourselves:

- How are we getting our claimants ready for UC?
- For your claimants, are you expecting looking for work to be a job in itself?
- How many of your referrals are being cancelled or allowed because we have got the process wrong? And what are you doing about it?
- Under UC all SMART actions on the Claimant Commitment are mandatory - what are you doing to get your claimants ready for this now?

- Under UC looking for work is expected to take 35 hours per week - what are you doing to get your claimants ready for this now?
- Are we raising a doubt first time and every time that jobseekers are not meeting their JSAg?

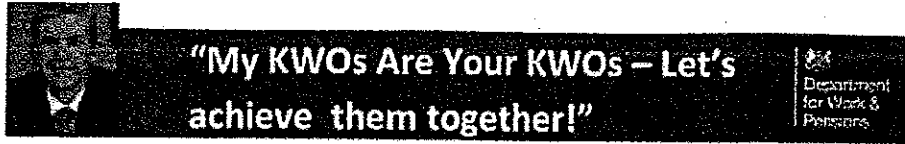
We all need to make sure that referrals are completed as accurately as possible so that we don't waste each other's time and decisions are made with all the relevant information. This should give us all greater confidence to justify decisions to claimants and help reduce the numbers of appeals against them. As part of this we have both agreed a target of raising the adverse decision rate to 80% - getting four out of five referrals to decision makers as correct. That involves advisers making sure referrals are of a quality and that decision makers understand the vital part applying a sanction can have in getting someone back to work.



There are no targets or benchmarks for the number of benefit sanctions applied. Neither should individual targets appear in performance agreements. We need to be very clear about that, especially given the recent media coverage alleging that local targets are imposed. A recent internal inquiry ^{W&S} found no evidence of the practice, although there has been some misunderstanding in the past.

It is all about quality not quantity and working together across benefits and jobcentres to get people back to work.

Neil Couling Jason Feeney

Work Services Director Benefits Director



Activity 	Measure 
Mandatory Reconsiderations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To be completed within 10 days (7 by March 2015) – from date DRT receive all evidence* (see below) > 80% of Mandatory Recons uphold decision > Sandra Maughan has promised the Minister we won't have any MRs which take us more than 90 days to complete
Appeals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Appeals to be submitted to HMCTS with 28 days from their request (90%) (21 days by March 2015). 95% in 21 days April 2015 onwards > 80% of Appeals uphold decision (awaiting new measure)
Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To achieve at least 85% Quality for MRs > To achieve at least 85% Quality for Appeals > To achieve at least 90% for Call Quality
AWDL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To achieve less than 6.9 annual working days lost
Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Make an effective contribution to an engagement score of between 60% - 65%
Call Backs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > To achieve at least 97% for HOTT handovers in 3 hours – 99% in 1 hour; 95% in 3 hours to be "voice to voice"
Performance Variation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Achieve performance variation between the best and worst performing site of no greater than 5%

*Note that you should record DOR in DMACR as DOR in DWP until further changes to DMACR can be made to allow us to measure customer service

BA1 Group Secret 1 2014

29 January 2015

Glossary

AJCS	Accessing Jobcentre Plus Customer Services (<i>enquiry/reception type appointments</i>)
ASE	Actively Seeking Employment
Assistant Work Coach	AO Grade assistant adviser/clerk
Avail	Availability
BC	Benefit Centre
CC	Claimant Commitment
DMA	Decision Making and Appeals
FJR	Fortnightly jobsearch review
FTA	Fail to attend
GIS	Group Information Session
HOTT	Handover of telephony target (<i>from the contact centre to the benefit centre</i>)
IAD/WAD	Internet Access Device/Web Access Device (<i>Computer</i>)
JSAG	Jobseekers Agreement
JSD	Jobseekers Direction
KWO	Key Work Objectives (<i>individual targets for staff</i>)
LMDM/DM	Labour Market Decision Maker/Decision Maker
MR	Mandatory reconsideration
PWPS	Post Work Programme Support
QAF	Quality Assurance Framework (<i>An observed interview where staff are assessed and given feedback</i>)
RE	Refusal of employment
SMART	Stretching, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Timebound (<i>in reference to objectives or claimant commitments/JSAGs</i>)
TUS	Trade union side (<i>departmental negotiators</i>)
UDR	Upheld decision rate
WEX	Work experience (<i>individual</i>)
WJR/WSR	Weekly jobsearch/work search review
Work Coach	EO grade adviser

