



Benefits Newsletter May 2016

1. Universal Credit

In-Work Conditionality/In-Work Progression Trial

The Works and Pensions Committee, chaired by Frank Field MP, has published a report about the in-work progression trial (in-work conditionality) which the DWP has been running in 10 Jobcentres since April 2015 and a further 80 since December 2015.

The trial has involved 15,000 UC claimants who are

- in the all-work related requirements group and
- have earnings above £338 per month for single person (£541 for a couple) and below the Conditionality Earnings Threshold (CET), which is individually set but up to a maximum of the equivalent of 35 hours work at the national minimum wage. (Claimants with earnings below £338/£541 per month are treated as jobseekers with full conditionality)

The CET is the amount of hours the claimant is required to be available for (relevant number of hours) multiplied by the National Minimum (Living) Wage.

- For a single claimant over 25 who is looking for full time work the threshold is 35hrs x £7.20 (NLW) = £252 per week, (£1,092 a month) gross income.
- For a lone parent aged 24 with a 4 year old child the amount would be 16hrs x £6.70 (NMW) = £107.20 per week (£464 a month) gross income.
- For a joint claimants the CET is the number the sum of the couple's individual thresholds.

Claimants have been randomly allocated to 1 of 3 groups. The group regimes are:

- IWP Group 1 – Work Search Reviews with JCP Work Coaches every 8 weeks
- IWP Group 2 – Work Search Reviews fortnightly
- IWP Group 3 – (control group) current Light Touch regime – telephone interview at start of claim followed by a telephone interview after 8 weeks

The Works and Pension Committee found that there is 'insufficient information in the public domain about the number and characteristics of participants and effects on their pay and employment'. They concluded that there is 'no comprehensive evidence on which to determine how to deliver an effective in-work service', so the DWP will be 'learning on the job'.

When UC is introduced for all claimants the DWP estimates there will be one million working people affected by in-work conditionality. The report also recommended that Jobcentre Work Coaches need more training and accreditation to enable them to gain the additional and enhanced skills they need to deliver this support.

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201516/cmselect/cmworpen/549/549.pdf>

York University Report on Universal Credit

Researchers at York University have published '**Welfare Conditionality: Sanctions, Support and Behaviour Change**' a report on their findings interviews with 480 'welfare service users' in England and Scotland including 58 UC claimants;.

They found that

- sanctions had severely detrimental financial, material, emotional and health impacts on those subject to them; e.g. one claimant was left with only £7 a month to live on after sanction and another man lost his home as the result of a sanction and another was sanctioned because he was unable to supply a medical note to say he was in-hospital following a suicide attempt;
- in-work conditionality could be counterproductive and introduce new disincentives to work; e.g. one claimant had a 7 day sanction at £10 a day for missing an appointment because she was working at the time and was unable to contact them by phone to inform them.
- there was a mismatch between the flexibility required by employers and the rigidity of UC job search requirements and the Jobcentre Plus appointments system; e.g. zero hour contract employees are often unable to take a second job because they need to be available when their employer needs them;
- most participants found the 35 hour a week job search requirement as unrealistic and inappropriate; e.g. one man working 16 hours a week was required to do 19 hours a week job search despite his rural location and lack of internet access;
- support services such as Universal Jobmatch and the premium rate telephone line were often insufficient, costly or ineffective; e.g. one claimant who was unable to drive was asked to apply for a driving instructor job.

For the full report see: <http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/publications/>

Latest UC Stats

The latest statistics published by the DWP show that 247,801 people were on the Universal Credit caseload across the UK, as of 14th April 2016. Of these, 97,504 (39%) were in employment and 150,299 (69%) were not in employment.

In North Staffordshire the figures of UC claimants have continued to increase dramatically since UC was introduced in Stoke on 1st February 2016. In Stoke-on-Trent there were 467 claims for UC between 17th March and 5th May 2016 and there are currently 972 UC claimants on the UC caseload whose claim for UC has been awarded; this has increased from 746 in March 2016 (30% increase).

Local Authority	New Claims 17 March – 5 May 2016	Caseload April 2016		
	Total	In employment	Not in emp	Total*
Stoke-on-Trent	467	154	298	448
Newcastle	101	146	189	335
Staffs Moorlands	161	82	112	189
Total	729	382	599	972

*Figures in this table have had statistical disclosure control applied to avoid the release of confidential data. Totals may not sum due to the adjustments.

46% of claimants on the UC caseload in North Staffordshire are under 25

	under 25s
Stoke	205
Newcastle	159
Staffs Moorlands	83
	447

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/universal-credit-29-apr-2013-to-5-may-2016>

2. Reports into Benefit Related Deaths

The DWP has published redacted copies of peer reviews of 49 benefit related deaths between February 2012 and August 2014 following a ruling by the Information Tribunal. The Independent reports that 40 of these 49 cases are thought to be related to the suicide of a benefit claimant.

Most of the information contained in the peer reviews has been redacted but there are recommendations which indicate there have been failings on the part of the DWP staff to identify claimants who are vulnerable and to offer appropriate support to those who have expressed suicidal thoughts.

The DWP has issued a statement with the release of this data to state that since the peer reviews were carried out they now have a 'Vulnerability Hub' with resources to enable staff to support vulnerable claimants and for those who make a reference to self-harm they have a 'Six Point Plan' in place to outline the procedures which need to be followed. However there are indications in the reports that the 'Six-Point Plan' is still not being followed and there is a need for more staff training.

PR 6, PR17, PR36 and PR44 contain the most information. We have extracted the recommendations from all 49 of the reviews – if you would like a copy contact tina.mendolia@snsCab.org.uk.

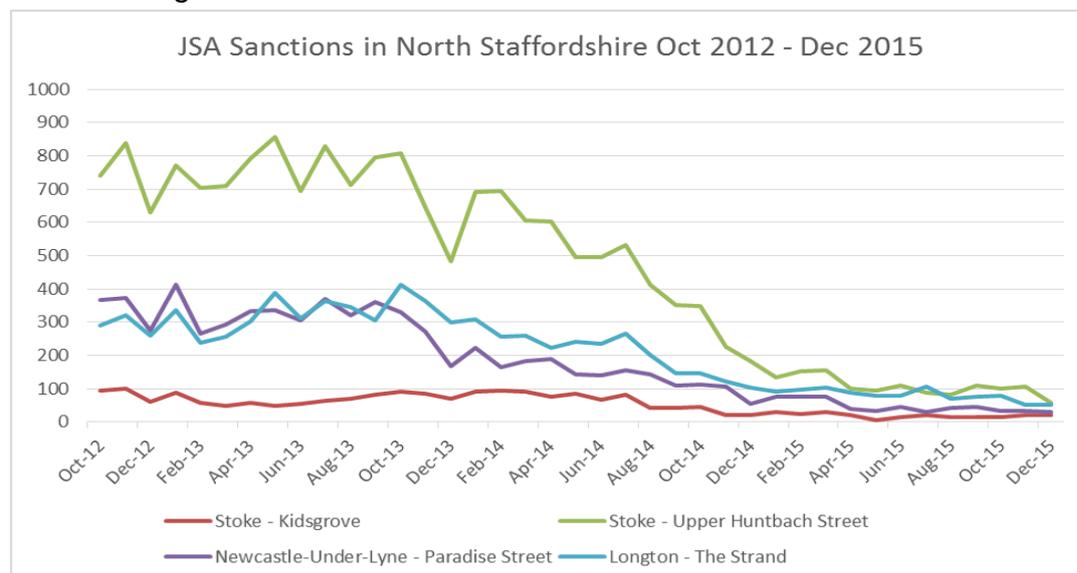
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dwp-foi-releases-for-may-2016>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/dwp-repeatedly-warned-of-failures-to-protect-vulnerable-benefit-claimants-internal-documents-reveal-a7029691.html>

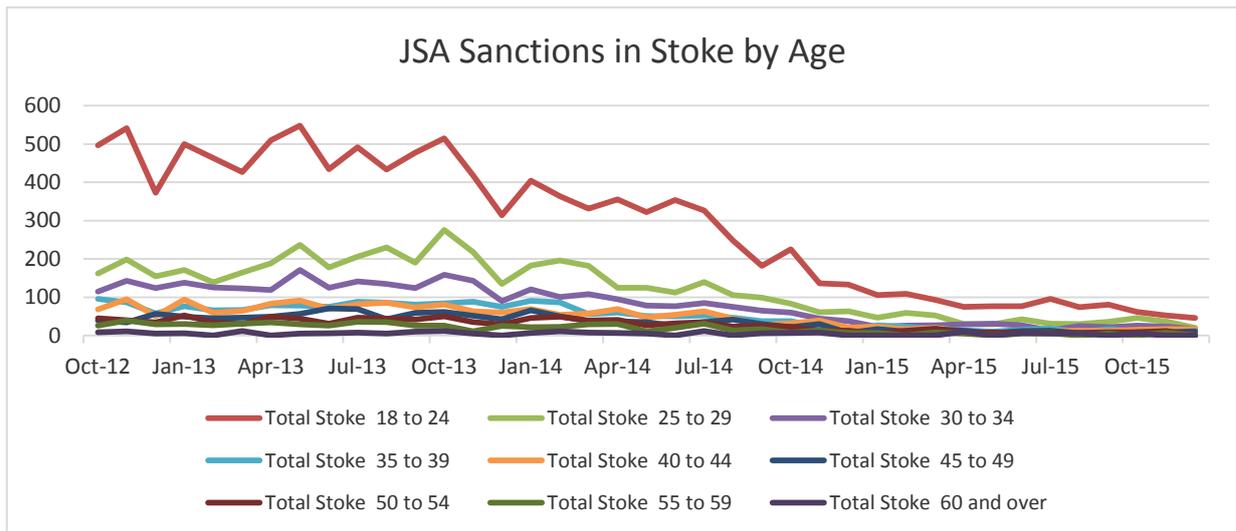
3. JSA and ESA Sanction Statistics

JSA Sanctions

The latest JSA sanctions published in May 2016 continue to show a considerable decrease in the number of sanctions applied by Jobcentres in North Staffordshire between 22nd Oct 2014 and 31st December 2015. 42.69% of sanctions were applied to claimants aged 18-24.

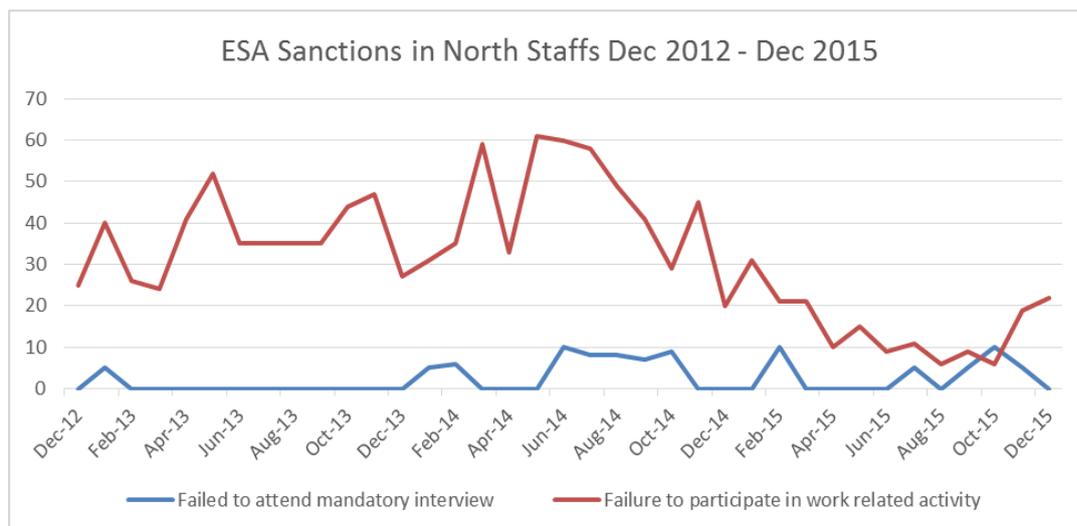


Total JSA Sanctions by Year in North Staffordshire	
Oct 12 - Dec 12	4,346
Jan 13 - Dec 13	17,301
Jan 14 - Dec 14	10,607
Jan 15 - Dec 15	3,013
Total	35,267



ESA Sanctions

In the period 1st January to 31st December 2015 there were 215 ESA sanctions applied to 152 claimants in North Staffordshire (563 in 2014). The majority of sanctions were applied because a claimant had failed to complete a work-related activity. There has been an upturn in the number of sanctions applied in the last quarter of 2015.



<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/jobseekers-allowance-and-employment-and-support-allowance-sanctions-decisions-made-to-december-2015>

4. PIP and DLA for hospital in-patients under 18

The DWP has published new regulations The Social Security (Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment) (Amendment) Regulations 2016 (SI.No.556/2016), which come into force on 29th June which remove the 84-day and 28-day payment limits for DLA and PIP for hospital in-patients who were under 18 on the day they enter hospital.

This follows a Supreme Court Judgment Cameron Mathieson v Secretary of State for Work and Pensions [\[2015\] UKSC 47](https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2014-0166-judgment.pdf)

The new regulations also prevent claimants who are under 18 being invited to claim PIP if they are under 18 and receiving DLA on the day they enter hospital. See

<https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2014-0166-judgment.pdf>
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2016/556/made>