Institution: University of York		
Unit of Assessment: 20 - Social Work and Social Policy		
Title of case study: The Welfare Conditionality (WelCond) Project: towards a fair and effective welfare system		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2019		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s): Peter Dwyer Jenny McNeill	**Role(s) (e.g. job title):** Professor Researcher	**Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:** 2013-present 2014-2018
Period when the claimed impact occurred: Aug 2013 – Dec 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No		

1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words)

Under the leadership of the University of York, the Welfare Conditionality (WelCond) project has achieved demonstrable impact with a range of international, national and regional policy makers and practitioners. Evidence and recommendations derived from its empirically grounded analysis have informed debate and influenced welfare policy and practice in, and beyond, the UK. WelCond's findings have been used by policymakers in the governments of the UK, Scotland, Wales and the Isle of Man, and contributed to specific policy changes and decisions e.g. about the implementation of Universal Credit. Additionally, evidence from WelCond has influenced the findings and recommendations of major national and international inquiries and reports into the impacts of benefit sanctions and the effectiveness and impacts of welfare conditionality (e.g. The House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee, the National Audit Office, the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development, and the United Nations).

2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words)

Funded under the ESRC's Centres and Large Grants Scheme, 'Welfare conditionality: sanctions support and behaviour change' (WelCond) was a major five-year (2013-2018) programme of research involving 13 researchers and two administrative staff and supporting a cohort of eight linked PhD studentships. This large collaborative project brought together researchers across six English and Scottish Universities with the University of York acting as the lead institution. As WelCond project PI, Professor Peter Dwyer (York) provided strategic and intellectual leadership and took an active role in all of the knowledge exchange and impact activities set out below (e.g. drafting evidence submissions, organising and attending events). The York based Project Manager and Impact Officer coordinated and delivered day to day, budgetary, administrative and knowledge exchange and impact support to collaborating partners. The project aimed to develop an empirically and theoretically informed understanding of the ethicality and the effectiveness of welfare conditionality, in promoting and sustaining behaviour change among a diversity of welfare recipients over time.

A principle of welfare conditionality makes eligibility to certain basic, publicly provided, welfare benefits and services dependent on an individual first agreeing to meet particular compulsory duties or patterns of responsible behaviour. More specifically, within social security systems it routinely makes continued access to social welfare benefits contingent on individual claimant's engagement with mandatory work focused interviews, training/support schemes and/or job search requirements; with failure to undertake such specified activities leading to benefit sanctions. As detailed in our research **[A-F]** the use of conditional welfare arrangements that combine elements of sanction and support have been extended and intensified in recent decades and have become an established feature across many diverse fields of welfare policy.

Three linked elements of qualitative fieldwork underpinned the research, and generated extensive original data for analysis. These were: 54 semi-structured interviews with policy stakeholders; 27 focus groups with frontline welfare practitioners; and an innovative repeat, qualitative longitudinal panel study undertaken with a diversity of welfare service users subject to conditional welfare interventions. This latter component is one of the largest of its type ever

undertaken. Nine purposively sampled cohorts of respondents were interviewed up to three times across a two-year period ('wave A' n=481; total interviews=1,082) in eleven locations in England and Scotland. Key findings highlighted by WelCond include:

- The ineffectiveness of welfare conditionality in facilitating people's movement off social security benefits and entry into, or progression within, the paid labour market over time.
- The profoundly negative, personal, financial, health and behavioural outcomes triggered by benefit sanctions.
- Deficiencies in much of the mandatory support available, and the pivotal role of appropriate and personalised support in triggering and sustaining movements into paid work and/or the cessation of problematic and anti-social behaviour **[A-C, E, F]**.

Additionally, the Forces in Mind Trust (FiMT) funded a linked project, 'Sanctions Support and Service Leavers' (2017-2019), a collaboration between the Universities of York (Dwyer) and Salford (Scullion). This project used the methods developed by WelCond to explore armed forces veterans' transitions from military to civilian life, and their experiences of the contemporary social security system. Key findings included:

- A lack of collaboration between the DWP and the MOD in relation to veterans' resettlement into civilian life.
- A pressing need to improve the quality and consistency of the information and support offered within the social security system to those transitioning from the armed services into civilian life.
- A need for the DWP to rethink and expand the role of Armed Forces Champions **[D]**.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[A]   **Dwyer, P.** and Wright, S., (2014) 'Universal Credit, ubiquitous conditionality and its implications for social citizenship', *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice*, 22(1): pp,27-35 https://doi.org/10.1332/175982714X13875305151043

[B]   * **Dwyer, P.** (2018) 'Punitive and ineffective: benefit sanctions within social security', *Journal of Social Security Law*, 25(3): pp.142-157 https://uk.westlaw.com/Document/IB435C020EBF011E89F88CCBB10113015/View/FullText.html

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

[D]   Scullion, L., **Dwyer, P.**, Jones, K. Martin, P. and Hynes, C. (2019) 'Sanctions, support and service leavers: social security benefits, welfare conditionality and transitions from military to civilian life', *Final Report* available at: http://www.welfareconditionality.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/FiMT-Final-Report.pdf

[E]   * **Dwyer, P.** et al. (2020) 'Work, Welfare and Wellbeing? The impacts of welfare conditionality on people with mental health impairments in the UK*', Social Policy and Administration,* 54(2): pp.311-326 https://doi.org/10.1111/spol.12560

[F]   * Wright, S. and **Dwyer, P.** (2020) 'In-work Universal Credit: claimant experiences of conditionality mismatches and counterproductive benefit sanctions', *Journal of Social Policy,* available in FirstView at: https://doi.org/10.1017/S0047279420000562

* selected for submission to REF2021.

References **[A-C, E, F]** are all peer reviewed journal articles. References **[A]**, **[C]** & **[D]** are being submitted to REF2021. Reference **[D]** is an extended project report for a study that subsequently received the funder's (i.e. the Forces in Mind Trust's) 2019 impact award.

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

The WelCond project worked to proactively engage in knowledge exchange and impact activities with a host of international, national and regional policy maker, practitioner and welfare service user audiences and generated 166 publications, 331 engagement activities, and 94 influences on policy and practice **[1]**.

UK policy impact

At the *UK level,* WelCond's written evidence submissions have directly informed and been widely cited in the reports of ten Westminster/UK level inquiries (Work and Pensions Committee (W&PC) 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 (x2), 2020; National Audit Office (NAO) 2016; Public Accounts Committee (PAC), 2016, 2018; Social Security Advisory Committee (SSAC) 2016). Dwyer also gave oral evidence to the Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee's (W&PC) two inquiries into benefit sanctions in 2015 and 2018 **[2a-i]**. In response to the 2015 inquiry the DWP introduced (October 2015) a sanctions warning pilot, as recommended within the 'Written evidence from WelCond project' **[2a]**. Citing WelCond's evidence and in line with our recommendations, the 2018 W&PC report called for disabled people to be made exempt from conditionality and sanctions and for the application of conditionality to in-work Universal Credit (UC) claimants to cease. The testimonial from the current Chair of the W&PC states, *"in particular, the Committee drew on the Project's evidence in reaching its conclusions that there was no evidence that conditionality contributed to improving employment outcomes for disabled people, and in concluding that the government would be unwise to press ahead with in work conditionality in the absence of any evidence of its effectiveness"* **[2g]**. WelCond also achieved secondary impact when 20 other organisations, including the Scottish Government, cited our findings in their submissions to the 2018 inquiry **[2g]**.

With regard to UC, alongside providing written evidence to relevant Westminster inquiries, WelCond actively briefed MPs drawn from across all parties. Subsequently, WelCond's evidence was cited nine times in the W&PC (2016) inquiry report on 'UC in-work progression'. Responding to the inquiry, the Government announced new measures including more training for Work Coaches, and bringing forward publication of sanctions and research trial data, as recommended by WelCond **[2b]**. Four Westminster debates on UC also took place in late 2017 and 2018. Papers and evidence from WelCond, including **[A],** were directly cited in parliamentary debates by Patrick Grady MP, Neil Gray MP and Debbie Abrahams MP **[4]**. Incrementally, the UK Government subsequently announced four significant changes to UC (i.e. increasing advances for new claimants and offering them sooner, abolishing the initial 7 day waiting period, and extending loan recovery times) all recommended by WelCond **[2a-i] [4]**.

WelCond's impact on Westminster/UK level policy is further evidenced in several ways. First, by the Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary's invitation for Dwyer to join the Labour Party's Commission on Social Security and co-author a national policy paper on reforming the social security sanctions regime. This report and wider evidence from WelCond was *"extremely useful in contributing to the Labour Party's policy development and campaigning"* **[3a]**, fed into the Labour Party 2019 consultation Rebuilding a Just Social Security System **[3b]** and was significant in informing the Party's 2019 election manifesto commitment to *"scrap Universal Credit"* **[3c]**. Second, the NAO noted that the *"range and depth of evidence"* provided by WelCond *"directly informed their understanding of the experience of benefit sanctions"* and triggered a recommendation in their report for greater DWP engagement with others working to consider sanction outcomes **[2d]**. Third, Dwyer delivered invited face to face briefings to senior civil servants at DWP, London and the Social Security Advisory Committee. Additionally, the 'Sanctions, Support and Service Leavers' (SSSL) project (developed using WelCond's methods and undertaken in collaboration with Salford University), has directly informed debate in the UK parliament **[5f-i]** and triggered significant policy change. The Armed Forces Lead, DWP, has stated it *"caused the department to have a very close look at the way it supported veterans…. more specifically we were able to use the research to support a £5 million investment designed to significantly bolster the Armed Forces Champions (AFCs) network during the 2019/2020 financial year"* **[5a]**. Its influence has been further acknowledged on two fronts. First, the SSSL project received FiMT's annual Research Award **[5c]** for 'significant impact', with FiMT's 2019

Impact Report citing its role in directly influencing the award of the additional GBP5,000,000 funding (as noted above), promoting increased collaboration between the DWP and the MoD as a routine part of veterans' resettlement and the development of *"a new training module to help assess specific health issues related to service"* **[5d]**. Second, Will Quince, Minister for Welfare Delivery, UK government has stated that he will continue to *"actively engage… on this work going forward ... to ensure we provide members of the Armed Forces Community with the help and support they need and deserve"* **[5b]**.

Impact in the devolved administrations of Wales and Scotland and the Isle of Man Government

Through face-to-face briefings with politicians and senior civil servants alongside evidence to inquiries etc. WelCond has achieved policy impacts within the *devolved administrations* of the UK. In 2017 Dwyer and team members gave written and 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 **[6b-d]**. *"As a direct result"* of WelCond's evidence the committee chair, John Griffiths AM, wrote to Westminster Secretary of State David Gauke outlining a range of concerns about UC, and called for a pause in its rollout until the problems identified by WelCond could be addressed **[6a]**. In 2018, Dwyer further briefed him and other Welsh government senior civil servants on Welcond's final findings. Mr Griffiths subsequently stated that he has *"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 **[6a]**.

WelCond's interactions with the Scottish Parliament and Government have also had verifiable policy impact. A November 2016 WelCond briefing to MSPs and senior civil servants at Holyrood led to Sandra White MSP, convenor of the Social Security Committee, initiating a one-hour parliamentary debate specifically focussed on WelCond's First Wave Findings **[6e, 6f]**. Concluding the debate, Employability Minister Jamie Hepburn stated that Welcond's work had *"helped to shape our [Government] thinking"* **[6g]**, and confirmed that the Scottish Government was exploring ways to mitigate the effects of benefit conditionality and sanctions (as recommended by WelCond), so *"that devolved employment programmes will not interact with the UK Government's horrendous sanctions regime"* **[6g]**. Subsequently, the Scottish Government has used its devolved powers to end compulsion and sanctions within Scotland's employment support programmes. Furthermore, WelCond's work has directly impacted social security policy in the Isle of Man. Dwyer's invited 2018 visit to the Isle of Man Government and WelCond's evidence was instrumental in the Manx administration's decision to *"abandon plans to introduce UC or increase or intensify our activation regime"* **[7]**.

International impact

WelCond has achieved notable *international* impact. Following written and, in person submissions, WelCond outputs were cited in the final report of the UN Special Rapporteur's (2018) 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"* **[8]**. A WelCond recommendation for an independent review of sanctions and a rebalancing of the social security system towards support was adopted in the UN report. In addition, the OECD has also stated that, a WelCond seminar to its senior staff in 2018 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"* **[9]**.

Further afield, Dwyer delivered the Sir Roland Wilson Public Lecture (2015) and the opening plenary at the Australian Council of Social Service national conference (2018) also meeting with a range of senior civil servants, third sector organisations and end users **[10a-c]**. As noted by a senior Australian civil servant, WelCond's evidence *"has been quoted extensively in submissions to Australian senate inquiries, including inquiries on jobactive… and ParentsNext"*

and its findings *"have stimulated policy discussion within the "Department for Social Services, Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet and academia"* **[10b]**.

In New Zealand, CPAG NZ called for an end to sanctions impacting on children **[10d]** and the Aotearoa, NZ Association of Social Workers condemned a policy proposal to remove welfare payments from gang members **[10d]**, with both organisations citing WelCond's UK evidence base and findings to support their positions. Subsequently, *"guided by the broad Welfare Review in 2018 and findings from the 2018 UK Welfare Conditionality research the New Zealand government has committed to removal or easing of sanctions for some of the most vulnerable groups, including sole parents and Jobseeker support recipients"* **[10b]**.

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5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

[1] **Researchfish** overview supporting evidence (as of 17th August 2020).

[2] **UK Westminster Parliamentary inquiries**, (*further details and links in evidence bundle*) including: **(a)** Work & Pensions Committee 2015; **(b)** Work & Pensions Committee 2016; **(c)** Social Security Advisory Committee 2016; **(d)** National Audit Office report 2016 / Commons Public Accounts Committee inquiry 2017 & **Testimonial** from Executive Leader, National Audit Office, 8th April 2019; **(e)** Work and Pensions Committee report 2017; **(f)** Work and Pensions Committee report 2018; **(g)** Work & Pensions Committee inquiry and report 2018 (see pp. 30-34 and 38-40) & **Testimonial** from Chair, House of Commons Work and Pensions Select Committee, 17th September 2020; **(h)** Public Accounts Committee inquiry 2018; **(i)** Work & Pensions Committee inquiry 2020

[3] **UK Labour Party** evidence: **(a)** **Testimonial** from former Shadow Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, 11th September 2020; **(b)** Consultation: Rebuilding a Just Social Security System (2019); **(c)** Welfare policy announcement, 27th September 2019

[4] **Westminster Parliamentary debates**, 17th January & 24th October 2017, alongside subsequent Government announcements on (i) removing seven-day wait and up to 100% advances & (ii) longer time for recovery of advances

[5] **Sanctions Support and Service Leavers project** evidence: **(a)** **Testimonial** from Armed Forces Lead, DWP, 16th October 2020; **(b)** **Testimonial** from Minister for Welfare Delivery, DWP; **(c)** FIMT Impact Prize Award Letter, 9th March 2020; **(d)** FIMT Impact Report 2019 (see: pp.20-21); **(e)** Ministry of Defence: Defence Holistic Transition Policy, October 2019; **(f)** SSSL project evidence to Commons Work & Pensions Committee, 14 June 2018; **(g)** Parliamentary request for debate (M. Moon MP), 11 June 2018; **(h)** Parliamentary written question (P Farrelly MP), 18th June 2019; **(i)** Parliamentary written question (J Cunningham MP), 19th June 2019

[6] **Devolved UK administrations** evidence: **(a)** Testimonial from Chair, Equality, Local Government and Communities (ELGC) Committee, National Assembly for **Wales**, 29th March 2019; Welcond Evidence **(b)** written & **(c)** televised to ELGC Committee (2017) and **(d)** Report (2018); **(e)** Motion (petition) to Scottish Parliament (2016); **(f)** **Testimonial** from, Deputy Convenor of **Scottish** Parliament's Social Security Committee, 15th November 2017; **(g)** Speech by Scottish Employment Minister (2016)

[7] **Testimonial** from Deputy Director, Social Security, **Isle of Man Government**, 1st November 2019

[8] **Testimonial** from UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights, 26th November 2018

[9] **Testimonial** from OECD Economist, 8th July 2019

[10] **Australia and New Zealand** evidence: **(a)** **Testimonial** from CEO, Familycare Australia, 7th December 2018; (b) **Testimonial** from Director, Strategic Policy DSS, Australian Government, 30th November 2019; **(c)** **Testimonial** from CEO, Australian Council of Social Service, 3rd December 2019; **(d)** CPAG New Zealand Statement, 15th June 2018; **(e)** Press release: Aotearoa NZ Association of Social Workers, 30th October 2019; **(f)** CPAG New Zealand Statement, 24th January 2019; **(g)** CPAG New Zealand statement, 15 June 2018