

Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Survey of Scottish Local Authorities

March 2015



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Executive Summary

This report provides detailed feedback from the Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Survey which was undertaken by the Improvement Service on behalf of the Scottish Government and COSLA during the course of March and April 2014.

The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of the impacts of the Claimant Commitment process and benefits sanctions on claimants of Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) and local services. A survey was issued to all 32 local authority welfare reform lead officers on 13 March 2014 and copied to local authority Chief Executives for information. The survey covered four themes:

- Impact on service demand
- Information and data collection
- Impact on client experiences
- Council responses

The closing date for the survey was 30 April 2014; this was extended by a week to maximise the response rate. 27 of 32 local authorities responded to the survey, amounting to an 84% response rate. As of April 2014, the 27 local authorities who responded accounted for 87% of JSA claimants in Scotland and as of May 2014, they account for 86% of ESA claimants in Scotland (Nomis 2014).

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Provide a brief overview of the background and methodological approach of the survey
- Set out the findings arising from the survey, drawing attention to the key issues which have emerged
- Suggest recommendations informed by the survey findings
- Identify any gaps and/or issues which the survey has highlighted and detail any further work to help address these.

It is anticipated that this paper will be of interest to Scottish Government, all of Scotland's local authorities and Community Planning Partnerships, as well as a wider range of stakeholders including the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

Taking each of the four themes in turn, the report seeks to provide a summary of the survey findings and suggests recommendations going forward. Where apparent, the paper also draws attention to linkages between questions and the broader landscape of conditionality, sanctions and welfare reform. Where relevant, the report alludes to potential gaps and/or issues flagged up by the research.

Impact on Service Demand

The survey findings indicate that local authorities are seeing an increase in demand (either significant increase or some increase) across 10 of the 12 service areas on which they were asked to provide information. The services showing the biggest increase in

service demand are:

- Scottish Welfare Fund (96%)
- Debt Advice (84%)
- Welfare Rights (82%)
- Money Advice and Budgeting Support (80%)

In only two service areas did half or less than half of respondents signal that they have witnessed an increase (significant increase or some increase) in service demand; Community Learning and Development (50%) and Library Services (47%). It should be noted that these service areas recorded some of the highest 'don't know' responses, i.e. 26% for Library Services and 25% for Community Learning and Development (CLD). This perhaps highlights a gap regarding data gathering and reporting which needs to be addressed in order to determine more accurately the impact of the Claimant Commitment on certain services.

Information and Data Collection

75% of respondents reported that they collected information on service demand in a consistent and routine manner. There appears to be a relationship between how data is collected and the known impact on service demand. The service areas where more local authorities reported an increase (either significant increase or some increase) are those areas where local authorities are more likely to gather information systematically, e.g. 96% of respondents reported an increase in use of the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF), the highest for any service area; 75% of respondents collected systematic information on this, higher than any service area except for Money Advice.

Conversely, the service areas where fewer local authorities reported an increase are those areas where local authorities were less likely to draw on systematic evidence; only 22% of local authorities record systematic information relating to Library Services and 21% relating to Community Learning and Development. Information on these services is more likely to be collected anecdotally.

Impact on Client Experiences

Respondents noted a number of interrelated client experiences of the Claimant Commitment and benefit sanctions. These are summarised in Chart 1. As the illustration shows, the most prominent experiences to emerge from the survey concerned a lack of understanding amongst clients and issues around a lack of communication, guidance and flexibility with individual vulnerabilities or circumstances not being taken into account by Jobcentre Plus (JCP) staff. Several respondents also reported cases of clients feeling they don't possess the necessary skills nor have access to the necessary services to meet their requirements.

Council Responses

Chart 2 below captures some of the responses or actions councils have discussed, planned or delivered in relation to changes in service demand. As the image shows partnership working was identified as a key area. Respondents noted there were opportunities to develop more joined up and coherent responses to the introduction of the Claimant Commitment and the strengthening of the sanctions regime. A number of

Chart 1: Summary of council views on the impact of client experience of the Claimant Commitment and sanctions



examples were given, including joint staff training with Jobcentre Plus and council staff, establishing local practitioners networks, and improving links between existing services.

Generally many respondents noted that their Local Authority had established Corporate, and in some cases multi-agency, Welfare Reform groups which had developed action plans, communication plans, toolkits and so on. In some instances the work of these Welfare Reform groups had been linked to the Council's anti-poverty and child poverty strategies. Some Local Authorities had taken the opportunity to develop new financial inclusion and "digital assistance" strategies linking this to their wider channel shift policies.

Chart 2: Summary of council responses to changes in service demand



Council Responses - Challenges and Opportunities

Respondents were asked to describe the emerging opportunities and challenges presented by changes across service areas that have impacted local authority and community partners' capacity to identify, plan and deliver services. Respondents

identified a wide range of opportunities and challenges and these are outlined in Table 1. As you will see, some issues present both opportunities and challenges to local authorities.

Table 1: Summary of opportunities and challenges identified by local authorities

| Opportunity | Challenge |
|--|--|
| Partnership working, coordination of services, improved referral pathways. Localise service provision, improving access to services. Improving digital access and skills. Review provision of key services including libraries, money advice, digital access, welfare advice etc. | Data sharing with DWP/JCP including local level info & demographics/ characteristics of those sanctioned. Balancing increasing demand for services against diminishing resources. Partnership working, coordination of services, improved referral pathways. Engaging with clients. Improving digital access and skills. Training, informing and up-skilling staff. |

In relation to challenges, the most frequently raised issue concerned data sharing with the DWP/JCP. This was expanded on by respondents when they were asked to note any information or data that might support their service planning and mitigation work. In particular local authorities expressed the need for timely local level information concerning who is being sanctioned, characteristics of those affected, number of appeals and their outcome, etc.

Conclusions and Recommendations

- There is little systematic data or hard evidence on the impact of the Claimant Commitment or sanctions at a local authority level as yet, although in some service areas this was under development.
- Local authorities are beginning to collect and monitor the impact on their services. What is available at this stage shows a variation across service areas as to the information they collected regarding service use in relation to the Claimant Commitment and sanctions.
- Where possible local authorities (LAs) should look to move towards more systematic collection of service demand/service use data. Authorities should seek to record data as uniformly as possible. For example, the Scottish Government now publishes statistics on the SWF as experimental statistics. If councils collect information in the same way, information can be analysed at a national level, and comparisons can be made across LAs.
- Communication and data sharing between local authorities and Jobcentre Plus

requires to be significantly improved, and that the Claimant Commitment and sanctions policy of the DWP is the cause of tension at local partnership level. COSLA should look to enhance partnership working – support for claimants on the Claimant Commitment and sanctions with the DWP.

- Enhanced partnership working is also needed to collect quality information. This is challenging as in the case of Mental Health services, for example – different agencies can work with clients and it may be difficult to pull information from several agencies. There are some examples of good practice in the written responses, e.g. a council and DWP office working together to compile a list of digital access points with internet/computers.
- One thing that comes out of the written responses as opposed to the quantitative data is that there may be small groups of individuals who are disproportionately affected by lack of access to services which has a significant impact on them. Mental health issues are also frequently highlighted in the responses. An example given from the responses is that people with no home internet access will find it more difficult to search for jobs.
- A theme that also comes out of written responses is the effect that changes are having on frontline staff who provide services. As well as increased demand, there is also a need to be more aware of certain client issues, e.g. potential mental health issues, substance misuse. Also, it is apparent from the written responses that frontline staff need more training on the processes for sanctioning individuals. There are also cases where staff have had to contact security in cases where individuals who have been sanctioned become aggressive.
- Councils should keep track of information that is released by DWP on sanctions. One of the themes of the report is that certain groups (e.g. people with mental health issues, younger people) are more likely to be adversely affected by sanctions. The data dashboard includes figures on sanctions by age and ethnicity which are sourced from DWP, which councils can use to test some of their hypotheses.
- There was a view that sanctions were being applied inconsistently by Jobcentre Plus staff.
- There was a view that many of those being sanctioned were already vulnerable and were unaware they had been sanctioned and that they did not fully understand the Claimant Commitment process.
- Many respondents thought that the proposed Claimant Commitment survey was potentially premature, however some saw it as having a beneficial effect with regard to council's thinking and planning in this area.

Introduction

This report provides detailed feedback from the Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Survey which was undertaken by the Improvement Service on behalf of the Scottish Government and COSLA during March and April 2014. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of the impacts of the Claimant Commitment process and benefits sanctions on claimants and local services. A survey was issued to all 32 local authority welfare reform lead officers on 13 March 2014. The closing date for the survey was 8 May 2014. Twenty seven of 32 local authorities responded to the survey, an 84% response rate.

Methodology

An online survey was developed collaboratively between the Improvement Service, Scottish Government and COSLA. The survey was issued as a “questback” online survey and an equivalent Microsoft Word version on 13 March 2014, with a deadline of 8 May 2014. A copy of the full version of the survey can be found in Appendix 1. Appendix 3 contains the full data tables of the service demand change.

The survey was emailed to all 32 local authority lead officers, and copied to Chief Executives for information. A weekly reminder email was sent to all recipients. The survey was structured around four themes:

- Impact on service demand
- Information and data collection
- Impact on client experiences
- Council responses

At the final closing date of the survey on 8 May 2014, 27 of 32 local authorities had responded to the survey, an 84% response rate.

Prior to the circulation of the survey a national welfare reform “Link and Learn” event took place in Edinburgh on 12 March. The Link and Learn events are held quarterly to bring together the welfare reform leads from local authorities. The main discussion item on the Link and Learn agenda was to ascertain participant’s views on the Claimant Commitment and sanctions.

The event had informed to local government welfare reform leads that a survey would be undertaken. Three questions were posed to participants at the workshop session of the Link and Learn event.

1. Since the introduction of the Claimant Commitment in October 2013, how would you describe the impact and changes to the demand for the services, and in which service areas?
2. Reflecting upon the information you have reviewed or heard, how would you describe the most common experiences expressed by claimants related to claimant conditionality and benefit?
3. Please describe the emerging opportunities and challenges presented by changes across service areas that have impacted your local authority and community partners’ capacity to identify, plan and deliver services.

Key findings included:

1. There is little systematic data or hard evidence on the impact of the Claimant Commitment or sanctions at a local authority level as yet, although in some service areas this was under development.
2. Local authorities are beginning to collect and monitor the impact on their services. What is available at this stage shows a variation across service areas as to the

information they collected regarding service use in relation to the Claimant Commitment and sanctions.

3. Communication and data sharing between local authorities and Jobcentre Plus requires to be significantly improved, and that the Claimant Commitment and sanctions policy of the DWP is the cause of tension at local partnership level.
4. There was a view that sanctions were being applied inconsistently by Jobcentre Plus staff.
5. There was a view that many of those being sanctioned were already vulnerable and were unaware they had been sanctioned and that they did not fully understand the Claimant Commitment process.
6. Many respondents thought that the proposed Claimant Commitment survey was potentially premature, however some saw it as having a beneficial effect with regard to Council's thinking and planning in this area.

Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Survey - Spring 2014

Response Rate from Local Authorities

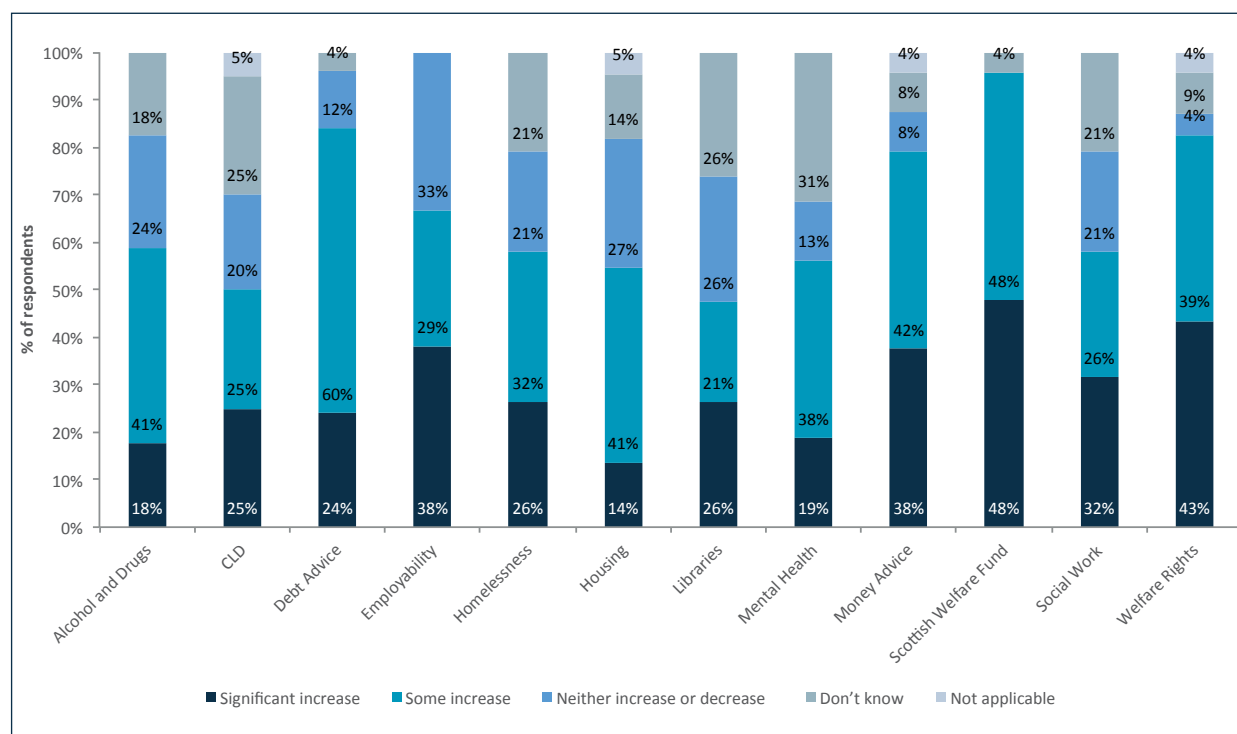
The survey was sent to all 32 local authorities in Scotland. We received responses from 27 of them, amounting to a response rate of 84%. As of April 2014 the 27 local authorities who responded account for 87% of JSA claimants in Scotland and as of May 2014, they account for 86% of ESA claimants in Scotland (Nomis 2014).

One local authority submitted two survey responses. Where its answers differ, both responses have been excluded from the analysis and this is indicated by an asterisk (*). In instances where the answers are the same, the duplicate response has been excluded. This is applied to all quantitative questions.

Section 1: Impact on Service Demand

Section 1 used a mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions to assess the change in service demand since the introduction of the Claimant Commitment in October 2013. Chart 3 below shows that local authorities have witnessed an increase in demand across several service areas following the introduction of the Claimant Commitment. Furthermore, no local authority indicated that they have seen a drop in demand for any of the stated service areas. The majority of local authorities indicated they have seen an increase (either significant increase or some increase) in demand across ten of the stated 12 service areas.

Chart 3: Since the introduction of the Claimant Commitment in October 2013, what best describes any changes in the level of demand for the following services?



The survey suggests that more local authorities are seeing an increase in what could be described as reactionary services. For instance, 96% of local authorities reported witnessing an increase in demand for the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) following the introduction of the Claimant Commitment. This increase also coincides with the changes made to the SWF guidance which now permits applications from sanctioned claimants, although they are subject to the same criteria as other applicants.

84% of local authorities reported seeing an increase in demand for Debt Advice/Management services, 83% have seen an increase in Welfare Rights/Advocacy services and 79% have seen an increase for Money Advice/Budgeting Support services. It should be noted that this survey made no attempt to quantify or measure the increase further.

The relatively substantial percentage of local authorities who have seen neither an increase nor decrease for certain service areas, e.g. 33% for Employability, could be taken as a possible indication of the timing of the survey and its relative close proximity to the implementation of the Claimant Commitment, which was not complete in several local authorities until April 2014. It is possible that some local authorities did not have enough time to assess and/or implement recording measures to gauge the impact the Claimant Commitment had had on service demands. It will be important to monitor how these figures change over time, as the Claimant Commitment becomes more established.

Libraries and Community Learning and Development (CLD) are the only service areas where 50% or less of local authorities have seen an increase in demand. The nature of these services is perhaps surprising as you would have anticipated that claimants would be looking to access Libraries and CLD in order to meet the conditions of their Claimant Commitment. It should be noted that these service areas recorded amongst the highest 'don't know' responses: 26% for Library Services and 25% for CLD. Only Mental Health recorded a higher rate (31%). This perhaps highlights a gap regarding data gathering and reporting which needs to be addressed in order to determine more accurately the impact of the Claimant Commitment on certain services. This is supported by some of the qualitative responses to questions. Several authorities reported that they relied on conversations with library staff as evidence of an increase in demand. Libraries reported that it was difficult to measure increased demand as they cannot always tell if clients are accessing websites related to job searches, etc. One authority summarised the issues they had recording data:

"Library staff discussed this survey. These issues are reported as a matter of concern every week across our public libraries. Information is anecdotal as we cannot isolate usage related to welfare benefit reforms. However in the last year there has been a 17% increase in first click access to government job sites on our public access PCs (our system can only track the first website that users of our public PCs access)"

Some qualitative responses recorded more of the nature of demand for library services. In several instances, library staff responded they had noticed an increase in clients asking for assistance in using IT software. In one of the case studies, a 60 year old man had been sanctioned partly as a result of the computer systems at his library being different to the ones he had been taught on. Furthermore, several authorities reported that for many clients, using the library was their only means of applying for jobs and/or accessing training courses.

Section 2: Information and Data Collection

Chart 4: Does your local authority collect information in a consistent and routine manner on service demand levels?

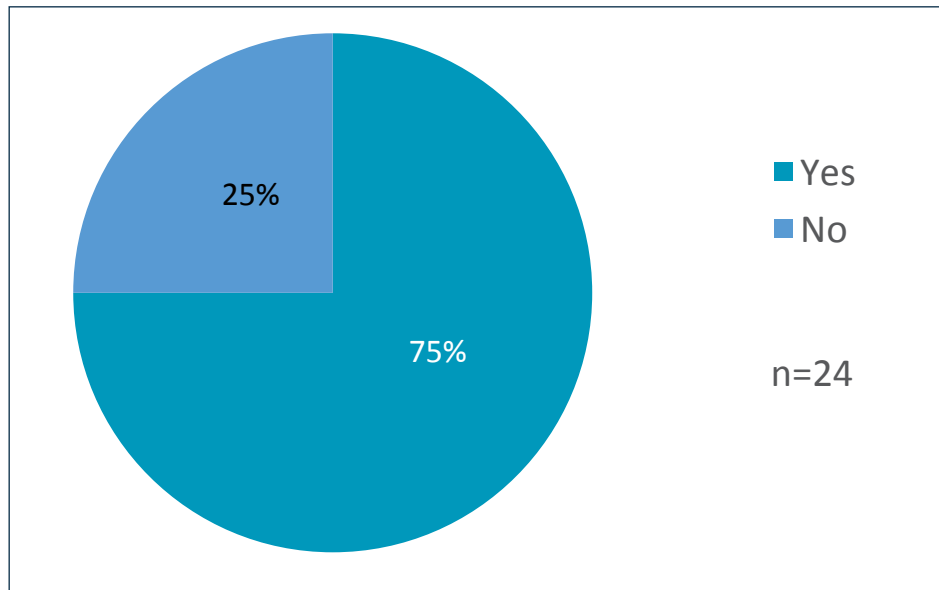


Chart 4 shows that 75% of local authorities reported that they collect information in a consistent and routine manner on service demand levels. The type and nature of the information collected is explored further below.

Chart 5: What best describes the type of information you used in your response to changes in service demand in the previous section (questions 1 and 2)?

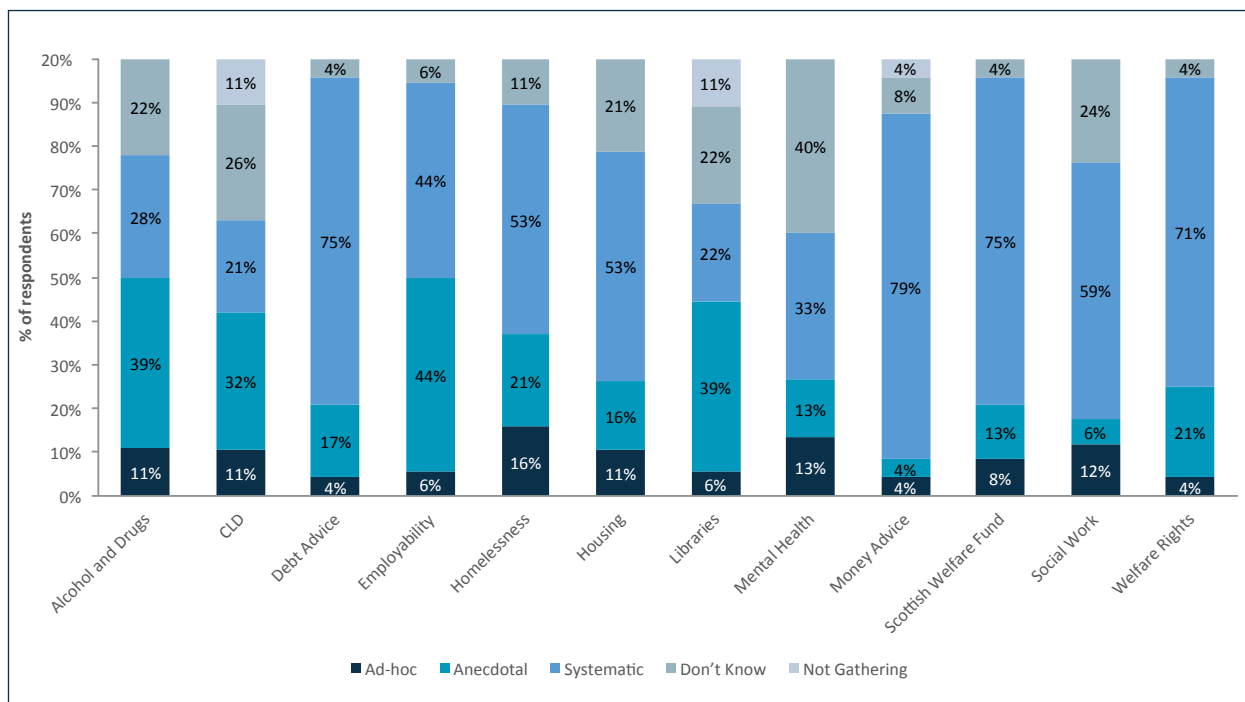


Chart 5 shows that in general local authorities are using a mixture of methods to collate information and that the methods used vary widely according to the service area. It is important to note that the question did ask respondents specifically about information concerning changes in service demand since the introduction of the Claimant Commitment.

The service areas where more local authorities reported an increase (either significant increase or some increase) are the service areas where local authorities are more likely to gather information systematically: 79% of local authorities gather information on Money Advice/Budgeting Support systematically; 75% Debt Advice/Management; 75% SWF; and 71% Welfare Rights/Advocacy services. Conversely, the service areas where fewer local authorities reported an increase are the service areas where local authorities draw more on anecdotal evidence: 22% of local authorities record anecdotal information relating to Library Services and 21% relating to CLD. The relationship between these questions is explored further in this report.

As with Q1, the survey has identified potential gaps concerning data gathering. Chart 5 shows that for certain service areas a substantial number of local authorities don't know how the information is gathered, e.g. 40% for Mental Health. However it is worth bearing in mind that with particular service areas such as mental health, it is likely that there will be a range of service providers with a variety of collection methods.

Table 1.1 below shows the services ranked by those with the highest proportion of authorities reporting some increase or a significant increase, along with the rankings of services where data was collected systematically by authorities. As can be seen from the table the Social Welfare Fund, Debt Advice, Welfare Rights, and Money Advice were the four services with the highest proportions of increases in demand, and also the four services which were most likely to be systematically recorded. Similarly, Libraries and Community and Learning Development occupied the bottom two spaces in terms of increase in demand and recording.

Table 1.1: Service areas affected by claimant changes ranked by local authorities reporting an increase in demand and by whether local authorities systematically record data

| | % recording some increase/ significant increase | | % systematically recording data |
|-------------------|--|-------------------|--|
| SWF | 96% | Money Advice | 79% |
| Debt Advice | 84% | Debt Advice | 75% |
| Welfare Rights | 83% | SWF | 75% |
| Money Advice | 79% | Welfare Rights | 71% |
| Employability | 67% | Social Work | 59% |
| Alcohol and Drugs | 59% | Homelessness | 53% |
| Homelessness | 58% | Housing | 53% |
| Social Work | 58% | Employability | 44% |
| Mental Health | 56% | Mental Health | 33% |
| Housing | 55% | Alcohol and Drugs | 28% |

| | % recording some increase/ significant increase | | % systematically recording data |
|-----------|---|-----------|---------------------------------|
| CLD | 50% | Libraries | 22% |
| Libraries | 47% | CLD | 21% |

Two further areas where data collection ranked lower than others were Alcohol and Drugs and Mental Health, where 28% and 33% of councils respectively reported systematically recording increases in level of services. Mental Health was the service area with the highest proportion of councils reporting they didn't know how information was collected (40%). Information from written responses suggests that mental health and addiction issues were having effects on some of the other front line services. These were frequently cited as reasons that claimants did not fully understand the implications of the Claimant Commitment. One respondent, for example, stated:

“There has been a marked increase on the number of CAB (Citizen’s Advice Bureau) clients with underlying mental health issues, or addiction issues that are being sanctioned as a result of the Claimant Commitment/Jobseekers Agreement. Chaotic lifestyles and lack of understanding of what they are required to do are bringing this most vulnerable user group to the CAB as a result of sanctions.”

The survey results indicated that local authorities are generally using a mixture of information gathering processes. The processes appear to vary according to the service area, with local authorities more inclined to adopt systematic methods for certain services. Across service areas, more detail would be required in order to gain a better understanding of the exact nature of and frequency at which information is gathered and reported (applies to systematic, anecdotal, ad-hoc, local research etc.). Further exploration would also be needed to appreciate how local authorities are managing to attribute changes in demand to the Claimant Commitment/sanctions. Several local authorities expressed that they are struggling to disaggregate the impact of the Claimant Commitment/sanctions from broader welfare reforms and economic circumstances; this could be a potential learning point going forward as a couple of local authorities’ responses indicate that they are able to record the direct impact of sanctions on certain services.

It should be noted that a handful of local authorities stated that time constraints have inhibited their ability to conduct more in-depth analysis thus are currently relying on discussions with staff etc. Some local authorities also acknowledged that going forward they intend on putting measures in place to aid/enhance data collection in regards to the impact of the Claimant Commitment and sanctions on service demands.

The services on which more specified information was given are detailed below.

Scottish Welfare Fund

Several local authorities indicated that they are gathering information concerning the change in demand for the SWF via systematic means. This mostly consists of the recording and examining of statistics to identify trends in demand. The tendency to collect information by systematic methods is perhaps to be expected given the requirement of local authorities to report on statistics to the Scottish Government;

this point was noted by a few local authorities, who commented that they extract information from the council systems. This also serves to reinforce the findings from question 6.

Despite the reporting requirements of local authorities, several seem to be supplementing this with feedback in the form of discussions with staff - both front line and SWF assessors - in order to broaden their understanding of the source of increased demand and get an insight into customer's experiences.

Social Work

Local authorities appear to be consulting statistics and running reports from their internal systems. One local authority has added a code concerning Claimant Commitment and sanctions to their SWIFT software records. There are also instances of information being gathered via information from staff.

Housing/Homelessness Support

Several local authorities are gathering information via internal data collection/performance indicator systems in order to identify trends. As with other service areas, this information seems to be used in combination with housing officer feedback following interviews with claimants and front line staff experiences to add to the understanding of reasons behind the demand.

Community Learning and Development

Although a couple of local authorities stated that they collect statistics in relation to demand changes for CLD, the majority of responses suggest that most information is gathered via staff meetings, discussions with front line staff and feedback from service users. One local authority noted that it has undertaken case studies but no further information on this was provided.

Employability

As with other service areas, it appears that a mixture of methods is used to gathering information relating to employability. Some local authorities acknowledged that they collect information via the collection of statistics and recording of outcomes. One local authority noted that it specifically records the impact of sanctions. Any statistical information appears to be supplemented with information from team meetings and discussions with front line staff. There are also instances of local authorities undertaking local research in the form of case studies.

Library Services

As the findings in question 6 alluded to, there seems to be an emphasis on qualitative processes when assessing the impact on demand for library services. As with other service areas, this appears to primarily take the form of staff discussions and observation of demand. A couple of local authorities are recording the number of computer bookings and wider service use statistics but this would need to be explored further to determine how they link this to the Claimant Commitment/sanctions.

In addition, one local authority is also recording instances where staff have been required to support customers with job related activity. Further information regarding the recording and reporting methods was not apparent.

Advice Services (including CAB, Money Advice, Debt Advice, Welfare Rights)

Across advice services, there appears to be the tendency for information to be gathered via statistical means. Once again the level of detail provided varied but they are instances of local authorities recording enquiries, number of referrals and reasons for referrals on databases and management systems to identifying emerging trends of demand. This largely backs up the findings from question 6.

As with other service areas, team meetings/staff discussions (front line and advisors) are also used to obtain information. Given the nature of the array of advice services, it is not surprising that a couple of local authorities noted that they use discussions with their partners in order to make an assessment of demand changes.

Some local authorities have also undertaken local research. This includes case studies and a survey of service users over a two week period in April 2014.

Foodbanks

In response to question 2 (please indicate any other service areas in which you have seen changes in demand following the introduction of the Claimant Commitment) several local authorities indicated that they have seen a rise in enquires about and referrals to foodbanks. Three local authorities expanded on this and indicated that they are systematically recording the number of and reason for foodbank referrals, whilst a further local authority gathered this information anecdotally.

Chart 6: To your knowledge, what best describes how individuals affected by the Claimant Commitment come to access the following services?

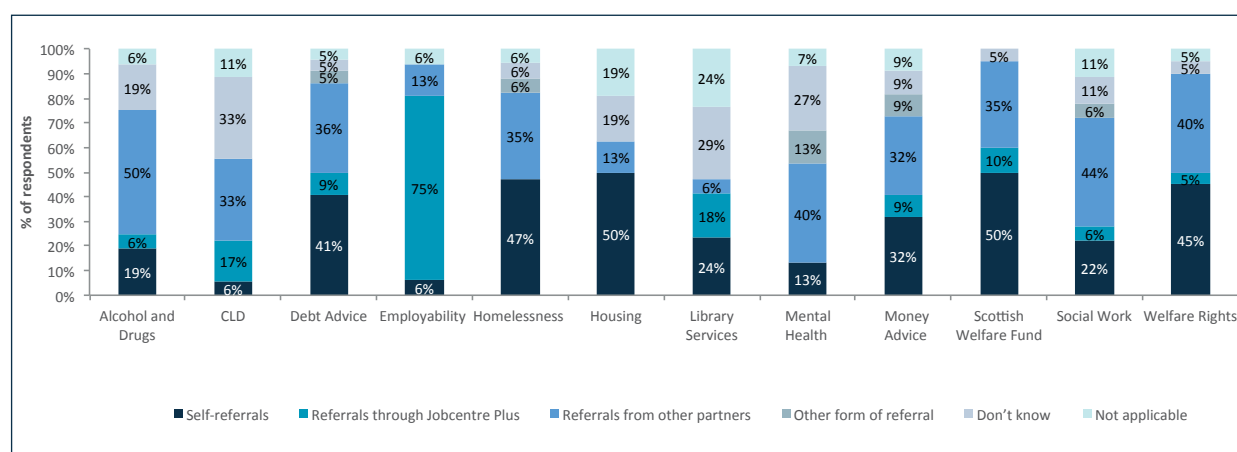


Chart 6 shows that customers access services via a range of referral routes and that this varies according to the service area. Unsurprisingly, the traditional 'walk in' service areas such as Housing, SWF, Homelessness and Welfare Rights/Advocacy have a high proportion of self-referrals, whereas other service areas where a referral is required for access have a higher proportion of referrals from other partners. These include Alcohol and Drugs, Social Work, and Mental Health. As would be expected, the highest

proportion of referrals to employability services come from Jobcentre Plus. However, by comparison, fewer referrals are being made by Jobcentre Plus to Welfare Rights/ Advocacy and advice services including Money and Debt Advice.

As has been alluded to throughout this paper, the survey raises potential data recording issues, as in several instances local authorities do not know which best describes how individuals affected by conditionality come to access services. However, in several cases, local authorities are reliant on information from their partners who run or have overall responsibility for the service.

Please indicate any other service areas in which you have seen changes in service demand following the introduction of the Claimant Commitment in October 2013. (15 respondents)

Based on the question above, the following responses were provided. There is a core issue of attribution, as with all responses to the survey. As one respondent stated, "it is difficult to comment as to whether this is down solely to the Claimant Commitment or a combination of all welfare reforms that are impacting on the same group of people" (G/L/ED3). However, respondents identified a wide range of services noting an increase in service demand. Responses included:

- Increasing numbers of people presenting to services facing financial hardship (W6, W5)
- People seeking access to foodbanks (N7, N1, W2, E/SE6)
- Increased demand for a range of Social Work services (E/SE4)
- Money Advice services, and advice and information services more generally (W5)
- People seeking support from fuel poverty services (N2)
- As previously noted, an increase in demand for SWF support (E/SE9)
- Crisis drop-in services - "sanctions causing significant short term financial hardship" (E/SE3)
- Alcohol and drugs services (G/L/ED1)

Please describe the nature of those changes in service demand indicated in the previous questions

As with all responses there is the issue of attribution, some of the elements of increased service demand may not be as a result of the introduction of the Claimant Commitment.

Looking to consider changes and increases to service demand in two linked areas. The first is in response to the introduction of the Claimant Commitment – so, for example, the increase in demand for library services, access to IT facilities and support, and for employability services, in adult education and IT skills and training services. These are all areas of service demand which can support claimants to comply with their Claimant Commitment.

The secondary area of service demand increase can be described as additional demand resulting from the effect of sanctions, i.e. the local authority services sought

by claimants after they have received a sanction to their benefit, and on the resulting increased administrative demand, for example within the Housing Benefit service. The type of service demand that can be seen in this context is as a result of claimants being unable to meet their Claimant Commitment, for whatever reason, and have subsequently had their benefit sanctioned.

Services such as the SWF, Homelessness and Housing services, Alcohol and Drugs services, and a range of other services responding to people facing financial hardship in the third sector, for example foodbanks. Outlined below are some specific examples of responses to the changes in service demand being witnessed by local authorities.

- Significant increases noted in terms of applications for crisis grants for SWF. One authority reported a 25% increase in applicants since January 2014. (W7)
- Linked to this is increased demand for food vouchers and foodbanks. One authority reported that demand for food vouchers increased from 212 between March and September 2013 to 712 from October 2013 - April 2014, approximately a 3½ fold increase. (W7)
- Information and advice services have seen an increase; one authority reported a 10% increase in demand between October 2013 to March 2014, compared to the previous six months March - September 2013. This was reported as an increase of 1,074 clients. (W7)
- Money Advice Service- "representations have increased due to the number of sanctions issued and that customers are seeking advice/ assistance in the completion of reconsiderations/appeals" (E/SE1)
- Employability services - A substantial increase in demand for a wide range of employability services, one authority reporting an increase from 354 participants in the whole of 2013, to 556 participants from January to the end of April 2014. (W6)
- Library services - Services noting a change in the customer group with increasing numbers of people who have not used the library service before. They need additional support, particularly in relation to IT: setting up an email account, undertaking job searches, applying for jobs, and so on.
- Adult education, skills training (particularly IT skills).
- Revenue and benefits services - "a higher volume in changes of circumstance that require to be actioned, although the actual Housing Benefit paid does not change when claimants are sanctioned and have zero income" (E/SE8).

Section 3: Impact of claimant conditionality and sanctions on claimants' experiences

This section of the survey asked two interrelated questions:

Reflecting upon the information you have reviewed or heard, please describe the most common experiences expressed by claimants related to claimant conditionality. (22 responses)

There was a range of views contained in the 22 responses to the question.

The most prevalent response was that claimants did not understand the Claimant Commitment and what it required of them. More generally, there was a view that as the system was new, claimants were finding it difficult to deal with. A common view was that communication from Jobcentre Plus to the claimant was insufficient and that there was a lack of clear information, guidance and signposting to potential support services by Jobcentre Plus staff to claimants.

A respondent stated:

"There is a general lack of understanding of the requirements and processes of claimant conditionality. Learning a new way of thinking is difficult for people and comes with a large degree of mistrust. Understanding the six claimant groups and what the subsequent, appropriate level of job search with each is difficult. There is confusion over required activities due to lack of detailed explanation by advisors. Claimants are unable to access travel funds. Accessing services can be difficult in general with some failing to meet the service user's needs. Although the new sanction regime is relatively new to our council area, sanctions are starting to have some impact on rent arrears where a tenant has a repayment arrangement to clear accrued rent." (W6)

Another respondent echoed this view:

"Claimants are not sufficiently aware of the sanctions process and what they can do once it impacts on them. Claimants visiting advice services have usually not been advised what options they have once the sanctions have been applied. Claimants are thus becoming confused and frustrated with the entire process." (W5)

A third respondent provided a detailed description of the challenges the new Claimant Commitment system has presented in their local authority area:

"Poor communication – claimants not knowing what is expected of them and claimants stating they did not receive letters that explain decisions. Some examples exist of claimants receiving excellent advice and assistance through

JCP, particularly through Disability Employment Advisers. However, as we work with claimants who have some sort of dispute with DWP, feedback is focused on negative aspects rather than positive. The majority of feedback is regarding poor communication, invariably based on claimants not understanding what is expected of them.

In many cases, the job seeking conditions would appear to be about making the claims process as uncomfortable as possible rather than improving employability. There is a failure to adequately explain the requirements of the Conditionality and the consequences of failure to adhere to them. Claimants indicate a clear lack of understanding. Also state that this is not explained clearly enough within JCP/DWP, with staff appearing all too keen to refer them to Scottish Welfare Fund without examining other avenues. Customers do not appear to be getting advice about what services they can get from the Jobcentre Plus/DWP. Anecdotally and from experience, the main challenges are “understanding conditionality” and “experience with the process”. (E/SE3)

Potentially linked to the newness of the system was the view that there were delays in administration processes. One respondent reported the following:

“Administration issues are all throughout the claimant journey from initial to claim to appeal, with the process being fraught with delays throughout. Claimants become frustrated as they have no money and there is no apparent understanding of this situation. Frustrations are also felt by advisors (from the local authority) who experience more barriers to gaining information (from Jobcentre Plus) and who are finding increasingly that they can give no reasonable explanation to their service users as to why the claims are being delayed.”(G/L/ED3)

Respondents reported that claimants were often unaware of the how the Claimant Commitment and sanctions process operated, and that in a number of cases claimants were unaware of, and had not been informed of, the mandatory reconsideration and appeals process and the potential to apply for hardship in the event of a sanction. Again, this points to the need for clearer more effective and consistent communication on the part of Jobcentre Plus to ensure claimants are aware of all the key elements of the system. One respondent stated that:

“Welfare Rights report that claimants are not receiving written notification of decisions to stop benefit due to a sanction and are not being advised about availability of hardship.” (E/SE4)

Some respondents took the view that there was a lack of flexibility in the Claimant Commitment process. Rather than the stated aim of producing individually tailored Claimant Commitments which take a comprehensive view of claimants strengths, barriers to employments and other circumstances, the Claimant Commitment, to date, had taken a “one size fits all” approach. This lack of flexibility was compounded by the view that changes in claimants circumstances were not recognised by Jobcentre Plus staff, which could potentially increase the number of sanctions.

This lack of flexibility was exemplified in the views of a respondent that the Claimant Commitment was in effect “crowding out” claimants ability to access other services. The following example was provided:

“Early Years services also have experienced some impact in relation to people being unable to fully access services due to the commitment that the DWP/ Job Centres expect of them i.e. not being able to attend consistently groups or parenting assessment due to the parents having to present at the Job Centre or attend work interviews etc. We have in the past submitted letters asking that appointments be changed/rearranged in support of parents attending groups/ assessment meetings however this appears to be subject to the discretion of the individual DWP worker. There seems a reluctance to accept that by parents attending these sessions this can also positively enhance their lives with regards to readiness for work etc.” (E/SE9)

Another example of JCP advisors being unable or unwilling to make allowances for parenting commitments was submitted in case study form:

Client lives in the area with his nine year old daughter and is now in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance following a previous sanction. Client received notification that he was to start a Mandatory Work Place Activity from 9 October to 4 November. This coincides with school holidays and client has no-one to look after his daughter. The client’s Claimant Commitment recognises this situation and states that he is allowed to limit work to 16 hours per week. Despite this, the Mandatory Work Programme was set for an activity of 30 hours per week. The client does not understand this and has grave concerns that a further sanction will follow if he does not attend the Mandatory Work Activity. Client has been made aware of his appeal rights and should this happen he will contact the council service for further assistance. (E/SE5)

There is the potential that the inflexible application of the Claimant Commitment, which does not recognise claimants other commitments or responsibilities, will not help claimants gain employment.

Some respondents questioned Jobcentre Plus’ assessment process for claimants, whether it was effective in accessing and recognising the barriers a claimant had, such as poor literacy and skills and childcare responsibilities or specific vulnerabilities such as mental health, poor physical health, homelessness, alcohol and drug problems and so on. Without a comprehensive assessment of a claimant barriers and vulnerabilities, it is unclear how the appropriate support can be provided and how an appropriate Claimant Commitment can be put in place.

Linked to this was the view that claimants were signing up to unrealistic targets within their Claimant Commitment. One respondent noted:

“Claimants feel they had to actively input into conditionality agreement and agreed to suggestions even though they knew they would be unable to comply.”

This is of concern as such an approach increases the likelihood of a sanction being applied and does nothing to support a claimant into employment. This also relates back to the earlier point; claimants are unaware or unclear of what the Claimant Commitment is committing them to.

A large number of respondents noted that claimants had reported real difficulty with the IT requirements of the Claimant Commitment. These difficulties are in two broad

areas: a lack of IT skills and a lack of access to appropriate IT equipment to effectively meet the requirements of the Claimant Commitment. Claimants need to be able to demonstrate that they have undertaken the required job search activity to meet their Claimant Commitment; it was clear from the survey respondents that many claimants struggle with this. Many claimants do not have regular access to the internet at home and are often reliant on publicly accessible PCs in libraries and other council and community facilities.

Reflecting upon this information you have reviewed or heard, please describe the most common experiences expressed by claimants related to benefit sanctions. (20 responses)

Respondents noted a number of interrelated claimant experiences of benefit sanctions. In general, claimants' experience is one of poor communication from Jobcentre Plus in relation to a sanction being put in place. Many respondents noted that claimants had not been informed that they had been sanctioned, that they had not received notification in writing of a sanction and in some cases they were unaware that they had been sanctioned until they discovered they had no money in their bank account.

These responses mirror concerns noted in the previous question, that many claimants do not understand the Claimant Commitment and sanctions regime and the information they receive from Jobcentre Plus is either insufficient, or they do not understand it. One respondent stated:

"Claimants have difficulty understanding how, why and when sanctions are applied, sometimes unaware that they have a sanction in place. Sanctions often arise due to personal opinion/interpretation of the advisor. There is an apparent lack of empathy of advisors towards individuals' personal barriers, e.g. vulnerable/disadvantaged people with addictions, mental health problems etc. There is a difficulty in understanding what processes and options are available to claimants. As well as a lack of clear explanation from advisors, the language in itself is a barrier, e.g. the difference between a sanction and a disallowance. (W6)

Another respondent echoed these comments:

"Claimants are often advised verbally of a potential sanction, at their Job Centre meeting. Claimants do not fully understand the reasons for this sanction or what this means, due to the lack of formal decision letters, and the lack of reasons on the decision letters that customers eventually receive."(E/SE9)

A third respondent stated:

"Most claimants state that had they understood what was expected of them then they would have complied and not been sanctioned. It is the poor communication that is the key here. While JCP staff may think they have communicated something, it is often not 'heard' by the claimant due to obstacles such as poor mental health, learning difficulty, substance misuse or other behavioural problem. The onus is thus on JCP staff to ensure their communication is fully received – sending a letter is not proof that communication has taken place as it is one-sided. Full assessments are required of claimants' abilities to understand information so that communication can be successful." (E/SE3)

This view is supported by the following case study:

Client missed an appointment at JCP as the letter advising him of this was delivered to his neighbours who were on holiday at the time. Client explained, but was sanctioned for two weeks. Client has appealed and has a letter from his neighbour verifying they were on holiday and confirming that they received his mail. (W7)

The DWP's stated aim is that the new Claimant Commitment and sanctions regime will affect a "cultural and behaviour" change amongst claimants in advance of the introduction of Universal Credit. Central to that aim is that claimants fully understand sanctions and why they have been applied. Without a clear understanding of why a sanction has been applied, or even in some cases that a sanction has been applied, it is difficult to see how claimants will change their behaviour in the way desired by the DWP.

Respondents also reported that claimants, perhaps unsurprisingly, found that the sanctions applied were unfair and unjust.

A significant number of examples were provided. Section 6 of this report contains 20 case studies, many of which illustrate this point. Claimants thought that sanctions were applied for reasons outwith their control, for example being late for an interview at the Job Centre due to traffic delays. A respondent noted again the perception that the system was inflexible and unfair, giving the following example:

"Sanctions being imposed when common sense would dictate that the claimant has not fully understood what is expected and has tried their best to complete the condition required, i.e. limited access to internet in rural locations and limited job opportunities due to transport limitations/attending college course personally funded by claimant to further changes of employment and as a result, not been able to access internet (full-time course) as only accessed this through library. As a result, job search was short two and was sanctioned." (E/SE 8)

This example also raises a concern identified by a number of respondents, that the sanctions regime can be counterproductive and hamper effective job search and work preparation activity. This point requires further examination and elaboration; it would be a genuine concern if the conditionality and sanctions regime introduced by the DWP with the stated aim of encouraging people back to work, had the opposite effect and became another barrier to employment.

There is a concern amongst respondents that sanctions are not being applied in a consistent manner. A respondent provided the following insight:

"Extremely inconsistent approach, most common reason is insufficient evidence of job search activity. We have heard of sanction decisions that are clearly inappropriate and unfair but unfortunately we do not tend to hear of them within appeal time limits. Clients unwilling to appeal as they have made it through crisis before any appeal would be heard, but we try to explain to clients it is still important as any future sanction decision would be for a longer period due to having a 'first offence' against them." (N3)

This point reflects a general concern about the lack of clarity and transparency from

Jobcentre Plus about how the sanction regime is applied and whether Jobcentre Plus advisers are applying the rules. In particular, there is a concern that claimants are not properly informed of having a sanction decision referred for mandatory reconsideration, or the potential to access hardship payments.

This view is borne out in the following specific example:

Client was advised by work programme in a letter that he was not required to attend a meeting, however, when the client attended the jobcentre he was told by JSA he should have attended and was sanctioned. Client will be claiming Pension Credit in three weeks so this appears particularly harsh given his age and the unlikelihood of him finding employment. (W7)

Section 4: Council Responses — Emerging Opportunities and Challenges

The purpose of this section is to better understand the impact of changing demands on services and the local authority's responses. Councils were asked to describe the emerging opportunities and challenges presented by changes across service areas that have impacted local authority and community partners' capacity to identify, plan and deliver services. Respondents identified a wide range of opportunities and challenges. These included:

Opportunities

- Partnership working, coordination of services, improved referral pathways.
- Localise service provision, improving access to services.
- Improving digital access and skills.
- Review provision of key services including libraries, money advice, digital access, welfare advice, etc.

Challenges

- Data sharing with DWP/JCP including local level information and demographics/ characteristics of those sanctioned.
- Balancing increasing demand for services against diminishing resources.
- Partnership working, coordination of services, improved referral pathways.
- Engaging with clients.
- Improving digital access and skills.
- Training, informing and up-skilling staff.

Please describe any actions or responses your local authority and community partners have discussed, planned or delivered in relation to changes in service demand

There were 20 responses to this question.

Generally, many respondents noted that their local authority had established corporate, and in some cases multi-agency welfare reform groups, which had developed action plans, communication plans and so on. In some instances, the work of these welfare reform groups had been linked to the council's anti-poverty and child poverty strategies. Some local authorities had taken the opportunity to develop new financial inclusion and "digital assistance" strategies. Other respondents noted that welfare reform was a standing item on their Community Planning Partnership (CPP) agenda.

Partnership working was identified as a key area where there were opportunities to

develop more joined up and coherent responses to the introduction of the Claimant Commitment and the strengthening of the sanctions regime. A number of examples were given including joint staff training with Jobcentre Plus and council staff and establishing local practitioner's networks. A respondent provided this example of joint working from their local authority area:

"The council has worked closely with local DWP/Jobcentre Plus colleagues. As well as having a DWP representative at our Welfare Reform Steering Group we also setup regular meetings with representatives from all of our local Jobcentre Plus offices to facilitate the discussion of ongoing local issues as a result of welfare reform, which more recently has focused on Claimant Commitment. This has resulted in awareness sessions being held for key frontline staff where JCP colleagues briefed our staff on Claimant Commitment, including correcting some of the myths.

"This was well received by staff who all said they found it useful. These meetings also included clarifying escalation/enquiry routes between council and DWP staff, discussing the ongoing increase in demand for access to digital/internet. The short-term outputs from this has included a detailed list of all known places where claimants can access digital (computers and internet), graduates being recruited (as part of the council's graduate intern programme) to help customers bridge the digital skills gap as well as ongoing discussions about the longer term solutions to access to digital and support/up-skilling for customers." (W7)

A respondent from another local authority area described the level of joint working that had taken place with regard to the Claimant Commitment and sanctions:

"Joint training on claimant conditionality and sanctions by JCP staff provided to housing staff, benefits staff and housing association staff

- Articles included in the tenant newsletter to raise awareness of the sanction regime and employability support.
- There is a requirement for the council to further assist customers in understanding claimant conditionality and sanctions, e.g. provision of information leaflets.
- Employability event held in a local area.
- Welfare Reform Advice Team is making referrals to the Employability Service.
- Welfare Reform Debt Advice services for tenants increased following a successful bid for SLAB funding.
- Additional funds were provided to Citizen's Advice by the council.
- A wider group of services are now invited to the Welfare Reform Forum" (W6)

A large number of respondents noted that their council had identified budgets and additional staff to respond to new service pressures and demands, for example in housing, welfare and benefits advice services and for the SWF.

Other respondents noted that they had worked with local third sector partners to secure additional external funding to support new services to meet increasing service demand. The third sector SLAB funding, made available by Scottish Government, and the Big Lottery's "Support and Connect" funding stream were both identified as important sources of external funding.

A number of operational developments have been taken forward by local authorities. These include the development of a welfare reform toolkit for staff, with a focus on the impact of sanctions and the related loss of income, co-location of information and advice services in “community hubs” and improving the links and referral pathways between financial, digital inclusion and employability services. One respondent provided an example from their authority:

“Work continues through the Welfare Matters hub and community satellites to co-locate services to provide more joined up information and services for clients. The Welfare Reform Programme Board which involves a range of community planning partners monitors impacts and oversees the development and implementation of local responses.” (N1)

Is there any further information or data related to claimant conditionality and sanctions that might support your service planning and mitigation work?

A significant number of respondents stated that data sharing with Jobcentre Plus/DWP was a major issue and challenge in terms of developing an effective response to preventing or mitigating sanctions. Some local authorities stated that they had requested data from the DWP at a local level:

“More detail on number and reasons for sanctions and expectations locally would help us to inform clients and to mitigate sanctions. This has been requested from the local jobcentres, but has not been forthcoming. The response was that we have been given one talk on what is involved with Claimant Commitments. We were also advised that the number of sanctions were minimal for our area, however, recent statistics released have highlighted our area as one of the highest for sanctions. This has been fed back locally to Jobcentre Plus in the hope that the issue will be addressed and information shared to help decrease the number of sanctions.” (W7)

Another respondent stated the following:

“We would welcome a greater degree of data sharing with the JCP, including projections of their estimated number of sanctions and adverse decisions in each area; full access to their assessment criteria; partnership around how we can all, including our third sector partners, work together to tailor Claimant Commitments to the realities facing the claimant, and the realities of the local job market on the ground; and to seek positive outcomes for our mutual customers”. (E/SE9)

A number of respondents wanted up-to-date local, i.e. at a local authority level, data on sanctions, for example:

“Information sharing by the DWP on numbers of sanctions issued in each local authority area broken down by town/postcode, number of appeals lodged and outcome. Demographics of those affected by sanctions, e.g. age, number of dependents etc.” (W6)

Another respondent stated that their council would be keen to work with Jobcentre Plus/DWP to get a much more evidence based picture of the impact of sanctions in their area.

"Anecdotal evidence regarding sanctions provides us with a picture that a high number of sanctions are being imposed on single, young people, a high volume with mental health and/or justice involvement – this is an area we would want to explore to come up with more hard fact evidence and work with the DWP in exploring the reasoning behind this." (G/L/ED3)

Section 5: Case Studies

The survey contained a final section which allowed local authorities to include case study examples – as detailed in the question, “Are there any further points related to claimant conditionality and sanctions that has not been covered that you would like to discuss? (Please provide any further examples or case studies undertaken).” In most cases, respondents chose to provide examples of claimants who had been sanctioned. The table below includes all the responses, presented verbatim except for the removal of any locality information which could identify respondents. Responses have been coded to preserve the anonymity of the respondents.

| No. | Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Case Studies |
|-----|---|
| 1 | 60yr old man, no knowledge of a computer, never had one or used one in his life, claiming JSA. He was put on a computer course by DWP for a few weeks to enable him to look for work online. However, he does not have a computer or online access at home and once the course was finished he was told to go to his local library to look for work online and take evidence of his job searches to his local JCP fortnightly. The computer system at the library was in a different format to the one he had been taught on and he was unable to navigate around the screens and get the information off the computer that he needed to verify the jobs he had applied for; so he wrote the details down and took them to the JCP on his next appointment. When he attended at his next appointment, the adviser was very unhappy with his efforts and told him that this was unacceptable, he had to learn to use the computers at the library before his next signing-on day and evidence his job searches properly in the expected format or his benefit would be sanctioned for failing to comply. (E/SE4) |
| 2 | Client in receipt of JSA. He got the opportunity to visit friends from 23.12.13 to 27.12.13, so off he went. Unfortunately, he did not advise JCP of this and he forgot to take his JCP log-in details with him. He was then unable to evidence a job search online for that week, although he did for the following week. When he next went to sign-on, he told them what had happened and showed them a hand written list of jobs he had looked at over Christmas week, when he was unable to search online. He was told this was unacceptable and was given a four week sanction. He asked for 'good cause' to be considered because he did not know that he had to advise JCP that he was going away for a few days and had forgotten his login. This was refused. He has made a claim for hardship payment and will get this at the end of this week. This was the first time he hasn't done what he should and it WAS Christmas! (E/SE4) |

| No. | Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Case Studies |
|-----|---|
| 3 | <p>Figures from the DWP show that around 10% of JSA claimants in our local authority area are sanctioned every month. This means that nearly 200 claimants are affected every month with all but a few failing to appeal the decision. In the year October 2012 to September 2013, 1,842 JSA claimants in our local authority area were sanctioned, the equivalent of the total unemployed count in the area. (W5)</p> |
| 4 | <p>Sanctions – reasonableness and common sense have to be applied in these. Is it reasonable for a man with contagious TB to be expected to go along and take part in a work programme – the common sense answer would be no, yet, there is a man with a four week sanction imposed on him because of this. Is it reasonable for a single parent to be asked to attend an interview at 3pm when she is at school picking up her children, again the common sense answer would be no, however, sanctions are imposed. These are only a few examples of sanction appeal cases we are dealing with, but are a good reflection on the attitudes of decision-makers looking at these cases (G/L/ED3)</p> |
| 5 | <p>Client got to JCP appointment without his work diary, he had been looking after his sick mother and left it on the kitchen table. He had his car and offered to go straight back home to get it. JCP advisor said no and sanctioned him. He had never been warned or sanctioned before and had never missed an appointment. Client appealed this and has won his appeal. (W7)</p> |
| 6 | <p>Client had spent the night at his mother's bedside in hospital after she suffered a brain haemorrhage. His wife phoned JCP the following morning at 9am to inform his advisor that he was just home and in bed and wouldn't make his appointment at 9.45am and could the appointment be changed. JCP sanctioned the client for two weeks as he did not have a letter from the hospital as proof. He was sanctioned for two weeks. (W7)</p> |
| 7 | <p>Client was 15 mins late to sign on due to traffic and was sanctioned. (W7)</p> |
| 8 | <p>Work programme provider/broker – Various examples from clients who state that the provider did not take into account their condition or make reasonable adjustments for their ill health, including one client with a visual impairment. (W7)</p> |
| 9 | <p>Client was advised by work programme in a letter that he was not required to attend a meeting, however, when the client attended the jobcentre he was told by Jobcentre Plus advisor he should have attended and was sanctioned. Client will be claiming Pension Credit in three weeks so this appears particularly harsh given his age and the unlikelihood of him finding employment. (W7)</p> |

| No. | Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Case Studies |
|-----|---|
| 10 | Client missed an appointment at JCP as the letter advising him of this was delivered to his neighbours who were on holiday at the time. Client explained, but was sanctioned for two weeks. Client has appealed and has a letter from his neighbour verifying they were on holiday and confirming that they received his mail. (W7) |
| 11 | Saw a client today. She has come off ESA 2/7 signed on for first time 3/7. Missed signing on 31/7 but attended on 2/8/13 and explained that she had got confused – her mums' funeral was at the end of June as was the anniversary of her son's death. She has been sanctioned for four weeks. Seems harsh for first mistake. (W7) |
| 12 | Client lost his job as a mechanic a while ago and has been looking for something for a while, in the past he has had his own garages so he knew what to do. He informed JCP that he was setting up his business, has been attending Business Gateway and last week attended the Job Centre with an A4 list of what he has been doing. The list ranged between applying for jobs, meeting people, looking for premises, writing business plans and applying for grants, insurance, etc. He also has been attending his Ingeus placements and has never missed an appointment. He attended his signing-on appointment and was told that because he had not applied for jobs through the Universal Jobsearch he was getting a sanction. He explained to them that he has to access to the internet on his phone outside of office hours because he's spending his time on setting up his business and that he has been having problems logging in. He was told that he should come to the Job Centre to log in on their computers. He told them that because he has to cycle to places and meetings he can only log in after the Job Centre has closed, but that he had a list of the jobs he had applied for. He was told that this wasn't good enough and that he was getting sanctioned. I wrote out an appeal that he took up, and explained to him about the hardship payment. He wasn't told about this either. (W7) |
| 13 | I had another client in who has had dealing at the Job Centre. He has on a letter from his tribunal that although he doesn't have the points he is unfit to work as he poses a risk to himself and others (reg29). The advisor at the Job Centre seemingly told him that ESA is exactly the same as JSA and that he should be looking for work and she expected him to volunteer and train for a job. (W7) |
| 14 | Client is claiming JSA. He was dealing with Jobcentre and he was living in a hotel but has now got a room in a shared house. He signed on Feb 6 and was told his benefit was being disallowed until Feb 19. He signed on Feb 20 and was told he had to fill in a JSA ILS form and a JSA 10 form and was sanctioned until Mar 5. The reason given was not enough job seeking, but while in the hotel he had no access to a computer. He was told he will get a hardship payment but because his claim was lodged after he signed on the money cannot be paid until after he signs on again on Mar 6. He applied for a welfare |

| No. | Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Case Studies |
|-----|---|
| | payment but was turned down because he had been sanctioned. Client is being treated for depression by his doctor. (G/L/ED1) |
| 15 | We had a gentleman present last week who was extremely distressed by the situation. If you were looking for someone to interview to do a case study I think he would interested. Late forties/early fifties, had a career in IT before he was made redundant/became ill 2008. Lost entitlement to sickness benefit during the ESA migration, claims JSA and was sanctioned for having to look after an elderly relative who lived 50 miles away. (N9) |
| 16 | There are a few cases coming through where clients have been removed from ESA and now receive JSA. This has caused a lot of anxiety given the sudden immediate impact of loss of income. In some circumstances individuals are asking to access long term rehab to come off Methadone as they see this as potentially affecting their ability to gain employment. However, in some cases this may be a response/reaction to not being able to cope and access to rehab requires to be assessed/screened/approved but this potentially could put a strain on SW budgets. (W7) |
| 17 | Claimant requested written proof that computers were not available on the 26 December 2013 as had been told that he would be sanctioned for not looking for work on the 26 December. Claimants aggressively demanding an e-mail or cv is created for them as they have been told they will be sanctioned if unable to supply one. (E/SE5) |
| 18 | Client lives in the area with his nine year old daughter and is now in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance following a previous sanction. Client received notification that he was to start a Mandatory Work Place Activity from 9 October to 4 November. This coincides with school holidays and client has no-one to look after his daughter. The client's Claimant Commitment recognises this situation and states that he is allowed to limit work to 16 hours per week. Despite this, the Mandatory Work Programme was set for an activity of 30 hours per week. The client does not understand this and has grave concerns that a further sanction will follow if he does not attend the Mandatory Work Activity. Client has been made aware of his appeal rights and should this happen he will contact the council service for further assistance. (E/SE5) |
| 19 | Client lives in the area and was asked to apply for a job by JCP. On the date the application was due to be put in, the client was too ill but instead asked a friend to deliver the application form on her behalf. The friend duly did so. At the next sign on the JCP adviser advised that no application had been received and the client was asked to complete another one, which they duly did and returned to the JCP by first class post. At the next sign on meeting client was again advised that no application had been received. It appears |

| No. | Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Case Studies |
|-----|--|
| | <p>that JCP did actually have the forms and, in particular, had received the first application form prior to the closing date. Despite JCP acknowledging this, the DWP sanctioned client. The client feels, legitimately, that there was a lack of communication within JCP and despite doing all that was asked of them, the client has received a sanction of benefit for a period of three months. Our service is currently assisting with a Mandatory Reconsideration. (E/SE5)</p> |
| 20 | <p>Client lives in the area. Client was due to attend TRIAGE as part of his Claimant Commitment which he has been doing for nearly two years without fail. On day client was to attend a TRIAGE clinic he felt ill and, as he had no money on his mobile phone to contact them, he visited TRIAGE two hours later (once he felt better) to explain his absence. Despite this (and his previous good attendance) client was subsequently sanctioned. Following assistance from our service the client won his Mandatory Reconsideration and the sanction award was backdated for a period of 13 weeks. On receipt of the backdated award the client noticed that only nine weeks had been paid. On investigation this was subsequently found to be due a previous sanction applied to the client for a different time period. Following various visits to our service and JCP client was told his appeal was successful but when no money was repaid the client was then told his appeal was unsuccessful. Due to the timescale that had elapsed the client was then out of the timescale for Mandatory Reconsideration. Our service has submitted Reconsideration on client's behalf and are awaiting outcome. (E/SE5)</p> |

Section 6: Conclusions

- There is little systematic data or hard evidence on the impact of the Claimant Commitment or sanctions at a local authority level as yet, although in some service areas this was under development.
- Local authorities are beginning to collect and monitor the impact on their services. What is available at this stage shows a variation across service areas as to the information they collected regarding service use in relation to the Claimant Commitment and sanctions.
- Where possible local authorities should look to move towards more systematic collection of service demand/service use data. Authorities should seek to record data as uniformly as possible. For example, the Scottish Government now publishes statistics on the SWF as experimental statistics. If councils collect information in the same way, information can be analysed at a national level, and comparisons can be made across LAs.
- Communication and data sharing between local authorities and Jobcentre Plus requires to be significantly improved, and that the Claimant Commitment and sanctions policy of the DWP is the cause of tension at local partnership level. COSLA should look to enhance partnership working - support for claimants on the Claimant Commitment and sanctions with the DWP
- Enhanced partnership working is also needed to collect quality information. This is challenging as in the case of Mental Health services, for example – different agencies can work with clients and it may be difficult to pull information from several agencies. There are some examples of good practice in the written responses, e.g. a council and DWP office working together to compile a list of digital access points with internet/computers.
- One thing that comes out of the written responses as opposed to the quantitative data is that there may be small groups of individuals who are disproportionately affected by lack of access to services which has a significant impact on them. Mental health issues are also frequently highlighted in the responses. An example given from the responses is that people with no home internet access will find it more difficult to search for jobs.
- A theme that also comes out of written responses is the effect that changes are having on frontline staff who provide services. As well as increased demand, there is also a need to be more aware of certain client issues, e.g. potential mental health issues, substance misuse. Also, it is apparent from the written responses that frontline staff need more training on the processes for sanctioning individuals. There are also cases where staff have had to contact security in cases where individuals who have been sanctioned become aggressive.
- Councils should keep track of information that is released by DWP on sanctions. One of the themes of the report is that certain groups (e.g. people with mental health issues, younger people) are more likely to be adversely affected by sanctions. The data dashboard includes figures on sanctions by age and ethnicity which are sourced from DWP, which councils can use to test some of their hypotheses.

- There was a view that sanctions were being applied inconsistently by Jobcentre Plus staff.
- There was a view that many of those being sanctioned were already vulnerable and were unaware they had been sanctioned and that they did not fully understand the Claimant Commitment process.
- Many respondents thought that the proposed Claimant Commitment survey was potentially premature, however some saw it as having a beneficial effect with regard to council's thinking and planning in this area.

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Claimant Conditionality and Sanctions Survey Questionnaire
- Appendix 2: Feedback from the Workshop Session on the Claimant Commitment and Sanctions, National Link and Learn Event
- Appendix 3: Service Demand Change as a Proportion of Type of Data Used in Response

Appendix 1: Survey Questionnaire

Claimant Conditionality and Sanction Survey

The Improvement Service, working with Scottish Government and COSLA, is looking to better understand the impacts of the Claimant Commitment process and benefits sanctions on claimants and local services. The Claimant Commitment was introduced by the Department of Work and Pensions in October 2013 for Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) claimants.

We would greatly appreciate it if you could complete the survey on behalf of your local authority. The survey has been distributed to all 32 Scottish local authorities to better understand the implications if the Claimant Commitment and associated sanctions on claimants, local service demand and the experience of local authorities in responding to these changes.

The survey is the first part of a two stage process. The second stage will include shared learning, disseminating the findings of the survey, which will be facilitated by the Improvement Service.

The survey is voluntary and you can choose not to answer any of the questions. Please note that the survey does not allow you to save your answers and therefore responses must be submitted in one sitting. If you exit the survey without completing it your answers will be lost.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Andrew Noble at the Improvement Service, andrew.noble@improvementservice.org.uk

Please complete this survey by Wednesday 30 April 2014.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Section 1: Impact on Service Demand

The purpose of this section is to better understand any changes to demand for local authority services since the introduction of the Claimant Commitment.

1. Since the introduction of the Claimant Commitment in October 2013, what best describes any changes in the level of demand for the following services: *(Please insert a tick into the appropriate column).*

| Service Area | Significant Increase | Some Increase | Neither Increase or Decrease | Some Decrease | Significant Decrease | Do Not Know | Not Applicable |
|------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Alcohol and Drugs | | | | | | | |
| Community Learning and Development | | | | | | | |

| Service Area | Significant Increase | Some Increase | Neither Increase or Decrease | Some Decrease | Significant Decrease | Do Not Know | Not Applicable |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|---------------|------------------------------|---------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Debt Advice/ Management | | | | | | | |
| Employability Services | | | | | | | |
| Further Education/ Colleges | | | | | | | |
| Homelessness Support | | | | | | | |
| Housing | | | | | | | |
| Library Services | | | | | | | |
| Mental Health | | | | | | | |
| Money Advice/ Budgeting Support | | | | | | | |
| Scottish Welfare Fund | | | | | | | |
| Social Work | | | | | | | |
| Welfare Rights/ Advocacy | | | | | | | |

2. Please indicate any other service areas in which you have seen changes in demand following the introduction of the Claimant Commitment in October 2013. *(Please indicate the service area and the type of change in demand experienced).*

3. Please describe the nature of those changes in service demand indicated in the previous questions (1 and 2). *(For example, changes in demand related to specific programmes or dimensions of the service area, regional distribution, differences in service user groups).*

4. To your knowledge, what best describes how individuals affected by the Claimant Conditionality come to access the following services: *(Please consult the definitions and insert a tick into the appropriate column).*

| Service Area | Self-referrals | Referrals through Job Centre Plus (inc. Work Programme Returners) | Referrals from Other Partners | Other Form of Referral | Do Not Know | Not Applicable |
|------------------------------------|----------------|---|-------------------------------|------------------------|-------------|----------------|
| Alcohol and Drugs | | | | | | |
| Community Learning and Development | | | | | | |
| Debt Advice/ Management | | | | | | |
| Employability Services | | | | | | |
| Further Education/ Colleges | | | | | | |
| Homelessness Support | | | | | | |
| Housing | | | | | | |
| Library Services | | | | | | |
| Mental Health | | | | | | |
| Money Advice/ Budgeting Support | | | | | | |
| Scottish Welfare Fund | | | | | | |
| Social Work | | | | | | |
| Welfare Rights/ Advocacy | | | | | | |

Section 2: Information and Data Collection

The purpose of this section is to better understand the type of information your council and its partners collect relating to changes in demand for services.

5. Does your local authority collect information in a consistent and routine manner on service demand levels (including changes to service demand)?
 1. Yes
 2. No
 3. Don't know

6. What best describes the type of information you used in your response to changes to service demand in the previous section (questions 1 and 2)? *(Please consider the following definitions and insert a tick into the appropriate column).*

Definitions:

- 'Ad hoc' refers to very infrequent reporting of instances that is not systematically or routinely collected, for example, between 0 and 5 similar examples within a week.
- 'Anecdotal' refers to more frequent reporting of instances, but not systematically or routinely collected, for example, to more than 5 similar instances within a week.
- 'Systematic' refers to information that is systematically and routinely collected, for example, service user/programme statistics.
- 'Do not know' refers to information that you personally do not know.
- 'Not gathering' indicates that you know this information is not gathered.

| Service Area | Ad hoc | Anecdotal | Systematic | Do Not Know | Not Gathering |
|------------------------------------|--------|-----------|------------|-------------|---------------|
| Alcohol and Drugs | | | | | |
| Community Learning and Development | | | | | |
| Debt Advice/Management | | | | | |
| Employability Services | | | | | |
| Further Education/Colleges | | | | | |
| Homelessness Support | | | | | |
| Housing | | | | | |
| Library Services | | | | | |
| Mental Health | | | | | |
| Money Advice/Budgeting Support | | | | | |
| Scottish Welfare Fund | | | | | |
| Social Work | | | | | |
| Welfare Rights/Advocacy | | | | | |

7. Please describe the information gathering processes you have undertaken to make your assessment of changes to service demands (*for example, consulting programme statistics, discussions with front-line employees, informal reporting sessions, local studies, case studies, claimant feedback*).

Section 3: Impact of Claimant Conditionality and Sanctions on Claimants' Experiences

The purpose of this section is to better understand the claimants' feedback that your council has received on the conditionality regime and service demand.

8. Reflecting upon the information you have reviewed or heard, please describe the most common experiences expressed by claimants related to claimant conditionality. *(For example, claimants' understandings of conditionality, experiences with the process, navigating referrals and accessing services, modifying behaviour, and other opportunities or barriers).*

9. Reflecting upon the information you have reviewed or heard, please describe the most common experiences expressed by claimants related to benefit sanctions. *(For example, understanding of the process, including how, why and when sanctions are applied, repeat sanctioning, modifying behaviour, navigating and accessing services, and other opportunities or barriers).*

Section 4: Council Responses

The purpose of this section is to better understand the impact of changing demands on services and the local authority's responses.

10. Please describe the emerging opportunities and challenges presented by changes across service areas that have impacted your local authority and community partners' capacity to identify, plan and deliver services.

11. Please describe any actions or responses your local authority and community partners' have discussed, planned or delivered in relation to changes in service demand. *(For example, what are the actions, in which forums and with which key stakeholders these actions been discussed and developed - including the Welfare Reform Corporate Group and Community Planning Forums).*

12. Is there any further information or data related to claimant conditionality and sanctions that might support your service planning and mitigation work? *(Please provide any further examples of data that might be collected or shared across partner.)*

13. Are there any further points related to claimant conditionality and sanctions that has not been covered that you would like to discuss? *(Please provide any further examples or case studies undertaken).*

Appendix 2: Feedback from Workshop on the Claimant Commitments and Sanctions

**National Link and Learn Event
12 March 2014, Verity House, Edinburgh**

Introduction

This paper sets out some of the key points raised and discussed during the workshop session on the impact of the Claimant Commitment and sanctions at the welfare reform Link and Learn event which was held on 12 March at COSLA's offices at Verity House in Edinburgh.

The Link and Learn event brought together a range of local authority officers to discuss their experience to date of the impact of the new Claimant Commitment and sanctions regime introduced by the DWP in October 2013, with full roll out complete by the end of April 2014. The workshop discussion was in advance of the Claimant Commitment and Sanctions Survey, which was issued to all 32 local authorities on the 13 March, with a return date set for 30 April.

The workshop session lasted for approximately an hour and focused on three questions:

- Question 1: Since the introduction of the Claimant Commitment in October, 2013, how would you describe the impact and changes to the demand for services, and in which service areas?
- Question 2. Reflecting upon the information you have reviewed or heard, how would you describe the most common experiences expressed by claimants related to claimant conditionality and benefit sanctions?
- Question 3. Please describe the emerging opportunities and challenges presented by changes across service areas that have impacted your local authority and community partners' capacity to identify, plan and deliver services.

Key Points

1. There is little systematic data or hard evidence on the impact of the Claimant Commitment or sanctions at a local authority level as yet, although in some service areas this was under development.
2. Local authorities are beginning to collect and monitor the impact on their services. What is available at this stage is anecdotal evidence.
3. Communication and data sharing between local authorities and Jobcentre Plus requires to be significantly improved, and that the Claimant Commitment and sanctions policy of the DWP is the cause of tension at local partnership level.
4. There was a view that sanctions were being applied inconsistently by Jobcentre Plus

staff.

5. There was a view that many of those being sanctioned were already vulnerable and were unaware they had been sanctioned and that they did not fully understand the Claimant Commitment process.
6. Many respondents thought that the proposed Claimant Commitment survey was potentially premature, however some saw it as having a beneficial effect with regard to council's thinking and planning in this area.

The feedback from the workshop is presented below.

Question 1: Since the introduction of the Claimant Commitment in October 2013, how would you describe the impact and changes to the demand for services, and in which service areas?

- Delegates noted large increases in demand for advice services and also destitution services – the majority of delegates had figures on this. There was concern amongst everyone at the table that demand for the SWF would increase when guidance changed next month to allow payments to be made in respect of sanctions. There was a real concern that increased demand would put a strain on available resources and also on staff resources which had been calculated prior to this guidance change.
- Large proportion of clients seeking general money advice as there are high numbers of sanctions being applied in certain areas. Also seeing increase in demand for access to food banks and SWF. Not straightforward dealing with sanctions – tend to impact on people who already have chaotic lifestyle/complex needs, and links to other services not quite joined-up.
- One council seeing a rise in demand for homelessness services. Problem with individuals not appealing against sanctions imposed, either through lack of knowledge of how to do so effectively or lack of confidence appeal will be successful. Also a problem with Claimant Commitment where individuals are making commitments which are unlikely to be realistically achieved.
- One council is experiencing tensions between JCP and LA services – the partnership working could be improved. The council also feels it is difficult to engage with DWP about local services with the exception of employability.
- A council has experienced an upturn in referrals to mental health services, mainly due to drug/alcohol related mental health issues. It is also experiencing an increase in service demand from individuals who were not previously known to service practitioners. The council feels that DWP needs to share more information in respect of claimants who are in danger of being sanctioned so that LAs can work proactively with individuals concerned. Delegates wondered if COSLA and/or SG help amplify local authorities' voices on sanctions.
- Anecdotal evidence that individuals who have questioned the Claimant Commitment with some JCP advisers have been treated as security risks and removed from the premises.
- Delegates said there was a lack of hard evidence about claimants' experiences

related to conditionality and sanctions but some anecdotal evidence suggests there is little commonality. Some evidence that claimants who have firm job offers/future start dates are being made to honour the Claimant Commitment in the meantime (i.e. being required to continue jobseeking despite having already secured one but not yet started).

- Delegates believed there was too much discussion with JCP/DWP and not enough actions. One council felt the DWP statistics on sanctions were too broad (i.e. cover too wide a geographical area) – they need to drill down to Jobcentre area level to allow LAs to get a better handle on where sanctions are happening to manage service demand.
- In general delegates felt that it was quite early to be carrying out a survey as the impacts of Claimant Conditionality and sanctions were at too early a stage to be measured. Despite this, delegates felt that the survey would act as a catalyst for change and that it would be brought to WR corporate partnerships for completion and hence would result in a programme of detailed record keeping being instigated. Delegates thought that an initial survey with perhaps a follow up one later in the year would be beneficial.
- Sanctions - The update from members indicates that people who are being sanctioned can't get support; they are going to the SWF but can't get support there.
- It's difficult to quantify if demand changes are occurring: we know the number of sanctions and we know the number of SWF applications, however we don't know where they're being referred to.
- They are being sanctioned for things they haven't done, but there is little scope for appealing.
- There is a feeling that not much is known about who is impacted and how.
- We do know that people are being sanctioned, but we're not sure where they are going for support because to date, we're not seeing huge changes in service demand.
 - We expect they're going to family, friends – go to your neighbour's because you can't afford dinner.
 - We're not sure what they do or where they go.
- There is a lack of clear information/data about those affected. DWP managers say that they have 'no targets', but we know there are inconsistencies in how sanctions are applied. For example, among lone parents (discussion regarding the legislated 'flexibilities' with lone parents on JSA).
- Advisors at DWP may not be aware of the flexibilities; need more training and guidance (how is this known?).
- The inconsistency in applications has to do with:
 - Issues of ethics and fairness, equality.
 - Practically, the inconsistency makes it difficult to plan, prepare, educate and help people into complying. LA services seen to have a role in communication – inconsistency in the application of rules and flexibilities makes it difficult to prepare and communicate to claimants in terms of how to avoid being

- sanctioned and how to comply fully.
- How can you support people into complying with their conditionality agreements?
- How do advisors recognise the barriers individuals face when making the agreement – engagement to the level suitable to the individual’s capabilities?
- Local partners can only intervene or support where they know or have access to the information; currently not enough information sharing about claimants at risk of being sanctioned to support their compliance
- Local authorities and communities having to pick up the pieces following sanctions.
- Increased pressure on library services and public access IT points. This raises problems not so much about access but around the level of assistance required.
- Increased demand on Employability Services. People presenting due to conditionality, before it was really only people using the service on a voluntary basis.
- Increased destitution referrals and use of foodbank/food vouchers.
- Still to see the full extent of the impact as its only early days. But costs and demand only going to increase as conditionality extended to more complex cases.
- Substantial administration resources involved in SWF.

Question 2: Reflecting upon the information you have reviewed or heard, how would you describe the most common experiences expressed by claimants related to claimant conditionality and benefit sanctions?

- Delegates reported that they felt there were discrepancies between the way ‘advisors’ and ‘decision-makers’ dealt with claimant’s situations. It was felt that ‘decision-makers’ were often not local (Sheffield) and therefore did not have any relationships with local services who could assist in working with claimants to meet conditionality.
- Delegates all felt that there had been occasions where claimants with mental health issues had been unfairly sanctioned and that better liaison and cooperation with key local support services could have prevented a ‘sanctions’ decision.
- People need to understand that they will be sanctioned if they don’t comply.
- People need to understand what they are signing up for in their conditionality agreements and if the terms are unrealistic, they need to be negotiated before signing.
- The Claimant Commitment Form is an agreement, there are flexibilities in what they’re asked to do however unclear about the range of possibilities.
- It is unknown if the claimants can negotiate, assuming they have the capacity/confidence to negotiate either Claimant Commitment.
- Even if there were templates, the clients are different in different areas, how can the

DWP advisors recognise the barriers the individuals face and how do the partners help?

- Would be helpful if there was a 'last step' before being sanctioned, a referral mechanism or mediation role with local services to help claimants to meet their conditions. For this to work, need the Jobcentre Plus to referral onward.
- Those with the least capacity to understand their commitments and negotiate their agreements are likely to be the most in need of help, and the hardest to reach.
- Need to better understand what can be done to avoid agreeing to unachievable T&Cs in the Claimant Commitment to prevent the sanctions.

Data and Information

- We don't know if there's data on referrals or service demand changes.
- Libraries, anecdotally, are seeing huge increases in queries to staff about CVs, work searches and email address set ups to meet Jobcentre Plus requirements.
 - Areas of footfall increase would be good to know about; what sort of footfall and what are the demands they present – how can we place the right services where the users go?
 - What else can we provide to people, e.g. in libraries?
 - Where do people go? We need to think about the opportunities to reach.
- There are wider management information systems in place, e.g. with employability services. These are probably not picking up on sanctions.
- The onus should be on DWP to provide information on a quarterly basis, or the league tables on demographics, severity, area, claimant type, e.g. lone parents, reason for sanctions. (How would you use this data if you had it?)
- There's too much of a lag in data on sanctions from DWP.
- Conditionality agreements: Not collecting data on referrals or where people are required to go.
- System of support becomes very ad hoc. How do you improve that when JCP is suggesting a range of approaches?
- Do we have a clear view of what people are being asked to do? e.g. 30 hours of search on the Job Match.

Capacity/Moving Between Benefits

- ESA clients turned down for ESA and waiting on appeals get caught in a benefit trap; they are waiting on appealed decision, directed to apply for JSA in the interim for support. However, they're not fit for work – they sign a Claimant Commitment then are sanctioned. The appeal and waiting process puts them in a trap to be sanctioned when they shouldn't have ever applied for JSA in the first place.
- GPs have to wait 3-4 months of GP, general care before being able to refer to specialist care.

Labour Market Matching

- Are advisors setting agreements based on labour market demand and what's achievable, e.g. jobs available in the economy, restrictions on lone parents and individual capacity?
- There are wider local labour market issues; are these taken into account when setting conditionality agreements?
- Requirements of the claimant conditionality necessitate a level of creativity – being asked to network and do speculative applications without the supports to help people do this. This is beyond the existing skills of many claimants.
- Conflict with local labour market demands – if person only able to get four hour shift, but advisors are pushing for 20 hours of work – some progression into work and activity is better than none. Need to recognize what's achievable and empower people.
- Is the local labour market something that advisors take into account?
- There's a need to join up local labour market demands, large employers through CSR initiatives and claimants.
- Information mostly anecdotal but found this isn't always accurate, i.e. cases of exaggeration, etc.
- Cases of benefit being withdrawn before sanctions notification letters received.
- At the time, a lot of LAs represented had not had the Claimant Commitment fully rolled out in their area and so did not have much to contribute in terms of claimant experiences.

Question 3: Please describe the emerging opportunities and challenges presented by changes across service areas that have impacted your local authority and community partners' capacity to identify, plan and deliver services.

- Delegates were all reporting that they had only had initial discussions with WR Corporate Groups about the impacts of sanctions. It was reported that collecting information across services would be time consuming and have resource implications. It was however recognised as vital to planning future service demand and that partnerships would need to begin collecting this information in a systematic way.
- Delegates who were involved in Benefits and Revenues felt frustrated at the lack of information sharing between DWP, local JCPs and local authorities. For example, a list of claimants whose benefit had been sanctioned would greatly assist in the processing of Discretionary Housing Payments (DHPs), however DWP are not able to share this data. In general there was unhappiness with the lack of information sharing possible with local JCPs, although data sharing confidentiality issues were cited as often legitimate reasons and both parties unsure of how to get around this.
- There is a need for commitment from range of services to work collaboratively. More

collaboratively than co-location; to improve the quality of services. Need to have buy-in.

- Most disadvantages might be known to multiple services; where can we interact with them and who is already working with them?
- Communicating and presenting information in a simpler way for users: need to be able to simply communicate what individuals are signing up for in their Claimant Commitment as well as supporting them with timelines and budgeting.
- How do we support the vulnerable people? How can we – or should we – share information across other services?
 - Data sharing concerns, consents; willingness of clients to have information shared between services and shared with DWP. Do individuals want that?
- How can we have early warning systems to support people before they get sanctioned?
- Welfare reform forced councils to things they should have been addressing previously i.e. positive interventions.
- Reluctance to put too much infrastructure in place before Local Support Services Framework (LSSF), as they won't be paid for this resource.
- Looking at ways to best capture information relating to Claimant Commitment but recognition that they can't capture everything.
- Concerns that capturing info will be quite resource intensive and dubious about what the information will achieve in the wider sense i.e. with the DWP.
- Communication from DWP needs to improve. Meetings with DWP at district level but finding a reluctance of DWP to engage locally.
- Would find local information i.e. sub Local authority from the DWP useful.

Appendix 3: Service Demand Change as a Proportion of Type of Data Used in Response

| Service Area | Type of Data Collected | Total | | Significant Increase | | Some Increase | | Neither | | Some Decrease | | Significant Decrease | | Do Not Know | | N/A | |
|------------------------------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|----------------------|------------|---------------|------------|----------|------------|---------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-----|---|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Alcohol and Drugs | Ad hoc | 2 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | Anecdotal | 7 | 39 | 1 | 50 | 2 | 29 | 2 | 50 | | | 2 | 67 | | | | |
| | Systematic | 5 | 28 | 1 | 50 | 3 | 43 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Don't know | 4 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | 2 | 50 | | | 1 | 33 | | | | |
| | Not gathering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Total | | 18 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 7 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 3 | 100 | 5 | 100 | | |
| Community Learning and Development | Ad hoc | 2 | 11 | 1 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 25 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Anecdotal | 6 | 32 | 3 | 60 | 2 | 50 | 0 | 0 | | | 1 | 20 | | | | |
| | Systematic | 4 | 21 | 1 | 20 | 2 | 50 | 1 | 25 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Don't know | 5 | 26 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 50 | | | 3 | 60 | | | | |
| | Not gathering | 2 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | 1 | 20 | | | | |
| Total | | 19 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 1 | 20 | 5 | 100 | | |
| Debt Advice | Ad hoc | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 8 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Anecdotal | 4 | 17 | 2 | 33 | 2 | 15 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Systematic | 18 | 75 | 4 | 67 | 10 | 77 | 2 | 67 | | | 1 | 100 | | | | |
| | Don't know | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 33 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Not gathering | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Total | | 24 | 100 | 6 | 100 | 13 | 100 | 3 | 100 | 3 | 100 | 1 | 100 | 5 | 100 | | |

| Service Area | Type of Data Collected | Total | | Significant Increase | | Some Increase | | Neither | | Some Decrease | | Significant Decrease | | Do Not Know | | N/A | |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|----------------------|------------|---------------|------------|----------|------------|---------------|---|----------------------|---|-------------|------------|----------|------------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Employability | Ad hoc | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | | | | | | | | |
| | Anecdotal | 8 | 44 | 4 | 67 | 3 | 60 | 1 | 14 | | | | | | | | |
| | Systematic | 8 | 44 | 2 | 33 | 2 | 40 | 4 | 57 | | | | | | | | |
| | Don't know | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | | | | | | | | |
| | Not gathering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 14 | | | | | | | | |
| Total | | 18 | 100 | 6 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 7 | 100 | | | | | | | | |
| Homelessness | Ad hoc | 3 | 16 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 1 | 33 | | |
| | Anecdotal | 4 | 21 | 2 | 50 | 1 | 20 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 1 | 33 | | |
| | Systematic | 10 | 53 | 1 | 25 | 4 | 80 | 3 | 75 | | | | | 0 | 0 | | |
| | Don't know | 2 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 25 | | | | | 1 | 33 | | |
| | Not gathering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 0 | 00 | | |
| Total | | 19 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 4 | 100 | | | | | 3 | 100 | | |
| Housing | Ad hoc | 2 | 11 | 1 | 33 | 1 | 13 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Anecdotal | 3 | 16 | 1 | 33 | 1 | 13 | 1 | 25 | | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Systematic | 10 | 53 | 1 | 33 | 6 | 75 | 3 | 75 | | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Don't know | 4 | 21 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 3 | 100 | 1 | 100 |
| | Not gathering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 19 | 100 | 3 | 100 | 8 | 100 | 4 | 100 | | | | | 3 | 100 | 1 | 100 |

| Service Area | Type of Data Collected | Total | | Significant Increase | | Some Increase | | Neither | | Some Decrease | | Significant Decrease | | Do Not Know | | N/A | |
|---------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|----------------------|------------|---------------|------------|----------|------------|---------------|------------|----------------------|------------|-------------|------------|-----|---|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Libraries | Ad hoc | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| | Anecdotal | 7 | 39 | 3 | 60 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 60 | | | 1 | 20 | | | | |
| | Systematic | 4 | 22 | 2 | 40 | 2 | 67 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Don't know | 4 | 22 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 20 | | | 3 | 60 | | | | |
| | Not gathering | 2 | 11 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 20 | | | 1 | 20 | | | | |
| Total | | 18 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 3 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 5 | 100 | | |
| Mental Health | Ad hoc | 2 | 13 | 1 | 33 | 1 | 25 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Anecdotal | 2 | 13 | 1 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 50 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Systematic | 5 | 33 | 1 | 33 | 3 | 75 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Don't know | 6 | 40 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 50 | | | 5 | 100 | | | | |
| | Not gathering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Total | | 15 | 100 | 3 | 100 | 4 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 5 | 100 | | |
| Money Advice | Ad hoc | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Anecdotal | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 11 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| | Systematic | 19 | 79 | 8 | 100 | 7 | 78 | 1 | 50 | | | 1 | 50 | | | | |
| | Don't know | 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 50 | | | 1 | 50 | | | | |
| | Not gathering | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | 0 | 0 | | | | |
| Total | | 24 | 100 | 8 | 100 | 9 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 2 | 100 | 2 | 100 | | |

| Service Area | Type of Data Collected | Total | | Significant Increase | | Some Increase | | Neither | | Some Decrease | | Significant Decrease | | Do Not Know | | N/A | |
|----------------|------------------------|-----------|------------|----------------------|------------|---------------|------------|----------|------------|---------------|---|----------------------|---|-------------|------------|----------|------------|
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| SWF | Ad hoc | 2 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 10 | | | | | | | 0 | 0 | | |
| | Anecdotal | 3 | 13 | 1 | 10 | 1 | 10 | | | | | | | 0 | 0 | | |
| | Systematic | 18 | 75 | 8 | 80 | 8 | 80 | | | | | | | 1 | 100 | | |
| | Don't know | 1 | 4 | 1 | 10 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | 0 | 0 | | |
| | Not gathering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | | | 0 | 0 | | |
| Total | | 24 | 100 | 10 | 100 | 10 | 100 | | | | | | | 1 | 100 | | |
| Social Work | Ad hoc | 2 | 12 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 20 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 1 | 25 | | |
| | Anecdotal | 1 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 20 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 0 | 0 | | |
| | Systematic | 10 | 59 | 4 | 80 | 3 | 60 | 2 | 67 | | | | | 1 | 25 | | |
| | Don't know | 4 | 24 | 1 | 20 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 33 | | | | | 2 | 50 | | |
| | Not gathering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 0 | 0 | | |
| Total | | 17 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 5 | 100 | 3 | 100 | | | | | 4 | 100 | | |
| Welfare Rights | Ad hoc | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 1 | 50 | 0 | 0 |
| | Anecdotal | 5 | 21 | 2 | 20 | 3 | 38 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| | Systematic | 17 | 71 | 8 | 80 | 5 | 63 | 1 | 100 | | | | | 0 | 0 | 1 | 100 |
| | Don't know | 1 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 1 | 50 | 0 | 0 |
| | Not gathering | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | | | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Total | | 24 | 100 | 10 | 100 | 8 | 100 | 1 | 100 | | | | | 2 | 100 | 1 | 100 |

Note: N refers to number of responses; * refers to [...]; data used gathered in questions 1 and 6.

Improvement Service
Westerton House
East Mains Industrial Estate
Broxburn
EH52 5AU

T. 01506 775558
E. info@improvementservice.org.uk
www.improvementservice.org.uk

