International conference on welfare conditionality

26-28 June 2018 University of York, U.K.

Two top academics are to guest at the Welfare Conditionality Project's international conference next year.

Associate Professor Rik van Berkel from the Utrecht School of Governance, Netherlands, will discuss 'From policy to practice: a street-level perspective of welfare-to-work".

Professor of Social Policy at the University of Bath Jane Millar will speak on 'Women, work and welfare: how does conditionality change choice?'

Their plenary sessions will be highlights of the three-day conference.

The *Welfare Conditionality: Principles, Practices and Perspectives* event marks the conclusion of five years' research into the topic for the WelCond project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council. Other participants from around the world will present their own work on this controversial area of public policy.

Suggested reading

A hand up or a slap down? Criminalising benefit claimants in Britain via strategies of surveillance, sanctions and deterrence
By Del Roy Fletcher and Sharon Wright

Abstract

British policy-makers have increasingly sought to intensify and extend welfare conditionality. A distinctly more punitive turn was taken in 2012 to re-orientate the whole social security and employment services system to combine harsh sanctions with minimal mandatory support in order to prioritise moving individuals 'off benefit and into work' with the primary aim of reducing costs.

This article questions the extent to which these changes can be explained by Wacquant's (2009) theory of the 'centaur state' (a neoliberal head on an authoritarian body), which sees poverty criminalised via the advance of workfare.

We present evidence of an authoritarian approach to unemployment, involving dramatic use of strategies of surveillance (via new paternalist tools like the Claimant Commitment and the Universal Jobmatch panopticon), sanction and deterrence. This shift has replaced job match support with mandatory digital self-help, coercion and punishment. In relation to Work Programme providers, there is a contrasting liberal approach permitting high discretion in service design.