

Spring 2016

SOLIDARITY

The quarterly newsletter of One Fund For All

Training People to be Poor!

Roll-out of Universal Credit impacts on Derbyshire People

A man who has had a nil income for weeks has been called in to the Job Centre for an appointment to discuss money management! The man is on Universal Credit, the new system that is being gradually introduced by the Government that aims to bring together many existing benefits under one credit. He had been working until recently but on a low wage and had run into arrears with his Council rent. On being finished at work, and on Universal Credit, he informed the Jobcentre he was now out of work. He was in a position where he needed an advance on his Universal Credit to get by after losing his job. Subsequently his Universal Credit payments were affected by having to pay off this advance plus his monies were being directly paid to the Council to offset his rent arrears. His income was, therefore, **nothing**.

Foodbank

The Job Centre had been referring him to the foodbank from October whilst he was working. But after so many referrals, the foodbank flagged up the issue with the Job Centre as it is not supposed to be a long term solution. They directed him to the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres (DUWCs) for help. At the same time, the Job Centre made him an appointment to discuss issues around managing money! With his rent arrears, he will continue to have these deducted, and can only look forward to living on nothing in the immediate future. He is also expected to look for work with no money in his pockets!

Denying Dignity

Many people have problems with their weekly budget. With Universal Credit being paid monthly in arrears, the system seems to be gearing up to training people how to be poor and live on very little, or even nothing at all. DUWC will be raising this issue with his local MP and will continue to highlight the total inadequacy of the system that denies dignity to those coming face to face with the benefits system encompassing the low paid as well as those out of work.



RESEARCH

Centres Contribute to Sanctions Research

Together with Financial Action and Advice Derbyshire (FAAD) and Citizens Advice the Derbyshire Unemployed Workers' Centres provided completed questionnaires and case studies to support research into the impact of benefit sanctions published by FAAD in December. The research used:

- Analysis of DWP statistics
- In depth Questionnaires – 61 completed
- Telephone Interviews – 5 completed
- Case studies – 6 completed
- *Informal discussions with—local authority staff, support workers, advice workers.

The findings included:

- Sanctions decisions on individuals averaged at around 8% across Derbyshire in March 2015
- Numbers have decreased significantly. The proportion of claimants sanctioned and the claimant count have both gone down.
- *Referral rates seem likely to be driven by guidance and interpretation within Jobcentre Plus than claimant behaviour.

The key points were:

- Only one person thought that the sanction increased their chance of finding work.
- *Only one person thought their sanction was fair.
- Around half thought they might have been able to avoid the sanction if they'd been warned.
- 85% felt they could not have avoided the sanction if they had wanted to.
- Around 70% felt they understood what they had to do under their jobseekers agreement.

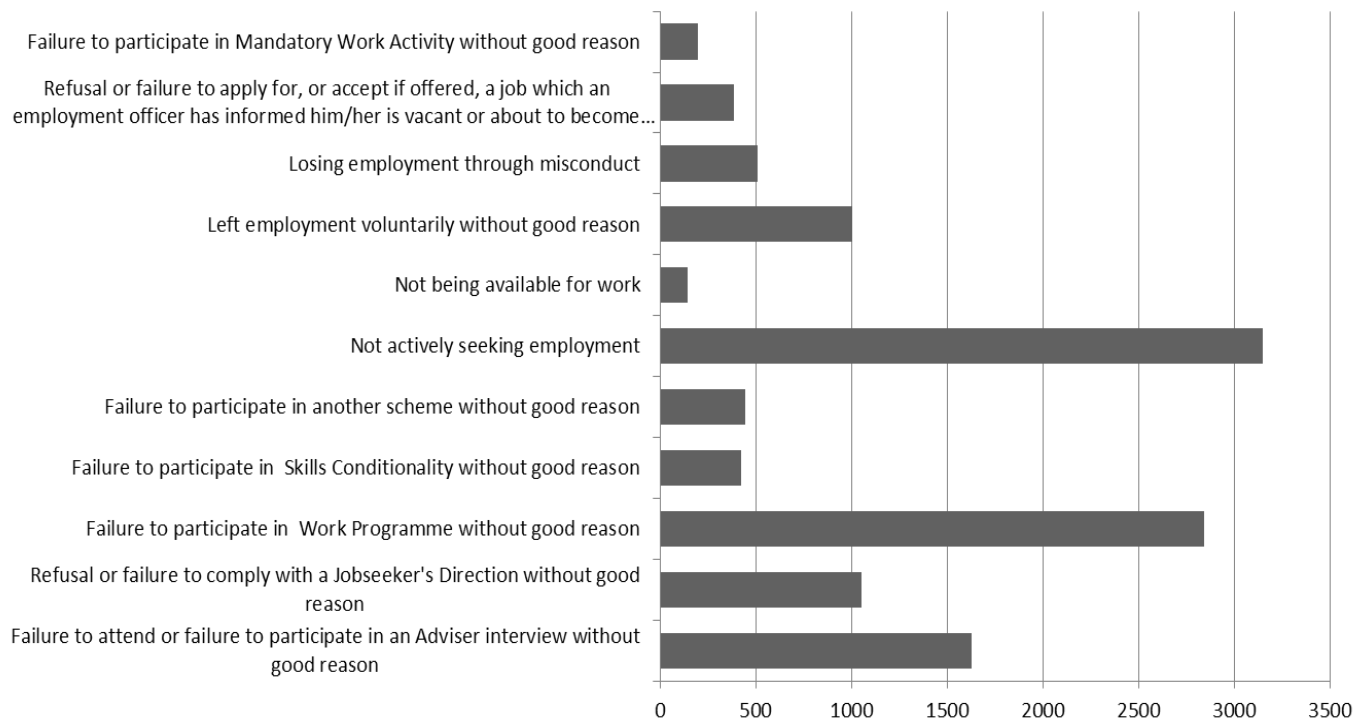
Impact on finances - key points

59% of people coped by relying on friends and family for loans with an extra 14 % given money

- Cutting back and not paying bills is common
- “I'm on a low amount anyway so you can't even afford to pay it back once you get through the Sanction”
- 26% reported more financial difficulty for 6 months or more after the sanction

JSA sanctions in Derbyshire 2014/15

Referrals of individuals by reason



Impact on health – key points

- Sanctions are expected to have a negative impact on health
- Hardship payments are not taken up in all cases and are often refused
- 95% of people felt more stressed, depressed or anxious following the sanction
- 28% still felt more stressed, depressed or anxious 6 months later
- Over 80% reported lower self esteem
- 25% reported long term impacts on physical health

Impact on work seeking – key points

- 95% of people reported feeling less positive about job centre staff following a sanction.
- For 64% this effect lasted for more than 6 months
- Strong negative impacts on confidence and ability to get a job are reported and for many this is long term
- This suggests sanctions have a negative impact on engagement and work seeking
- Only 20% of our respondents had found employment
- Only 42% of those had full time work
- Only one had an hourly rate of over £7.85
- This ties in with research suggesting that where sanctions move people off benefit it is into low paid, low quality jobs that are not sustainable

Campaign News

YOU'RE NOT FIT TO SELL THE SHIRT!

Flashmob choir hits Sports Direct with hilarious hymn

A flashmob against Sports Direct's employment policies struck at the firm with a hilarious choral hymn, with a very serious message.

Gathering casually in front of the leading sports retailer's Chesterfield store, they serenaded boss Mike Ashley, regaling tales of zero hours, workers sacked for sickness and mums giving birth on the factory floor.

And there was a very festive feel as the chorus of Chesterfield's Unite Community group started singing "Exploitation!" to the tune of 'Bread of Heaven', having devised their own lyrics by Unite member Colin Hampton.

Colin told us after the flashmob on November 20: "We thought that doing a flash mob was more effective than leafletting, to raising awareness of what people are experiencing there. The exploitation of their workers makes them unfit to sell football shirts to all the fans out there, so we emulated the football chant. 'You're not fit to sell the shirt.'"



Flashmob choir assembles outside the Chesterfield Sports Direct shop

Campaign News– continued

Colin added: “When they put such a big investment into a former mining area we wanted to see good jobs, but that’s not what we’ve got. We want Sports Direct to talk to the trade union and improve their image by improving their working practices, which will be better for both their workforce and their shareholders in the long run.”

So the group called out the firm, singing: “Workers came from throughout Europe, keen to earn their daily bread. Decent jobs were what they wanted... they got Sports Direct instead.” The very tuneful demonstration follows revelations that suggested the company operates a strike system for workers who turn up late or call in sick; undergo demeaning searches as they leave work and many may have been worked into illness, with a high number of ambulance calls to the site last year.



Unite Community Activists from North Derbyshire dressed in Victorian costume protest at Shirebrook on day of the Sports Direct AGM

To watch the Flashmob choir use the link below.

www.derbyshiretimes.co.uk/news/grassroots/flashmob-choir-hits-sports-direct-with-hilarious-hymn-1-7611389

News

Recording Our Asbestos Heritage

Derbyshire Asbestos Support Team are pleased to announce that we have been awarded a grant of £3,800 by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

This grant will cover the costs of a one-year project called Our Asbestos Heritage. We will be making an accessible record of where and how asbestos was used from the 1940s to the 1990s. One of the aims is to raise awareness among those who work with historic artefacts including museum workers, vintage collectors and property renovators.

We have prepared a questionnaire, which we are asking people who have previously worked with asbestos to complete. We will be asking where people worked with asbestos and what it was used for. We are also on the look-out for photographs – of people at work with asbestos, or of objects that contain it.

We will use the questionnaire answers and photographs to produce a new website and to launch new Facebook and Twitter pages dedicated to the subject. This will allow anyone to access information about the types of buildings and objects that may still contain traces of asbestos. We will also produce leaflets which we will send out to museums and vintage lifestyle magazines, and there will be an accompanying display board.

Memories and Photographs Needed

If you worked with asbestos (and your compensation claim has been settled) then please complete one of our questionnaires and send it back to us. If you would prefer to give your answers by telephone, then this can be arranged. If you have any photographs that you can share with us, then post them to us. We will scan them into an electronic format and return them.

Sarah Walters, DAST's Funding Development Worker says: "This 1950s travel iron (see photo), with the asbestos pad, was the inspiration behind this application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is very easy to stumble across asbestos when clearing out an old attic or rooting through boxes on flea markets. Many people also enjoy renovating period properties, which are likely to contain the substance throughout their fabric. As a keen historian I am really excited to be



News

working on this project and am looking forward to hearing peoples' stories and seeing old photographs."

Sarah went on BBC Radio Derby to talk about the project, and took along local man Alan Watson, who described how he was exposed to asbestos while working as an apprentice at the Derby loco works. The boilers of the steam engines that were being constructed were all covered in asbestos sheets. He brought in this photo of the construction shop:



This must be a concern to anyone working in the railway preservation movement.

Examples of places where asbestos might be found include:

- WW2 gas masks
- Vintage ironing boards and oven gloves
- Around the brakes of vintage cars
- In kitchen floor tiles
- Old talcum powder tins
- Around fireplaces



Follow our project on social media to keep informed and see the results of our research:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/AsbestosHeritage/>

Twitter: @BewareAsbestos

To participate in the project contact Sarah on sarah.walters@asbestosupport.co.uk or 01246 380415

The new website will be available in the spring.

Where to get advice

ALFRETON Alfreton House High Street Tuesday 9.00am-12.00pm Wed,Thur 9.00am-12.00pm 1.00pm-4.00pm	BOLSOVER Bainbridge Hall Carr Vale Monday 1.30pm-4.00pm	BRIMINGTON Community Centre High Street Monday 9.0am-12.00pm	CLAY CROSS Adult Education Centre Market Street Monday 9.30am-12.30pm
CLOWNE 48 Mill Street Tuesday 1.00pm-3.30pm	CRESWELL Limestone House Elmton Road Thursday 1.00pm-3.30pm	ECKINGTON Business Centre Market Street Monday 1.30pm-3.30pm	GRASSMOOR Community Centre New Street Thursday 10.00am-12.00pm
HASLAND Unit 2 Penmore Business Centre, Hasland Road Wednesday 1.30pm-3.30pm	HEANOR Salcare Ray Street Friday 8.30am-12.30pm	NORTH WINGFIELD Community Resource Centre Thursday 1.00pm-3.30pm	PINXTON Village Hall Kirkstead Road Tuesday 1.00pm-3.30pm
SOMERCOTES Parish Hall Nottingham Road Monday 1.30pm-4.00pm	STAVELEY Library Mon and Thurs 9.30am-12.30pm	CHESTERFIELD 1 Rose Hill East Mon-Fri 9.30am-1.00pm 01246 231441	SHIREBROOK 44 Patchwork Row Mon-Thurs 9.00am-11.30am 01623 748161

Help us Go Green!

If you are able to receive your issue of Solidarity via email, please send your address to:

info@duwc.org.uk

For more regular updates you can follow us on Twitter [@derbyshireuwc](https://twitter.com/derbyshireuwc) and we also have a Facebook page.

Don't Forget...

To remember us in your will, or to ask for donations in lieu of flowers at your funeral.

Let our future be your legacy.

If you should need the advice and representation services of DUWCs

Welfare Rights Team:

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Not forgetting our wonderful team of volunteers including Brigit Long

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