

Benefit Sanctions Research

Participant Information Sheet

The Public Law Project (PLP) is researching the barriers faced by benefit claimants to challenging and appealing unfair benefit sanction decisions. The findings will inform our strategy for tackling those barriers through policy, litigation and casework.

You are being invited to take part in this research project.

Before you decide whether to do so, it is important that you understand why the research is being carried out and what it will involve. Please take the time to read this information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish.

If anything is unclear, or you would like more information, please do not hesitate to ask. You can do this by emailing Caroline Selman at c.selman@publiclawproject.org.uk or by phoning her at 020 7843 1268.

Who are PLP?

The Public Law Project (PLP) is a national charity that uses the law, research and training to improve public decision-making and to improve people's access to justice.

Benefit Sanctions Research Project

One of PLP's areas of focus is benefit sanctions.

We have received funding from [The Lloyd's Bank Foundation](#) to carry out research looking at why sanctioned claimants do – and do not – challenge sanction decisions. The aim is for us to gain a better insight into the barriers that claimants may face when challenging sanction decisions.

The reason PLP is researching this is because we believe that where claimants are sanctioned, it is really important that they are able to challenge that decision if they think it is unfair or incorrect. This is important for ensuring individual claimants are not unfairly sanctioned. We also believe it helps improve the fairness of the system as a whole by ensuring mistakes are identified and corrected.



However currently there is evidence to suggest that many claimants do not challenge sanction decisions – even if they have a good chance of success. We are keen to understand the reasons for this further so we can develop a strategy for how we can support claimants to effectively challenge unfair or incorrect sanction decisions.

This will include developing recommendations aimed at addressing the barriers to challenging sanction decisions. We will share the findings (and our recommendations) with the DWP, politicians and policy makers in order to call for improvements to be made. We will also share the findings with welfare rights advisers and lawyers to help advisers to better support claimants to challenge unfair or incorrect sanction decisions.

Why am I being asked to take part?

You are being asked to take part due to your experience of benefit sanctions or of supporting individuals who have been sanctioned.

What would taking part involve?

If you would like to take part, it would mean talking by either phone or video call about yourself, your circumstances and your experiences of sanctioning decisions.

This would be a one-off call, probably taking about an hour (depending on how much information you would like to share).

We can arrange a convenient time for this that works for you.

If you wish to participate in an interview in an alternative format please just let us know by emailing Caroline Selman at c.selman@publiclawproject.org.uk or phoning her at 020 7843 1268 and we will do our best to accommodate this.

How will the information I provide be used / will it be kept confidential?

With your permission, the interview would be recorded. This is in order to capture an accurate account of what you say and to ensure we don't miss any of your comments. The recording will be destroyed once it has been transcribed.

If you would prefer for the interview not to be recorded, we can arrange to make typed or handwritten notes to record details of the research interview instead.



The information will be used for the purposes of the research project described above. We will analyse the information collected to inform this research and to use in publications resulting from that research.

All responses will be anonymised in publication. This means we will never use your name or identifying details in our published material or reports. Any information published as part of this research will have personal details removed so you cannot be recognised or identified.

Any information you provide will be stored securely and held in accordance with PLP's policies and procedures, which are GDPR compliant.

There may be exceptional circumstances where the researcher is duty bound to share information, for example, if we are concerned about your immediate safety or that of others.

You are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time while it is being stored by PLP. If you would like to see any of this information at any time please contact Christopher Igoe, Finance and Operations Director at c.igoe@publiclawproject.org.uk.

If you have any further questions about how your information will be stored and protected, please do not hesitate to contact Caroline Selman at c.selman@publiclawproject.org.uk.

What if I change my mind about taking part?

Participation in this research is entirely voluntary.

You can refuse to answer any question and you can ask to stop the interview at any time and for any reason.

You have the right to change your response or withdraw your response entirely at any point before 1 April 2022. You can do this by contacting Caroline Selman at c.selman@publiclawproject.org.uk.

After this date, you can still withdraw permission and your data will be deleted, however it may have already been used (anonymously). In these circumstances PLP will consider requests to amend and withdraw the information provided it is possible.

What are the benefits and possible drawbacks or risks of taking part?

The main benefit of taking part is that by sharing your first-hand experiences, you will be contributing to research aimed at improving access to justice for sanctioned benefit claimants.



The potential drawbacks of participating in the research include the time commitment and also the potential emotional impact of discussing experiences of being sanctioned, which depending on the circumstances, may be distressing.

PLP can sign post you to relevant services at any time during your participation in the research if you need additional support.

As set out above, you can refuse to answer any question and you can ask to stop the interview at any time, for any reason.

Questions or complaints

If you have any questions about this research, please do not hesitate to get in touch with Caroline Selman, Research Fellow (Benefit Sanctions) at c.selman@publiclawproject.org.uk or by phoning 020 7843 1268.

If you would like to make a complaint about the research or how it is being conducted, you can contact Arabella Lang, Deputy Research Director at a.lang@publiclawproject.org.uk.

Finally

If you do decide to participate in the research – thank you! We very much appreciate you taking the time and greatly value your contribution.