

# 789,000 families affected by **BENEFIT SANCTIONS** in the last 12 months!

By challenging this vicious policy  
we can make it unworkable...

It cannot affect your benefits and may  
get you your money back! See reverse  
for details or call us on 0161 789 2999



**Salford Unemployed & Community Resource Centre  
Greater Manchester Association Trades Union Councils  
Salford TUC, Public & Commercial Services Union  
How to challenge BENEFIT SANCTIONS**

**DON'T THROW THIS LEAFLET AWAY! It contains important information that will help you, a friend or family member with BENEFIT SANCTION issues.**

## How to Challenge Your Benefit Sanction...

The government have a deliberate policy of increasing sanctions to force people off benefits – hitting the most vulnerable hardest. More than 789,000 people have been sanctioned in the last year, often for petty reasons like being a few minutes late for an appointment.

The main union for jobcentre workers, the Public and Commercial Services union, says political pressure is putting intolerable pressure on staff. The union says: 'the government's stricter rules have led to target-like objectives being set for staff to sanction a certain number of claimants, regardless of their behaviour.'

This has often come with the threat of disciplinary action and is unfair on both staff and the people entitled to benefits who they are there to help.'

**We are here to give support, to give advice about dealing with Jobcentre Plus and Work Programme providers, and to pressure them and government into treating us better.**

**Call the Salford Unemployed & Community Resource Centre on 0161 789 2999**  
84-86 Liverpool Road, Eccles, Salford, M30 0WZ

## There is a two stage procedure to challenge a sanction:-

1) When you get the sanction notification letter from Jobcentre Plus, write back to the address on that letter stating that you want it reconsidered. If you wish, you can use form DR7 (available from your jobcentre). They MUST get your letter/form within one month of the date of their letter. You have to give your reason(s) for disagreeing with their decision, e.g. because it is unreasonable/unfair: see below. Keep a copy and get a free certificate of posting from the post office.

2) Jobcentre Plus may ask you for more information, but must eventually send you their written decision, called a mandatory reconsideration notice. If you disagree with this decision, then you should appeal. To appeal you should use form SSCS1, available from Salford Unemployed & Community Resource Centre and TUC Centres.

**Your grounds for appeal are your reasons, and can be the same as you gave at stage (1), but you can add or substitute new reasons. Your appeal MUST reach the Appeals Centre within 1 month of the date of the mandatory reconsideration notice, and you must attach a copy of that notice to your appeal. Indicate on the form that you want to attend a hearing of your appeal (because claimants who attend are more likely to win) get advice as soon as you get your hearing date if not before.**

## Your reasons for challenging decisions are basically common sense, e.g.

- The activity you were told to do or attend would not have helped you find a job – say why. (For example, if you were sanctioned for not attending an information session that you knew was identical to one you had already been to).
- You were not given proper details of where you were supposed to be, or when you were supposed to be there.
- You did not apply for a particular job because either you didn't meet its requirements, it was impossible to do that job due to childcare commitments, the job was over 90 minutes travel time away, or taking the job would actually have left you worse off.
- List all the things you did to look for a job during the time they said you didn't do enough to look for work – check this list against your Job Seekers Agreement, which tells you what things you agreed to do every week.
- If you have done the activities you normally do (and have no different instructions) you should mention this. If you have been doing the same things for weeks and this has been acceptable then they should have informed you of any new instructions; otherwise you have a strong case to say you are meeting the job-seeking requirements.
- A "Job Seekers Direction" is a particular type of letter that the jobcentre might have given you. It basically means it is compulsory to attend whatever appointment it is telling you about. If you were sanctioned for not complying with a "Job Seekers Direction", state that you should not have been given the Job Seekers Direction if any of the following apply to you:-
  - you were given it at your first appointment;
  - you had no history of missing appointments when it was given to you; or
  - you were given it by an adviser who did not know your circumstances.
- If you were sanctioned for being a few minutes late for an appointment, say so and give the reasons you were late.

## GET ADVICE if you miss the 1 month time limit.

When your JSA is sanctioned, the computers will stop your housing benefit and council tax support: you should reclaim these immediately at the Council Neighbourhood Office. You might be able to get, from Jobcentre Plus, hardship payments, which are paid at a lower rate than JSA: claim at the jobcentre.