

SAMH'S VIEW:

SOCIAL SECURITY

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POLICY LEAD

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ABOUT THE SAMH'S VIEW SERIES

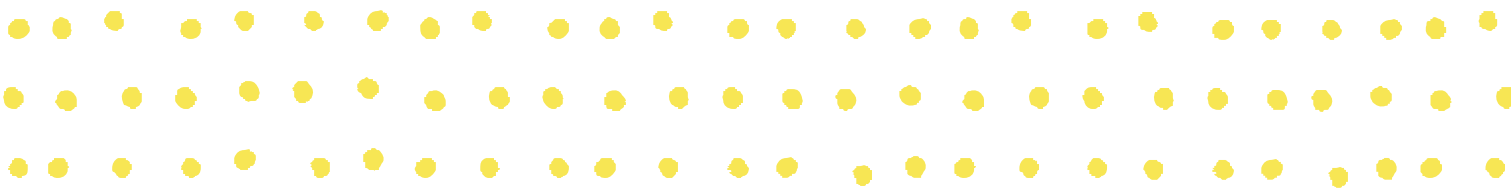
SAMH's View statements set out SAMH's position on a particular policy topic. They are produced by the Public Affairs team.

Context

More people receive the disability benefits Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) due to a mental health condition than any other health conditions.^{1, 2} ESA is an out of work benefit administered by the UK Government. Responsibility for PIP and other non-income related disability benefits is being devolved to the Scottish Government. This means that from around 2020 PIP – or a new benefit replacing it – will be administered from Scotland. Universal Credit (UC) is currently being rolled out across the UK. UC replaces six means-tested benefits for working-age households: Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit, Income Related Employment and Support Allowance, Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit. The roll out is due to be complete by December 2018, with existing benefit recipients beginning to transfer to UC from 2019.³

Key points

- Half of ESA and almost 40 per cent of PIP claims in Scotland are awarded on the basis of a mental health problem.^{4, 5}
- ESA and PIP usually require a face to face assessment to determine eligibility.
- The ESA Work Capability Assessment (WCA) and PIP medical assessment do not work for people with mental health problems. Issues include: assessors lacking experience in mental health; challenges in gathering additional evidence; difficulties in assessing fluctuating conditions; and a lack of trust in the assessments.^{6, 7} People also experience difficulties with travel to assessment centers and in some cases, an increase in thoughts of suicide.⁸
- The applicant is responsible for collecting written evidence to support an ESA and PIP application. GPs may charge as much as £10 for this.⁹
- An amendment to the Social Security (Scotland) Act means assessors in the Scottish system will have training and experience specific to the disabling conditions of the applicant.¹⁰
- People using the Scottish Social Security system will have a legal right to independent advocacy if they have a disability, including a mental health problem.¹¹
- Benefit sanctions and welfare conditionality can make mental health problems worse. There is no evidence that they support people into employment.¹²
- The Welfare Reform Act 2016 cut payments for those in the ESA Work Related



Activity Group by almost thirty pounds a week.¹³

- Forty per cent of all ESA sanctions are applied to people with mental health problems.¹⁴
- Over 4% of people in the UK had a drop in their UC benefit due to a UC sanction in February 2018.¹⁵
- There is a five week wait for initial payment of Universal Credit, resulting financial difficulty, including rent arrears for many claimants.¹⁶

SAMH calls for:

- Social security systems at the UK and Scottish levels to be based on dignity and respect, which empowers people to fully engage in their communities, with payments set at a level which allows a decent standard of living.
- The Scottish Social Security Charter to include a principle promoting improved health and mental wellbeing for everyone accessing the system.
- The £30 cut to ESA Work Related Activity Group payments to be reversed.
- Guaranteed access to independent advice and advocacy services for people accessing the UK and Scottish social security systems.
- Paper-based assessments to be the default option, with personalised face to face assessments when necessary.
- Any additional evidence needed to support a claim for a disability benefit to be gathered, free of charge, by the UK Department for Work and Pensions or new Scottish agency – not the applicant.
- Face to face assessments to be carried out by a mental health professional, at a place of the applicant's choosing.
- Sanctions to be abolished for people with mental health problems.
- The roll out of Universal Credit in Scotland to be halted until structural problems are addressed, including the five week waiting period

Further detail:

OFFICIAL STATISTICS

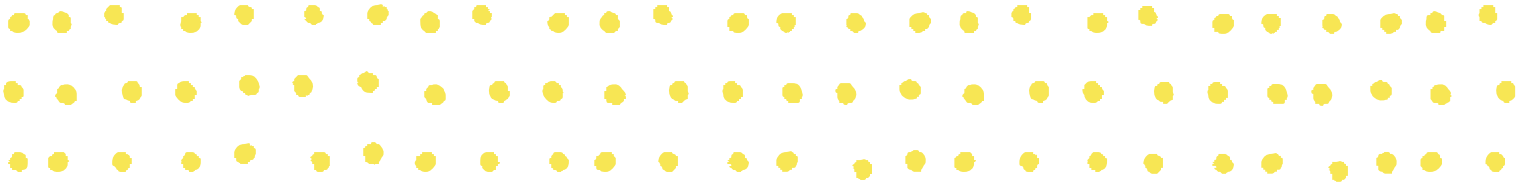
- DWP, [Stat-Xplore](#)
- Office for National Statistics, [Nomis](#)

SAMH RESEARCH

- [Personal Independence Payment -What's the problem?](#) (2016)
- [Fit for Purpose](#) (2015)
- [Worried Sick](#) (2013)
- [Ticking All The Wrong Boxes](#) (2015) [with the Scottish Mental Health Partnership]

OTHER INFORMATION

- Alliance, [Evaluation of the Welfare Advocacy Support Project](#), 2016
- DAS, [A million votes count – 2015 general election manifesto](#), 2015



Notes

- ¹ [Nomis statistics](#) [accessed June 2018]
- ² [Stat-Xplore](#) [accessed June 2018]
- ³ UK Government [Transition Rollout Schedule – March 2018 to December 2018](#)(March 2018)
- ⁴ [Nomis statistics](#) [accessed June 2018]
- ⁵ [Stat-Xplore](#) [accessed June 2018]
- ⁶ DWP, [Work Capability Assessment independent review – year 5](#), 2014
- ⁷ DWP, [Personal Independence Payment \(PIP\) assessment: second independent review](#) 2017
- ⁸ SAMH, [Personal Independence Payment -What's the problem?](#) (2016); [Fit for Purpose](#) (2015); [Worried Sick](#) (2013)
- ⁹ Citizens Advice Scotland, [Medical Evidence](#) [accessed May 2017]
- ¹⁰ National Archives [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)
- ¹¹ National Archives [Social Security \(Scotland\) Act 2018](#)
- ¹² ESRC [Final findings: WelCond project](#) 2018
- ¹³ House of Commons, [Abolition of the ESA Work-Related Activity Component](#), March 2017
- ¹⁴ UK Government [Employment and Support Allowance \(Sanctions\) \(Amendment\) Regulations 2012](#)
- ¹⁵ DWP [Benefit Sanctions Statistics](#) 2018
- ¹⁶ Citizen Advice Scotland [Citizen Advice Scotland Calls for Halt to Universal Credit](#) July 2017