



Department  
for Work &  
Pensions

Ministerial  
Correspondence  
Caxton House  
Tothill Street  
LONDON  
SW1H 9DA

0207 340 4000

[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)

[ministers@dwp.gov.uk](mailto:ministers@dwp.gov.uk)

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP  
House of Commons

Our ref: MC2023/76512

20 October 2023

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 5 October to the Secretary of State on behalf of a number of your constituents about benefit sanctions. I am replying as the Minister for Employment.

Conditionality has been a key feature of the benefit system since the formation of the welfare state. It is only right that those who can work are expected to take steps to find employment.

Claimants on work-related benefits, such as Universal Credit, are expected to take responsibility for meeting the conditionality requirements that they have agreed to with their Work Coach, and they will only be sanctioned if they fail to meet these requirements without demonstrating good reason for doing so. Where a claimant on a work-related benefit has a health condition or disability, Work Coaches have the discretion to tailor these requirements to what is reasonable and achievable, taking into consideration the claimant's condition.

If a claimant disagrees with a sanction decision, they can ask for this to be looked at again by way of a Mandatory Reconsideration. If a claimant further disagrees with the outcome of the Mandatory Reconsideration, they can raise an appeal for the sanction decision to be looked at by an independent tribunal.

The conditionality and sanctions regime does not apply to those with Limited Capability for Work and Work-Related Activity.

We have a well-established system of hardship payments. This is available as a safeguard where a claimant demonstrates that they cannot meet their immediate and most essential needs as a result of a sanction. These needs can include accommodation, heating, food and hygiene. Universal Credit claimants can enquire about hardship payments with their Work Coach via their online journal.

I hope this helps to explain the position.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Guy Opperman", with a large, sweeping underline stroke below it.

**GUY OPPERMAN MP  
MINISTER FOR EMPLOYMENT**