

*Symposium on Disciplinary
Welfare States*



**Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate
welfare states? Regional ideologies and
the devolution of social security**

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Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate welfare state?

Trajectories in UK social security policy

- Must be actively seeking employment (from 1989)
- Jobseeker's agreement (from 1996)
- Voluntary and mandatory employment/training programmes (stepped up from 1998)
- Expansion of activation pool to lone parents and long term sick (from 2007)
- Increased use of sanctions (from 2007/2010)
- Declining generosity of benefits (from 2011)
- Unpaid 'work for your benefit' schemes (from 2012)
- Escalation of sanctions – max 3 years (from 2012)

Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate welfare state?

Trajectories in UK social security policy

“DWP... believe philosophically if they make anything sort of more generous, less punitive you therefore decrease the incentive to go to work, and ultimately that would be in the long run bad for the people themselves”

Scottish civil servant



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Welfare reform: policy made for England?

- Post-2010 reforms under Conservative-Lib Dem coalition
- Little electoral support for government outside England

Region	Seats	Conservatives	Lib Dems
England	533	298	43
Scotland	59	1	11
Wales	40	8	3
N Ireland	18	0	0

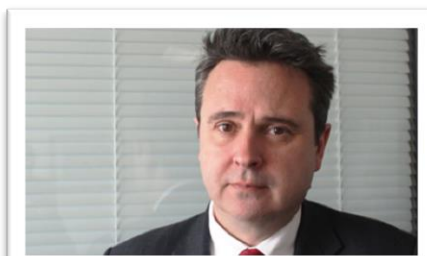
Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate welfare state?

Welfare reform: policy made for England?



“These measures are being brought forward by the Tory government and being imposed here.”

“Driven by the UK Government’s pernicious welfare reforms, the number of Scottish children living in poverty is expected to increase significantly.”



“Destabilising, damaging and devastating... they are stepping away from their responsibility to the most vulnerable in our society.”



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Welfare reform: policy made for England?

- *But* many policies continue trends under New Labour
- Labour dominant in Scotland and Wales for decades

Region	Seats	Labour
England	533	191
Scotland	59	41
Wales	40	26
NI	18	0

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Welfare reform: policy made for England?



“I would swim through vomit to vote against this bill. And listening to some of the nauseating speeches in support of it, I might have to.”

Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate welfare state?

Divergence from UK policy – NI & Scotland

Benefit	UK government policy	NI proposal	Future Scottish competence
Housing benefit	Reduction for under-occupation (social tenants)	Deferred for four years	Full control of universal credit housing element
Universal credit	Single household payment	Payments may be split	Power to vary single household payment
	Payment of housing element to claimants	Direct payment to landlords	Power to pay housing element to landlords
	Monthly payments	Fortnightly payments	Power to vary payment frequency
	Maximum sanction period three years	Maximum sanction period 18 months	No competence for conditionality
	Severe disability premium abolished	One year compensation	No competence for rates of benefit
Employment and support allowance	Contributory ESA limited to one year	One year compensation	No competence for ESA
All income replacement benefits	Cap on household benefit income	Four years compensation to claimants with children	Any new devolved benefits outside scope of cap
Disability benefits	Disability living allowance replaced with personal independence payment	One year compensation for loss of DLA/carer's allowance income	Full competence for disability benefits

Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate welfare state?

The question:

Do moves towards social security divergence in Northern Ireland and demand for new devolved powers in Scotland reflect differing ideologies of welfare within the UK?



Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate welfare state?

The literature

- Scottish national self-image as social democratic, anti-Tory – up to a point
- NI politics about national identity, not the left-right spectrum; structure of government a barrier to radicalism



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The findings:

Shared endorsement of 'welfare-to-work' objectives

"They're not even thinking about going to work and finding a job. That for me is really sad."

"I just don't think that you should ever be able to live more comfortably without going out to work."

"We want to get people back to work."

"Work is the best thing for people"

"People will be better off in work, not just financially but emotionally."



"I don't think any Minister would say that people shouldn't work"

"Work is a good thing, it's good for you in terms of your income, it's good for you in terms of your standard of living, it's good for your health and wellbeing."

"There seems to be those... who would argue that these people should be left alone... I'm not prepared to accept that"

Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate welfare state?

The findings:

Rare exceptions:

“It does kind of have echoes of Auschwitz, doesn't it? Work will set you free”

“Allowing people the flexibility to decide how to balance work, education, volunteering, caring, all of their other priorities in life, that's the way we would want to go”

“As somebody again who did take some time off with my kids, I think that's an important thing to do”



“Welfare's about looking after people's needs. Getting them back to work is a different thing altogether”



“Not forcing them back to work, but giving them the choice”

“It's all right saying to a lone parent there's a job, we'll help you to get into it, you... If they can't, if they're not going to be home when the kid gets home from school or something, they're going to find it very difficult”

Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate welfare state?

The findings:

Scotland – desire for *enabling* rather than disciplinary welfare state

“It should be decent pay that they're able to earn in working conditions that are compatible with the other things that are important in their lives”

“They can't go back into the labour market because they can't afford the childcare, it's just not worth their time”

“Any local authority in Scotland who run their own employability programmes, the outcomes that they achieve are two, three, four, five times as good as the work programme”



“What we actually need to be is much more sophisticated... tailored to meet the economic needs, social needs of different areas of Scotland”

“It's not about because they get stuff for nothing, it's about the lack of well paid jobs out there”

“It has to be, a, a living wage job that somebody's going into, [not] getting people off benefits and onto a zero hours contract”

Disciplinary, enabling or proportionate welfare state?

The findings:

Northern Ireland – more comfortable with disciplinary approach, but concerns that GB policy too harsh

“Sanctions... just make the system harder to operate... If you start from the premise that you’re going to have to sanction people then you’re going to end up sanctioning people.”

“Too many people have become reliant on benefits and it nearly became a lifestyle choice.”



“It was unjust... trying to heavily penalise people. Em, in terms of three years.”

“I would like to think that sanctions wouldn't be a core part of our business. That said... there will always be an element of customers that won't want to work... we do need something of a stick to address that group.”

“If you can't be arsed to get out of your bed... there are sanctions there, but it's the same like if you don't go to work you don't get paid.”

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Conclusion:

- Concern with disciplinary UK approach drives devolutionary aspirations
- Scotland – incentives preferred to threats
- NI – sanction regime too harsh
- But not the full picture





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For references, see M Simpson, 'The social citizenship of lone parents, 2010-2015: evolution and devolution (PhD thesis, Ulster University, 2016)
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