**IMPORTANT:** the address for service changed in Janaury 2024, as below.

Please send your letter by post to DWP and by email to the Treasury Solicitor.

Please seek advice from JRProject@CPAG.org.uk if no response is received within 14 days, or consider referring to a solicitor to issue judicial review proceedings, see [this CPAG page](https://cpag.org.uk/welfare-rights/support-advisers/support-advisers-england-and-wales/support-judicial-review-process/pursuing-court-and) for more information.

**Delete Box Before Posting**

***This letter challenges****:*

* the Secretary of State’s failure to amend your client’s claimant commitment to include only a work-focused interview requirement (s.20 WRA 2012.
* The challenge includes the removal of any unlawful sanctions imposed upon your client.
* This letter also seeks to compensate your client for the losses suffered from unfair penalties, including consequential financial loss and emotional distress.

Please **verify and include all relevant dates** in your letter.

**Read the whole letter carefully** and make any changes needed, in particular any text in red or [square brackets]. Delete [square brackets], comments/ prompts/instructions, return all text to black, and put on headed paper.

Always **send your letter for review** to JRProject@CPAG.org.uk before sending to DWP.

**Delete box before posting**

***Only use this letter if*** your client:

* Is receiving Universal Credit (UC) as a lone parent or couple;
* Has a one year old baby included in their UC award; and
* is being required by their claimant commitment to undertake work-related activity beyond a work-focused interview.

***This letter assumes*** *your client:*

* has, on several occasions, contacted DWP to request changes to the conditionality but has been unsuccessful
* Has been sanctioned (this can be removed).

***Do not use this letter if*** your client:

* Has not already asked their claimant commitment to be changed.

**Delete box before posting**

[address your letter to either the:

address on your client’s decision letter,

address your client sent their claim to, or

address on relevant DWP correspondence; or

request an upload link to post it to your client’s online UC account]

And by email to**:** thetreasurysolicitor@governmentlegal.gov.uk

**Our Ref:** [xxxx]

**Date:** [xxxx]

**Judicial Review Pre-Action Protocol Letter Before Claim**

**Dear Sir or Madam,**

**Re: Proposed claim for judicial review against the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions by [full name]**

##### We are instructed by **[full name] in relation to adjustments to [her/his] universal credit (**“UC”**) claimant commitment. We write in accordance with the Pre-action Protocol for judicial review. Please note that we are requesting your response as soon as possible and in any event no later than 4pm on [date] (14 days).**

**Proposed Defendant: Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (“D”)(“SSWP”)**

**Claimant:** [full name] (“**C**”)

**NINO:** [xxxx]

**Address:** [xxxx]

**Date of Birth:** [xxxx]

**Note on the address for Pre-action Protocol correspondence**

1. This letter is sent to you because in February 2024 a Senior Lawyer at Decision Making and Debt DWP Legal Advisers, Government Legal Department, Ground Floor Caxton House, Tothill Street, London, SW1H 9NA advised that:

*“Pre-action correspondence should now be sent directly to DWP, not to DWP Legal Advisers. DWP Legal Advisers is part of the Government Legal Department, not DWP itself. Pre-action correspondence should be sent to the relevant section of DWP. This will normally be the section of DWP responsible for the decision which is the subject of the pre-action correspondence via their usual communication methods. For example, if it relates to a particular benefit decision then the pre-action letter should be sent to the address at the top of that letter.”*

1. **This letter is also sent by email to the Treasury Solicitor as** Cabinet Office practice direction ‘Crown Proceedings Act 1947’ (December 2023)[[1]](#footnote-1) requires:

*“****All documents*** *required to be served on the Crown for the purpose of or in connection with any civil proceedings by or against the Crown shall, if those proceedings are by or**against an authorised Government department,* ***be served on the solicitor****, if any, for that department…”*

(Emphasis added)

1. The practice direction provides that the solicitor for service in connection with civil proceedings against the Department for Work and Pensions is “The Treasury Solicitor”.
2. **The Government Legal Department webpage**[[2]](#footnote-2) **further instructs:**

***[…]***

*“The email addresses above are for the service of new proceedings only.
They should not be used for letters before action, or pre-action protocol correspondence. If sending such documents to GLD please email these to**thetreasurysolicitor@governmentlegal.gov.uk**.”*

**The details of the matters being challenged**

1. **The following actions and failures of D are challenged:**
2. **imposition by D of wrongful conditionality on C in C’s claimant commitment from [date];**
3. **the ongoing failure of D to amend C’s claimant commitment in line with the legal framework set out below; and**
4. **if relevant: [the sanctioning of C for failing to do something which there was no lawful basis for requiring her/him to do.]**

***Background facts***

1. **C has been in receipt of Universal Credit (“UC”) since [date]. She/he was required to apply as [reason].**
2. **C receives UC as a [lone parent/couple] with [her/his] partner [X name, DoB and NINo].**
3. **C and [name] [has/have] [number] children [ names, DoBs] and these are included in [her/histheir] UC award.**
4. **This includes [name] who is a baby aged 1 year old.**
5. **[Any disability/additional needs?]**
6. **[Any childcare problems? How was D notified? ]**
7. **C has [detail UC conditionality] which requires [her/him] to […]**
8. **[C incurred a UC sanction on [date] as [she/he] was unable to …. when required to do so.]**
9. **[Sanction challenged? Give details.]**
10. **[Losses as a result of the sanction including amount of financial loss.**
11. **[List in date order all relevant contacts with D in which C has requested D change her/his conditionality and D’s responses including dates and quotes, formatted as follows:**
12. On [date] C posted a message to [her/his] online UC journal stating:

“*what was said?*”

1. On [date} D responded stating:

“***what was said*?”**

1. **To date, C clamant commitment has not been amended and C remains at risk of [further] sanction.**

**Note on D’s duty of candour**

1. As D will be aware, the duty of candour arises as soon as a public authority becomes aware that someone is likely to test or challenge a decision or action. The duty is engaged at every stage of the proceedings, including the pre-action stage, as confirmed in *R (HM, KH and MA) v Secretary of State for the Home Department* 3 [2022] EWHC 2729 (Admin).
2. If any guidance, policy or guidelines exists concerning any of the matters raised in the Background section above, we consider that compliance with the pre-action protocol and the duty of candour requires that it be i) disclosed and ii) provided in full for inspection as part of the response to this letter.

***Legal background***

***Responsible carer***

1. C is responsible for a child or qualifying young person as [name of child] “*normally lives with*” [her/him] under reg. 4(2) Universal Credit Regulations 2013 (“**UC Regs**”).
2. DELETE PARAGRAPH IF C IS A SINGLE CLAIMANT C receives UC as a couple with [partner’s name]. Of C and [partner’s name], C “*has the main responsibility*” for [child] by joint nomination with [his/her] partner under reg. 4(5) UC Regs.
3. C is therefore a “*responsible carer*” as defined by s. 19 (6) of the Welfare Reform Act 2012 (“**WRA 2012**”):

***19****.-(6) “In this Part “responsible carer”, in relation to a child means–*

*(a) a single person who is responsible for the child, or*

*(b) a person who is a member of a couple where–*

*(i) the person or the other member of the couple is responsible for the child, and*

*(ii) the person has been nominated by the couple jointly as responsible for the child.”*

***Relevant conditionality***

1. [name of child] is one year old and was so at the time [that C initially claimed UC and/or C was required to sign [her/his] claimant commitment]. D was informed of this on [date] when [he/she ie, the child] was including in C’s claim/ existing UC award. As such, C is required only to meet the ‘work-focused interview’ requirement under s. 20 WRA 2012:

***Claimants subject to work-focused interview requirement only***

***20****.-(1) A claimant falls within this section if–*

 *(a) the claimant is the responsible carer for a child who is aged 1, or*

 *[…]*

*(2) The Secretary of State may, subject to this Part,* ***impose a work-focused interview requirement*** *on a claimant falling within this section.*

*(3) The Secretary of* ***State may not impose any other work-related requirement*** *on a claimant falling within this section (and, where a claimant falls within this section, any other work-related requirement previously applying to the claimant ceases to have effect).*

(Emphasis added)

1. The relevant work-related requirements, which C must not be subject to except the work-focused interview under s. 20 WRA 2012) are summarised in the DWP’s guidance ‘Advice for Decision-Making’[[3]](#footnote-3):

***J3003*** *The work-related requirements are the*

*1. work-focused interview requirement (see J3030 et seq)*

*2. work preparation requirement (see J3040 et seq)*

*3. work search requirement (see J3050 et seq)*

*4. work availability requirement (see J3110 et seq).*

***1*** *WR Act 12, s 13(2)*

**Grounds for Judicial Review**

**Ground 1: Failure to apply the law resulting in imposition of unlawful work-related requirements [and unlawful sanctions]**

1. The legislation (set out above) is clear and unambiguous.
2. **D is aware of C’s baby given that [she/he gender of baby] has been included in C’s UC award** since [**she/he gender of baby**] birth on [date]**.** By imposing on C work-related requirements other than a work-focused interview requirement and failing to adjust C’s claimant commitment, D is in breach of s. 20 WRA 2012 and D’s own Advice for Decision Making at paragraph J3003, and is acting unlawfully.
3. **As a result of D’s failure to correctly apply the law and D’s own guidance, C [has already been unlawfully sanctioned and] remains at risk of [further] unlawful sanctions, financial hardship and stress as a direct result of the unlawful conditions imposed.**

**Ground 2: Discrimination**

1. The default requirement under reg. 88(1) taken together with reg. 97 UC Regs is that all claimants are required to undertake 35 hours of work search each week and be available to take up work for the same. Applying this blanket provision and/or making inadequate amendments for those caring for babies (the majority of whom are women) would be indirectly discriminatory, contrary to the Equality Act 2010, as such people (women) would be more likely not to be able to comply with the requirements and so be subject to UC sanctions, consequent financial loss and emotional distress.
2. The law recognises the otherwise discriminatory effect of a blanket 35 hour per week work search and work availability requirement by making adjustments to the requirement which vary depending on the age of the parent/carer’s youngest child: see ss. 19-21 WRA 2012 and reg. 88(1) in conjunction with reg. 97 UC Regs.
3. By failing to apply the restriction contained in s. 20 WRA 2012, the imposition of the conditionality on C beyond the work-focussed interview requirement is necessarily discriminatory; it cannot be shown to be a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim, and there can be no justification for the same.

**The details of the action that D is expected to take**

**D is requested to:**

* Amend C’s claimant commitment immediately to include only a work-focused interview requirement;
* Compensate C for [any financial] losses and stress/distress suffered as a result of the unlawful sanctions imposed; and
* Ensure adequate training of work coaches so that C and other claimants with children who are 1 year old are not subject to unlawful conditionality.

**The details of documents that are considered relevant and necessary**

* **C’s signed form of authority.**
* **All other documents available through C’s UC online account (Journal and Claimant Commitment).**

**ADR proposals**

**Please confirm in your reply whether D is willing to consider alternative dispute resolution.**

**The address for reply and service of court documents**

[Advice agency name

Address

And email here]

**Proposed reply date**

We expect a reply promptly and in any event no later than [date] (14 days).

**Should we not have received a reply by this time, our client will seek representation to issue proceedings for judicial review without further notice to you.**

Yours faithfully,

Encl.

1. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657c891d83ba380013e1b66c/List-of-Authorised-Government-Departments-under-s.17-Crown-Proceedings-Act-1947-15.12.2023.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. gov.uk/government/organisations/government-legal-department [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/675026f9b9847955e1632a10/admj3.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-3)