

Constructing incapacity for work: conditionality in sickness benefits since 1911

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1. Brief summary of what the research is about.	The project concerns the history of incapacity benefits in the UK from 1911 until the present day. Set firmly in the context of the current debate on welfare reform, the project sought to uncover the hidden conditionalities which were attached to claims for incapacity benefits across the twentieth century since the first sickness benefit scheme in 1911. The main sources for this project are over 300 appeal cases against refusals of benefits in the early twentieth century and case files for post-war appeal decisions for cases up until the mid-1960s. Analysis of over a 100 archive files of civil service documents and papers and online sources has enabled me to extend the research into the late twentieth century.	
2. What are the research questions?	My original research questions were to look at how the legal definition of 'incapacity for work' changed over the twentieth century, what evidence was used in determining claims for benefit, what explicit or unwritten behavioural conditions were attached to claims for incapacity for work, what evidence	

	was used and to what extent all of these conditions were gendered. An important outcome of the project has been to uncover a history of appeals in social security decision making which can illuminate our understanding of administrative justice today.
3. What, if any, outputs so far?	Conference papers for Social Policy Association, Law and Society Association, Socio-Legal Studies Association, British Sociological Association, Medical Sociology Conference, European Social Science History Conference, Social History Society.
4. What outputs are planned?	Forthcoming book in Palgrave Macmillan, Socio-legal studies series: <i>Constructing Incapacity for Work: a socio-legal analysis of incapacity benefits since 1911</i>
5. What is the anticipated impact?	Impact is likely to be in two main areas: • Amongst policy makers, rethinking understanding of the meaning of 'incapacity for work', understanding its history and using this understanding to consider the appropriateness of current welfare policies and the framing of future policies. • Amongst third sector activists in disability, gender and welfare rights organisations, increasing awareness of the history of benefits and welfare rights and leading to new thinking about how to challenge existing and future policy developments.
6. Comments / additional information / requests for data or input from the broader administrative justice community	See also project website: http://www.blogs.hss.ed.ac.uk/constructingincapacity/