



OLDHAM COUNCIL

Councillor Howard Sykes MBE

Leader of the Opposition, Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group Oldham Council, Member for Shaw Ward, Member for South Ward Shaw & Crompton Parish Council.

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The Rt. Hon. Ian Duncan Smith MP
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Our ref: HDS/jd/110615

Date: 11 June 2015

Dear Secretary of State,

Re. Benefit Sanctions

I am writing to you as Leader of the Liberal Democrat Group on Oldham Council to ask you as Secretary of State to adopt in full the recommendations resulting from last year's Oakley Review and those resulting from a recent inquiry of the cross-party Work and Pensions Select Committee.

Secretary of State, the application of sanctions has been the cause of much dispute and controversy. The Select Committee has also recommended that a broad independent review of benefit sanctions be established in this Parliament as early as possible, and this is an aspiration that we share and we hope that you will too.

The Select Committee also identified some practical and sensible proposals, such as developing a bespoke Vulnerability Guide to use with local partners to support vulnerable

claimants and to issue written warnings and non-financial sanctions (i.e. a 'yellow card') to claimants prior to issuing a financial penalty.

The Committee asked Government to establish pilots to test these ideas. Oldham is one Job Centre District with a particularly high incidence of sanctions, and I would like to ask you if Oldham might be considered as a pilot location for both of these proposals?

I shall look forward to receiving your reply.

Yours sincerely



Howard Sykes