

## **Press Release: Impact of benefit sanctions raised by anti-cuts group**

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Local campaign group Stroud Against the Cuts will:

**1. Host a screening of “I, Daniel Blake” by Ken Loach at The Prince Albert on Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March, followed by a Q&A (7-9.40pm) – and,**

**2. Hold a stall outside Stroud Job Centre Plus on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March to coincide with a National Day of Action Against Benefit Sanctions (12noon-2pm, gathering for a photograph at 1pm).**

Ken Loach’s film “I, Daniel Blake” [\[i\]](#) – winner of Outstanding British Film at the BAFTAs and the Palme D’Or at Cannes Film Festival will be screened Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup>

March at The Prince Albert in Stroud

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. Entry to the film is free, and accompanied by talks about local people in similar situations to those featured in the film from Stroud Against the Cuts, Stroud Citizens Advice and The Homeless Period Gloucestershire. Donations toward the campaigning and support work provided by the organisations will be collected.

The film follows Daniel Blake (Dave Johns) - a 59-year-old widowed carpenter as he navigates the benefits system when a heart attack leaves him unable to work. Despite his doctor's diagnosis, he is denied benefits. As Daniel undertakes an appeal, he develops a bond with a destitute, single mother (Hayley Squires) who's struggling to take care of her two children.

The screening has been arranged ahead of a National Day of Action Against Benefit Sanctions, organised by the Unite Community union for people in and out of work [iii]. 100,000 people have had their benefits stopped by sanctions in the last 12 months. Unite Community say “These sanctions are cruel and handed out for ridiculous reasons such as: Arriving minutes late to a meeting, not applying for jobs when waiting to start a new job, and missing an appointment on the day of the funeral of a close family member.” Members of Stroud Against the Cuts will gather outside Stroud Job Centre from 12noon-2pm on Thursday 30

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March to hand out information, in solidarity with actions around the country.

**James Beecher, spokesperson for Stroud Against the Cuts**, said: “Half a million people have had their benefits stopped by sanctions in the past year, many of whom have been plunged into poverty - unable to heat their homes or even eat. We’ve heard horror stories from people using the local Job Centre, and want to ensure people applying for benefits are aware of their rights, and that more fortunate people in our community are aware of the impact of the government’s policies”

**Sally Pickering, chief officer at Stroud Citizens Advice** – who will speak before the film screening and answer questions after it, said in January: “There’s definitely been an increased demand for our services. Half of the issues we encounter are money related – we all have them in different forms, many people have never experienced issues with money like debt before but then a life changing experience happens such as divorce or illness and things get out of hand.”

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[i] For more information go to the official [“Daniel Blake” Website](#) , watch the [O](#)

[fficial Trailer](#)

[ii] Facebook Event: ["I, Daniel Blake screening + Q&A - Stroud"](#);

[iii] For more information: ["Stop Benefit Sanctions - Unite Community"](#);

[iv] From: ["A friend to those in need: Stroud and Cotswold District Citizens' Advice entrenches itself in the community"](#);