



The Young Fabians bi-monthly digest of the latest policy publications

Welcome to the fourth issue of Policy News, brought to you by the Young Fabians Executive. This newsletter appears every two months and brings together policy news from think tanks, third sector organisations and Whitehall departments, including an outline of the best in recent policy publications. You can read the reports in full online by following the web address listed at the end of each summary.

The past two months have been dominated by publications reflecting current public and media concerns. A government report on food was published amid growing fears about inflation and rising commodity prices worldwide, a crisis that has also inspired responses from Oxfam and IPPR. Meanwhile the knife crime epidemic that seems to be affecting ever greater numbers of young people has made a recent publication from Policy Exchange particularly well timed.

The perennial issues of welfare reform and health policy gained higher profile on the back of a major green paper from DWP and the 60th anniversary of the NHS. In the former, the Government announced its intentions to set tougher regulations and expectations for people receiving Job Seekers Allowance, alongside a package of support that will increase skills provision to those excluded from the labour market. Progress launched its own 'green paper' alongside this, setting out its alternative vision for the future of welfare.

To suggest a publication to include in the next issue of Policy News (August- September), or for any other comments, please send an email with full details to the address below.

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Publications

PUBLIC SERVICES

► Demos - Making the most of collaboration

'Co-design' has become a global policy buzzword, coming on the back of innovations around co-production of public services. This discussion paper reports on the findings of a international survey of 466 public service practitioners, and sets out the challenges that will affect the implementation of collaborative design principles in the future. Making the most of collaboration focuses on the design stage of public service provision - where collaborative design principles are taking hold. The research involved interviews with 466 public service practitioners in the transport, health, social welfare and education sectors, across the UK, USA, Europe, Latin America and Asia-Pacific. The discussion paper reports on the findings, and sets out the key challenges that will affect the implementation of collaborative design principles in the future.

►► Available at: <http://www.demos.co.uk/files/CollabWeb.pdf>

► Demos – State of Trust: How to build better relationships between councils and the public

Politicians from all parties are beginning to grasp a public service reform agenda based on localism, co-production and community empowerment. But the vision of a partnership between citizen and state is under threat from worryingly low levels of public trust in politics and democratic institutions.

This report argues that governments urgently need to develop better relationships with the people they serve. The report explores how those relationships can be built. Working in four local authority areas, it shows how institutions have succumbed to the idea that better services alone are the key to building public trust. In fact, the public cares about process as well as outcomes. What you do matters, but so does how you do it.

Drawing on extensive research, the report offers a new typology of the trust relationships that the public wants to build with government. With practical ways for councils to take the initiative, it shows that the key is a focus on the personal interactions between citizens and staff and a new approach to taking political decisions.

►► Available at: http://www.demos.co.uk/files/Trust_web_ALL%20032.pdf

WELFARE

► **DWP - No one written off: reforming welfare to reward responsibility**

In July the Government set out its next steps in welfare reform, which hopes to simplify the benefits system and deliver greater and more personalised support for people in return for more responsibility. The majority of people of working age – who can work now or at some point in the future – will no longer be on benefits for life without getting the support they need to get back to work.

The Green Paper set out a range of options to:

- simplify the benefits system – moving towards a more streamlined system based on just two working age benefits: Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) for those who have a medical condition which prevents them from working and Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) for everyone who is fit to work
- ensure that for most people out of work benefits are only temporary – there is not a right to a life on benefits
- require most people on benefits to contribute actively in return for their benefits
- provide more support for disabled people to get into work and keep their jobs and more control over the support they get
- provide a full disregard for child maintenance payments, so that payments will not be taken into account when calculating how much out of work benefits a parent should get.

►► Available at: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/welfarereform/noonewrittenoff/>

► **Progress – Autonomy and control: making welfare work for social justice**

In February of this year Progress launched five policy groups, each with the task of generating five distinctive manifesto ideas for the Labour party at next general election. The welfare group is chaired by Rt Hon David Blunkett MP, former secretary of state for work & pensions. The group's remit is to look at new ways that the government could tackle worklessness and ensure that citizens have training and opportunities to find self-fulfilment and escape poverty through work. Specifically the group is looking at the welfare system in terms of employment support, the benefits system and the importance of incentives to work such as tax credits. This 'green paper' sets out some of the initial thinking behind the group's approach and seeks the views of Labour party members and others in the Labour movement.

►► Available at: <http://clients.squareeye.com/uploads/prog/documents/progresswelfare.pdf>

► **Joseph Rowntree Foundation - A minimum income standard for Britain: what people think**

This offering from JRF argues that while politicians from all parties are committed to tackling relative poverty, the debates lack a robust definition of a minimum income standard (MIS), below which people's incomes should not fall. This study devises a minimum income standard for Britain based on what members of the public said, and shows the cost of covering basic goods and services for different household types.

The project blends the best elements of the two main methods that have been used to develop budget standards in Britain in recent years. It reconciles the views of experts with those of ordinary people, allowing budgets based on social consensus to be tested against expert knowledge and research. As such, the MIS represents a new and important tool for informing social policy in order to promote fairness and well-being in Britain.

▶▶ Available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2226-income-poverty-standards.pdf>

HEALTH and SOCIAL CARE

▶ Institute of Economic Affairs – Sixty years on: Who cares for the NHS?

Politicians will go to any lengths to persuade the voting public that the National Health Service is safe in their hands. Alternative policy models cannot be placed before the electorate unless political parties take huge risks. Yet, at the same time, we see even a Labour government drawing private finance into the health service and giving patients rights to use the private sector.

This study shows that, although politicians do not feel confident in proposing radical new models of healthcare, elite opinion in the media, in political circles, in academia and in policy think tanks has fallen out of love with the idea of a centrally planned health service provided and financed by government.

Elite opinion does not, as yet, warm to a free market in healthcare. Although aspects of a market-based system are accepted, ideas of 'market failure' loom large - especially amongst the political class. Nevertheless, the author shows how some groups of opinion formers are prepared to be more radical. These groups, she believes, may in time be effective in promoting a vision of a market in healthcare that is free from government interference and from the stifling power of government-granted professional monopolies.

▶▶ Available at: <http://www.iea.org.uk/files/upld-book435pdf?.pdf>

▶ Social Market Foundation – Health Project Background Papers

The SMF Health Project is a major two year study looking at the future of the health system in England. The past few years have seen unprecedented investment in healthcare that has brought the UK into line with the rest of Europe. While waiting times have come down, over the same period health costs have risen and public health has not significantly improved. With an ageing population, expensive new medical treatments, ever more demanding patients and an end to large funding increases for the NHS, the time is now right to look ahead at the health system of the future.

These background papers provide an extensive review of the literature on different aspects of health policy – from the implications of ageing to the reformed provider market in the NHS. Intended as an introduction for the general reader these papers also identify the key challenges facing the health system and suggest areas for further research. The SMF Health Project will be building on these background papers and publishing a series of reports on key aspects of health policy before a final publication in 2009.

▶▶ Available at: <http://smf.co.uk/testing-publication-two.html>

▶ IPPR – Older People and Wellbeing

Although the UK population is living longer and is in better health than ever, older people are not getting any happier. There is some evidence that older people may be becoming decreasingly satisfied, lonelier and more depressed and, due to demographic changes, there are increasing numbers of older people, many of whom are living with low levels of life satisfaction and wellbeing. This is particularly so if you are poor, isolated, in ill health, living alone, in unfit housing or rundown neighbourhoods and worse still if you are a carer or living in a care home: and all of these risk factors apply to a large proportion of the UK's older population.

This report, the first in a series on older people and wellbeing from ippr, describes some of the key social trends in the UK and assesses how these may be impacting on older people and their wellbeing.

▶▶ Available at:

<http://www.ippr.org/members/download.asp?f=%2Fecomm%2Ffiles%2Folder%5Fpeople%5Fand%5Fwellbeing%2Epdf>

FOOD

▶ Cabinet Office - Food Matters: Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century

In 2007 the Prime Minister commissioned a major project on food and food policy. The aims of the work were to review the main trends in food production and consumption in the UK; to analyse the

implications of those trends for the economy, society and the environment; to assess the robustness of the current policy framework for food; and to determine what the objectives of future food strategy should be and the measures needed to achieve them.

The final report was published in July, and sets out a future strategic framework for food policy and practical measures for addressing issues around food and health, food and the environment and other concerns. Coinciding with rising global commodity prices and domestic inflation fears, the report received much coverage in the press.

►► Available at: http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas/food_policy.aspx

► IPPR – Best Before: How the UK should respond to food policy challenges

With rising food prices, concerns about environmental impacts of agricultural production and worrying levels of obesity, food has never been more topical. Ensuring a safe, affordable, sustainable and healthy supply of food is one of the most fundamental challenges facing policymakers in the UK and, indeed, around the world.

At first glance, getting food on the table seems to be a relatively straightforward issue of demand and supply. Yet, there are a growing number of increasingly thorny and sometimes urgent food-related challenges facing UK policymakers. This report attempts to set these out.

►► Available at:

<http://www.ippr.org/members/download.asp?f=%2Fecomm%2Ffiles%2Fbest%5Fbefore%2Epdf>

► Oxfam - The Time Is Now: How world leaders should respond to the food price crisis

Oxfam looks at the impact of the food crisis globally and particularly for developing countries. Global food prices are up 83 per cent compared with three years ago. The resulting food price crisis constitutes an unprecedented threat to the livelihoods and well-being of millions of rural and urban households who are net food buyers. Around the world, Oxfam International and many of its partners have seen soaring prices force people to eat less food or less nutritious food and drive poor households to cut back on health care, education, and other necessities. Women and children's nutritional levels are particularly vulnerable, as women often put men's consumption before their own.

Oxfam estimates that current food price levels constitute an immediate threat to the livelihoods of around 290 million people living in countries most vulnerable to food price increases. Such vast numbers dwarf those affected by even the largest natural disasters, such as the 2004 Asian tsunami.

►► Available at: <http://www.oxfam.org/files/food.pdf>

HOME AFFAIRS

► **Policy Exchange - Going Ballistic: dealing with guns, gangs and knives**

In the midst of the youth knife crime wave, Policy Exchange takes on the issue of violent crime in general. Murders involving knives and firearms never fail to grab the headlines, yet they are relatively rare. Gun crime represents only 0.4% of all recorded crime in England and Wales. The public are often sceptical, however, when they read figures such as this – and they have reason to be so. This research develops four primary arguments: that official crime figures do not reflect the experiences of many communities in England and Wales; that information and intelligence sharing between agencies is lacking; that early intervention and prevention work needs to be targeted and expanded and that the relevant legislation governing gun and knife crime is a mess.

►► Available at: <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/libimages/407.pdf>

MISCELLANEOUS

► **Compass- Swimming with the tide - Democratising the places where we work**

This report calls on the Government to take seriously the democratisation of the places in which we work. If they don't then the gap between our power as consumers and citizens, compared to the sterility of our voice and influence at work will become a chasm.

Furthermore the report argues that people are becoming more autonomous, they want to self-manage their lives and are throwing off the shackles of deference. But power cannot be switched off when they clock on: people have a right to influence how their workplace is run.

►► Available at:

<http://clients.squareeye.com/uploads/compass/documents/Swimmingwiththetide.pdf>

► **OECD - OECD Economic Outlook**

Twice a year the OECD Economic Outlook analyses the major trends and examines the economic policies required to foster high and sustainable growth in member countries. This issue will cover the outlook to end-2009, focusing on global inflation and the credit crunch. This issue contains a special chapter entitled The implications of supply-side uncertainties for economic policy, which addresses the following questions: How deep is the impact of the recent oil and credit shocks on the productive potential of OECD economies? To what extent can structural reforms help to soften it?

How should economic policies respond to the uncertainty created by these shocks?

▶▶ Available at:

http://www.oecd.org/document/18/0,3343,en_2649_33733_20347538_1_1_1_1,00.html