



Welcome to the latest issue of Policy News, brought to you by the Young Fabians Exec. 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.

In the past two months policy wonks have been publishing prolifically on a wide range of issues. The deteriorating situation across the Middle East and Afghanistan has inspired fresh thinking from NGO and foreign affairs commentators about where we go from here. On the domestic brief, we have had a raft of publications on citizenship and identity in Britain, with some particularly interesting offerings from IPPR. Meanwhile Whitehall analysts have focused efforts on the Government's emerging talent agenda, with newly released reports looking beyond employment towards advancement and progression in the workplace. The much-anticipated Byron Review on the effect of new technologies on children was also published, and made a host of policy recommendations for the Government to consider.

To suggest a publication to include in the next issue of Policy News (April-May), please send an email with full details to the address below.

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## Publications

### ► Demos - The Everyday Democracy Index

The EDI is a new tool for assessing the democratic health of European countries across many different dimensions. That includes not just formal dimensions of democracy but also more everyday features of democracy – how important democratic principles and practices are to the cultures of workplaces, to people’s community life, to the way they interact with public services, and even to the way they talk to their friends and family. This pamphlet sets out the argument and methodology behind the first EDI, which covers 25 countries in the European Union area.

►► Available at: <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/theeverydaydemocracyindexbook>

### ► Oxfam - Falling short: Aid effectiveness in Afghanistan

Here, Oxfam shows how increasing insecurity and criminality is jeopardising progress in Afghanistan. With low government revenues, international assistance constitutes around 90% of all public expenditure in the country, thus how it is spent has an enormous impact on the lives of almost all Afghans and will determine the success of reconstruction and development. Given the links between development and security, the effectiveness of aid also has a major impact on peace and stability in the country. Yet thus far aid has been insufficient and in many cases wasteful or ineffective. There is therefore no time to lose: donors must take urgent steps to increase and improve their assistance to Afghanistan.

►► Available at: [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/debt\\_aid/aid\\_effectiveness\\_afghanistan.html](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/debt_aid/aid_effectiveness_afghanistan.html)

### ► Oxfam - The Gaza Strip: A Humanitarian Implosion

This report argues that the situation for 1.5 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip is worse now than it has ever been since the start of the Israeli military occupation in 1967. The current situation in Gaza is man-made, completely avoidable and, with the necessary political will, can also be reversed. Gaza has suffered from a long-term pattern of economic stagnation and plummeting development indicators. The severity of the situation has increased exponentially since Israel imposed extreme restrictions on the movement of goods and people in response to the Hamas take over of Gaza and to indiscriminate rocket attacks against Israel. The report illustrates the gravity of the current situation across key sectors.

►► Available at:

[http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/conflict\\_disasters/downloads/gaza\\_implosion.pdf](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/conflict_disasters/downloads/gaza_implosion.pdf)

### ► Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion - Driven to swim with the tide? Urban redevelopment and community participation in China

Over the last decade, there has been growing attention to the issue of neighbourhood governance and community participation in China. The focus has been on the extent to which community involvement in rule-making and decision-making processes could be promoted. The issue of community participation in urban

redevelopment, however, has received little attention. Urban redevelopment in contemporary Chinese cities is taking place on an unprecedented scale, arguably dissolving long-standing local communities and demolishing poverty-stricken neighbourhoods. Examining the case of Beijing, this paper questions current redevelopment and residents' appeal procedures. The paper concludes that community participation in neighbourhood redevelopment remains at the bottom of the ladder, and that the vested interests of local authorities and developers in urban redevelopment projects restrict poor residents' active participation in decision-making processes.

▶▶ Available at: <http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/dps/case/cp/CASEpaper130.pdf>

▶ **Young Foundation/NESTA - Transformers: how local areas innovate to address changing social needs**

The report looks at how local areas are adapting to meet changing social needs. The study reveals the importance of local innovation in enabling people to shape their communities and homes.

▶▶ Available at: <http://www.youngfoundation.org.uk/node/672>

▶ **New Local Government Network - The Local Journey to Work: Localism, welfare and worklessness**

This research argues that devolving welfare to work policy to a local government level will be key to the Government achieving its target of 80% of people in employment. Local authorities and their partners are best placed to understand local issues and to target certain areas of worklessness.

▶▶ Available at: <http://www.nlgn.org.uk/public/wp-content/uploads/the-local-journey-to-work.pdf>

▶ **DWP/DIUS - Ready to work, skilled for work: Unlocking Britain's talent**

This Command Paper sets out how the Government intends to help employers to recruit job-ready individuals and raise the skills-base of their staff. The paper discusses how government and business can work together to 'unlock Britain's talent', to ensure employers have access to the skills they need to prosper, and to give millions of people the chance to realise their potential and change their lives. In particular, the paper looks at how Government is reshaping the employment and skills system to meet employers' needs. In return, employers are expected to open up job opportunities to a wider pool of applicants, commit to investing in the skills of their workforce and offer a greater number of apprenticeship places.

▶▶ Available at: [http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/ready\\_to\\_work.pdf](http://www.dius.gov.uk/publications/ready_to_work.pdf)

▶ **Cabinet Office/DWP/DIUS - Life Chances: Supporting people to get on in the labour market**

The challenges of globalisation and trends in the UK labour market are creating new challenges for Britain and its workforce, and require that we work harder to raise skills in order to compete effectively as a country and to ensure that no-one is left behind. This paper examines the forces that are shaping and changing opportunities in the labour market, looks at what holds certain groups back from progressing in their working lives, and considers what best enables people to get on in work.

▶▶ Available at: [http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work\\_areas.aspx](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/work_areas.aspx)

► **Social Market Foundation - Angloflexicurity: A safety net for the UK workers**

Here, SMF argues that despite the sustained success of the British labour market, workers feel increasingly insecure. This is partly due to the increased financial consequences of losing employment today. At present, neither the state nor the private market provides an adequate response to this. This report argues that government, in cooperation with the private sector, can and should provide a safety net for the vulnerable middle class to counteract this trend. The authors sketch out a way to do this by significantly increasing access to insurance against the risks of unemployment among those facing the greatest financial fragility, in part through auto-enrolment in such insurance. Since this approach has been shown to significantly increase take-up of financial products elsewhere, it is expected to be successful in unemployment insurance too. Some might argue that growing insecurity is an inevitable consequence of economic flexibility and globalisation, but allowing insecurity to grow unchecked risks undermining popular support for both. The key, therefore, is to find a model that maintains this flexibility, while providing greater security for workers. This paper aims to provide a blueprint for just such a model, ending the false choice between flexibility and security.

►► Available at: [http://www.smf.co.uk/assets/files/publications/SMF\\_Angloflexicurity.pdf](http://www.smf.co.uk/assets/files/publications/SMF_Angloflexicurity.pdf)

► **Sutton Trust - Knowing Where to Study? Fees, Bursaries and Fair Access**

This study investigates the impact of financial considerations on sixteen to twenty year-old students' decisions about participation in higher education. It focuses on intentions to live at home whilst studying at university and the extent to which bursaries influence institutional choice. The study found that nearly two-thirds (fifty-nine percent) of students who had decided not to pursue study in higher education reported that avoiding debt had affected their decision 'much' or 'very much'. For students who are planning to go to university, financial considerations are strongly related to their decision about whether to live at home. Bursaries only make a difference when they are large and most students make their choices about studying in Higher Education before they hear about the bursary options. The impact of bursaries also varies according to students' background.

►► Available at: <http://www.suttontrust.com/reports/StaffordshireReportFinal.pdf>

► **Demos - Culture and Learning Consultation Paper**

In the context of recent government announcements about cultural education, Demos challenges cultural professionals and educationalists to provide a new and coherent direction for creative learning and for encouraging creativity through culture. Culture and Learning: Towards a New Agenda invites debate and responses among the educational community.

►► Available at: <http://www.demos.co.uk/publications/cultureandlearningconsultationpaper>

► **Policy Exchange - Helping schools succeed: Lessons from abroad**

In recent years, the expansion of international comparative studies such as PISA, TIMSS and PIRLS has significantly changed the way we assess the success of any given education system. Strong internal progress is

no longer sufficient to merit a positive evaluation. In a world where education is viewed as the means by which nations achieve and maintain an edge over their competitors, success is increasingly defined vis-à-vis the performance of other systems. In order to understand what England might do differently, this reports looks at five systems – New Zealand, Canada (Ontario and Alberta), Hong Kong and Sweden – which have relatively successful education systems, and which have been steadily working on improving their outcomes through extensive reform strategies. The systems are spread across four continents and encompassed a wide range of organisational structures, philosophies, reform histories and socio-economic idiosyncrasies. Despite these differences, the challenges faced by each are remarkably similar. Even where there were significant differences in approach, a closer examination of the internal logic of each system reveals common underlying principles. These tenets have been drawn together to create a proposal of what the authors believe a coherently aligned system should look like.

▶▶ Available at: <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/images/libimages/351.pdf>

#### ▶ Safer Children in a Digital World: the report of the Byron Review

This is the much-anticipated report of the independent review commissioned by the Prime Minister in September to look at the effect of new technologies on children. The report concludes that while new technologies bring incredible opportunities to children and young people, parent's general lack of confidence and awareness is leaving children vulnerable to risks within their digital worlds. Many parents seem to believe that when their child is online it is similar to them watching television. Author Tanya Byron is keen to emphasise that in fact it is more like opening the front door and letting your child go outside to play, unsupervised. Digital world risks are similar to real world risks but can be enhanced by the anonymity and ubiquity that the online space brings. In order to improve children's on-line safety, Dr Byron makes a number of recommendations including the creation of a new UK Council for Child Internet Safety; a set of independently monitored industry codes of practice; a comprehensive public information and awareness campaign; and a reformed classification system for rating video games.

▶▶ Available at: <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/byronreview/pdfs/Final%20Report%20Bookmarked.pdf>

#### ▶ OECD - 2008 OECD Environmental Outlook: How much will it cost to address today's key environmental problems?

The 2008 OECD Environmental Outlook marries economic and environmental projections for the next few decades and simulates specific policies to address the key challenges. It identifies four priority areas where urgent action is needed: climate change, biodiversity loss, water scarcity and the impact on human health of pollution and toxic chemicals. Economic-environmental projections show that world greenhouse gas emissions are expected to grow by 37% to 2030 and by 52% to 2050 if no new policy action is introduced. To meet increasing demands for food and biofuels world agricultural land use will need to expand by an estimated 10% to 2030; 1 billion more people will be living in areas of severe water stress by 2030 than today; and premature deaths caused by ground-level ozone worldwide would quadruple by 2030.

►► Available at:

[http://www.oecd.org/document/20/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_37465\\_39676628\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_37465,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/20/0,3343,en_2649_37465_39676628_1_1_1_37465,00.html)

► **Cabinet Office - Future strategic challenges for Britain**

This major new strategic review provides a wide-ranging analysis of the trends and drivers shaping Britain's future. The report gives a detailed analysis of the country's strengths and weaknesses, and a comprehensive review of the long-term challenges and opportunities facing Britain. The report covers a wide range of areas, including globalisation; economic prosperity; life chances, talent and social mobility; the ageing and increasing diversity of the population; family life and communities; crime and public safety; climate change, and the modernisation and renewal of the constitution and democratic institutions.

►► Available at:

[http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/strategic\\_challenges.pdf](http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/strategic_challenges.pdf)

► **Joseph Rowntree Foundation - Immigration, faith and cohesion: Evidence from local areas with significant Muslim populations**

This report examines the significance of different dimensions of cohesion – including social interaction, participation and belonging – on the lives of Muslims and people of other faiths or of no faith, both recent arrivals and established residents, living in the London borough of Newham, Birmingham and Bradford. It provides new insight into people's experience of cohesion and community at a time when policy is focusing on community cohesion at the local level, particularly in relation to the arrival of significant numbers of new migrants in some areas. The report includes the views and experiences of interviewees, as well as those of policy makers and practitioners, on a range of issues, including racial and religious discrimination; interactions with neighbours and the areas where they live; support and friendship networks; political and civic engagement; and 'transnational identification', or a feeling of belonging to both their country of origin and to Britain.

►► Available at: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/bookshop/eBooks/2189-immigration-faith-cohesion.pdf>

► **IPPR - Beyond Naturalisation: Citizenship policy in an age of super mobility**

International migration to (and from) the UK has increased since the early 1990s. Rising asylum inflows, labour migration responding to strong economic conditions, student migration to the UK's large higher education sector and large-scale movements from new European Union member states have together added some 2 million over the last decade to the foreign-born population resident in the UK. This report examines how a government committed to progressive notions of citizenship might respond to the fact that fewer people are willing to take up British citizenship or able to establish long-term roots within communities.

►► Available at:

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

► IPPR - Beyond the Constitution? Englishness in a post-devolved Britain

The notion that we are currently witnessing a growing commitment to English nationalism and deeper and wider identification with Englishness, as opposed to Britishness, is becoming part of the political wisdom of the age. The suggestion that the English are beginning to think of themselves as a nation with a separate identity from the other nationalities within the United Kingdom feeds into a vexed debate among politicians and commentators about the identity and future of 'Britishness' itself. This paper argues for the adoption of a greater sense of historical proportion about these trends, and challenges the widely held presumption that the rise of Englishness signals the death-knell of values and identities associated with Britishness.

►► Available at: <http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=590>

► Institute of economic affairs - Prohibitions: Why outlawing particular goods and services is bad public policy

This collection of essays examines the outlawing of the manufacture, distribution, sale or provision of particular goods and services by consenting adults. It begins with an overview of the economics of prohibition, and subsequently analyses particular prohibition issues around gambling, prostitution, recreational drugs and trade in body parts. The authors find that in most cases prohibition imposes significant costs on individuals and society as a whole and produces few benefits in return. Prohibition places markets into the hands of criminal enterprises and criminalises people who would not otherwise come into conflict with the law. It makes risky behaviour even more risky, increases public ignorance and often encourages the behaviour it seeks to prevent. Given the substantial costs and minimal benefits, it is argued that prohibition is bad public policy.

►► Available at: <http://www.iea.org.uk/files/upld-book429pdf?.pdf>

► IPPR - Make Me a Criminal: Preventing youth crime

This report makes the case for a more therapeutic and family-based approach to youth offending, as opposed to the present, more punitive, system. The arguments for the proposed approach appear persuasive – not only on humanitarian grounds, but also in terms of economics and efficacy. The UK suffers from two related problems that define the terrain within which youth crime is debated. First, evidence seems to show that we experience higher and more sustained levels of youth crime and anti-social behaviour than culturally similar countries. Second, the UK public experiences more fear of crime and concern about youth misbehaviour than citizens elsewhere. In turn, UK citizens are known to favour more punitive responses to youth crime than those in Sweden, Finland or Germany, and are less forgiving of youth misbehaviour. But there is emerging evidence that sections of the public do increasingly accept that a more welfare-orientated approach to youth crime would be fairer and more likely to succeed than current approaches – particularly if poor parenting were tackled. A progressive policy agenda for crime reduction can therefore find moorings in public attitudes, although the task is a difficult and complex one.

►► Available at: <http://www.ippr.org/publicationsandreports/publication.asp?id=587>