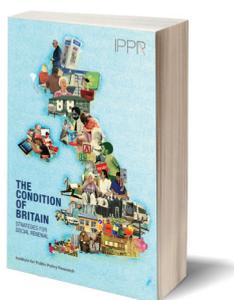


CONDITION OF BRITAIN: STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL RENEWAL

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS



Condition of Britain: Strategies for social renewal is a landmark report from IPPR, arguing for a new approach to politics and public action driven by the goals of spreading power, fostering contribution and strengthening shared institutions. Covering a wide range of policy issues, it makes proposals for reshaping the systems of support for families, young people, older people and those facing deep exclusion from society, while also setting out reforms to social security, employment support and housing policy.

To download a full PDF, read online or request a printed copy (while stocks last), visit <http://www.IPPR.org/condition-of-britain>

The Condition of Britain programme was established by IPPR in February 2013 to consider how our politics, social institutions and public policies need to change to respond to our new circumstances. The final report from the programme explains how we can work together to build a good society in tough times.

It sets out a deliberately ambitious agenda for social renewal across Britain, rooted in today's challenges but learning lessons from the past. We are realistic about the austerity and uncertainty our country continues to face, but believe these provide the impetus to seek new ways of addressing our problems, rather than to abandon our aspirations for society.

OUR GOALS FOR SOCIETY

Our overarching goal for society should be greater equality of social relations. We seek a society in which people relate to each other as free and equal citizens, and in which unjust hierarchies of power, esteem and standing are progressively overcome. This broadens the centre-left's commitment to equality beyond purely distributional concerns, although these remain vital.

This 'active equality' cannot be handed down from above but must be pursued by citizens. It requires a more equal distribution of power, greater recognition of what individuals can do for themselves and for others, deeper democratic control and stronger social relationships.

THE CONDITION OF BRITAIN

In order to better understand the 'condition of Britain', we have drawn on the insights of hundreds of people from all walks of life and all across the country. We heard that Britain is not 'broken' but that the social fabric is under pressure, scarred by the economic crisis and slow recovery, and shaped by deeper social and demographic shifts.

The squeeze on living standards continues to be felt by the majority, while family time is often torn between work and care. Young people's prospects are uncertain and older people worry about how they will be cared for. Homeownership is slipping beyond the reach of increasing numbers of people. Many who have paid into the social security system do not think it will offer strong enough financial protections if they lose their job.

Twenty years ago, the Commission on Social Justice (hosted by IPPR) set down the broad outlines of the social policy pursued by the last Labour government. It led to important reforms in education and welfare, but was overconfident about the ability of the central state to solve social problems and sometimes blind to the power of the market to dominate our lives.

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In the mid-2000s, the Conservative party began to argue that British society was ‘broken’, evidenced by high levels of worklessness, addiction and personal debt. This led David Cameron to call for a ‘big society’ to tackle social problems while the state pulled back. However, there was no strategy for bringing about the ‘big society’ so it has come to little in government.

Both the Commission on Social Justice and the Breakdown Britain report put forward powerful, though often contrasting, critiques of the government of the day. Yet in practice, the governments they inspired have often taken surprisingly similar approaches to solving social problems.

Our central criticism is that governments have tended to place too much faith in both central government and in markets to address major social problems. This has helped to concentrate power in the hands of a few, made it harder for citizens to take responsibility for solving their own problems, and weakened some of the institutions that enable people to live a meaningful life together.

Fundamentally, this approach fails to make the best use of the talents of everyone in Britain, leaving valuable resources untapped. At a time of limited public money, we cannot afford to waste these resources.

THE THREE PILLARS OF A STRONGER SOCIETY

In the next parliament, we will not be able to spend our way to a better society. Instead, we must all work together to build a stronger society on three ‘pillars’: spreading power, fostering contribution and strengthening shared institutions.

Spreading power and responsibility can help to strengthen society by:

- Spreading jobs and prosperity across Britain - rather than seeing them concentrated at the centre.
- Mobilising local areas to improve services through innovation and collaboration - rather than top-down control that drives standardisation and fragmentation.
- Making people and places responsible for their own destiny - rather than leaving them dependent on Whitehall and Westminster.

Fostering contribution can help to strengthen society by:

- Mobilising all our resources – rather than wasting talent, allowing people to become dependent on others or the state, and accepting exclusion from mainstream society.
- Helping to make the social security system more popular and resilient – rather than leaving it vulnerable to more cuts and allowing it to gradually decline so that it only meets the needs of a minority.

Strengthening shared institutions can help to strengthen society by:

- Help tackle social problems for good – rather than relying on a series of short-term initiatives imposed by central government that ignore the ability of people to help themselves if they have the right support.
- Build popular support for social action – rather than driving frustration with remote, bureaucratic public services and distrust in the benefit system.

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STRATEGIES FOR SOCIAL RENEWAL

Our detailed, costed policy recommendations are rooted in the need to spread power, foster contribution and strengthen institutions.

Families: Raising children and nurturing relationships

1. Greater paternity entitlements for working dads

Working fathers should be given the chance to play a bigger role in early parenting, through an entitlement to four weeks of leave following the birth of their child, paid at least the national minimum wage, as well as paid time off for antenatal appointments.

2. Guaranteed affordable childcare for all young children

An affordable childcare place should be guaranteed for all parents of preschool children from the age of one, with a universal entitlement to free, part-time, year-round care for all those aged between two and four, paid for by restricting pension tax relief, freezing child benefit for school-age children and scrapping the marriage tax allowance.

3. A better qualified childcare workforce

To further improve the quality of early-years provision, all staff working with two-year-olds should hold at least a level 3 child development qualification, and 30 per cent should hold a degree in early-years education.

4. Increases in child benefit focused on young children

Child benefit should rise with prices for children under five, to protect family incomes when parents want to work fewer hours; but it should be frozen in cash terms for school-age children, to be invested in childcare.

5. Universal credits reform to promote dual-earning

A separate work allowance should be introduced into universal credit to make work pay for second earners, which would promote dual-earning and a balance of work and care within couples. This should be paid for by slightly increasing the rate at which universal credit is tapered away.

6. More support for strong relationships

Every adult should have a lifetime entitlement to one course of couples counselling to help sustain relationships when times are tough. The government should also give a little extra help to couples when they get married, by ending marriage notice fees.

Young people: enabling secure transitions into adulthood

7. A distinct work, training and benefits track for young people

For 18–21-year-olds, existing out-of-work benefits should be replaced by a youth allowance that provides financial support conditional on looking for work or completing education, targeted at those from low-income families.

8. Guaranteed earning or learning for young people

A youth guarantee for 18–21-year-olds should be established that offers access to education or training plus intensive support to find work or an apprenticeship, with compulsory paid work experience for those not earning or learning within six months.

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9. Expanded opportunities for young people in National Citizen Service

The National Citizen Service programme should be expanded so that half of young people aged 16 and 17 are taking part by 2020, using money saved from holding down cash benefits to families with older children.

10. Young adult offenders brought under the remit of youth offending teams

The remit of youth offending teams should be extended to those aged up to 20, in order to provide locally-led, integrated support to help keep young adult offenders out of prison, cut reoffending and prevent them from entering a life of crime.

Working life: promoting work and rewarding contribution

11. Institutional independence for the National Insurance Fund

The National Insurance Fund should be given institutional and financial independence from government, with a responsibility for ensuring that national insurance contributions are sufficient to finance contributory benefit entitlements over the long term.

12. More generous temporary benefits for those who have paid in

As a step towards reviving the contributory principle, the rate of contributory JSA should be increased by £30 a week, and those entitled to it should also gain access to help with mortgage interest payments if they become unemployed.

13. A Work Programme focused where it can be effective

The next phase of the Work Programme should focus on supporting long-term jobseekers and those recovering from temporary health conditions, with contracts based on meaningful economic geographies and a job guarantee to prevent long-term unemployment.

14. A 'New Start' supported employment programme

Those with a long-term health condition or disability that reduces their capacity to work should participate in 'New Start', a new, locally-led supported employment programme for ESA claimants, with integrated budgets and incentives for success.

15. Stronger incentives to hire and retain disabled workers

Small firms should be able to recover sick pay costs for employees hired from ESA. In addition, there should be greater back-to-work engagement between individuals and employers during sickness absence, matched by a longer period of employment protection.

16. An Affordable Credit Trust to endow local non-profit lenders

An independent, non-state Affordable Credit Trust should be established to capitalise and mobilise local, non-profit lenders capable of providing low-cost loans, while also supporting low-income households to build up savings of their own.

Housing: mobilising local leadership to build more homes

17. Powers for local areas to bring forward land for development

Towns and cities with an appetite for growth should be given new powers to unblock stalled sites so that land can be used for housing, including designating 'new homes zones' that fund development by capturing the resulting increases in land values.

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18. Incentives for local areas to bring down the housing benefit bill

Councils should be able to retain and reinvest a share of any savings achieved by local action to reduce housing benefit spending in their area. In addition to their existing powers, they should also be given greater freedom to borrow responsibly against their housing assets and income.

19. Powers for local areas to set housing benefit in the private sector

Local areas entering into an earn-back deal with the Treasury should be able to determine the level of housing benefit available in the private rented sector, to prevent landlords overcharging the taxpayer in low-cost areas.

20. Housing capital budgets devolved to combined authorities

Housing capital budgets should be devolved to combined authorities that have agreed strong joint working arrangements and investment plans that support the goal of shifting from 'benefits to bricks'.

21. Full housing spending devolved to combined authorities in time

Combined authorities should be able to take control of all public spending on housing in their area through an upfront, multi-year affordable housing fund, used to meet local affordable housing needs through building homes and subsidising rents.

Crime and exclusion: putting people and places in control

22. An entitlement to restorative justice for victims

All victims of crime and antisocial behaviour should have an entitlement to 'restorative justice', which would give them a distinct voice in the criminal justice system while forcing offenders to face up to what they have done and try to make amends.

23. Neighbourhood justice panels in every area

Neighbourhood justice panels should be established in every local area to mobilise local volunteers to help tackle the root causes of antisocial behaviour and low-level crime, and to force offenders to face up to their actions.

24. A 'Troubled Lives' programme to tackle deep social exclusion

A new 'Troubled Lives' programme should be established to mobilise and coordinate local efforts to address the deep social exclusion experienced by a minority of adults, drawing heavily on the expertise of the voluntary sector.

Older people: living well together in an ageing society

25. A right to flexible working for carers

People providing a significant amount of unpaid care should have the right to adjust their working arrangements to enable them to remain in employment rather than relying on the benefit system.

26. An entitlement to support for moderate care needs

Entitlement to care services for those on low incomes should be extended to older people with moderate needs, to enable them to stay at home and live independently. This should be paid for by limiting entitlement to winter fuel payments to those who are eligible for pension credit.

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27. A review of how national insurance could protect against high care costs

An independent review should consider how the national insurance system could be used to progressively lower the planned cap on care costs and raise the asset threshold, using the principles of contribution and risk-pooling to help finance long-term care costs.

28. Neighbourhood networks to help older people overcome isolation

Groups of older people who want to establish a community-run neighbourhood network in their area should be backed with money and support, with the aim of building such institutions across the country to bring people together and help overcome isolation and loneliness among older people.