



SOCIAL POLICY 2009

Current projects

Now it's personal: the new public service professional

PAs are emerging as new core public service professionals across a range of services, from welfare to lifelong learning, whether they work in the public, private or voluntary sector. ippr's work is leading the way in developing ideas around this.

The first stage of the project is currently reviewing the existing literature on the effectiveness of PAs and considering the current composition, skills set and roles of PAs, and how these might need to evolve in the future. The research is being informed by interviews with PAs and other professionals across sectors as well as service users. A report based on the findings of phase one of the project is due to be published in April 2009.

The next stage of the project, will work with different delivery partners to test and evaluate principles developed during stage one. The partners will each be focusing on a particular aspect around the role of the PA, such as: the professionalisation of the PA role; career progression and skills; re-thinking the customer journey; the integration of services; the use of mentors; and the PAs role with newly redundant workers.

Consumer spending and debt

This project is seeking to explore the implications of the UK's 'consumer culture' on low-income families. The research is based on diary research with low-income families to understand changes in their incomes and expenditure, and how they cope with the pressures of Christmas, summer holidays, new school terms – and the recession.

Income segregation

The project aims to examine how housing policy drives segregation and regional disparities. The research will assess the extent to which housing, planning, communities and benefits policies currently act to reinforce income segregation and offer new evidence about people's attitudes to mobility and residential choices which can reinforce segregation.

'Red' and 'green' taxes

The UK tax system is currently regressive in its overall effects – it takes more, as a proportion of income, from the poorest families in the UK than from the richest. At the same time there is widespread agreement that the government's environmental tax record falls short of what is required to achieve targets for carbon emissions in the coming decades.

There is very little current research on how policymakers can create a tax system that is more progressive *and at the same time* more 'green'. This project aims to fill a large gap in the literature and the policy debate by demonstrating how the tax system can be reformed to be both fairer and more environmentally friendly, thus addressing two key progressive political objectives: social justice and environmental sustainability.

A central feature of the project is to develop a tax-benefit model which will allow us to model a range of tax and benefit reforms, and help us to understand the distributional effects and impact on the public finances. The model will also be available for future ippr projects, and for ippr's work with partners.

Savings and assets conference

In May 2009, ippr will host a one-day conference on savings, assets and debt in the context of recession. The conference will consider the twin challenges of economic downturn and financial instability and how this may impact on savings, debt and asset-building in the UK. The conference builds on ippr's strong track record of work on the assets agenda and will stimulate a debate about savings and asset ownership in the UK.

Social care workforce

This project is a follow-up to ippr's Working Out of Poverty programme, which investigated the causes and consequences of low pay and in-work poverty. Building on our case study of low pay in the early years sector, this project would explore how social care could be transformed into a sector which pays decent wages and offers strong opportunities for progression, while providing high quality care services.

The NEET tracker

Over the next year, ippr will be producing a quarterly bulletin on NEETs (young people not in education, employment or training), that will provide an overview and commentary on new research, policy and data. The bulletin will also provide space for comment, opinion and wider debate on the challenges facing disadvantaged young people in the UK.

The aim of the newsletter is to provide useful data and learning materials for policymakers and practitioners, and to anticipate emerging trends and issues. It will provide a resource for organisations working directly with young people, who may not have the capacity to work through data and policy documents.

Housing seminar series

Since July 2008, ippr has been running a seminar series exploring the social, economic and environmental trends that could impact on and shape housing needs beyond 2020.

London Councils – child poverty project evaluations

ippr is leading the evaluations for London Councils to evaluate two pilot schemes helping to reduce the effects of child poverty by working with families who live in disadvantaged communities.

Forthcoming projects

Alternative provision

What are the alternatives for young people who are not thriving in mainstream education? This project will explore how alternative educational provision can help improve educational outcomes for young people who are not doing well in mainstream education. It will consider how innovative best practice approaches can tackle underlying inequalities by providing opportunities to some of the most disadvantaged young people. We will survey the current landscape in the UK through innovative case studies and draw on learning from international best practice in this field.

Green jobs and skills

This project is aimed at developing a green industrial strategy for the UK which will generate jobs through climate mitigation activities. It will seek to learn lessons from successes abroad and to tackle the supply chain problems which stand in the way of the UK delivering its

Renewable Energy Strategy. The project will also explore how we can ensure that new 'green' jobs provide high-value, high-skill, high-wage work, accessible to people sometimes disadvantaged in the labour market.

Parents at the centre

The objective of this research is to place parents at the centre and empower them to break the cycle of disadvantage. Through an innovative methodology, the project will work with a group of parents from disadvantaged areas (across the UK) who do not regularly access childcare. The project aims to: understand how parents assess the information that shapes decision-making around early years provision; empower parents to convey messages around early years education; and consider how these messages can inform the policy agenda on early years provision and child poverty.

Health and social care budgets

This policy briefing will consider the policy debate around the integration of health and social care budgets. Factors such as an ageing population, increasing expectations of health services and increased personalisation are combining, encouraging local and national government as well as the voluntary and community sector to consider innovative ways of responding to peoples' needs.

This research will examine some of these factors and consider the advantages and shortcomings of aligning these budgets. It will also survey the current landscape to highlight good practice around the integration of health and social care budgets.

For youth, by youth

ippr is proposing to lead a partnership to deliver a programme of work that is focused on how young people engage with social and political issues. It further aims to help young people to develop skills to advocate on issues that they have views on.

The proposed project offers a way to work with young people; to build capacity and develop skills; to hold a one-day conference for young people and about young people; and to consider the way that young people can actively contribute to debate on social and political issues. The process is structured to be engaging, flexible and innovative.

For more information on any of these projects, please contact Dalia Ben-Galim – d.ben-galim@ippr.org / 02074706153