

TheBigSource

October 2013



Welcome to October's Big Source, looking at developments in policy and research in August and September 2013.

In this issue: Research into **childcare** policies and proposals for future provision; Debate and analysis of the current **Work Programme** and the Conservatives' ideas for 'Help to Work'; **Zero-hours contracts**; Pressures on the **NHS** and its staff; The **Immigration Bill** is currently going through Parliament, Challenges to the '**Bedroom Tax**' and criticisms of DWP's management of **Universal Credit**; Several new campaigns aimed at ending **stigmas and stereotypes**; And plenty more besides.

Lots of interesting ideas came out of conference season, a couple of them have crept in here but we'll look at such proposals more in-depth when the party manifestos are published.

The contents are arranged alphabetically by policy area, though there is some crossover.

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Photo: Theresa May speaking in Manchester, AFP/Getty.

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CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

The Resolution Foundation's **All work and no pay** argues that the government's extra support for childcare costs is skewed towards comparatively wealthier households, even among those who will qualify for Universal Credit (UC). The report finds that higher earning families in UC will have 85% of their childcare costs paid, while lower earning families will be able to recover only 70%.

- <http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/all-work-and-no-pay/>

The IPPR's **Early developments: Bridging the gap between evidence and policy in early-years education** reviews the evidence of both the benefits of quality childcare, and the policies which have been successful in improving standards in the UK and abroad. It draws lessons for UK policymakers on how our care system can be improved.

- <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/11073/early-developments-bridging-the-gap-between-evidence-and-policy>

A cross-party group of MPs launched **The 1,001 Critical Days Campaign**. The group's manifesto calls for universal antenatal education; new standardised training for health and early years key workers; better evaluation and impact studies on interventions; improvements to Joint Strategic Needs Assessments; and better support for 'the most vulnerable' families in children's centres. The manifesto is supported by the NSPCC and the NCT, among others.

- <http://www.andrealeadsom.com/downloads/1001cdmanifesto.pdf>
- http://www.nspcc.org.uk/news-and-views/media-centre/press-releases/2013/1001-critical-days-manifesto/1001-critical-days-manifesto_wdn98377.html

At the Labour Conference, Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls pledged that a Labour government would extend **free childcare** from 15 to 25 hours a week for working parents of 3 and 4 year olds. The additional cost would be covered by an increase in the banking levy.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24199711>

COMMUNITIES

Manchester City Council have launched a new commissioning structure, different from the previous one which was organised around commissioners having responsibility for themes such as Youth and Play, Mental Wellbeing and Immigration Advice.

Some of the key elements of the new structure are: Adult and Children's Commissioning are merged; Commissioning will be primarily area based: North, Central and South will share boundaries with NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups; The Lead Commissioners for each area will also have thematic responsibilities.; and alongside area-based commissioning is a "Commissioning Hub"

- <http://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news/manchester-city-council-new-commissioning-structure>

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Release have issued a report, **The Numbers in Black And White: Ethnic Disparities In The Policing And Prosecution Of Drug Offences In England And Wales**. It finds that in 2009/10 there were 10 stop and searches for drugs for every 1,000 people in England and Wales. Black people were stopped and searched for drugs at 6.3 times the rate of white people, Asian people at 2.5 times the rate and people of mixed race were stopped at twice the rate of white people. Drug use is lower among black and Asian people than their white counterparts.

- <http://www.release.org.uk/publications/numbers-black-and-white-ethnic-disparities-policing-and-prosecution-drug-offences>

The **Justice Data Lab pilot** is a new statistical service open to all organisations who work with offenders, with particular focus for supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector. It will provide reoffending data for up to 150 organisations over the pilot year so they can see what interventions work to reduce reoffending.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/charities-benefiting-from-expert-reoffending-analysis>

DISABILITY

Bradford council have become the first local authority to investigate the impacts of the **Work Capability Assessment**. A motion passed by the full Council said the tests were “causing fear and distress” among vulnerable disabled people, that they discriminated against those who had fluctuating conditions and that the appeals process was too lengthy. The (now reshuffled) Minister for Disabled People said she would not rule out scrapping the WCA “if there was proof that it had fallen below a certain standard.”

- http://www.thetelegraphandargus.co.uk/news/10662037.Bradford_Council_to_probe_work_disability_tests/
- <http://disabilitynewsservice.com/2013/10/conervative-conference-minister-would-not-rule-out-scrapping-wca/>

Islington Council said the WCAs carried out by Atos Healthcare had been “too simplistic” after 87% of appeals made by its residents were won. The DWP said successful appeals did not mean the original decision was inaccurate.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-24609466>

The government has responded to the **Consultation on the PIP assessment 'moving around' activity**. The consultation addressed the specific question of whether being unable to walk 20 metres or 50 metres

should be the threshold for claiming Personal Independence Payment. Although 80% of respondents believed 50m would be more appropriate, the government have gone with 20m. Disability Rights UK have condemned the consultation as a “sham”.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-pip-assessment-moving-around-activity>
- <http://disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2013/october/govt-ignores-disabled-people-over-pip>
- <http://janeyoung.me.uk/2013/10/22/the-pip-20-metre-rule-remains-intact/>

New Minister of State for Disabled People

Mike Penning told the *Daily Mail* that he finds it “morally wrong that so many people get welfare payments ‘for life’”. Penning went on to say that around 170,000 people are likely to lose disability benefit by the next election, but up to 150,000 of the most severely disabled will get more support. Disabled blogger Sue Marsh calls current government policy “the biggest single assault on the lives of those with disabilities in memory.”

- <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2466712/Disabled-benefits-farce-94-new-claimants-assessed-doctor.html>
- <http://diaryofabenefitscrounger.blogspot.co.uk/2013/10/i-introduce-new-minister-not-for.html>

DRUGS AND ALCOHOL

The Chief Constable of Durham Police and intelligence lead for the Association of Chief Police Officers has called for a “more honest **debate on the ‘war on drugs’**”. He says that “politicians, professionals and the media collude in the fiction that we are winning the war on drugs, or if not, that we still have to fight it in the same way.” The reality, he says, is “if the war on drugs means trying to reduce the illicit supply of drugs, then it has comprehensively failed.” He believes that a controlled environment would be more effective than prohibition. He joins others leading figures, including England’s chief medical officer in speaking out against current

drug policy. The Deputy Prime Minister and the Home Affairs Committee (HAC) have both backed calls for a Royal Commission to look at options for reform.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/sep/28/ending-war-on-drugs-cut-crime-mike-barton>
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/crime/home-office-drugs-must-remain-illegal-to-protect-society-8847565.html>

A petition is calling on the government to follow the advice of HAC and introduce a Royal Commission.

- <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/43034>

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

The Cabinet Office has invited community organisations across the country to bid for funding from an **Innovation Fund** to get more people on the electoral register.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/half-of-young-people-not-registered-to-vote-confirmed-by-new-government-research>

The IPPR released a report called **Divided Democracy**. It looks at inequalities in the political system and argues that first-time voting should be compulsory for young people.

- <http://www.ippr.org/press-releases/111/11175/young-voters-should-be-required-to-vote-first-time-round>

Parliament Week will take place from 15-21 November. It is a UK-wide programme of events that “aim to engage, inspire and connect people with Parliament and democracy.” Events have ranged from talks about Parliament and its history, to debates about current issues and discussions through social media.

- <http://www.parliamentweek.org/>

If you are a member of Big Life group staff and are interested in holding a Parliament Week event for your clients, please contact Ben Godfrey (details on the front page).

EMPLOYMENT

George Osborne announced **Help to Work**, a scheme in which ‘long-term unemployed people’ (those who haven’t found work after 2 years on the Work Programme) will be made to work for their benefits – ‘work’ is here defined as litter picking, sitting in a Jobcentre for 35 hours a week or partaking in compulsory training. The penalty for failing to adhere to the rules will be the loss of four weeks’ worth of benefit for a first breach, and three month’s worth for a second ‘offence’.

A DWP assessment of mandatory work activity - a similar scheme introduced in 2011 - found it “had no impact on the likelihood of being employed”. Help to Work is currently costed at £300 million a year and scheduled to start in April 2014.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/help-to-work-scheme-announced-by-the-government>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24327470>
- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/222938/early_impacts_mwa.pdf

The government published **Work Programme statistics** up to June 2013, covering the first two years of the policy. In their analysis of the report, Inclusion wrote: “The Work Programme is now exceeding the DWP Minimum Performance Level for the two main groups of Jobseeker’s Allowance claimants, but is still falling significantly short for Employment Support Allowance claimants. However, DWP’s Minimum Performance Level is flawed because it can be affected by the numbers joining the programme rather than job outcomes.”

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/departments-for-work-pensions/series/work-programme-statistics--2>
- http://stats.cesi.org.uk/website_documents/WP_stats_inclusion_briefing_September_2013.pdf

Some of the largest providers of **welfare-to-work** programmes have been ‘penalised’ for low performance. Almost 8 out of 10 people on the Work Programme had been unable to get a job after 2 years. A4E and Avanata are among those who will receive fewer referrals, though Ingeus and G4S will benefit from the decision due to their “better” performance.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24286806>
- <http://www.leftfootforward.org/2013/09/work-programme-failing/>
- <http://blogs.channel4.com/factcheck/factcheck-work-programme-improving-fails-sick-disabled/15918>

The Employment Related Services Association has issued a call for ideas to help it develop a “clear and representative industry view on the **design of future mainstream outsourced welfare to work provision**”.

- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2013/sep/ersa-issues-call-ideas-%E2%80%98work-programme-mark-two%E2%80%99>

The ONS released its **Labour Market Statistics, August 2013**. Covering April-June of this year, it found the employment rate for 16-64 year olds down 0.1%. 2.49 million people in the UK are unemployed and almost 9 million people are classed as ‘economically inactive’.

- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/september-2013/statistical-bulletin.html>

The ONS also released **NEET statistics quarterly brief: April to June 2013**. There were 1.09 million 16 to 24-year-olds in the UK not in education, employment or training (NEET) in the quarter to June, down by 1,000 from the first three months of the year and by 104,000 from a year earlier. The numbers are 10,000 up on when the government came to power in 2010.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/net-statistics-quarterly-brief-april-to-june-2013>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/08/22/net-figures-shame-government-gcse-results-day_n_3795231.html
- <http://www.progressonline.org.uk/2013/09/02/a-net-idea/>
- <http://www.leftfootforward.org/2013/08/youth-unemployment-experience-of-work-does-matter/>

The House of Commons Library have produced a report on **zero-hours contracts (ZHC)**. It finds an estimate that around 3-4% of workers (around one million people) are on ZHC in the UK. The contracts are most prevalent in the hospitality, health and social care sectors. There is some uncertainty about whether zero-hours workers are classified in law as having “employee” or “worker” status. Workers have fewer employment rights than employees.

Employee organisations argue that the contracts result in financial insecurity for workers who lack key employment rights; employer organisations stress their utility when seeking to meet fluctuating demand and argue that they play a vital role in keeping people in employment. An ONS report last year found that people on ZHC had lower levels of wellbeing and self-worth than other workers.

- <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN06553>
- http://www.civilsociety.co.uk/finance/blogs/content/15097/what_charities_should_know_about_zero-hour_contracts
- <http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2013/aug/08/zero-hours-contracts-charities>
- <http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/featured/2013/10/07/zero-hour-contracts-the-dark-side-of-flexible-labour-markets/>

The policy and campaigns director of the UK Homecare Association says that many **homecare services** would be under threat of closure if zero-hours contracts were abolished. He believes a “huge increase” on local authority spending would be needed to offset the damages.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/social-care-network/2013/sep/18/homecare-services-zero-hours-contracts>

IPPR's **Who's breadwinning? Working mothers and the new face of family support** finds that almost one in three working mothers with dependent children are now the primary breadwinner for their family. The analysis explores trends and how they affect different groups of women and different kinds of households.

- <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/11082/whos-breadwinning-working-mothers-and-the-new-face-of-family-support>

The Confederation of British Industry believe the UK will fail to close its “chronic skills gaps” without urgent action to boost advanced ‘learn as you earn’ training and more business-designed degrees. **Tomorrow's Growth** argues that relying alone on traditional university courses will not meet the growing demand for skills in key sectors like manufacturing, construction, IT and engineering.

- <http://www.cbi.org.uk/media-centre/press-releases/2013/07/tomorrows-growth-report/>

The Centre on Dynamics of Ethnicity released **Ethnic inequalities in labour market participation?** Based on the 2011 census, it came to the familiar conclusion that White ethnic groups (with the exception of the ‘Gypsy or Irish Traveller’ group) were in a more advantaged position than others.

- <http://www.ethnicity.ac.uk/census/CoDE-Employment-Census-Briefing.pdf>

The government has announced plans to bring forward the planned **increase in State Pension age** to 67 and to introduce a “regular

and structured method” for considering future changes. The first 5-yearly review will take place in the next Parliament.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/reviewing-the-state-pension-age>

The number of people **working past the state retirement age** has almost tripled over the past 15 years, according to figures compiled for *The Observer*. A TUC survey showed that 258,000 women and 338,000 men are still working at 65 and over, against 93,000 and 112,000 in 1998. For older men, the most common jobs are managers, directors and senior officials, while older women tend to be in lower-skilled jobs such as general administration.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/aug/24/over-65s-work>

Employers who fail to pay the national minimum wage (NMW) will be publicly “named and shamed” under new plans to make it easier to clamp down on rogue businesses. This is on top of financial penalties which employers already face if they fail to pay NMW. The scheme will come into effect in October 2013.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/national-minimum-wage-rogues-to-be-publicly-named-and-shamed-under-new-plans>

HEALTH

The ‘Berwick review’, **A promise to learn – a commitment to act: improving the safety of patients in England** was published in August highlighting the main problems affecting patient safety in the NHS and makes recommendations to address them. Professor Don Berwick, was asked by the Prime Minister to carry out the review following the publication of the Francis Report into the breakdown of care at Mid Staffordshire Hospitals.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/berwick-review-into-patient-safety>

The government revealed its **new strategy for NHS procurement**. It details ambitious plans to save £1.5 billion by getting the NHS to use its money more smartly and more efficiently. The associate director of procurement at County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust, called the new scheme “divisive”.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/minister-launches-radical-new-procurement-strategy-to-save-the-nhs-15-billion>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2013/sep/04/nhs-market-forces-against-value-for-money>

A report by the Royal College of Nursing makes the case that patient care in the UK is being put at risk by staff cuts and excessive workloads, leading to unprecedented nurse stress and ill health. **Beyond Breaking Point?**, a survey, of more than 2,000 nursing staff found that 55% have been made unwell by stress over the previous year. The most significant causes of stress are named as: being unable to deliver the care they would like; increasing workloads; feeling unsupported by managers; and the rapid pace of change. 82% of nurses reported that they have gone to work despite feeling too ill, raising concerns that safe patient care could be jeopardised.

- <http://frontlinefirst.rcn.org.uk/sites/frontlinefirst/index.php/blog/entry/beyond-breaking-point-patient-care-jeopardised-by-nurse-stress/>

The Council for Science and Technology published **The NHS as a driver for growth**, a report on how the NHS can increase innovation and lower costs; the CST says that the NHS will need to work with innovative businesses. It argues for a cultural change within the NHS that will support innovation.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/increasing-innovation-and-lowering-costs-in-the-nhs--2>

The King’s Fund’s **How is the health and social care system performing? September 2013** highlights the growing pressures on

NHS providers and a growing pessimism amongst finance directors that they will meet targets of delivering £20 billion in productivity improvements by 2015.

- <http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/publications/how-health-and-social-care-system-performing-september-2013>

NHS stop smoking services have helped almost 146,000 people quit long-term, according to Cancer Research UK. **Performance of English stop smoking services in first 10 years** finds that services have had an increasing impact in helping smokers to stop and have successfully reached disadvantaged groups. However, performance across local services has varied considerably.

- <http://www.bmj.com/content/347/bmj.f4921>

HOMELESSNESS

The DCLG released statistics on **Homelessness prevention and relief: England 2012 to 2013**. In 2012-13, a total of 202,400 cases of homelessness prevention or relief are estimated to have taken place outside the statutory homelessness framework in England, 90% were preventions and 10% were cases of relief. 53% of cases of prevention and relief involved the household being assisted to obtain alternative accommodation; the remaining 47% involved the cases being assisted to remain in their existing home. The most common action taken to prevent or relieve homelessness is said to be the use of landlord incentive schemes to secure private rented sector accommodation.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-prevention-and-relief-england-2012-to-2013>

Homeless Link published **A high cost to pay**. The report found that 31% of homeless people in receipt of Job Seekers Allowance had been sanctioned, compared to 3% of 'typical claimants'. The report makes a number of recommendations - for example: that "DWP increase the flexibility of the claimant commitment to accommodate those who are furthest from the job market and need more support"; and "clearer communication about welfare reform and the sanction regime to ensure Jobcentre Plus staff and homelessness services can work together to provide homeless people with the support they need to get their lives back on track."

- <http://homeless.org.uk/news/benefit-sanctions-hitting-homeless-people-hardest>

Homelessness charity **Shelter** has stood by the appointment of Derek Myers as chair of its board of trustees. Myers has been criticised for implementing "punitive" housing policies as chief executive of Hammersmith and Fulham Council. According to *Private Eye*, the council under Myers: demolished a hostel for homeless people and auctioned 300 council houses to make way for 'luxury' developments; included no plans for affordable housing in the redevelopment of the Earl's Court centre; threatened to relocate 500 families on benefits to the Midlands; and told homeless people to "be prepared for leaving the borough".

- http://media.shelter.org.uk/home/press_releases/statement_on_the_new_chair_of_trustees_for_shelter
- <http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/go/management/article/1216888/shelter-insists-its-new-chair-shares-its-values-criticism-mp/>
- *Private Eye* No. 1351, 18-31 Oct. 2013, p. 6

HOUSING

The ONS released **House building in England: April to June 2013**. It revealed that construction on new homes was up 6%. The government presented the statistics as evidence that the market was recovering but

Shelter argued that what "they really show is that we are still building less than half of the 250,000 homes we need each year to meet demand."

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/home-building-in-england-april-to-june-2013>
- http://media.shelter.org.uk/home/press_releases/governments_house_building_figures_reveal_extent_of_shortfall

More than 350 councils in England are calling for the freedom to make **extra investment in housing** to help clear a backlog of almost 400,000 homes given planning permission but yet to be built.

- http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10171/4107631/NEWS-TEMPLATE
- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/aug/22/400000-homes-england-waiting-research>

The National Housing Federation have launched the **Yes to Homes** campaign calling on councils to commit to more housebuilding.

- <http://www.yestohomes.co.uk>

According to *The Guardian*, increased discounts in **right-to-buy** schemes are depleting local authority housing stock. The paper says Autumn figures show that councils sold an estimated 2,149 dwellings under the scheme between April and June 2013, nearly five times the number sold the same quarter of the previous year. Houses currently rented at cheaper, social rates can be replaced with homes let at 80% of market value under the government's affordable rent model.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2013/sep/16/right-to-buy-discounts-risk-council-finances>

The *FT* finds that typical **new homes in Britain have nearly halved in size over the last 80 years**, making them the smallest in western Europe.

- <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/2aa2cffa-08ee-11e3-ad07-00144feabdc0.html>

IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

The **Immigration Bill** had its first reading in the House of Commons. It aims “to limit, or otherwise make provision about, access to services, facilities and employment by reference to immigration status; to make provision about marriage and civil partnership involving certain foreign nationals; and for connected purposes.” It will not affect migrants from inside the European Union.

- http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/2013-2014/0110/cbill_2013-20140110_en_1.htm
- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/immigration/10358569/End-of-free-NHS-care-for-migrants-under-new-bill.html>

Crisis are concerned about the Bill's ramifications on homeless and vulnerably housed people, saying the onus to prove one's identity could entrench homelessness and promote discrimination among landlords.

- <http://www.crisis.org.uk/data/files/publications/Crisis%20Briefing%20Second%20Reading%20of%20the%20Immigration%20Bill.pdf>

The Department for Health have published two reports on **Overseas visitors and migrant use of the NHS: extent and costs**. Health Secretary Jeremy Hunt said one of the reports was the "most thorough research there has ever been" in this area. The report itself notes that it is based on "incomplete data, sometimes of varying quality, and a large number of assumptions." The government claims 'health tourism' costs the UK £2 billion a year.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overseas-visitors-and-migrant-use-of-the-nhs-extent-and-costs>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24616801>

Channel 4's FactCheck blog has analysed the reports and concluded: "In terms of how much visitors, foreign, British, legal or illegal, cost the NHS – this report's headline figure is on expenditure, not on losses. Based on the free

care that many visitors are entitled to, it's only about £190m they owe, under current guidelines. It doesn't say how much has been lost, but previous figures from the Department of Health suggest it was about £7m in 2010-11."

- <http://blogs.channel4.com/factcheck/foreign-visitors-owe-nhs-2bn-factcheck/16194>

Also going through parliament is the **Romanian and Bulgarian Accession (Labour Restriction) Bill** which seeks to make provision for restrictions of Bulgarian and Romanian nationals to continue past the end of the A2 Accession period. Under current law, citizens of these countries will have the same rights as all other EU citizens to live and work anywhere in the EU from January 2014. The Bill is a Private Member's Bill by Conservative MP Peter Bone and has not yet been published.

- <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/romanianandbulgarianaccessionlabourrestriction.html>
- <http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/blog/2013/10/backbench-rebel-conservative-mps-launch-devastating-attack-immigration>

The Home Affairs Committee published its report on **Asylum**. It found some asylum-seekers have been waiting 16 years for a decision on their claim; discovered "appalling" housing conditions faced by many; and found evidence of pressure placed on gay applicants to prove their sexual orientation. The report also finds Britain at risk of harbouring war criminals and terrorists due to poor decisions made by border officials. 30% of appeals against initial asylum decisions were allowed in 2012, suggesting, say the Committee, flaws in decision-making.

- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/home-affairs-committee/news/131011-asylum-rpt-published/>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/oct/11/asylum-claimants-delays-housing-unacceptable-report>

The Centre for Economics and Business Research published **Impact of EU Labour on the UK**. Its key findings are: i) Government borrowing would be higher without EU migrants; ii) EU immigrants are less likely to claim benefits and more likely to be in work than UK born citizens; iii) Workers from 'established' EU countries are more likely to earn more than British workers and work in more senior jobs. It warns that curbing EU immigration could cost the UK £60 billion in lost GDP by 2050 and drive up national debt.

- <http://www.cebr.com/reports/migration-benefits-to-the-uk/>

In the last Big Source we mentioned the Home Office's "stupid and offensive" **Go Home vans**. The vans were sent around London as a trial to encourage undocumented migrants to leave the UK voluntarily. A 'government source' told the BBC that the vans are "not very effective" and that national roll-out "will not be going ahead".

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24624383>

MENTAL HEALTH

Victim Support published **At risk, yet dismissed: The criminal victimisation of people with mental health problems**. It finds that people with mental illnesses are three times more likely to be victims of crime than the general population. People who had experienced crime told researchers that their reports to the police were often dismissed or disbelieved.

- <http://www.victimsupport.org.uk/about-us/news/2013/10/risk-crime-people-mental-health>

An investigation by the BBC and Community Care magazine into mental health **crisis services** has found professionals struggling to get emergency hospital care for patients as the NHS has shut more than 1,700 beds in two years. Adult psychiatric wards are running occupancy levels of more than 100%, meaning some patients are being sent to

private hospitals miles from home or admitted to NHS hospitals without a bed.

- <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2013/10/16/patients-at-risk-as-unsafe-mental-health-services-reach-crisis-point-2/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-24537304>

The deputy chief executive of the Centre for Mental Health, blogs about a recent BBC *Panorama* programme on **the use of police custody in mental health emergencies**, which he said "painted a disturbing and distressing picture."

- <http://blog.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/2013/09/10/a-continued-focus-on-prevention-early-intervention-and-recovery/>

POVERTY

The National Children's Bureau's report, **Greater Expectations**, is calling for urgent action to address child poverty. A comparison with other developed nations shows that a lack of ambition for children growing up in the UK causes children to suffer unnecessarily and risks patterns of disadvantage becoming permanent features of our society.

- <http://www.ncb.org.uk/greaterexpectations>

Consumer group Which? Found that 41% of shoppers said **rising food prices** were "causing stress and worry and leaving people wondering how they are going to cope".

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24192396>

The Centre for Social Justice have published **Turning the Tide: Social justice in five seaside towns**. Looking at Rhyl, Margate, Clacton-on-Sea, Blackpool, and Great Yarmouth, the report offers a glimpse of how social breakdown has affected smaller communities. The report finds evidence of charities, schools and councils working to try to overcome ingrained disadvantage.

- <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/publications/turning-the-tide-social-justice-in-five-seaside-towns>

SCHOOLS

Save the Children are calling for the **Pupil Premium** to be more than tripled. Their report, *Too Young to Fail*, states that seven-year-old children from poor families are still consistently more likely to fall behind in critical skills.

- <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/resources/online-library/too-young-fail>

The article **What to do about free schools and academies that are failing?** raises concerns that “in their desperation to ‘play the numbers game’, the government have prioritised increasing the number of free schools and academies at the expense of putting in place proper quality controls and strategies to manage them.”

- <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/school-report-blog/1078285/what-free-schools-academies-failing>

The DfE’s new **Cultural education** document sets out the department’s plan for England and provides an overview of the programmes and opportunities open to schools and teachers to give all children access to a high-quality cultural education.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/cultural-education>

The **School Teacher’s Review Body: 21st Report** summarises the findings of the Body’s analysis of provisions for teachers’ pay “with a view to raising the status of the profession and improving the standard of teaching in schools”. It argues for greater autonomy for schools to set pay and “increased accountability for high professional standards”.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/school-teachers-review-body-21st-report-2012>

WELFARE REFORM AND BENEFITS

The National Housing Federation found that over half of families hit by the **‘Bedroom Tax’** have been pushed into rent arrears in the policy’s first three months. In a survey of 51

housing associations, they found that 51% (32,432) of residents affected by the bedroom tax have been unable to pay their rent between April and June. Salford is one of the worst-affected local authorities with 41% of its tenants now in rent arrears. Twelve Merseyside housing associations have released figures showing a £2.2 million increase in arrears compared to the corresponding period last year.

- <http://www.housing.org.uk/media/press-releases/more-than-half-of-families-hit-by-bedroom-tax-pushed-into-debt>
- <http://www.tuc.org.uk/social-issues/bedroom-tax-has-pushed-one-three-council-tenants-arrears>
- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/regulation/rent-arrears-up-%C2%A322m-six-months-after-bedroom-tax-introduced/6528824.article>

The **United Nations’ Special Rapporteur on housing** issued a statement in which she says current UK legislation “appear[s] to compromise the realisation of the right to adequate housing and other related human rights.” She said her meetings with people affected by the ‘Bedroom Tax’ “clearly point to a measure that appears to have been taken without the human component in mind.” Former housing minister and current Conservative chairman Grant Shapps referred to the statement as “a disgrace” and has written to the UN demanding an apology. According to *The Telegraph*, the UN stands by the investigator’s comments, according to *The Daily Mail*, the UN has “disowned” the “loopy Brazilian leftie”.

- http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=45826#.Ukvp1IPp_To
- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/conservative/10338137/UN-stands-by-bedroom-tax-protester-after-Shapps-complaint.html>
- <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2433351/United-Nations-disown-loopy-Brazilian-leftie-official-came-Britain-demanded-bedroom-tax-axed.html>

A housing association tenant in central London has won an **appeal against the imposition of the 'Bedroom Tax'** by Westminster City Council, in what is thought to be the first such victory in England. It was argued successfully to a tribunal that a room in his flat that the Council classified as a second bedroom had never been used as one and had always been where equipment helping him to lead a normal life was kept.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/sep/26/bedroom-tax-westminster-council-defeat>

A tribunal judge in Glasgow ruled that a woman affected by the 'Bedroom Tax' had had her human rights breached by DWP officials. The judge ruled that the woman whose MS prevented her from sharing a room with her husband had had her rights breached by the policy "without justification".

- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/legal/glasgow-judge-finds-bedroom-tax-breaches-human-rights/6528844.article>

The ConservativeHome blog has been less critical of the 'Bedroom Tax', arguing that **Cutting the spare room subsidy is getting thousands into work**. The research stops short of actually proving its headline, rather it finds that 141 surveyed councils reported to have 25,238 fewer Housing Benefit claimants and makes a number of assumptions based on that.

- <http://www.conservativehome.com/localgovernment/2013/10/cutting-the-spare-room-subsidy-is-getting-thousands-into-work.html>

Hull City Council have warned that **families affected by welfare reforms could be forced to wait more than 10 years for a suitable home**.

- <http://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/main-topics/general-news/bedroom-tax-families-facing-10-year-wait-for-suitable-home-1-6048856>

A leaked internal survey of Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) employees working on the Universal Credit programme describes "an environment of poor

management and high levels of stress". One civil servant writes of "a near complete absence of anything that looks like strategic leadership in the programme".

- <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/aug/02/universal-credit-staff-flagship-reform>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-local-support-services-framework>

The National Audit Office's **Universal Credit: early progress** has claimed that the "DWP was overly ambitious in both timetable and scope" and that the programme "suffered from weak management and ineffective control."

- <http://www.nao.org.uk/report/universal-credit-early-progress/>

The Payments Council have published **Pay Your Way: Universal Credit**. It says that 2.7m current claimants believe they will struggle with their finances as a result of UC. The Council carried out the survey of claimants and found that many of them are worried about running into debt, or struggling to pay bills on time. A guide has been created to help people understand payment types and financial planning.

- <http://www.payyourway.org.uk/special-focus/universal-credit-understand-payments-to-make-the-most-of-your-money/>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-24352427>

It was announced that the **Benefit Cap** is now in place on all appropriate existing claims and will be applied to all new claims. For couples and lone parents, the cap limits benefit payments to £500 a week and to £350 a week for single adults.

- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2013/sep/benefit-cap-place-across-country>

The Chartered Institute of Housing looked at one of the pilot areas for the Benefit cap and found that 10% of those affected are known to have found jobs and that people who are already marginalised in society are disproportionately affected by the cap. The research says there was evidence that the

cap was changing attitudes to employment, but for many claimants there were significant barriers to finding work. Nearly half of capped households claimed Discretionary Housing Payments to help them pay their rent, which the CIH said "both shunts costs between national and local government budgets and masks the true impact of the cap". When asked, MP Mike Penning (see also: Disability, above) could not give a figure for the number of people who were working more as a result of the cap.

- http://www.cih.org/news-article/display/vpathDCR/templatedata/cih/new-s-article/data/Benefit_cap_struggling_to_meet_its_aims_CIH_research_shows
- www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24630321
- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/oct/23/effect-benefit-cap-work-pensions-welfare-official-figures>

An IT delay at the DWP has meant that an extra £1m is needed to employ over 100 civil servants who will 'manually verify whether people should be hit by the new benefit cap'.

- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/department-for-work-and-pensions-forced-to-spend-1m-on-extra-staff-after-it-delay-8749024.html>

Statistics were released from May 2012 to August 2013 on **Jobcentre Plus activity with claimants potentially impacted by the benefit cap**. They claim that Jobcentre Plus has helped around 15,300 claimants identified as living in potentially capped households into work; and that approximately 35,300 people have accepted an offer of employment support.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobcentre-plus-activity-regarding-claimants-who-have-been-identified-as-potentially-impacted-by-the-benefit-cap>

The IPPR have published **On the front foot: Designing a welfare cap that reforms social security**. It sets out a strategy for reforming spending that "should maximise

social investment over what might be termed 'compensatory welfare'".

- <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/11290/on-the-front-foot-designing-a-welfare-cap-that-reforms-social-security>

The Centre for Responsible Credit (CfRC) has: assessed the different **local schemes running in place of the Discretionary Social Fund**, looking at the potential for the involvement of credit unions and Community Development Finance Initiatives. They also analysed Social Fund expenditure since 2010 and reviewed research.

- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2013/aug/implementing-local-welfare-schemes>

The Director of Public Prosecutions has called for a **'tougher stance' on benefit fraud** and proposed a new maximum penalty of 10 years in prison under the Fraud Act.

Benefit fraud is estimated to cost the state £1.9 billion per year, the DWP estimates that it has somewhere between £7 and £13 billion in unclaimed benefit entitlements and tax avoidance is estimated to cost £69.9 billion per year.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24104743>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-work-pensions/series/income-related-benefits-estimates-of-take-up--2>
- <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/11/tax-avoidance-justice-network>

The leaders of eight trade unions co-signed an **open letter to the new Shadow Secretary for Work and Pensions**, Rachel Reeves following her pledge to be "tougher than the Tories" on welfare.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/oct/19/union-chiefs-rachel-reeves-labour-welfare-pledge>

The DWP has commissioned an **independent review of benefit sanctions**.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/independent-reviewer-of-benefit-sanctions-announced>

The Social Security Advisory Committee published **Communications in the benefits system, September 2013**. It makes nine recommendations to improve the quality of 'claimant-focused communications'. These included: DWP emphasising the importance of communications in its business plans; developing a claimant communications strategy; and using appropriate tone and language when explaining the aims of its policies in documents aimed at stakeholders and claimants.

- <http://ssac.independent.gov.uk/about/independent-work-programme/>

The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) have launched their **People Like Us** campaign which aims to challenge stereotypes about benefit recipients. A group of campaigning organisations have also launched **Who Benefits?** which seeks input from members of the public to 'Share your story, Change the debate'.

- <http://www.cpag.org.uk/people-like-us>
- <http://www.whobenefits.org.uk/page/content/front>

Northern Housing Consortium published the first report of their **Real Life Reform** project which will track a number of families who live in housing association properties over 18 months, monitoring the impact of welfare reform.

- <http://www.northern-consortium.org.uk/reallifereform>

The Citizens Advice Bureau have launched a wider campaign called **Well, Actually...** which brings together information and statistics to challenge discrimination. A pamphlet has been published which is broken down into 4 sections: Poverty and Debt; Disability; Welfare; and Gender and Sexuality.

- <https://skydrive.live.com/view.aspx?cid=D65253B9CE6FE37C&resid=D65253B9CE6FE37C!121&app=WordPdf>

If you have any questions or comments about Big Source or its contents, please contact Ben Godfrey (details on the front page).