

TheBigSource

December 2013



Welcome to December's Big Source, looking at developments in policy and research over the last couple of months.

In this issue: We look at George Osborne's recently announced **Autumn Statement**; controversies around both the **Care** and **Immigration** Bills; developments in **disability benefits**; research around **youth unemployment** and **apprenticeships**; controversy and policy aimed at **Roma** communities; new research on **poverty**; and all the usual bits around welfare reform.

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

Thanks to all who've so far provided feedback on the relaunched Big Source, it's been helpful!

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Photo: Danny Alexander, George Osborne and David Cameron, laughing as Osborne delivers the Autumn Statement. © PA

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AUTUMN STATEMENT

Chancellor George Osborne announced the government's Autumn Statement. It contained a range of measures that would continue their "long term plan" of austerity, despite predictions of a budget surplus by 2018-9. The government talked up economic recovery and the opposition response highlighted falling living standards. There was a renewed commitment to a cap on welfare spending and **departmental budgets** are to be cut by a further £1 billion by 2015. DfE, DWP, MoJ, and Communities are among those depts. that will see reductions in spending.

Tax-free childcare will be introduced from autumn 2015. The government says it will provide 20% of childcare costs up to £1,200 a year for children under 12. 15 hours per week of free childcare is to be extended to 40% of disadvantaged two year olds by September 2014.

Employers will be helped to receive funding for the training costs of **apprentices** directly through an HMRC-led system to which employers will contribute. £40m will be provided to deliver an additional 20,000 higher apprenticeship starts over the next two academic years.

The government have pledged to increase local authority **Housing Revenue Account** borrowing limits by £150m in 2015-6 and £150m in 2016-7. A £1bn six year investment programme will be introduced to "unlock new large housing sites to support the delivery of 250,000 homes."

The government will establish a framework for the **welfare cap** which will be updated in 2014. At the beginning of each

Parliament, the Chancellor of the day will set the welfare cap for the coming years and ask the House of Commons for its support. The cap will not apply to JSA and JSA-passported Housing Benefit, or to those within the Full Conditionality group of Universal Credit with no net earnings. Osborne said the cut in welfare spending was justified because those in work were seeing their incomes rise more slowly than those on benefits. Julia Unwin from the JRF said "The uprating of benefits by 1% will increase poverty. Poorer people are facing perhaps a decade of destitution, felt by future generations." Labour refused to say whether it would back the three-year squeeze in welfare benefits.

The government will increase activity to recover **benefit debt** owed to DWP, using debt collection agencies with "specialist skills in recovering difficult to collect debt" and will introduce measures to reduce fraud to deliver savings of more than £2.3bn over the forecast period.

There are various gains for current **pensioners**, and a prediction that the retirement age will reach 69 by the 2040s. Public and Commercial Services union general secretary Mark Serwotka argued the age increase would mean "poorer people with lower than average life expectancy will pay for the pensions of the rich." The average age of Conservative voters is 68.

The Statement documents also highlight a plan to recoup £3.5bn in **offshore taxes** but a similar plan to recover tax from Switzerland failed to reach anything near its target (£1.9bn of £5.3bn).

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/263942/35062_Autumn_Statement_2013.pdf
- http://www.dodsmonitoring.com/downloads/Autumn_Statement/2013/Autumn_Statement_2013_Briefing.pdf
- <http://www.jrf.org.uk/media-centre/autumn-statement-13-million-poverty>

- <http://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/dec/05/george-osborne-welfare-autumn-statement>
- <http://blogs.channel4.com/factcheck/factcheck-unpicking-autumn-statement/16590>
- <http://cdn.budgetresponsibility.independent.gov.uk/Economic-and-fiscal-outlook-December-2013.pdf>

CARE

The **Care Bill** had been originally drafted to oblige CQC to conduct regular checks on local authority adults' services, giving ministers the option of reintroducing regular performance assessments and routine checks on commissioning. However, the government has now issued an amendment to repeal this section of the bill. A further amendment would enable the CQC to conduct a "special review" of a local authority with the approval of the secretaries of state for health and local government. The IPPR highlight the importance of routine checks on commissioning.

- <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2013/10/14/no-return-to-regular-assessments-of-local-authority-adults-services-says-minister/#.UoH2Syf6c4R>
- <http://www.ippr.org/articles/56/11444/government-scores-own-goal-on-care-commissioning>

The government has launched a website comparing adult social care between local authorities. **The Adult Social Care Outcomes site** provides data for each area in England on 21 indicators including direct payment take-up rates, the self-reported quality of life of a sample of service users and rates of delayed discharges from hospital attributable to a lack of social care.

- <http://ascof.hscic.gov.uk/>
- <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2013/11/11/website-launched-to-compare-adult-social-care-performance-between-council-areas>

Manchester City Council have published their first **Market Position Statement** concerning Adult Social Care, which forms the basis for

future commissioning. It begins with a statement of strategy with emphasis on prevention, personalisation, partnerships and return on investment all in the context of diminishing resources. The main bulk of the document, however, goes through supply and demand in every area of service provision and contains a lot of statistics.

- http://www.manchester.gov.uk/info/200095/tenders_and_contracts/6156/market_position_statement
- <http://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news/manchester-city-council-publish-market-position-statement-adult-social-care>

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The government have responded to their **Supporting separated families: securing children's futures** consultation. The Child Maintenance Service (CMS) will take over all new child maintenance cases and the overhaul will see the introduction of charges for both parents if the maintenance-paying parent refuses to pay or arrangements break down. Single parents turning to the CMS to collect child maintenance will result in the child losing on average £70 a year in charges.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/supporting-separated-families-securing-childrens-futures>
- <http://www.gingerbread.org.uk/news/225/CSA-closes-to-new-cases>

The State of Children's Rights in England report accuses the government of using "economic pressures" to "justify not only a serious erosion of children's economic and social rights, such as health, food and the right to play, but also fundamental changes to our justice system." Hundreds of thousands more children are living in poverty compared to a year ago - the total number is predicted to reach 3 million by 2015.

- <http://www.crae.org.uk/our-work/monitoring-compliance-with-childrens-rights/state-of-childrens-rights-in-england/>

- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/austerity-is-being-exploited-and-children-denied-basic-rights--report-8950143.html>

According to research by *Community Care*, three quarters of **Child protection social workers** do not have the time or resources to prevent vulnerable children from coming to serious harm, while child protection ends at 14 in some authorities. The report also finds that protection thresholds have risen over the past year, making it harder for workers to intervene and protect children from neglect and abuse. Budget cuts, rising child protection referrals and social work vacancies were cited as the main causes of rising thresholds.

- <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2013/11/19/community-care-survey-exposes-rising-thresholds-leaving-children-danger>

Unicef UK has partnered with six local authorities in the **Child Rights Partners** project to enlist the help of young people in the design and delivery of services aimed at them. The project will “prioritise the most vulnerable children, including those living in care or poverty and young people affected by drug and alcohol misuse”. Each local authority is using the project to deliver different types of service: Tower Hamlets; Derry; Glasgow; Leeds; Neath and Port Talbot; and Newcastle.

- <http://www.unicef.org.uk/UNICEFs-Work/What-we-do/Our-UK-work/Child-Rights-Partners/>
- http://www.civilsociety.co.uk/finance/news/content/16521/unicef_partners_with_six_councils_to_involve_children_in_service_design

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

The Centre for Social Justice have published **The new probation landscape: Why the voluntary sector matters if we are going to reduce reoffending**. It looks at reforms to the probation service and seeks to inform “strong and resilient partnerships between the private and voluntary sectors.”

- <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/publications/the-new-probation-landscape>

An open letter, sent by 17 organisations, is asking Justice Secretary Chris Grayling to put education at the centre of his rehabilitation reforms. The letter was sent ahead of a new report, ‘**Smart Rehabilitation**’, which highlights the benefits of education to reduce crime and make prisons safer.

- http://www.prisonerseducation.org.uk/fileadmin/user_upload/PLA_Smart_Rehabilitation_Report_PROOF3.pdf
- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2013/dec/prisoner-learning-alliance-tells-chris-grayling-get-smart-about-rehab>

The chairs of the Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Warwickshire probation trusts have each written to Grayling saying he must delay his **probation service privatisation** plan for at least six months or face inevitable protection failures and risks to public safety.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/oct/28/chris-grayling-delay-probation-service-privatisation>

DISABILITY

The Court of Appeal overruled the government’s decision to close the **Independent Living Fund (ILF)**. Although the Court upheld the government’s position that the consultation exercise on the closure of the ILF was lawful, the Court held that the Minister for Disabled People had breached the public sector equality duty under the Equality Act 2010. Following the judgment, the DWP has instructed the ILF to cease the Transfer Review Programme and all additional closure related activity. The ILF is in the process of writing to all users to explain the position and outline the next steps.

- www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/sn05633.pdf

The Shaw Trust, published **'Making Work a Real Choice: Where next for specialist disability employment support?'**, research that argues there is a strong case for retaining a specialist disability employment programme

along the lines of a refined Work Choice model. The report argues that “whilst Work Choice is proving successful in helping disabled people into work, there are a number of improvements that could be made both now and in the development of a future programme.” Earlier this year, the government published their own evaluation of Work Choice.

- <http://www.shaw-trust.org.uk/media-centre/news/shaw-trust-unveils-twelve-point-plan-for-the-future-of-employment-support-for-disabled-people/>
- https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-the-work-choice-specialist-disability-employment-programme-rr846?_=9

The DWP has announced that £2m has been set aside through the **Access to Work** scheme to help disabled people take up work placements. Before this investment, Access to Work only offered this type of support to disabled people on work experience placements organised through Jobcentre Plus.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/access-to-work-extended-to-help-more-disabled-people-into-work>
- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2013/dec/access-work-extended-%C2%A32-million>

A Freedom of Information request by the **Disabled Benefits Consortium** (DBC) revealed that one in five people receiving Disability Living Allowance (DLA) are currently in work. In a survey of over 1,000 disabled people, over half of those receiving in-work DLA said it “could be impossible to stay in work without it”. The government’s total cut in mobility support for disabled people in work could save £145m but, based on the DBC’s estimates, the consequences could cost £464m.

- <http://disabilitybenefitsconsortium.files.wordpress.com/2013/11/click-here.pdf>

The Centre for Welfare Reform have published **Investigating the real reason for the misery of ‘fit for work’ assessments**. The report analyses how government policy has undermined the objectivity of the Work Capability Assessments used by the private medical firm Atos.

- www.centreforwelfarereform.org/library/type/pdfs/how-norms-become-targets.html
- <http://wearespartacus.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Peoples-Review-of-the-WCA-Further-Evidence-December-2013-final.pdf>

There is a petition calling for a **Cumulative Impact Assessment of Welfare Reform, and a New Deal for sick & disabled people**. Its authors demand: a cumulative assessment of the impact of budget cuts on sick and disabled people; an end to the Work Capability Assessment; improved support into work for sick and disabled people and an end to sanctions; and ‘an independent, committee-based inquiry into welfare reform’.

- <http://epetitions.direct.gov.uk/petitions/43154>

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The Domestic Abuse Disclosure Scheme (**‘Clare’s Law’**) enables people to check the police record of their partners, and is to cover all of England and Wales following pilots. Home Secretary Theresa May said “The national scheme will ensure that more people can make informed decisions about their relationship and escape if necessary.” The House of Commons Library have prepared a Standard Note on the new law which includes arguments for and against it.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/domestic-violence-protection-orders-and-domestic-violence-disclosure-scheme>
- <http://www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN06250>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25077115>

- <http://www.guerrillapolicy.org/justice/2013/11/26/claes-law-a-simple-solution-or-more-confusion/>

The TUC is conducting a survey to find out more about **how domestic violence affects working life** and the role that employers, colleagues, and union reps can play in supporting those experiencing domestic abuse. They would like to hear from anyone who has either experienced domestic violence themselves or has a friend or colleague who has experienced domestic violence. The survey is entirely anonymous.

- <http://www.tuc.org.uk/equality-issues/gender-equality/violence-against-women/workplace-issues/tuc-domestic-violence-survey>

EMPLOYMENT

November's unemployment statistics find that unemployment has fallen by 0.2% (48,000 people). The figures also show that 18.5% of people in part-time work (1.46 million people) are working part-time just because they could not find full-time work. The report highlights the significant gap between the 35,000-person fall in unemployment (excluding young people in full time education) and the 104,000-person fall in benefit claimants. Employment minister Esther McVey welcomed the figures, saying: "This Government is delivering on its promise to rebalance the economy, promote job creation, and support people to get off benefits and into work."

- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/november-2013/index.html>
- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/lms/labour-market-statistics/november-2013/statistical-bulletin.html>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/11/13/uk-employment-figures_n_4265134.html
- <http://www.unemployednet.org/unemployed-claimants-go-missing-todays-figures-sanctions-blame>

The government released **The future of apprenticeships in England**, the implementation plan that aims to "put apprenticeship design in the hands of employers." The plan comes at a difficult time for the programme with the latest government figures showing apprenticeship all age starts and success rates falling and employers increasingly paying their apprentices below minimum wage.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/future-of-apprenticeships-in-england-richard-review-next-steps>
- <http://feweek.co.uk/2013/10/28/government-publish-their-radical-and-far-reaching-apprenticeship-implementation-plan/>

The IPPR have published **No more NEETs: our plan to get more young people learning or earning**. They say it is a "plan to fix holes in the school-to-work transition". It includes a dedicated 'youth track' of benefits, support for the under-25s and substantial devolution of powers and funding to city-regions.

- <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/11516/no-more-neets-a-plan-for-all-young-people-to-be-learning-or-earning>

The **living wage**, aimed at meeting basic needs, has increased by 20p an hour, or 2.7%, to £7.65 outside London. It is higher than the legal minimum wage, which stands at £6.31 an hour for over-21s. The living wage is independently set each year, according to the basic cost of living. It is updated annually and employers choose to pay the rate voluntarily.

- <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/dbf7a4ae-4540-11e3-b98b-00144feabdc0.html#axzz2kQQoKMnb>

The Resolution Foundation has published **Minimum stay**, a report that finds 320,000 people have been earning the minimum wage for five years or more. Among its findings are that women are disproportionately affected.

- <http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/press/trapped-minimumwage/>

- <http://www.leftfootforward.org/2013/11/how-britain-ranks-internationally-on-low-pay/>

The IPPR have also published research into **the cost of low pay**. It estimates that every low-paid worker moved on to the living wage would save the government an average of £232 in lower social security spending and raise £445 in higher tax receipts.

- <http://ippr.org/juncture/171/11455/the-cost-of-low-pay>

The government's **"back to work" schemes were legally flawed**, according to the supreme court. The court ruled against the DWP, which was attempting to overturn an earlier verdict by the court of appeal. The verdict was that the 2011 regulations creating the programme were invalid as they did not contain a sufficiently detailed "prescribed description" of the schemes.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2013/oct/30/poundland-case-government-defeated-work-schemes-duncan-smith>
- <http://www.thirdsector.co.uk/go/news/article/1218751/government-loses-back-to-work-schemes-appeal-supreme-court/>

EQUALITIES

Austerity measures imposed on housing, health and police services are pushing LGBT people to the margins of society, according to a report by NatCen Social Research for UNISON. The reduction of specialist services means service users miss out on key support and protection, it says.

- <http://www.unison.org.uk/news/cuts-to-health-and-housing-services-push-lgbt-people-to-margins-of-society>

Opportunity Now has launched **Project 28–40** and has called for 100,000 women to participate in a study into their experiences at work. The study "will enable women to tell their stories, to share their experiences of workplace cultures and to give a personal view of how career ambition fits in with their other goals in life."

- <http://opportunitynow.bitc.org.uk/node/189336>
- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2013/nov/project-28%E2%80%9340-surveying-women%E2%80%99s-experiences-work>

HEALTH

Simon Stevens has been appointed **new chief executive of the NHS in England**. Stevens previously advised the New Labour government on 'marketising' the NHS before working for American private health company UnitedHealth. "In the light of NHS spending pressures," he has accepted a salary of £211,000 and the NHS has announced that he will have no official dealings with UnitedHealth for the first 12 months of his appointment. An article in the *Health Service Journal* praises Stevens' 'influence' and 'intellect'.

- <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/exblair-adviser-simon-stevens-who-is-linked-to-us-healthcare-giant-is-new-nhs-boss-8899875.html>
- <http://m.hsj.co.uk/5064618.article>

Appeal court judges upheld a verdict that health secretary Jeremy Hunt's **cuts to Lewisham hospital were unlawful**. The court took ten minutes to reach the verdict that Hunt's closures of A&E and Maternity at the South London hospital were in breach of the National Health Service Act. Tony O'Sullivan, director of children's services at Lewisham and Greenwich NHS trust said: "We always said they were acting unlawfully and undemocratically in using an emergency process to bypass meaningful consultation and destroy an excellent hospital." The Care Bill (see *Care, above*) currently going through Parliament, will make challenges like that at Lewisham impossible in the future.

- <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/health/10412986/Jeremy-Hunt-loses-appeal-on-unlawful-hospital-closures.html>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/oct/29/lewisham-hospital-jeremy-hunt-unlawful>

- <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/care.html>

The *New Statesman* published an article on **the politics of NHS reform**. It looks at how the debate around the NHS might be framed by politicians in the coming months.

- <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/11/hunt-wants-do-nhs-what-gove-did-schools-how-should-labour-respond>

The IPPR have published **Towards whole person care** which reviews the case for change in the English health and care system. There are two core elements to this vision: making the connections between physical health, mental health and social care needs, and supporting people to remain in their own homes as long as they wish.

- <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/11518/towards-whole-person-care>

The International Longevity Centre UK have published **Immune response. Adult immunisation in the UK**. It finds that lack of flu vaccinations amongst frontline health and social care workers “could pose a significant risk to public health”. The report was funded by Pfizer, who sell flu vaccinations.

- http://www.ilcuk.org.uk/index.php/publications/publication_details/immune_response_adult_immunisation_in_the_uk
- <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2013/11/19/lack-of-flu-vaccinations-among-social-care-staff-could-pose-significant-public-health-risk>

HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

An *Inside Housing* survey of 113 social landlords across Britain reveals that “councils, arm’s-length management organisations and housing associations” are increasingly using the **threat of eviction** to protect their income in the face of welfare reform and falling living standards. The survey shows that landlords issued 99,904 notices seeking possession for rent arrears in April to November this year, compared with 79,238 for the same period in 2012 - a 26% increase.

- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/tenancies/eviction-notices-surge-by-26/6529938.article>

The **Rental Exchange initiative** is a national programme involving Big Issue Invest and credit ratings agency Experian. It will be rolled out next year to improve social tenants’ credit ratings, allowing them to access traditional private finance. Experian found that 20% of social tenants fell just below mainstream lenders’ pass marks but said adding rental payment data could help one million social tenants.

- <http://www.experian.co.uk/rental-exchange/>
- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/finance/better-finance-for-1m-social-tenants-if-data-was-shared>

The House of Commons library published **Homelessness in England**. Which assesses the current policy landscape. Among its findings are that local authorities are not always being informed when homeless families are relocated to their area.

- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN01164/homelessness-in-england>

The TARA Project: A longitudinal study of the service needs of homeless women is a report commissioned by the School for Social Care Research at the government-funded National Institute for Health Research. It concludes that homeless women often lack access to social workers “despite having multiple and complex needs.”

- http://sscr.nihr.ac.uk/PDF/SSCRResearchFindings_13_.pdf
- <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/2013/12/06/homeless-women-lack-access-social-workers-despite-multiple-complex-needs/>

IMMIGRATION AND ASYLUM

The government announced **new measures to prevent immigrants from other parts of the EU from accessing benefits**, ahead of the lifting of restrictions on migrants from

Romania and Bulgaria in January. The measures include a three-month qualification period for benefits, which would then only be payable for six months. European migrants only working in part-time jobs and falling below a certain income threshold would lose access to some benefits and newly arrived EU jobseekers would not be able to claim housing benefit. Also discussed were new powers to deport European migrants found begging or sleeping rough.

Downing Street says the rules allowing deportation of homeless people and six-month limit on getting jobless benefits would be in force from 1 January, as well as a “tougher” habitual residence test (which determines general eligibility to many UK benefits). The three-month delay on claiming out-of-work benefits will take longer to implement because it requires legislation, while it is not yet known when, and for how long, EU migrants would not be able to claim housing benefits.

However, experts in constitutional law as well as the EU's Employment Commissioner said the plans could not be legally implemented.

- www.ft.com/cms/s/0/b2b10574-56c3-11e3-ab12-00144feabdc0.html
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25114890>
- <http://theconversation.com/ignore-the-scare-tactics-roma-integration-is-hard-but-worth-it-20982>

The Guardian have examined some of the evidence for and against the new restrictions including the vital point that it is currently unknown how many new migrants are likely to come to the UK in 2014.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2013/nov/27/benefit-restrictions-on-eu-migrants-will-they-work>

The **Immigration Bill** has again been criticised, this time by the chairman of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges. He said

"common compassion" should decide when emergency treatment is offered and explained the difference between routine and emergency treatments. The Bill, published earlier this month, seeks to restrict access to public services for non-EU citizens.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-24728085>
- <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmpublic/immigration/memo/ib05.htm>
- <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201314/cmpublic/immigration/131029/am/131029s01.htm>

A representative from the Migrants Rights Network attended the **Immigration Bill Committee evidence sessions** and has written of his highlights. The article looks at: the inadequate substitution of appeals by 'administrative review'; the potential financial cost of landlords conducting citizenship checks; and some of the issues around access to healthcare.

- <http://www.migrantsrights.org.uk/blog/2013/11/immigration-bill-committee-evidence-sessions-highlights>

Sheffield MPs Nick Clegg and David Blunkett have both spoken publically about **Roma integration** in the city. Liberal Democrat leader Clegg said Roma people ought to “be sensitive to the way of life that is lived in this country.” Former Labour home secretary Blunkett warned of “an explosion” unless “we change the behaviour and the culture of the incoming community”.

UKIP leader Nigel Farage has applauded both men's statements and *The Telegraph* illustrated the Sheffield story with a photograph of a Roma settlement in France.

- www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/nick-clegg/10449064/Nick-Clegg-intimidating-and-offensive-Roma-migrants-must-be-sensitive-to-British-way-of-life.html
- http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2013/11/14/nick-clegg-roma-immigration_n_4272611.html

A lecturer from the University of Manchester wrote a response to Clegg and Blunkett dispelling some common myths about Roma communities and highlighting some good practice in terms of community integration.

- <http://blog.policy.manchester.ac.uk/featured/2013/11/our-politicians-must-stop-scapegoating-roma-community/>

The Independent reports that publication of a review into **the impact of EU migration on Britain** has been delayed until next year because home secretary Theresa May has taken issue with its broadly positive findings.

- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/government-delays-eu-immigration-report-because-it-is-too-positive-8994264.html>

Researchers from Warwick University will be looking into the impact of the “stupid” and “offensive” **Go home vans**. The team aims to uncover impacts on local migrant and non-migrant communities, public debate and activism.

- http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/newsandevents/pressreleases/new_research_project_to_examine_impacts_of_the_145go_home146_campaign1

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The national government are consulting on a **Proposal to establish a combined authority for Greater Merseyside**. The six Greater Merseyside authorities, working jointly with the Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority and with the support of the “Liverpool City Region Local Enterprise Partnership” have prepared and published a scheme with “proposals for delivering greater economic growth in their area.”

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposal-to-establish-a-combined-authority-for-greater-merseyside>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-merseyside-23989196>

MENTAL HEALTH

An initiative in Leicester sees **police work with mental health staff to manage crisis call-outs**. A ‘triage car’ is staffed by an officer and a nurse who can assess the person and steer them to appropriate care and support services. The car is a partnership between Leicestershire police, Leicestershire Partnership NHS trust and Leicester probation service.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2013/nov/13/triage-scheme-police-mental-health>

A survey by five European newspapers found that the vast majority of almost 100 European doctors and psychiatrists who replied said there was a “**prescribing culture**” in their country because other help for people with depression was inadequate.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/20/antidepressant-use-rise-world-oecd>

POVERTY

The JRF published **Monitoring poverty and social exclusion 2013**. It finds that more than half of the 13 million people living in poverty in the UK in 2011/12 were in a working family. While the labour market has shown signs of revival in the last year, the number of people in low-paid jobs has risen and average incomes have fallen – around five million people are paid below the living wage.

- <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/monitoring-poverty-and-social-exclusion-2013>

The Centre for Social Justice published **Maxed Out**, a report on personal and household debt in the UK. It finds that people in the UK are now in record levels of debt and that “Low, reduced or irregular income is a major contributory cause of problem debt.”

- <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/publications/maxed-out>

The Town and Country Planning Association have released **Planning out Poverty**, a report which looks at the National Planning

Policy Framework with an eye on poverty reduction and social inclusion. It concludes with a number of recommendations for government, local authorities, the private sector and the 'planning community'.

- <http://www.tcpa.org.uk/pages/planning-out-poverty.html>

SCHOOLS

The **School and Early Years Finance (England) Regulations 2013** will come into force on 1 January 2014. They concern the funding arrangements made by local authorities for maintained schools and early years provision in England for the financial year 2014-15.

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/265749/DfE_consultation_response_to_School__Early_Years_Regulations_2013.pdf
- <http://www.education11kbw.com/2013/12/13/new-local-authority-school-finance-regulations/>

The **free schools** programme will cost at least three times the amount originally allocated to it. According to the National Audit Office, the programme will now cost £1.5bn, the original Treasury grant was £450m. It also criticised the scheme for "prioritising speed over cost" and said schools were not always in the areas where they were most needed.

- <http://www.nao.org.uk/report/establishing-free-schools/>
- *The Big Issue in the North* No. 1009, 16-27 Dec. 2013, p. 5

THIRD SECTOR

The National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA) have circulated an update on the third reading of the **Lobbying Bill** in the House of Commons. Whilst some changes have been made, NAVCA say that the bill will still make life harder for many charities and community groups. Stephen Bubb of the Association of

Chief Executives of Voluntary Organisations wrote a piece for *The Guardian* on why it is important for charities to challenge government power.

- <http://www.vsnw.org.uk/news/view/2013-10-11-update-on-the-lobbying-bill>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/20/charities-challenge-powers-lobbying-bill>

The **Charity Commission** has published the results of the consultation on proposed changes to the annual return and changes to the information displayed on the register of charities. Along with an analysis, the regulator has also announced the key changes charities should expect for 2014.

- <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/news/charity-commission-publishes-analysis-of-annual-return-consultation/>
- <http://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news/changes-charity-annual-return>

Civil Exchange's **Big Society Audit 2013** reviews what has been happening against key 'Big Society' commitments made by the government. It finds that "bias towards the private sector is killing the idea of the Big Society, while the charities to which people in need turn are left out in the cold."

- <http://www.civilexchange.org.uk/the-big-society-audit-2013>

'Payment by Results contracts: a legal analysis of terms and process' is a report for the National Council for Voluntary Organisations. It finds that the model "has suffered from crude implementation, meaning opportunities to improve public services, such as mental health treatment or drug rehabilitation, are being missed."

- <http://www.ncvo.org.uk/about-us/media-centre/press-releases/479-payment-by-results-implementation-seriously-flawed-new-report>

The NAO published two reports: **Managing government suppliers** and **The role of major contractors in the delivery of public**

services. The reports call for stricter penalties for poor service and highlight the heavy concentration of government spending with a small number of big suppliers (namely Atos, Serco, Capita and G4S). Central government spent £40bn with private providers in 2012-13, the NAO found, that figure more than doubles when local government and NHS services are included. The report noted that G4S and Atos did not pay any corporation tax in 2012 despite between them benefiting from more than a billion pounds of public sector contracts.

- <http://www.nao.org.uk/report/memorandum-managing-governments-suppliers/>
- www.ft.com/cms/s/0/69c31024-4af1-11e3-8c4c-00144feabdc0.html

The government have published their response to **Making public sector procurement more accessible to SMEs.** The key reforms will be: abolition of Pre Qualification Questionnaires (PQQs) for low value contracts; Mandating the use of a standard core PQQ for high value contracts; Ensuring small business needs are taken into account in the design of procurement processes; Establishing an online portal for contract opportunities; and Mandating prompt payment terms throughout a public procurement supply chain.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/making-public-sector-procurement-more-accessible-to-smes>

An article on *The Guardian's* Voluntary Sector Network looks at how to create engaging and effective **annual reports**. Effective reporting should be simple, transparent and demonstrate impact, it says.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/voluntary-sector-network/2013/oct/31/demonstrating-impact-charity-has-made>

WELFARE REFORM & BENEFITS

Some information on disability benefits is under Disability, above.

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is being rolled out to existing working-age claimants of Disability Living Allowance as of 28 October 2013. The new benefit includes a new face-to-face assessment and regular reviews. The government estimates that 600,000 fewer disabled people will qualify for PIP by 2018.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/personal-independence-payment-rolls-out-to-existing-claimants>
- <http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/personal-independence-payment-pip>

The DWP have released statistics on the **Benefit cap: number of households capped to September 2013.** They show that of the 18,024 households subject to the cap, all but 2% featured children and only 2% more had one child. 43% had five or more children and 26% had four children. This seems to support pre-implementation concerns that the cap would disproportionately affect large families. According to *Children & Young People Now*, “The figures have stoked concerns that the cap will negatively impact on living standards for some of the poorest children.”

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/benefit-cap-number-of-households-capped-to-september-2013>
- <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/1140314/large-families-worst-hit-benefit-cap>

The *Daily Mail* has picked up a story of a group of Conservative MPs who would like to see the benefit cap lowered further – from £26,000 to £20,000. According to the *Mail*, “MPs said it would help raise cash to pay for middle-class tax cuts, as well as sending out a powerful message that the unemployed should not be able to live a comfortable life on benefits.” The Free Enterprise Group was founded by education minister Elizabeth Truss and is backed by a number of other senior figures, including Treasury minister Sajid

Javid and business minister Matthew Hancock.

- <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2509645/Cut-benefits-cap-20-000-say-Tories.html>

A Parliamentary debate on the ‘**bedroom tax**’ upheld the policy, though the government’s majority was cut to just 26 MPs. Conservative Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith was absent for the debate, leaving Lib Dem Work and Pensions Minister Steve Webb to defend the policy. Shadow Work and Pensions Secretary Rachel Reeves echoed Labour’s pledge to abolish the policy if elected to government. *Prospect* magazine highlights a few of the debate’s speeches.

- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2013/november-/mps-debate-abolition-of-the-bedroom-tax/>
- <http://www.channel4.com/news/bedroom-tax-labour-lib-dems-vote-commons>
- <http://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/prospector/opposition-day-the-bedroom-tax-debate>

Welfare reform minister Lord Freud, was asked about the timetable for **Universal Credit** (UC) roll-out. He said that he was “not in a position” to give a timetable. The DWP had originally planned to have all new claims from ‘simple’ cases (single people with no dependents or disabilities) on to UC from October. This was changed over the summer to just six areas.

- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/finance/freud-not-in-a-position-to-give-timetable-for-universal-credit/6529262.article>

The Public Accounts Committee has published its 30th report on Universal Credit. The Chair of the Committee said ‘implementation has been extraordinarily poor’ and caused ‘the waste of a yet to be determined amount of public money’. The report has identified failures in monitoring progress, understanding the complexity of the

task at hand, and a failure to intervene when problems occurred.

- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/public-accounts-committee/news/universal-credit-report/>
- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2013/nov/report-says-implementation-universal-credit-has-been-%E2%80%98extraordinarily-0>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/dec/09/universal-credit-it-writeoff-iain-duncan-smith>

Research from Citizen’s Advice has found that 22% of their clients in the UC pilot areas do not have access to the basic banking services they will need to deal with UC. Equipping benefit claimants with the digital and financial skills to use the government’s new universal credit welfare system is likely to cost hundreds of millions of pounds, unpublished research commissioned by the DWP has found.

- http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/index/pressoffice/press_index/press_office20131105.htm
- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/nov/21/universal-credit-benefit-training-cost-millions>

The DWP released **Jobseeker’s Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance sanctions: decisions made to June 2013**. It shows that 860,000 claims were subject to sanctions in the year to June 2013, the highest since statistics began to be published in their present form.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobseekers-allowance-and-employment-and-support-allowance-sanctions-decisions-made-to-june-2013>

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s 2010 review of the international evidence on the impact of sanctions found that in practice they can cause severe hardship and create higher public costs in the long-term.

- <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2013/11/why-benefit-sanctions-could-end-costing-taxpayer-more>

- <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/review-of-benefit-sanctions>

The Manchester Citizens Advice Bureau has published a report on the impact of benefit sanctions. **'Punishing Poverty'** reviews the benefits sanctions and their impact on clients and claimants. It finds that the imposition of sanctions is causing great hardship not only to claimants but to their dependants. "The hardship is likely to make claimants less rather than more likely to be in a position to find and keep paid work."

- http://www.manchestercab.org/news_more.asp?news_id=19¤t_id=1

Local authorities that cut **council tax benefits** have seen a sharper increase in court proceedings against constituents. In local authorities that made no cuts to the benefit there was a 15% increase in the number of liability orders on the previous year. This figure jumps to 30% in local authorities that withdrew assistance. 670,000 people have faced bailiffs over council tax arrears since April.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2013/dec/02/council-tax-support-withdrawal-increase-court-proceedings>

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