

TheBigSource

April 2014



Welcome to April's Big Source, it's a bit shorter than usual, looking at developments in policy and research over the last month.

It's the final Big Source under my watch and I'm informed that the super-qualified Emma Eaton will be carrying the torch from now on. Expect increases in factual and grammatical accuracy and decreases in sarcasm and unflattering photos of cabinet members. You can contact Emma on 0161 848 2426 or at emma.eaton@thebiglifegroup.com.

Cheers all who've read Big Source this last year and especially to those of you who got in touch about it.

As ever, the contents are arranged alphabetically by policy area and there's some crossover.

To see past issues visit:

thebiglifegroup.com/tag/big-source/

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Photo: Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith and Employment Minister Esther McVey watching last month's Budget announcement © BBC

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CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Education and Childcare Minister Liz Truss announced a freeze on the fees **childminders** pay to Ofsted, keeping them at £35 a year.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/boost-for-childminders-and-hardworking-families>

Truss also announced that childminder agencies would be introduced “to boost the number of people joining the profession.” DfE are consulting on how those agencies should look. The consultation closes on the 22nd of May.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/childminder-agencies-and-changes-to-the-local-authority-role>

Planned reforms to support for children and young people with **Special Education Needs** (SEN) are ‘at risk’ according to an evaluation by policy researchers SQW. The report found that - while 80% of pathfinder areas had developed, or were developing, between seven and nine of the nine main elements of the reforms - half of the non-pathfinder areas that responded had implemented between none and three. SQW recommends that the progress of non-pathfinder sites be closely monitored and additional support offered for areas that need it.

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/298902/SEND_Pathfinder_Evaluation_Readiness_and_Champion_Research_Report_-_Jan_2014.pdf
- <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/1143171/sen-reforms-risk-slow-pace-implementation>

The University of Manchester’s new Policy@Manchester team have published a briefing on **UK Childcare in the European**

Context. It states that the UK has made important strides in expanding childcare since 1998 but finds shortfalls in supply, affordability, quality and flexibility. It calls for Family Leave systems that incentivise greater roles for fathers in childcare, as mothers often leave the labour market or reduce their hours after having children because childcare is “unavailable, too expensive or inadequate.”

- http://www.policy.manchester.ac.uk/media/projects/policymanchester/992_Policy@Manchester_UK_Childcare_briefing_v5.pdf

Alan Wood, the new president of the Association of **Directors of Children's Services**, has written in *The Guardian* stating that the sector's priorities must be early years and schools, and proposes a streamlined inspection system.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/apr/09/alan-wood-association-of-directors-of-childrens-services>

DISABILITY

The DWP issued a press release on the **Future of the Independent Living Fund** (ILF) - in short, there isn't much of one. The ILF will close on the 30th of June 2015 and funding will be transferred to local authorities and the devolved administrations. The government's own impact assessment says that the closure of the fund will have an "adverse effect" on claimants. Local authorities have said that they won't be able to provide the same level of support that people had under the ILF. Around 18,000 people will be affected.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/future-of-the-independent-living-fund>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/31/independent-living-fund-disabled>

Religious think-tank Ekklesia published **Beyond the Barriers**, a report on sickness and disability support in the UK written and researched entirely by disabled people from the Spartacus network. Among its

recommendations are that sick and disabled ESA recipients be released from the Work Programme to co-produce and commission their own support plans.

- <http://www.ekklesia.co.uk/node/20383>
- <http://diaryofabenefitscrounger.blogspot.co.uk/2014/04/beyond-barriers-updates.html>

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

HMIC have published **Everyone's business: Improving the police response to domestic abuse**. The report found that "despite the progress made in this area over the last decade, not all police leaders are ensuring that domestic abuse is a priority in their forces."

"HMIC found alarming and unacceptable weaknesses in some core policing activity, in particular the quality of initial investigation undertaken by responding officers." The report also identifies that officers may lack the necessary supervision, knowledge and skills to tackle domestic abuse, and that some have "poor attitudes". Theresa May, who commissioned the report, has announced that she will chair an advisory group to encourage forces to apply the report's recommendations.

- <http://www.hmic.gov.uk/news/news-feed/police-response-to-domestic-abuse/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/home-secretary-leads-action-on-police-response-to-domestic-violence-and-abuse>

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

NHS drug clinics have begun offering heroin users **financial incentives to quit** as part of a major trial which 'could radically transform the UK's drug prevention strategy'. 33 NHS and voluntary clinics are giving a £10 shopping voucher to every user of opiate drugs, including heroin, if they can provide a clean urine sample at a weekly meeting with their key worker.

- <http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/health-news/controversial-trial-at-nhs-clinics-to-offer-cash-for-drug-addicts-who-stay-clean-9247189.html>

EMPLOYMENT

The government has outlined new rules for anyone hoping to receive **Jobseekers Allowance (JSA)**. The requirements build on last year's 'claimant commitment', whereby claimants must sign a contract to do certain things, such as regularly applying for a minimum number of jobs or sitting in a Jobcentre for a set number of hours. From the end of April 2014, claimants preparing for their first interview with a Jobcentre Plus adviser will be asked to draw up a CV, set up an email address and register for the government's much maligned Universal Jobmatch website. If a jobseeker fails to meet with these requirements prior to claiming JSA they will "face a sanction unless they comply quickly".

- <http://www.cipd.co.uk/pm/peoplemanagement/weblog/archive/2014/04/07/benefits-claimants-required-to-do-more-to-find-work.aspx>

Bleak new analysis on **youth unemployment** from the Local Government Association has revealed that of the 2.5 million young people struggling to find enough work across England and Wales, only 340,000 are likely to find more work over the next four years, leaving 2.12m still unemployed or underemployed. Urban areas outside of London such as Sheffield, Leeds, Newcastle and Manchester are the worst hit by unemployment and have seen the biggest increases.

- http://www.local.gov.uk/media-releases/-/journal_content/56/10180/6020941/NEWS
- <http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2014/03/councils-issue-youth-unemployment-warning>

Reforms to **Apprenticeships** funding will cut the number of places available to vulnerable young people, the Association of Employment and Training Providers has warned. It is feared that government proposals to only part-fund apprenticeships for 16-18 year olds, and

make employers pay a contribution towards training, will result in smaller firms (that currently offer 75% of apprenticeships) being less likely to offer places.

- <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/1142690/funding-changes-apprenticeships-risk-warn-employers>
- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2014/mar/funding-changes-put-apprenticeships-risk-warn-employers>

Newcastle College Group (NCG) are the first providers to have their **Work Programme** contract terminated. Minister for Employment Esther McVey announced the decision after a review of the bottom 25% of contracts placed NCG, who provide services in North East Yorkshire and the Humber, as the lowest performing. The other providers reviewed have been put under an 'enhanced performance management regime', in an attempt to improve their services and outcomes.

- http://www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-vote-office/March_2014/6th-March/21.DWP-WorkProgupdate.pdf
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-26470392>

The House of Commons Library have published a Standard Note on **Zero-hours contracts**. It provides an overview of arguments for and against the contracts and highlights that the extent of the use of zero-hours contracts is unclear.

- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/research/briefing-papers/SN06553/zerohours-contracts>

Information on a new Apprenticeship in nursing is under 'Health', below.

Information on a report into the effects of immigration on the UK labour market is under 'Immigration', below.

HEALTH

The Department of Health is consulting on a new **Statutory Duty of Candour** for health professionals. The Duty of Candour will place a legal requirement on providers of health and adult social care to be open with patients "when things go wrong". This is to ensure "that honesty and transparency are the norm in every organisation registered by the Care Quality Commission." The consultation closes on the 25th of April.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/statutory-duty-of-candour-for-health-and-adult-social-care-providers>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/healthcare-network/2014/apr/08/duty-of-candour-nhs>

The Department for Business, Innovation and Skills last week announced a new **Nursing Higher Apprenticeship** targeted at the "brightest and the best" healthcare assistants already working in hospitals. The Apprenticeship will have a degree built into it and will be developed by a group of NHS organisations and private providers working with Health Education England. The Royal College of Nursing have said it should not be seen as an easier route into the profession than a more traditional nursing degree.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-nursing-apprenticeships-for-those-who-have-proven-they-can-care>
- https://www.rcn.org.uk/newsevents/news/article/uk/nursing_apprenticeships
- <http://www.nursingtimes.net/nursing-practice/clinical-zones/educators/nursing-leaders-respond-to-apprenticeship-route-into-nursing-plans/5068712.article>

HOUSING

The **Build to Rent Fund** was launched by DCLG to support the development of new purpose-built privately rented homes. It will provide investment opportunities to developers. Housing Minister Kris Hopkins

has published a shortlist of developments in areas including Salford, Manchester, Liverpool and Kirklees, which could benefit from a share of the fund.

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/286733/BTR_R2_-_Shortlist_FINAL.xlsx
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-rented-housing-sector--2/supporting-pages/private-rented-sector>

A study by Shelter has found a large number of renters in the UK facing '**revenge evictions**' in retaliation for questioning bad conditions. In 2013, more than 200,000 people faced eviction after asking their landlord to fix a problem in their property. The study also found extensive reports of poor conditions with 40% of respondents having reported problems with mould in the past year and 25% having experienced leaking roofs or windows. As the government is considering changing the law around revenge evictions, Shelter is calling on those affected to speak up, and sign a petition to increase the pressure for action.

- http://england.shelter.org.uk/news/march_2014/shelter_exposes_true_scale_of_revenge_evictions

Information on reforms to housing benefits is under 'Welfare Reform & Benefits', below.

IMMIGRATION

The government got round to publishing **Impacts of migration on UK native employment**. The findings are largely inconclusive though the report does assert that migration is more destabilising to native workers in times of recession and that labour markets do tend to gradually adjust to new workers over time. Home Secretary Theresa May was strongly criticised late last year when it was revealed that her office had delayed the report's publication for fear it was "too positive".

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impacts-of-migration-on-uk-native-employment-an-analytical-review-of-the-evidence>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/03/06/migration-uk-report_n_4910123.html
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/government-delays-eu-immigration-report-because-it-is-too-positive-8994264.html>

In a reform to **EU migrant access to benefits**, from the 1st July 2014, people will need to have lived in the UK for three months before claiming Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. The government has also announced that new claimants eligible for Jobseeker's Allowance will no longer have routine access to interpretation services, and from the 28th of April this year their spoken English will be tested.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/further-curbs-to-migrant-access-to-benefits-announced>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26949172>
- <http://www.leftfootforward.org/2014/04/a-tale-of-two-immigration-announcements/>

The Home Office's freeze on **asylum support** was overturned by the High Court. The judge ruled that Home Secretary Theresa May acted 'irrationally' when she ordered a freeze on the £36.62 weekly cash benefit paid to asylum seekers. May "failed to take reasonable steps to gather sufficient information to enable her to make a rational judgment," according to the judge.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/apr/09/asylum-seeker-subsistence-payments-defeat-government-theresa-may>
- <http://www.leftfootforward.org/2014/04/a-tale-of-two-immigration-announcements/>

The Home Office deported **Yashika Bageerathi** in April. The 19 year old who posed no risk to the public was separated from her family, detained in Yarl's Wood detention centre for a few weeks and eventually deported back to Mauritius under

the watch of two guards. Yashika and her family came to the UK when they fled an abusive relative in 2012, she was due to sit her A-levels in May. Yashika's case drew a large amount of media attention and public support, including from her local Conservative MP and British Airways, who refused to carry her.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26860400>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/lee-pedder/save-yashika_b_5028995.html
- <http://www.channel4.com/news/yashika-bageerathi-to-be-deported-tonight>

Under the government's **vulnerable person's relocation** (VPR) scheme for Syrian nationals, refugees of the current Syrian conflict will be granted five years' humanitarian protection, including "access to public funds, access to the labour market and the possibility of family reunion."

Sheffield MP and current deputy prime minister Nick Clegg has announced that he is "shocked" and "disappointed" at Sheffield City Council's failure to accept any Syrian refugees. Clegg claimed Sheffield had been asked to resettle just a small number of "some of the most vulnerable people in the world". He compared Sheffield's decision with that of Bradford council, which has offered to support around 50 Syrian refugees.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/vulnerable-persons-relocation-scheme-for-syrian-nationals>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2014/apr/01/nick-clegg-accuses-sheffield-council-syrian-refugees>

Policy@Manchester have published a briefing paper on **Roma migrants from central and eastern Europe**. It asserts that "interventions must focus on capacity building within the Roma community rather than expand the mediation role of third sector agencies."

- <http://www.policy.manchester.ac.uk/media/projects/policymanchester/Policy@Manchester-briefing---Roma-Migrants.pdf>

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Information on Sheffield City Council's response to Syrian refugees is under 'Immigration', above.

MENTAL HEALTH

Campaign group **Think Local Act Personal** (TLAP) are looking for case studies from providers, commissioners or user-led organisations that show "what person centred support can look like within mental health services and across community based support". TLAP want examples of commissioning models that "can lead to more person centred support and examples of innovation".

- <http://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news/think-local-act-personal-are-seeking-case-studies-relating-people-mental-health-needs>

SCHOOLS

Schools Minister David Laws has announced changes to the **assessment and accountability** regime in primary phase and the accountability regime for post-16 providers. For primary schools, new KS2 tests will be introduced, with 85% of pupils expected to reach the standard equivalent to level 4b of the existing tests. A new baseline test will also be introduced in reception class, against which future progress will be measured.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/step-change-in-ambition-will-mean-higher-standards-for-all>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/new-national-curriculum-primary-assessment-and-accountability>
- <http://www.nga.org.uk/News/NGA-News/Jan-Apr14/Primary-and-16-to-19-assessment-and-accountability.aspx>

THIRD SECTOR

The **Audit Commission** will close at the end of March 2015 and contracts for public sector audit services will be managed by a new private company to be created by the Local Government Association. When the new framework comes in, local public bodies will be required to appoint their own auditors and manage their contracts individually or collectively. This could be as early as 2017, although there is an option available for the Government to extend contracts until 2020.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-local-audit-steps-move-12-billion-savings-closer>
- <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/2014/03/dclg-opts-for-the-local-government-association-to-manage-the-audit-commissions-85-million-audit-contracts-when-it-closes/>

The NCVO have prepared **Charities and the Lobbying Act: Frequently asked questions**. It aims to start addressing some of the key concerns that the Act has raised. It covers: where and when the new rules apply; which charities need to register; and regulated activities.

- <http://blogs.ncvo.org.uk/2014/03/12/faqs-on-the-lobbying-act/>

WELFARE REFORM & BENEFITS

A Work and Pensions Committee report has warned that there is still uncertainty about the new **Universal Credit** (UC) IT system, including around how it will work, how much it will cost and who will develop it. Although roll-out of UC was due to begin in October 2013, problems with IT systems meant that implementation was delayed twice in 2013. New claims are not expected to be extended across the UK until 2016; and the bulk of existing claimants will not move over to UC until 2016-17.

- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/news/universal-credit-it-report-substantive/>

<http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2014/apr/it-still-not-clear-universal-credit-it-will-work-warn-mps>

- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2014/apr/it-still-not-clear-universal-credit-it-will-work-warn-mps>

Changes to **council tax benefit** have weakened work incentives for up to 225,000 people in England, according to the Public Accounts Committee. The taper rate, at which support is reduced as income rises, was increased from 20% to either 25% or 30% in 19 local authorities. The Committee explained that the increases, combined with the loss of housing benefit and increased income tax and national insurance payments, meant that claimants taking on additional work lost either 93p or 97p out of every extra £1 they earned. Chair of the Committee Margaret Hodge called the reforms “fundamentally perverse”.

- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2014/mar/changes-council-tax-benefit-have-weakened-work-incentives-%E2%80%98-225000-pe>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26520833>

Figures from the Office for National Statistics (ONS), have shown that the number of people claiming **jobseeker's allowance** for more than three years has increased from 5,090 in 2010 to 57,340; the highest number since 1997. The number of people claiming unemployment benefits for more than five years has also increased, from 4,375 to 11,295, the highest since 2003.

- http://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/2014/03/28/uk-unemployment-five-years-osborne_n_5047863.html
- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2014/mar/number-brits-claiming-jobseekers-allowance-over-three-years-highest-1>

The Work and Pensions Committee have published the report **Support for housing costs in the reformed welfare system**. It joins the large number of reports that find current welfare reforms, namely the ‘bedroom

tax' and benefit cap, to be "causing financial hardship to vulnerable people." It recommends that anybody living in a home that has been significantly adapted for them should be exempt from the 'bedroom tax' and urges the government to exempt all households that contain a person in receipt of higher level disability benefits (DLA or PIP).

- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/news/support-for-housing-costs/>

Two separate studies published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF), have found that the '**bedroom tax**' has left tenants struggling to cope and has failed to free up homes in many areas. It also discovered that savings to the DWP will fall short in the policy's first year.

- <http://www.jrf.org.uk/media-centre/welfare-reform-100000-trapped-in-larger-homes>

The BBC have published some analysis and case studies around reforms to **housing benefits**. It finds just 6% of those affected by the 'bedroom tax' have been able to move home, 28% in arrears for the first time and 3% have had legal action taken against them.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26770727>

A number of councils 'ran out' of money for **Discretionary Housing Payments** (DHPs) before the end of the 2013-4 financial year. DHPs were presented by the government as a support plan for people affected by the 'bedroom tax'. Some councils reported having to turn away 'three quarters of those asking for help'. Demand for DHPs across the country has increased by more than 300% since the introduction of the 'bedroom tax' last year.

- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/exclusive-new-chapter-in-bedroom-tax-saga--now-councils-run-out-of-emergency-funds-to-help-worst-cases-9239766.html>
- <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/blog/axe-the-bedroom-tax-one-year-on>

The third report of the **Real Life Reform** study into the impact of welfare reforms on claimants found the average debt of participants is now £2,943, up 28% since the last report.

- http://www.lyha.co.uk/documents/Real_Life_Report_No3_March2014.pdf
- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/average-debt-of-welfare-reform-hit-tenant-around-%C2%A33000/7002826.article>

Information on the Independent Living Fund is under 'Disability', above.

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