

TheBigSource

March 2014



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

This issue includes: new consultations around childcare and schools; details of an increase to the National Minimum Wage; a fair bit of criticism for the Department for Work and Pensions; bad news for private contractor Atos; worse news for recipients of disability benefits; a controversial new patient database for the NHS; grim new statistics on rough sleeping and suicide; a ban preventing jobless immigrants from claiming Housing Benefit; the Lobbying Bill; and some numbers from the Universal Credit pilot areas. Enjoy!

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

To see past issues visit:

thebiglifegroup.com/tag/big-source/

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CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Children and Families Minister, Edward Timpson has launched a new **Special Educational Needs Champions fund**. The Children and Families Bill will make significant changes to the support available for children with special educational needs and the fund will be used to recruit and train ‘independent supporters’ from voluntary, community and private organisations to help the families of children and young people “get the most out of” the reformed system. Funding applications will go through the Council for Disabled Children.

- <http://www.councilfordisabledchildren.org.uk/news/january-june-2014/government-announcement-on-independent-supporters>
- http://www.learningdisabilitytoday.co.uk/39sen_champions39_fund_set_up_by_children_and_families_minister_25769806088.aspx?CMP=EMCSOCEML657

Two new Practice Guidances from the **court of protection** and the **family division** seek to give ‘greater transparency’ to how the courts work.

- <http://www.familylaw.co.uk/articles/New-Practice-Guidance-to-increase-transparency-170114-963>

The charity Early Education have co-ordinated an open letter warning the government and local authorities against **cuts to early years support**. The letter, signed by a number of academics and campaigners, criticises the “irresponsible” and “damaging” decisions to close more than 500 children’s centres since 2010.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/education/2014/feb/21/early-years-provision-protected-children>

The National Childcare Trust (NCT) are campaigning for **maternity and paternity pay** to rise in-line with inflation and for it to be excluded from the ‘benefit cap’. In a letter to David Cameron, the NCT’s Chief Executive writes that financial anxieties “lead to poorer physical and mental health outcomes for all family members.”

- <http://www.nct.org.uk/press-release/support-nct%E2%80%99s-call-stop-real-terms-cuts-maternity-and-paternity-pay>

Childmind the gap: Reforming childcare to support mothers into work is a new report which “explores the factors behind maternal employment in the UK, and especially the pivotal role of affordable, accessible childcare in supporting mothers who want to work, or to work more, to do so.”

- <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/11899/childmind-the-gap-reforming-childcare-to-support-mothers-into-work>

The DfE and DWP are consulting on **Child poverty: a draft strategy**. They are seeking views from: the voluntary and community sector; local and central government; parents and carers; children and young people; practitioners; representative bodies; academics; and social enterprises on the draft child poverty strategy, which sets out what action the government plans to take from 2014 to 2017 to reduce child poverty.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/child-poverty-a-draft-strategy>
- <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/editorial/child-poverty-%E2%80%93-draft-strategy-launched>

The government have responded to their consultation on **Childcare regulation**. It explains the government’s decisions on the proposals to “simplify the childcare registration system and strengthen the safeguarding and welfare requirements”. The regulations “aim to expand the supply of flexible and affordable childcare provision to meet the needs of working parents, while promoting quality.”

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/cildcare-regulation>

Information on racist bullying in schools is included under 'Education', below.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Simon Hughes MP has replaced Lord McNally as **Minister of State for Justice**; Hughes will step down as Deputy Leader of the Liberal Democrats once a successor is chosen.

- <http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/practice/mcnally-replaced-in-surprise-justice-reshuffle/5039222.article>

DISABILITY

A DWP press release finds **More than 500 disabled people a week supported into work or training**. Since 2011 more than 78,000 disabled people have "either found a job or taken a significant step towards the workplace." The press release does not define 'significant step'. Disability Rights UK urge people not to "celebrate too soon" and suggest the figures could be more accurately communicated.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/more-than-500-disabled-people-a-week-supported-into-work-or-training>
- <http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2014/january/work-programme-still-fails-disabled-people>

The impact of changes to **disability benefits** has been assessed by the Disability Benefits Consortium (DBC). The DWP estimates that nearly half a million disabled people are set to lose either part or all of their payments under planned welfare reforms. The DBC believes this could force more than 50,000 disabled people out of work.

- <http://disabilitybenefitsconsortium.wordpress.com/2013/11/14/over-50000-disabled-people-could-lose-jobs-as-vital-support-is-cut/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-the-pip-assessment-moving-around-activity>

Atos Healthcare will no longer be conducting the controversial **Work Capability Assessments** (WCAs). The private company which has been much criticised for its approach to WCAs has exited their contract early, citing death threats to staff. Disability Rights UK say Atos was "brutal and incompetent in conducting the assessments" and that the system needs an overhaul. Repeat WCAs have been suspended until a replacement contractor can be found.

- <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/5abc8d36-9a28-11e3-8232-00144feab7de.html>
- <http://disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2014/february/atos-lose-wca-contract-our-response>
- <http://www.benefitsandwork.co.uk/news/2645-all-repeat-wca-medicals-to-be-stopped>

Trailblazers, part of the Muscular Dystrophy Campaign, has published **Short-changed** a report on disabled people's experience of retail. It finds a number of significant challenges in physically accessing premises; staff attitudes; and misuse of, or broken, equipment. The Equality Act 2010 makes it illegal to discriminate against disabled people.

- http://www.mdctrailblazers.org/news/1351_high-streets-are-losing-out-on-disabled-shoppers

The National Audit Office has said **Personal Independence Payment** claimants were suffering distress and financial difficulties due to having to wait longer than expected for eligibility assessments. The DWP had made just 16% of its expected number of decisions by the end of October last year.

- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2014/feb/delays-disabled-people%E2%80%99s-benefit-eligibility-tests-causing-distress-a>

DRUGS & ALCOHOL

The Home Office has announced that 'ultra-cheap' **alcohol discounts** will be banned in England and Wales from the 6th of April. A 440ml can of 5% beer will have a minimum

price of 50p. A standard bottle of 40% vodka could not be sold for less than £10.16 and a bottle of wine would retail for at least £2.24. Critics have argued that the new legislation will affect only 1% of sales.

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/277201/BelowCostSalesAlcohol.pdf
- www.parliament.uk/briefing-papers/SN05021.pdf
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-26040550>

EMPLOYMENT

The **National Minimum Wage** (NMW) will rise in October to £6.50 an hour for workers aged 21 and over, up from £6.31. The general secretary of the Unite union said "This increase is a slap in the face for low paid workers... An hourly rise of 19p for adults is an insult when the minimum cost of living has increased by a staggering 25% since the beginning of the economic crisis."

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-26355725>

Employers who do not pay their workers the NMW will face an increased penalty of up to £20,000. Currently employers that break NMW law must pay the unpaid wages plus a financial penalty calculated as 50% of the total underpayment (up to £5,000) for all workers found to be underpaid.

- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2014/jan/rogue-employers-face-fines-%C2%A320000-minimum-wage-crackdown>

The DWP have attempted to summarise their **Back to Work** schemes in a new guidance document for JSA claimants. The document also details expectations on claimants and, helpfully, which sanctions people may face.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jobseekers-allowance-back-to-work-schemes>

Inclusion have analysed the DWP's **Work Programme** performance statistics for June 2011-September 2013. It finds the DWP

exceeding their own minimum targets for JSA claimants but 'falling significantly short' for people on ESA. The bulletin criticises the minimum performance measure and suggests an improved Job Outcome Measure to better reflect impact on claimants.

- <http://us5.campaign-archive2.com/?u=c32612be25d976fb2af6c77ed&id=d4400ead1b&e=3de190f1c0>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/work-programme-statistics--2>

The Third Sector Research Centre have published **Support for all in the UK Work Programme?** It accused the Work Programme (WP) of 'creaming' and 'parking' claimants. 'Creaming' refers to giving preference to easier-to-serve claimants whilst 'parking' refers to harder-to-serve clients. The report finds the practices 'widespread and systematically embedded' in the WP. The report blames a combination of intense cost-pressures and 'extremely ambitious performance targets', alongside 'overly diverse claimant groups and inadequately calibrated payment levels'.

- <http://www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tsrc/documents/tsrc/working-papers/working-paper-115.pdf>
- <http://www.gmcvo.org.uk/creaming-and-parking-common-practices-work-programme>

One in three adverts on the DWP's **Universal Jobmatch** website could be fake, according to a Labour MP. DWP confirmed it was investigating 179 employers for potentially breaching the rules on the site. National fraud investigators are examining allegations of a scam in the North West of England in which job seekers responding to adverts were asked to hand over £65 for background criminal checks for positions which did not exist.

- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/fraud-investigators-called-in-as-a-third-of-a-million-vacancies-listed-on-governments-jobmatch-site-are-claimed-to-be-fake-9171582.html>

- <http://www.frankfield.co.uk/latest-news/articles/news.aspx?p=102661>

The Work and Pensions Select Committee has published **The role of Jobcentre Plus in the reformed welfare system**. It suggests that Jobcentre Plus staff have referred many claimants for a sanction inappropriately. The report calls for a broader independent review of the operation of conditionality and sanctioning and for Jobcentres to be incentivised to get people into work, not just off benefits.

- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/work-and-pensions-committee/news/jcp-rpt/>
- <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pages/policy-bulletin.html>
- <http://www.policyexchange.org.uk/publications/category/item/smarter-sanctions-sorting-out-the-system>

Apprenticeships are dominated by older workers and existing employees, according to the Work Foundation. Liam Byrne, Shadow Minister for Universities, Science and Skills blamed the framework in place for the imbalance: ‘the skill system is not flexible enough to adapt and get young, unemployed people into the workforce.’

- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2014/mar/apprenticeships-dominated-older-workers-and-existing-employees-accord>
- <http://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/hro/news/1142477/apprenticeships-dominated-workers-existing-employees-foundation-expert>

Information on mental health at work is under ‘Mental Health’, below.

HEALTH

The government announced ‘**care.data**’, a new single database of all English medical data. Advocates say that sharing information will make medical advances easier and ultimately save lives but privacy experts warn there will be no way for the public to work out

who has their medical records or to what use their data will be put. The government is yet to publish specific guidelines for how the information will be shared and regulated.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/19/nhs-patient-data-available-companies-buy>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-26259101>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/21/nhs-plan-share-medical-data-save-lives>

The Royal College of General Practitioners has said a **reallocation of NHS resources** from GPs to hospitals was responsible for a "crisis" which will see 34 million patients fail to get an appointment in 2014. GPs are carrying out around 10% more consultations since 2009 while NHS spending on GPs has fallen by £9bn in real terms since 2005.

- <http://www.rcgp.org.uk/news/2014/february/34m-patients-will-fail-to-get-appointment-with-a-gp-in-2014.aspx>
- <http://www.politics.co.uk/news/2014/02/23/an-appeal-for-help-funding-cuts-pushing-gps-into-crisis>

The Difference it Makes: Putting Human Rights at the Heart of Health and Social Care from the British Institute of Human Rights shows how human rights can be practically applied to work in health and social care. It includes examples from Blackburn with Darwen, Manchester, Merseyside and Lancashire.

- <http://www.bihhr.org.uk/documents/guides/the-difference-it-makes-putting-human-rights-the-heart-of-health-and-social-care>
- <http://www.vsnw.org.uk/news/view/2014-01-14-the-difference-it-makes-putting-human-rights-at-the-heart-of-health-and-social-care>

The Point of Care Foundation have published **Staff Care: how to engage staff in the NHS and why it matters**. The Foundation calls on organisations to increase staff engagement at both strategic and operational levels by making support for staff “central to their strategies to improve patient care, productivity

and financial performance.” The report also exposes discrepancies between “what senior managers and staff think and say when it comes to how effectively their organisation supports staff and promotes high quality patient care.”

- <http://www.pointofcarefoundation.org.uk/Downloads/Staff-Report-2014.pdf>
- <http://www.ihm.org.uk/en/about-us/news/index.cfm/detail/staff-care-how-to-engage-staff-in-the-nhs-and-why-it-matters>

The *Social Investigations* blog has published a list of **parliamentary links to private healthcare providers**. Peers and MPs from all three major parties are shown to have financial interests in privatised health. The Conservatives top the chart with at least 63 peers and 61 MPs, including David Cameron, George Osborne and Jeremy Hunt.

- <http://socialinvestigations.blogspot.co.uk/2014/03/compilation-of-parliamentary-financial.html>

HOMELESSNESS

Figures released on Tuesday show that **rough sleeping in England** has risen by 37% since 2010. The official DCLG statistics showed a 5% rise on the previous year. Local authorities reported 2,414 people as sleeping rough on any one night in 2013. The steepest regional rises were seen in the East Midlands and the South East. The report has specific definitions of ‘rough sleeping’.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rough-sleeping-in-england-autumn-2013>
- <http://www.crisis.org.uk/pressreleases.php/589/number-of-rough-sleepers-rises-by-over-a-third-in-three-years>

St Mungo's **Rebuilding Shattered Lives** report shows homeless women are being “failed at a local and national level”. The report highlights problems including separation from children, mental and physical ill health, prison sentences, drug and alcohol use and involvement in prostitution.

- http://www.mungos.org/press_office/1821_new-report-highlights-sad-chronicle-of-missed-opportunities-for-homeless-women

HOUSING

A survey of housing associations by *Inside Housing* found 25 of 26 respondents intend to **increase rents** by 3.7%, the maximum allowed. The other respondent, Merseyside’s First Ark, have said they will raise rents by 3.5%.

- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/finance/majority-of-associations-to-hike-rents-by-maximum/7002013.article>

The DWP has published a new guide for social landlords to help them understand and plan for the direct payment of **housing costs under Universal Credit**.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-and-rented-housing>

The **Tenant Central** scheme started last year to offer advice and training “to equip tenants with the skills to lead change in their communities.” They offer free events covering different aspects of Tenant Empowerment and Involvement. The scheme offers advice and guidance online and is hosting events around the UK throughout 2014.

- <http://www.tenantcentral.org.uk/>

The IPPR have published **Back to Rising Damp? Addressing housing quality in the private rented sector**. It “explores the nature of the private rented sector as it exists today, looking at changing patterns of occupancy and the characteristics of the sector itself. It explores the growth of the housing benefit submarket, and what the tenure means for tenants themselves and the neighbourhoods that private rented housing helps to shape.”

- <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/11767/back-to-rising-damp-addressing-housing-quality-in-the-private-rented-sector>

A number of local authorities have seen dramatic reductions in the length of their **council house waiting lists**. An article in *The Guardian* finds that this is due to councils deeming huge numbers of people ineligible and removing them from their lists.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/money/2014/feb/01/council-house-waiting-lists-slashed>

IMMIGRATION

Writing in the *Daily Mail*, Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith and Home Secretary Theresa May have said they will **ban jobless immigrants from claiming Housing Benefit** from April 2014. Opinion polls show voters rank immigration as one of their biggest worries, though business leaders have cautioned that they have trouble finding low-skilled workers to do low wage jobs of the kind “often filled by migrants.”

- <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2542352/Exclusive-Ministers-new-crackdown-Housing-benefit-ban-jobless-migrants.html>
- <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/01/20/uk-britain-eu-welfare-idUKBREA0J0MO20140120>

The IPPR have published **In transition: Romanian and Bulgarian migration to the UK**. The report identifies good practice in economic and social inclusion and states that the UK’s labour market is more appealing to migrants than its welfare system. It criticises the government for failing to prepare for likely challenges, confusing the public and alienating potential allies in Europe. The report makes a number of recommendations for how policy-makers can better approach the lifting of restrictions on A2 citizens.

- <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/11688/in-transition-romanian-and-bulgarian-migration-to-the-uk>

Also from the IPPR is **A fair deal on migration for the UK**. The report recommends that “progressive arguments move away from focusing on the net economic benefits of migration, and recognise

that the varied economic, social and cultural impacts of migration are such that many British people feel that it disadvantages them and harms their communities.”

- <http://www.ippr.org/publication/55/11970/a-fair-deal-on-migration-for-the-uk>

Immigration minister Mark Harper has resigned from the government after it emerged his cleaner did not have permission to work in the UK. Conservative James Brokenshire has been appointed to replace him (Mark Harper, not the cleaner).

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-26101442>

Information on racist bullying in schools is included under ‘Schools’, below.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

According to new research by the treasurer of Newcastle City Council, the most deprived communities in the country are bearing the brunt of government **cuts to local authority budgets**. Councils in the 10 most deprived areas of England are seeing cuts averaging 25.3%, compared with 2.54% in the 10 least deprived areas. Liverpool City Council, who have the highest ‘deprivation score’, are facing cuts of 27.1%.

- <http://theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/30/local-government-cuts-poorest-areas>

Salford City Council announced 300 **job losses and significant cuts** to care services to help save £25m. Among the departments chosen for major budget reductions are children’s services which will lose £5.6m - nearly 10% of its spending - and adult services which faces a similar percentage reduction with £4.7m coming from its budget.

- www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-25635429
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-manchester-25635429>

The Council of Europe said cuts to local authorities mean the UK is not compliant with the European charter of local self-government. It found councils severely restricted in their ability to provide "essential public services", including health, social and elderly care.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/mar/07/britain-european-austerity-cuts-councils-local-authorities>
- <http://www.publicfinance.co.uk/news/2014/03/schied-town-halls-from-austerity-says-council-of-europe/>

MENTAL HEALTH

The ONS' **Suicides in the United Kingdom 2012** show that male suicide rates are more than three times higher than females and the highest suicide rate was among men aged 40 to 44. In 2012 the suicide rate in England was highest in the north west at 12.4 deaths per 100,000 and lowest in London at 8.7 per 100,000. 5,981 suicides were reported in 2012, 64 fewer than in 2011.

- <http://www.nhs.uk/news/2014/02February/Pages/UKs-suicide-rate-highest-among-middle-aged-men.aspx>
- <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/subnational-health4/suicides-in-the-united-kingdom/2012/stb-uk-suicides-2012.html>
- <http://www.samaritans.org/news/samaritans-comment-2012-office-national-statistics-suicide-figures>

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's **Mental Health and Work: The United Kingdom** finds that mental health issues cost the UK around £70bn every year (roughly 4.5% of GDP) in lost productivity at work, benefit payments and health care expenditure. The report says "Better policies and practices by employers and the health system are needed to help people deal with mental health issues and get back to work."

- <http://www.oecd.org/health/uk-needs-to-tackle-high-cost-of-mental-ill-health.htm>

Sean Duggan, the chief executive for the Centre for Mental Health believes **mental health services** are under threat from financial pressures.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/mar/02/mental-health-cuts-psychiatric-illness>

The **Street Triage Scheme**, recently rolled out by 10 police forces (see December's *Big Source*) was criticised in a blog post by Inspector Michael Brown, 'the mental health cop'. He wondered whether "available, accessible and responsive health services could potentially achieve the same thing" at less cost. The blog, along with Mr Brown's Twitter account, was closed down by West Midlands Police.

- <http://blogs.spectator.co.uk/nick-cohen/2014/02/why-the-police-silenced-one-of-the-best-officers-in-britain/>
- <http://libcom.org/blog/psychoplice-order-04012014>

The **Closing the Gap** mental health action plan, published by the government, outlines plans for "a high-level scoping study to examine evidence for both physical and mental health services focused on the 15 to 24 age group."

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-priorities-for-change>
- <http://www.cypnow.co.uk/cyp/news/1141712/study-raises-prospect-youth-mental-health-service>

South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust have released a mobile phone 'app' to help **military veterans** understand their mental health. The app has information on 11 mental health problems commonly affecting service personnel, including anxiety, post traumatic stress and depression.

- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-22521527>

POVERTY

The DWP plans to cut its cash allocation to **local authority welfare assistance schemes**. The £180m-a-year fund provides emergency help for low-income families and replaced the social fund last April. According to *The Guardian*, “although the DWP had always made it clear there were no guarantees of funding after 2014-15, it had promised to review the progress of the schemes before taking a decision on future funding.”

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/change-in-spending-power>
- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/03/government-stops-emergency-funds-low-income-families>

Households below a minimum income standard: 2008/9 to 2011/12 from the JRF shows the number of households living on incomes below an adequate standard of living has increased by a fifth (900,000) in three years. 4.7 million households are now living below what the JRF call “a minimum socially acceptable standard of living in the UK.”

- <http://www.jrf.org.uk/publications/households-below-minimum-income-standard>

Manchester City Council are inviting voluntary and third sector groups to bid for a share of a new £250,000 **fund to combat food poverty** in the city. Successful groups will meet immediate food needs or provide other essentials for vulnerable residents. Organisations can bid for funds to help maintain existing schemes, or to provide new support.

- <http://manchester.gov.uk/foodpovertyfund>

SCHOOLS

DfE have published **Universal infant free school meals**. From September 2014 all

pupils in reception, year 1 and year 2 in state-funded schools, including free-schools, in England will be eligible for free school meals. Existing entitlements to free school meals for disadvantaged pupils in nursery classes and at key stages 2-4 will continue. In the 2014-15 academic year, schools will be paid funding at a flat rate of £2.30 for each meal taken by newly eligible pupils. Additional one-off funding will be provided in the 2014 to 2015 financial year to small schools (with up to 150 pupils) to help with transitional costs.

- https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/287804/UIFSM_DEPARTMENTAL_ADVICE.pdf

DfE are consulting on **Management of independent schools: proposed regulations**. The consultation involves proposals to regulate independent schools, including academies and free schools, in England. The consultation is open until the 10th of April.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/management-of-independent-schools-proposed-regulations>

DfE are also consulting on **Revised standards for food in schools**. The standards have been drawn up by the authors of ‘The school food plan’, and aim to clarify the existing standards and make them easier for schools to use.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/revised-standards-for-food-in-schools--2>

Demos’ **A tale of two classrooms** finds the attainment gap between poorer and wealthier pupils increasing in half of local authorities. It analyses GCSE results from 2012/13 and reveals a 0.3% increase in the national attainment gap, which now stands at 26.7%. When London schools are excluded, the gap jumps to 29.5%. The figure represents the difference in attainment between pupils who receive free school meals and their peers.

- http://www.demos.co.uk/press_releases/ataleof-twoclassroomsinlondonresultsskewnationalpictureofeducationalinequalityontherise

CoDE's **How are ethnic inequalities in education changing?** uses data from the 1991, 2001 and 2011 Censuses to provide an overview of the educational attainment of ethnic groups in England and Wales and to examine how the educational attainment of adults has changed over time.

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

ChildLine's report **Can I tell you something?** Finds a 69% increase in children experiencing racist bullying, and an increase in 'cyberbullying'. A common theme was for young people to be called a "terrorist" or a "bomber", and to "go back to where they came from". The report found that the majority of racist bullying affecting children was happening at school and many of those calling ChildLine say teachers ignore the situation or make it worse with 'clumsy interventions'. *The Independent* link this increase to growing xenophobia in public discourse.

- https://www.nspcc.org.uk/news-and-views/latest-news/2014/childline-report/can-i-tell-you-something_wda100359.html
- <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/education/education-news/racist-bullying-farright-agenda-on-immigration-being-taken-into-classrooms-9045148.html>

TAX

Analysis of proposed '**tax giveaways**' has led the Resolution Foundation to urge politicians not to mis-represent tax breaks. Around 3 million people will be moving onto Universal Credit (UC) in the next parliament and UC is calculated on post-tax income. If tax breaks mean income rises, the UC award will fall correspondingly. The Foundation say, "Tax-cuts are often presented as if they are targeted at 'hard-pressed working families' yet these are precisely the households who are

most likely to miss out on most of the gains arising from tax cuts in the next Parliament."

- <http://www.resolutionfoundation.org/press/giveaways/>

THIRD SECTOR

The **Lobbying Bill** has passed and will be in force from September. The Bill aims to tighten regulation on campaign spending during election periods. The bill passed despite fierce criticism from a wide variety of charities, unions and third sector groups. The Commission has already said that the Bill would create "significant regulatory uncertainty for large and small organisations that campaign on, or even discuss, public policy issues before the next general election and imposes significant new burdens on such organisations".

- <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2013-14/transparencyoflobbyingnonpartycampaigningandtradeunionadministration.html>
- <http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/our-work/our-views/parliamentary-briefings/transparency-of-lobbying,-non-party-campaigning-and-trade-union-administration-bill>
- <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25934660>
- <http://www.nuj.org.uk/news/disastrous-lobbying-bill-receives-royal-assent/>

The Charity Commission is to work with the Electoral Commission to update its guidance on charities, elections and referendums, to explain the changes introduced by the Lobbying Bill.

- http://civilsociety.co.uk/governance/news/content/16805/charity_commission_to_update_guidance_on_political_campaigning

The CSJ have published **Something's Got to Give** which outlines how small charities are suffering disproportionately with wealth in the sector concentrated in a small number of larger charities. 1 in 5 of the charities polled said that they were at risk of closure. The CSJ

say that this “Is partly because charitable giving remains low and while the Government has pioneered some initiatives, many of these are yet to bear full fruit.”

- <http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/publications/something%27s-got-to-give>

A Conservative MP has complained to the Charity Commission about how a childcare charity uses its **Twitter** account. Mr Wilson accused The Family and Childcare Trust of implicitly endorsing the Labour Party by using the ‘hashtags’ *#childcarecrisis* and *#childcarecrunch*, both of which had also been used by Labour. Hashtags are used to link individual ‘tweets’ to a wider conversation. The Commission said that it is “not clear that the charity has acted contrary to our guidance on campaigning and political activity”.

- http://www.civilsociety.co.uk/governance/news/content/16703/mp_update_charity_commission_campaigning_guidance_to_include_social_media

VICTIM SUPPORT

The government has announced a new fund of £500,000 to help male victims of **sexual abuse**. The crime survey for England and Wales estimates that there are as many as 72,000 male victims of sexual offences every year, whether they are reported to the police or not. The launch of the fund comes as the justice ministry starts a social media *#breakthesilence* campaign to encourage male victims to speak about their experiences.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/500000-to-help-break-the-silence-for-male-rape-victims>
- <http://theguardian.com/society/2014/feb/13/uk-fund-male-victims-rape-sexual-abuse>

WELFARE REFORM & BENEFITS

The statistics for **Universal Credit** claimants (UC) in ‘pathfinder’ areas have been published by the DWP. The figures showed that of the 2,000 people starting on UC, three in four of the applicants to make claims

between April and October were under 25 years old and two-thirds were male. Ashton-under-Lyne, Oldham, Warrington and Wigan are among the pathfinder areas. UC is only currently being paid to applicants with ‘simple’ cases – new claimants, who are single, non-home owning, without children and without disabilities.

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/universal-credit-pathfinder-statistics-apr-2013-to-30-sept-2013>
- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2013/dec/universal-credit-pathfinder-evaluation-interim-results-published>
- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/dwp-reveals-universal-credit-numbers/6529782.article>

Further IT problems mean further delays for UC’s national rollout. A spokesperson for the DWP said the rollout plans have not changed since “last month”.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/society/2014/jan/07/benefits-scheme-universal-credit-delays>

The CIPD has released **Making work pay: Implementing Universal Credit**. It looks at awareness and attitudes of job seekers on the move to UC, as well as their opportunities to transition from benefits to employment. The report suggests four key steps to policy makers on how they might better assist a smooth transition to UC for job seekers: Communication, Education, Co-ordination and improvements to ‘in-work conditionality’.

- <http://www.cipd.co.uk/hr-resources/research/making-work-pay-universal-credit.aspx>
- <http://www.cesi.org.uk/social-inclusion-news/2014/jan/cipd-research-outlines-key-steps-%E2%80%9Emaking-work-pay%E2%80%99-universal-credit-i>

Up to 13,000 people affected by the **bedroom tax** may be owed money by the DWP. An error in the legislation has left thousands of social tenants exempt from the policy. The majority of long-term claimants who have lived at one address since 1996 should not have

been affected and may be due a refund of housing benefit reduction. People who believe they have been affected are being urged to write to their local authority and template letters have been made available. Lord Freud, the minister for welfare reform said "The housing benefit regulations will be amended in March 2014 to ensure that all working-age social sector tenants who underoccupy their homes are subject to a reduction in their eligible rent."

- <http://www.theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/jan/09/bedroom-tax-error-explained-housing-benefit>
- <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/7001671.article>
- <http://theguardian.com/housing-network/2014/feb/06/bedroom-tax-loophole-guide-councils-housing-associations>

The UN's special rapporteur on housing, who visited the UK last year to review the '**bedroom tax**', has published her report. She echoes her earlier call for the policy to be suspended and reviewed. The report has been dismissed by Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith as "utterly ridiculous" and by Housing Minister Kris Hopkins as a "misleading Marxist diatribe".

- www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/RegularSessions/Session25/Documents/A_HRC_25_54_Add.2_ENG.DOC
- <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2551114/Ministers-condemn-UN-inspector-reveals-report-slamming-Governments-housing-welfare-policies.html>
- <http://theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/feb/04/marxist-diatribe-uk-housing-market>

The **Council Tax Reduction** schemes that replaced Council Tax Benefit have not been renewed by the government. A survey of local authorities by the JRF found that more than a quarter of a million working-age households will see bills rise by an average of £78 a year, taking the amount of yearly council tax that they will have to pay to £176.

- <http://theguardian.com/money/2014/jan/30/poor-est-households-england-council-tax-rise>

The DWP will be piloting an awareness campaign to curb **benefit fraud**. The campaign will include letters to claimants encouraging them to declare changes of circumstance and posters encouraging people to report suspected benefit fraud. The BBC notes: "At £1.6bn, overpayments of benefits because of an error by claimants was higher last year than the £1.2bn cost of deliberate benefit fraud." Pilot areas include Blackpool and Blackburn.

- <http://bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-25576588>

Two legal challenges to the '**bedroom tax**' and **benefit cap** were unsuccessful in court. The challenge to the bedroom tax was initiated by two people with disabilities who argue that their second bedroom is essential and was backed by the Equality and Human Rights Commission. Campaigners against the benefit cap say the restrictions are having a particularly harsh impact on women fleeing domestic violence, and on their children.

- <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/feb/21/welfare-reforms-appeal-challenges-benefits-cap-bedroom-tax>
- <http://disabilityrightsuk.org/news/2014/february/benefits-cap-case-fails-court-appeal>

Chancellor George Osborne appeared on the *Today* programme to declare that "£12bn of further **welfare cuts** are needed in the first two years of the next Parliament." The only example Osborne gave of what these cuts might look like was to housing benefit for the under-25s. Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith has accused his colleague of "hacking at the same people". The Treasury currently spends £1.9bn on housing benefit for 350,000 people under 25, of whom around half have dependent children.

- www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/01/osborne-promises-12bn-more-welfare-cuts-where-will-his-axe-fall
- <http://www.thetimes.co.uk/tto/news/politics/article3967750.ece>

- <http://www.theguardian.com/politics/2014/jan/06/george-osborne-britain-cuts-austerity>

Newcastle City Council have examined the local **impact of welfare reform**. They estimate that the total benefits lost to Newcastle annually from 2011 to 2017 will be around £115m. The council surveyed a selection of residents: 33% expect their finances to get worse in the next 12 months; and two thirds said they had been negatively affected by the current economic climate. As a result of the changes, the council is considering “re-designating” whole tower blocks of two-bedroom flats as one-bedroom properties. The North East is thought to be particularly hard-hit by current reforms.

MPs have voted 125 to 2 in favour of a national investigation into “the impact of the Government’s welfare reforms on the incidence of poverty.”

- <http://www.newcastle.gov.uk/news-story/helping-people-affected-welfare-changes>
- <http://www.chroniclive.co.uk/news/north-east-news/hidden-costs-welfare-reforms-revealed-6478554>
- <http://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/backbench-business-committee/news/mps-debate-welfare-reforms-and-poverty/>

The NCVO are conducting their own research on the impact of welfare reform. The review will take evidence from charities and is intended to inform thinking on any future changes to welfare policy. NCVO will also “create resources aimed at helping charities understand the multiple welfare changes and the different ways in which beneficiaries may be affected”. The call for evidence is open until the 31st of March 2014.

- <http://www.manchestercommunitycentral.org/news/welfare-reform-research-will-inform-future-changes>

IPPR’s **On the front foot: Designing a welfare cap that reforms social security** agrees with the need to control social security spending but contests the cause of rising

expenditure and sets out a strategy for reform. In particular, the report says spending “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>

nef and Oxfam have launched **Towards a New Social Settlement**. The project “aims to encourage visionary conversations about the welfare system.”

- <http://www.neweconomics.org/blog/entry/towards-a-new-social-settlement>

Information on disability benefits is included under ‘Disability’, above.

Information on housing payments is included under ‘Housing’, above.

Information on the Work Programme is under ‘Employment’, above.

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