

SPEAKING UP for the east of england

Welcome to a **Special edition of the East of England Local Government Association Social Policy Bulletin**, the regional one stop monthly publication that keeps you informed about the key issues and developments impacting on the social policy agenda.

This special edition provides an “at a glance” summary of the social policy outlined in the full coalition agreement published yesterday (20 May 2010). The full 34-page document, is available at http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/media/409088/pfq_coalition.pdf, and forms the basis for the Conservative-Liberal Democrat governing partnership.

Children, families and education

- Maintain the goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020.
- A range of measures to support the neediest families including “taking Sure Start back to its original purpose of early intervention”, increasing its focus on those most in need, providing peripatetic outreach services and investigating a new approach to helping families with multiple problems.
- Action to protect children from excessive commercialisation and premature sexualisation, including a crack down on irresponsible advertising and marketing.
- Over 15 commitments around schools including, parents, teachers and charities to be encouraged to set up their own schools, a pledge to give teachers "the powers they need" to keep order, greater freedom over the curriculum and flexibility in the exams systems, inspections to be targeted on failing schools, a pupil premium for disadvantaged children and various measures to improve the quality of the teaching profession.
- Policy on higher and further education includes aspirations such as fostering stronger links between universities, colleges and industry through, for example, the creation of apprenticeships, internships, work pairings, and college and workplace training places.

Civil liberties and equality

- Introduce a freedom bill.
- Scrap ID card scheme and register, Contact Point database, halt next generation of biometric passports and outlaw fingerprinting of children at school without parents' permission.
- Changes to the DNA database, restore rights of non-violent protest, regulate CCTV and introduce safeguards against misuse of anti-terrorism legislation.

- New mechanism to prevent proliferation of unnecessary new criminal offences.
- Set up commission to "investigate the creation of a British bill of rights that incorporates and builds on all our obligations under the European convention on human rights".
- Extend right to request flexible working to all employees.
- Fair pay review in public sector to implement "20 times" pay multiple.
- Internships for underrepresented minorities in every Whitehall department and funding a targeted national enterprise mentoring scheme for BAME people who want to start a business.
- Promote equal pay and take a range of measures to end discrimination in the workplace.

Communities, local government and social action

- Just under 30 commitments ranging across council finance, housing, planning, and volunteering to "shift power from Westminster" by devolving decision-making to local councils, communities and individuals, and encouraging social action to help people "come together to improve their communities".
- Decisions on where and how many homes are built passed to local councils, who will also have new powers to stop "garden grabbing" – the practice whereby developers build homes in large gardens attached to suburban houses. In rural areas farmers will be able to convert existing buildings into social housing, while communities will be able to form trusts to make it simpler for communities to provide homes for local people.
- A freeze on council tax "for at least one year".
- Public sector workers will have the right to form co-ops and social enterprises to "become their own boss" and "take over" the services they deliver.
- "A new generation of community organisers" will be trained to support social action in deprived communities. A National Citizen Service will be introduced for 16-year-olds "to give them a chance to develop the skills needed to be active and responsible citizens, mix with people from different backgrounds and start getting involved in their communities". A further range of measures to encourage volunteering and involvement in social action, including launching a national day to celebrate and encourage social action.

Crime, Policing and Justice

- Oblige the police to publish detailed local crime data statistics every month, so the public can get proper information about crime in their neighbourhoods and hold the police to account for their performance.
- Promote better recording of hate crimes against disabled, homosexual and transgender people, which are frequently not centrally recorded.

- Review alcohol taxation and pricing to ensure it tackles binge drinking without unfairly penalising responsible drinkers, pubs and important local industries and allow councils and the police to shut down permanently any shop or bar found to be persistently selling alcohol to children.
- A range of measures around sentencing and rehabilitation including the introduction of a 'rehabilitation revolution' that will pay independent providers to reduce reoffending.
- Consider how to use proceeds from the Victim Surcharge to deliver up to 15 new rape crisis centres, and give existing rape crisis centres stable, long-term funding.
- Carry out a fundamental review of Legal Aid to make it work more efficiently.
- Introduce effective measures to tackle anti-social behaviour and low-level crime, including forms of restorative justice such as Neighbourhood Justice Panels.

Health, social care and disability

- Guarantee year-on-year real-terms increases in health spending and end to top-down reorganisations of the NHS; cut by a third the cost of NHS administration and transfer these savings to frontline services.
- "Significant" cuts in the number of health quangos but strengthened role for Care Quality Commission and Monitor, the foundation trust regulator.
- Renegotiate the GP contract but give more powers to GPs as patients' expert guides; develop a 24/7 urgent care service in England, including out-of-hours services. Provide GPs with greater incentives to tackle public health problems
- Seek to stop foreign health professionals from working in the NHS unless they have passed "robust" language and competence tests.
- Introduce directly elected members of primary care trust boards to provide a stronger voice for patients locally.
- Establish a commission on long-term care, break down barriers between health and social care funding, extend personal budgets for social care and introduce direct payments for carers and improve access to respite care.
- Help the elderly live at home for longer through home adaptations and community support programmes.
- Prioritise dementia research.
- Reform Access to Work programme, so disabled people can apply for jobs with funding already secured for any adaptations and equipment they will need.

Immigration

- Annual limit on number of non-EU economic migrants.

- End detention of children for immigration purposes.
- Create border police force as part of Serious Organised Crime Agency.
- New measures to minimise abuse of student visas.
- Citizens from any new EU member states to be banned from working in UK for a transitional period.
- Halt deportation of asylum seekers who have fled to the UK because their sexual orientation or gender identification put them at risk.

Jobs and Welfare

- End all existing welfare to work programmes and create a single welfare to work programme to help all unemployed people get back into work. Jobseeker's Allowance claimants facing the most significant barriers to work are referred to the new welfare to work programme immediately and those under 25 are referred to the programme after a maximum of six months.
- Ensure that receipt of benefits for those able to work is conditional on their willingness to work, re-assess all current claimants of Incapacity Benefit for their readiness to work and investigate how to simplify the benefit system in order to improve incentives to work.
- Support would-be entrepreneurs through a new programme – Work for Yourself – which will give the unemployed access to business mentors and start-up loans.
- Offer pre-employment training and work placements for unemployed people and develop local Work Clubs – places where unemployed people can gather to exchange skills, find opportunities, make contacts and provide mutual support

Older people

- Protect key benefits for older people such as the winter fuel allowance, free TV licences, free bus travel, and free eye tests and prescriptions.
- Various measures around pensions, including phasing out the default retirement age and a review to set the date at which the state pension age starts to rise to 66, restoring the earnings link for the basic state pension from April 2011 and exploring the potential to give people greater flexibility in accessing part of their personal pension fund early.

How to register

You can register to receive this resource by emailing Hannah.shah@eelga.gov.uk

Tell us what you think

Please contact Hannah Shah (Hannah.shah@eelga.gov.uk) with your comments and feedback on the Social Policy Bulletin.