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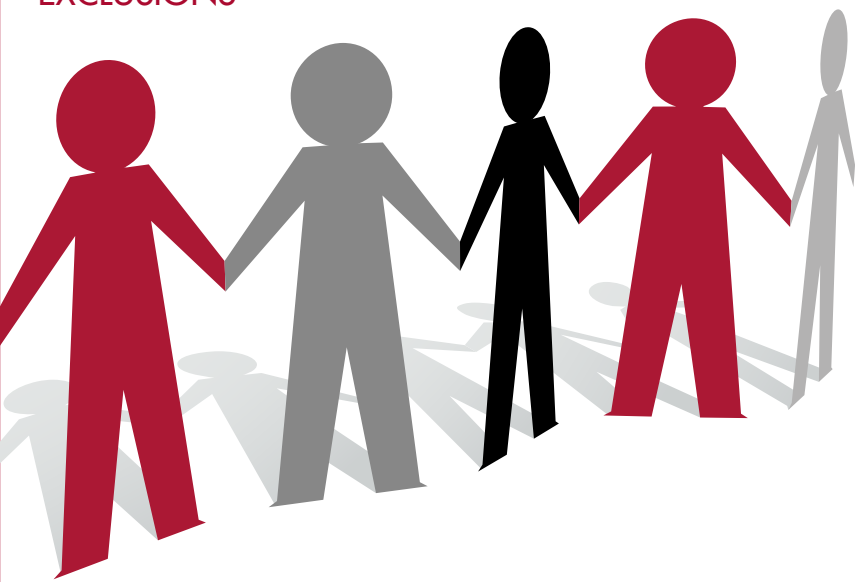
WITHIN REACH

THE NEW POLITICS OF MULTIPLE NEEDS AND EXCLUSIONS



Fabian Ideas 636

Edited by Ed Wallis and Oliver Hilbery

FABIAN
SOCIETY

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Within Reach

The new politics of multiple needs and exclusions

Edited by Ed Wallis
and Oliver Hilbery

Project partners

Supported by:

CALOUSTE GULBENKIAN FOUNDATION

About the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation is an international charitable foundation with cultural, educational, social and scientific interests. The UK Branch aspires to bring about long-term improvements in well-being, particularly for the most vulnerable, by creating connections across boundaries (national borders, communities, disciplines and sectors) which deliver social, cultural and environmental value. www.gulbenkian.org.uk

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MEAM Making Every Adult Matter

About the Making Every Adult Matter coalition

Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) is a coalition of four national charities – Clinks, DrugScope, Homeless Link and Mind – formed to influence policy and services for adults with multiple needs and exclusions. Together, the charities represent over 1600 frontline organisations working in the criminal justice, drug and alcohol treatment homelessness and mental health sectors.

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CONTENTS

Foreword ix
Andrew Barnett

Introduction 1
Ed Wallis and Oliver Hilbery

1. Focusing on the Person 5
Lisa Nandy MP

2. Independence not Inclusion: A liberal approach to disadvantage 13
Richard Reeves

3. The Coalition and Social Justice 21
Christian Guy

4. Blaming the Pilot 29
Lord Michael Bichard

5. The Hardest to Reach: Insights from an evidence base 35
Julia Unwin

6. A Localist Revolution 41
Simon Parker

7. Making the Case for Supporting the Most Vulnerable 47
Deborah Mattinson

FOREWORD

Remedying and preventing social injustice has been central to the work of the UK Branch of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation during its nearly 60 years of existence. We have a history of enabling long-term improvements in wellbeing, particularly for the most vulnerable and have sought to do so by creating connections across boundaries – sectoral, disciplinary and departmental among others – thereby delivering enhanced social value.

Convening those who might not otherwise come together has been core to our work for many years which is why in 2008 we helped to establish the Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) coalition to seek more effective solutions for the problems faced by adults with multiple needs.

Since then the environment surrounding multiple needs has seen a dramatic change, with greater interest from a range of stakeholders, change to policy and commissioning, and welfare and justice reform all having an impact on this group. Those in national and local government are aware of the pitfalls of siloed decision making, just as those on the frontline do not always feel empowered to work in a holistic way. While service providers in local areas can and do attempt meaningful collaboration to improve the experience of their beneficiaries, the process of collaboration can often be

hindered by structural barriers, which is why coordination across national government departments is so crucial.

At all levels, collaboration relies on connections between people. Person-centred, holistic approaches to support can only be achieved if an individual's network of friends and family are considered and well-utilised, just as cross-government working can only be achieved if officials understand each other's positions and aims. We seek to focus on individuals through all of our work and welcome the concept of the 'relational state' in providing more human responses to need.

As we draw closer to the 2015 election, we hope to see a paradigmatic shift towards collaboration as the new 'normal' at all levels, intelligent commissioning for multiple needs, and person-centred approaches which empower people to fulfil their potential. This is a mission for the Foundation but also one to which I have been personally committed as I have been engaged in these issues for over 25 years. We are determined that individuals with complex and multiple needs are afforded the support they need and included properly in every aspect of social and cultural life.

Andrew Barnett
Director, Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation UK Branch

INTRODUCTION

Ed Wallis and Oliver Hilbery

Across the country there is a small group of people who face multiple problems such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental health problems and offending. They slip between the cracks of mainstream public services and they fall out of a political debate that is unrelentingly focused on majoritarian concerns.

Something fundamental needs to change. And over the last 10 years, politicians, policymakers and frontline agencies have all come to the same broad conclusion: that our traditional 'silo' service responses simply don't work for people with multiple needs. In fact they waste money and they waste people's potential.

But recognising the problem is not the same as being willing to fix it. As frontline workers, commissioners, policymakers, organisations, institutions, politicians, we have grown used to the uncoordinated nature of our public services. And each and every day, funding mechanisms, strategy, targets, organisational cultures and professional boundaries push us back towards ways of working that we know all too well are ineffective.

This collection showcases the developing political ideas about how to tackle this problem and considers whether they can create the change we need to see for the most vulnerable. There are those who say that in the current economic situation there is little we can do. But while all contemporary poli-

cymaking operates within a brutal fiscal environment, tight public finances needn't be a block on innovation and change. Large amounts of cash were spent on the problem under the last government and still resulted in insufficient progress, with the money funnelled through a technocratic state that was ultimately too unresponsive to complex human needs. Now there isn't any money anyway, there is, perhaps, an opportunity to rip up the old models and start again.

Many have recognised that public services have become too controlling, doing things to and for people, rather than working with people. To answer this criticism there is an increasing interest in the idea of a 'relational state', which prioritises the strength of human relationships over statistical outcomes and puts people at the centre of public services. As Lisa Nandy argues in chapter one, we are all unique individuals with our own lives, contexts and distinct solutions: we need a richer, more complex approach to public services that works with the 'whole person' to find structural answers to deep-rooted problems.

Localism is another much discussed approach for innovation in public services. Yet it's something that every government talks about but rarely succeeds in delivering. The key thing national government needs to get right to make localism stick is funding: as Simon Parker of the New Local Government Network explains in chapter six, "at present, councils are often asked to make heavy investments in new forms of service provision that primarily save money for other agencies". Parker suggests ways of letting councils share the proceeds of prevention and thus incentivise them to shift shrinking budgets 'upstream'.

Others suggest that public services need to re-consider what it is they are trying to achieve. Richard Reeves argues in chapter two that independence, not inclusion should be the focus of public services and that we should measure

success by the degree to which people have the resources and opportunities to chart their own course in life. In chapter three, Christian Guy assesses progress under the coalition government and concludes that while recent social justice reforms and the Troubled Families programme have made crucial progress in difficult economic and political circumstances, "what we need now is continued commitment to focus on the root causes of social injustice and multi-layered disadvantage from all political parties seeking office in 2015."

There is no doubt that achieving fundamental change in our public services will require big shifts in how we design, fund, organise and run the 'system'. People's problems rarely sit comfortably within one Whitehall department, and this is especially the case for those living chaotic lives. Policymakers have known for some time about the opportunities of greater service co-ordination, which can drive the cost-effective improvements in standards that neither the market nor the central state alone can deliver, but progress has been undoubtedly slow.

Julia Unwin from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation outlines in chapter five how a strengthening evidence base can help achieve change, while Deborah Mattinson from Britain Thinks discusses how the case can be made to the public. Michael Bichard, cross bench peer and former director of the Institute for Government, poses the important question of why change has so far failed to materialise and concludes that it's because we continually see structural rather than systemic reform as the only response to service failure.

Overall, these essays suggest that a commitment to tackle multiple needs and exclusions is shared across the political spectrum. Politicians from all parties can agree there is both a fiscal, social and moral case for providing extra support for severely disadvantaged groups, though they have different

emphases and goals. By focusing on prevention, getting the relationships right, and seeing the whole person, we can provide the kind of support the most vulnerable in our society really need. By taking a long-term approach, with better policy co-ordination across Whitehall and service co-ordination at a local level, we can save money and strengthen communities at the same time.

Hardest to Reach?

The politics of multiple needs and exclusions

Within Reach builds on work published in the run up to the 2010 election by the Fabian Society and Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM). *Hardest to Reach?* was a short collection of commissioned essays exploring the political and policy challenges of multiple needs and exclusions. In it, Iain Duncan Smith outlined the approach that would later guide his role as work and pensions secretary and chair of the Social Justice Cabinet Committee. The pamphlet also featured specially commissioned polling from YouGov, outlined by Peter Kellner, and essays by Hilary Armstrong, Alasdair Murray, David Halpern and Akash Paun.

The pamphlet was published in association with Centre for Social Justice and CentreForum and was supported by the Gulbenkian Foundation. It is available to read in full at:
www.fabians.org.uk/publications/hardest-to-reach

1. FOCUSING ON THE PERSON

Lisa Nandy MP

Putting people back at the centre of our vision for multiple needs would require us to rebuild public services that recognise people as unique individuals with their own lives, contexts and individual solutions. This is more than a reheated version of a personalisation agenda that created choice between different, similarly inflexible services. We know that what sustains people through the most difficult times in their lives are good, strong, healthy relationships. We need a richer, more complex approach that sees the whole person and works with them to find structural answers to deep-rooted problems.

In 1839 Thomas Carlyle said "the condition of the great body of people in a country is the condition of the country itself", and yet 175 years later we still fail too many people with multiple, complex needs who are acutely in need of our help.

Typically we start in the wrong place, with the problem and not with the person themselves. It limits our chances of success from the outset and frequently forces our attention towards the one, most visible problem in isolation from the rest. Too often we label people - as 'homeless' or 'addicts' or 'offenders' for example - when the real problems are about depression, loneliness, lack of resilience, relationship breakdown, institutionalisation and a chronic lack of opportunity. Focusing on the person would tell us

that, but too seldom are our systems shaped around this understanding.

The last Labour government did understand this and created a series of structures to focus on people and their multiple needs – the Supporting People programme, New Deal for Communities and Sure Start. These led to good – sometimes striking – results, but because they were bolted onto mainstream services they proved too easy to dismantle. Meanwhile, mainstream public services continued to find people with multiple needs too difficult to help. Some excluded them from services while others addressed individual problems instead of dealing with the whole person, leading them down the wrong path. According to the charity Centrepoint, 33 per cent of homeless young people have mental health problems, yet only 7 per cent have a formal diagnosis. Instead many teenagers whose mental health problems bring them onto the streets are treated for the more visible problem of drug or alcohol addiction, tackling the symptom and not the cause of the problem.

Putting people back at the centre of our vision would require us to rebuild public services that recognise them as unique individuals with their own lives, contexts and individual solutions. This is more than a reheated version of a personalisation agenda that created choice between different, similarly inflexible services. We need a richer, more complex approach that sees the whole person and works with them to find structural answers to deep-rooted problems. This would allow us to focus on the potential people have instead of the problem they pose.

We know that what sustains people through the most difficult times in their lives are good, strong, healthy relationships with friends and family. Relationships are the thing that both adults and children most value in their lives, but too often the systems we've constructed drive a coach and

horses through those relationships at the time people need them most.

Take nine year old Amy, who I met last year. At six she was removed from home for her own safety and sent to live in foster care, miles from home, because the council would fund a foster placement but not kinship care. The bond with her closest relative, her grandmother, was broken and she had to move school. Needlessly, at the most traumatic time in her life, Amy lost her friends, her home and her family. For another child going to live with foster carers might have been the right decision – children's needs and experiences differ hugely – but the system doesn't always recognise this, to the detriment of far too many children. The same is also true for many adults. When a man's marriage breaks down and he becomes homeless, the last thing that he needs is to be placed out of area in a hostel where he loses contact with his children, his friends and his wider family. When we don't value people's relationships, we make things worse not better.

This goes further than a failure to understand and support the personal relationships that keep people resilient, happy and safe. We also fail to invest in the many and varied relationships between people, the state and civil society. As a result, people's experience of the state and some societal organisations becomes transactional, impersonal and characterised by a uniform approach that works for some, not others. It is a huge mistake and frequently stops people getting the help they need.

Before I was elected to parliament I spent nearly a decade working with and for some of the most vulnerable children in the country. They left me in no doubt that a good relationship with an adult they trusted mattered above all else. When someone listened and understood for the first time, trust was created and lives began to change. Many charities know this well. "No amount of professional help with getting a home

or tackling a drug or drink problem will persuade people to come off the streets if they feel there is no one on the other side who cares if they live or die," said Shaks Ghosh of the charity Crisis over a decade ago.

These relationships can be a lifeline yet we invest relatively little in them. A child like Amy is allocated a social worker whose job it is to understand, guide and support her but policymakers pay scant attention to whether the relationship between them is strong and persists. Most social workers tell a familiar story of spending too much time on paperwork and too little time with children like Amy. The same is true of key workers supporting adults in homelessness, substance misuse, mental health and criminal justice services. For the sake of simple factors like good-quality administrative support, satisfaction is low, burnout is common and turnover is high. As a result Amy has had six social workers over three years, the very people who were supposed to help her have failed and she has been left angry and isolated.

She is not the only one. There are too many people whose experience of the state and civil society is incomprehensible – computer-generated letters churned out by jobcentre plus, navigating the automated tax credit helpline, or the ordeal of repeating personal, painful details to dozens of people in frontline agencies. Others put up with the indignity of countless strangers arriving to wash, clothe and feed them, or make endless, lengthy trips to hospital because support is unavailable locally and the system has no flexibility to bend to individual needs. These experiences disempower people and they disempower the professionals tasked with helping them. Professionals are left feeling they are ticking boxes, unable to devote the time and energy they need to the individual in front of them and without the tools they need to help them. This is not the fault of the professionals themselves, but the unintended, damaging consequence of

the system in which they work. As a result, despite the best efforts of many frontline workers, kindness and empathy is squeezed slowly out of the system and the individual's voice is lost.

When we do listen, it makes a difference. Major improvements have been driven in mental health services in recent years by an understanding that the people who use services are best placed to shape them. Yet still this experience is far too rare. We know that what most homeless people want – supported accommodation – is also what works, but because the system is not designed to provide it on a large scale we provide hostel accommodation instead. We could do so much better than this.

We need to relinquish the power to make decisions to people and those tasked with helping them. In practice this means pooling budgets so that arbitrary barriers to help are dismantled, ensuring professionals work to shared outcomes, not departmental targets, and allowing people the flexibility to manage things themselves when they can, providing help when they can't.

It means understanding that people draw strength from their families and communities and that requires us to look outwards from the individual to understand the strengths of the wider community and identify where the potential for supportive, lasting relationships lie. It means asking 'what are the strengths of the families we are working with' rather than 'what are the weaknesses'? Charities like Grapevine, working with Coventry Law Centre to empower local communities in one of the most deprived areas of the city, are already proving that it can be done.

A relational approach also means making sure that whenever people come into contact with the state or civil society that it is a humanising experience, from the receptionist in the housing department to the caretaker at the town hall.

Releasing power to the frontline would give local communities the ability to reorganise services so that people have an ongoing, positive conversation between 'the system' and the person and allow us to hear the voice of the individual much more clearly in our public services at an earlier stage.

David Cameron's 'big society' has rightly faced criticism but its basic recognition that between the state and the market there is a much bigger space – society – matters. Society is where most people quietly live out their lives and where most of the country's energy and creativity is found. In the face of the twin challenges of scarce resources and rising demand, harnessing the energy of individuals, families, neighbours, charities and communities is not just desirable but essential.

To make it work we need to understand where the big society took a wrong turn. As the Centre for Social Justice recently argued, the big society didn't "trust the sector to innovate and develop effective new approaches to tackling social problems, preferring to concentrate ever larger sums of money on favourite, well-established charities, often asking them to deliver government's work in government's way through large prescriptive contracts". Moreover it was blind to the huge inequalities between communities, some of whom lack time, resources, networks and confidence, found Civil Exchange's *Big Society Audit*. The state is central to ensuring that communities, individuals and people-focused civil society organisations have the support they need to succeed. Without this, those who most need help in a human, relational way will be least likely to get it.

In the longer term this means tackling the root causes of inequality: poverty, lack of confidence, education and social connections, and the combined effect of this in some areas of the country. This is what defines Labour's 'one nation' politics, going beyond a transactional approach to tack-

ling inequality to a focus on transforming the basis of the economy and wider society. As Jon Cruddas has argued "if it lacks the spirit to transform people and give them hope for a better life then it will fail to tackle the fundamental power relations that keep them in their place."

A 'one nation' approach to multiple needs is not an attempt to achieve a utopia where social problems no longer exist. At times in our lives all of us will need help with ill health, depression, loneliness, addiction, housing, debt and other problems besides. When we look for help we should find a state and a civil society that respects our uniqueness, understands and values the relationships that sustain us, and is willing to invest in helping us to help ourselves.

2. INDEPENDENCE, NOT INCLUSION
A liberal approach to disadvantage

Richard Reeves

Liberals, conservatives and social democrats can all agree the provision of extra support for severely disadvantaged groups makes fiscal sense. But the different political traditions will bring different emphases to policymaking. For liberals, the overall measure of success is not the degree to which a deeply disadvantaged individual or family becomes 'included' in society; it is the degree to which they have the resources and opportunities to chart their own course in life, rather than living at the mercy of others, or in the grip of addiction.

There is surely no policy area so replete with synonyms, euphemisms and labels as this one. Depending on the context and political flavour of the times, we might read about the 'socially excluded', 'people with multiple needs', 'troubled families', the 'hard to help', or 'disconnected' - or perhaps people who are 'vulnerable', lead 'chaotic lives'. Sometimes people are even described as 'poor'.

What is clear is that we are not simply talking about people who are poor only in the sense of having an income below a certain line. This is poverty in a constellation of domains – health, education, employment, crime, housing, neighbourhood, income, drug use, family stability, or some combination of these: a cocktail of social and economic

problems combining in one individual, one family, or one community.

It is important not to get hung up on semantics, however. By and large we know who we are talking about. Indeed, one of the hallmarks of an unequal society is the clustering of different kinds of disadvantage in a particular social space, including an individual. This is in fact the central insight of *Disadvantage*, one of the most important books on the topic, by Jonathan Wolff and Avner De-Shalit. While equality in any given domain is unachievable, and indeed in many cases even undesirable, Wolff and De-Shalit suggest a fair society is one in which disadvantage is 'declustered', rather than being concentrated on particular people or families.

The group with which this volume is concerned are the super-clusters of disadvantage, those in the lower reaches of the socio-economic gradient on most indexes of opportunity, functioning or wellbeing. This is also a group for whom the various measures of disadvantage tend to be stable over time: on the dimension of income poverty, for example, they fall into the group who are poor for ten years in each decade, rather than for one or two.

One distinction is worth making, however, and not least because politicians too often fail to make it themselves: this group is difficult to pin down. Take the term 'troubled families': while the current government continues to use the figure of 120,000, the definition has in fact been changed quite radically. Frankly, the number is now a mythical one, and everyone knows it.

The substantive point for our social policy is that there are families who are in trouble, and there are families causing trouble. We cannot simply assume they are the same. While the political rhetoric still tends to be of the 'neighbours from hell' flavour, the latest definition of a 'troubled family' points in the other direction. To qualify as 'troubled', a family has to

suffer from at least five of the following seven disadvantages: a) no parent in work b) poor quality housing, c) no parent with qualifications, d) mother with mental health problems, e) one parent with longstanding disability/illness, f) family has low income, g) cannot afford some food/clothing items. The Making Every Adult Matter (MEAM) definition of an individual facing multiple needs is not dissimilar – people have to face a combination of problems, have ineffective contact with services, and be living 'chaotic lives.' There is nothing direct here about anti-social behaviour, or crime, or drugs, or truancy. These problems are often associated with the disadvantages in the qualifying list, of course, but it is important to note that they are not the explicit target of policy. 'Troubled' families are not the neighbours from hell; they are the neighbours in hell.

The goal of this government's policy is to 'turn around' all the 'troubled families' in the nation. Louise Casey, a three-PM veteran of policy in this area, has been given half a billion pounds and considerable power, exercised through dedicated co-ordinators (for one horrible moment it looked like they were going to be called 'controllers'). Each co-ordinator, typically a social worker by training, works with families through a Family Intervention Project providing 'intensive, practical support to whole families'.

This is broadly the right approach: historically, one of the problems has been an overlapping matrix of agencies working in different ways with different members of the family at different times.

It is worth noting at this point, that *individuals* with multiple needs have of course also historically faced the same problem. However, despite the similarities, and despite the fact that many individuals with multiple needs – the homeless person, the repeat offender – are part of family units, there is currently no governmental commitment to support individuals with

multiple needs in the same way as 'troubled families'. So what are the political issues at stake here? How will liberals, conservatives and social democrats approach the problem of deeply disadvantaged families and individuals?

Let's start where we can all agree. The provision of extra support for these groups makes fiscal sense: any improvements in the trajectories of the individuals and families in question results in significant savings in drug and alcohol treatment, criminal justice, welfare payments, and so on.

But the different political traditions will bring different emphases to policymaking, and in particular to the measure of success. Conservatives focus on preventing spillover effects to the rest of society, either directly in communities or indirectly as recipients of tax-funded welfare. The focus here is getting these families and individuals to adopt the norms of mainstream society. Morality, behaviour, respect for others, playing by the rules, individual and parental responsibility: these are the conservative leitmotifs. It's a deficit-based approach to disadvantage.

The orientation of social democrats is tackling resource deficits rather than moral shortcomings. The language of 'inclusion' is shorthand for people sharing similar life chances as the mainstream, with the resources to 'participate in society'. The problem, for the left-leaning policymaker, is that these individuals and families lack money, skills and hope. Opportunity, skill-building, self-respect are the focuses in this strengths-based approach.

Liberals bring a different perspective to bear. We agree that there are families and individuals in trouble, many of whom also cause trouble: though we rather insist on the distinction. We also agree that the state has a role to play in helping – a laissez-faire approach would suit a libertarian, but not a liberal.

There are three principles underpinning a liberal approach to deeply disadvantaged families and individuals.

1. Put children first

Institutions can fail individuals, and families are no exception. Since the liberal focus is on individual opportunities and flourishing, we will be harder-headed about the importance of the individual, including the distinction between parents and children.

Bluntly, for many children, their parents are the main problem. Even if they are not abusive, they are neglectful, disorganised, inconsistent and uninvolved. While we have a duty to help the parents, we also need to ensure that we do not fail the children by placing family autonomy above individual opportunity.

The key success measure for family interventions is decoupling the life chances of the child from the life circumstances of the parent. So, more pre-school (which the government, thanks to Nick Clegg, is extending to poorer two year-olds); longer school days; summer schools (Clegg again); more resources to the most disadvantaged through an enhanced pupil premium; and ideas such as the SEED boarding schools in the United States, which provide 24-hour education, care and tutoring from Monday to Friday for children from the poorest homes, should be considered.

But in some extreme cases, physical separation of the child from the parent is the most liberal move. I believe that political or moral discomfort with the very idea of the state as parent, has led to chronic underinvestment in this vital area of provision. The quality of state care is therefore shockingly, absurdly, immorally low to the extent that it is often a significant factor in causing, rather than solving, disadvantage in today's society. Given the problems in the care system, the

state is now too reluctant to take children into care. A liberal sees unflinchingly that, in extremis, the state is absolutely the best parent, but needs to get good at it, and fast.

2. Pay respect to the recipients of state assistance

Casey's coordinators – and those working with people facing multiple needs - work alongside families and individuals, not above them. Again, this is the right approach. While frustrated politicians often demand more 'respect' from disadvantaged groups, this cuts both ways: they are worthy of respect too. Because of the political confusion between 'in trouble' and 'causing trouble', an important division of labour can be lost. Crimes must be punished. But the role of the co-ordinators is the opposite of punitive. As Casey herself, in a rare personal moment, said last year, "what's missing here is love".

Like civic republicans, liberals seek a society in which people can look each other in the eye. As the philosopher Ronald Dworkin puts it:

> "A relational, or social, view of equality takes the task of an egalitarian society to be not so much to distribute goods in the right way, but to create the right kinds of classless relationships between people; avoiding oppression, exploitation, domination, servility, snobbery, and other hierarchical evils."

Respect of all kinds is built on self-respect. It is therefore vital that all services, assistance and support are offered in a spirit of respect for the recipient. Here the tone set by politicians is important too: if we continue to stigmatise 'troubled families' and people with multiple needs, we should not be surprised if social attitudes towards them

harden, which will have the effect of pushing them further away.

3. Focus on independence rather than inclusion

The overall measure of success therefore is not the degree to which a deeply disadvantaged individual or family becomes 'included' in society; it is the degree to which they have the resources and opportunities – the 'capability set', to borrow Amartya Sen's terms – to chart their own course in life, to be agents over their own lives, rather than living at the mercy of others, or in the grip of addiction.

Being independent does not mean going without state support, or being, in a tellingly paternalist phrase, 'weaned off welfare'. It means being in deliberate pursuit of a life plan, constructed according to your own values and ambitions. The role of the state is not to make people into model citizens, defined somewhere in Whitehall. The role of the state – especially with regard to children and vulnerable adults – is to ensure the provision of real opportunities, and respect for their independent choices.

To say that 'independence' is hard to measure is an understatement, though perhaps no more so than 'troubled' or 'included' or 'disadvantaged'. But it is the clear goal for liberal policy.

An example illustrates the distinction between inclusion and independence. It is not known how many Roma live in the UK; estimates range from 200,000 to 300,000. But the 2011 Census included a new category for 'gypsy or Irish traveller', and 58,000 people placed themselves in this category. I do not know how many 'troubled' families are travellers, but it seems very few. When Casey chose to interview 16 families to show the range of problems they face, not a single one had a Roma or traveller background.

Most travellers and Roma have life ambitions and personal values that depart from the societal norm. In a sense, this is none of our business. If we are confident that the state is offering the goods and services in line with the rights of citizens, including children, then we must respect the rights of traveller families to live differently. They are not 'included', but they are independent.

In the end, a society in which everyone was included in a mainstream way of life would be a dull one, lacking the diversity and friction of a liberal culture. 'Turning troubled families around' or supporting 'people with multiple needs' must only ever mean helping to set them on their own, independent path, free to pursue their own version of a good life, whatever that turns out to be.

3. THE COALITION AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Christian Guy

Despite the extremely difficult economic backdrop, the compromises inherent in governing by coalition, and the complexity of helping people with multiple needs, the coalition government has been able to make crucial progress in the way national and local government seeks to assist individuals and families. But what we need now is continued commitment to focus on these root causes of social injustice and multi-layered disadvantage from all political parties seeking office in 2015. In particular those planning for power should consider how to take public service intervention and integration even further.

The concept of social justice has long been owned by those on the left of British politics. For decades, in part through ideological resistance and in part through laziness, many Conservatives surrendered this political territory to Labour and Liberal politicians. The left, especially the Labour party, claimed a monopoly on the issue and won the right to define the terms of the debate. As well as being much more willing to wrestle with the problem of poverty and being in closer touch with the lives of those struggling in Britain, the advent and evolution of social security, the National Health Service and large programmes of house building for the working classes meant the left took great strides in providing for those who needed important safety

nets and public support. Whenever people on the right did engage with the challenges of poverty, disadvantage and inequality, too often they did so with judgement not grace, with condemnation not compassion.

For various reasons, including the work of my predecessors at the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), that began to change. The independent CSJ has been and continues to be proud to work with all major political parties because in part, it was founded to seek and build consensus about how to improve the lives of people hit hard by multiple disadvantage.

Yet the work of the CSJ's then chairman, Iain Duncan Smith, and its former team, is widely respected for making substantive inroads and challenging many on the right. As a result, when David Cameron became the new Conservative leader he offered important commitments about ending the costs of social failure, sparked by the CSJ's report *Breakthrough Britain,* and many in the party became passionate advocates for a change in approach. After years of well-intentioned but ineffective one dimensional income-transfer politics, which drove successive governments to chase the symptoms of poverty and bail out the vast systems supposed to help people, a refreshing discussion emerged about root causes. Instead of a narrow blank cheque welfare approach, which topped up incomes but ultimately failed to change lives, a serious policy agenda was presented to: stabilise family life; transform education in the poorest neighbourhoods; release the potential of work as a protector against poverty; deal with addiction; and free people from the entrapment of dangerous debt. Inherent in this was a new role for the vibrant voluntary sector – organisations working in ways the public and private sectors couldn't hope to.

And whilst much of the debate about social justice had traditionally focused on income inequality and the working poor – often helpfully so – this was a new agenda to help

people out of the entrenched poverty which threatened or took root in many lives.

Whatever our assessment of this coalition government, especially the Conservatives who lead social departments, the successful broadening of the debate about social justice and solutions for multiple disadvantage should be welcomed by all. A one-sided debate about these entrenched social problems held Britain back for too long.

The coalition 2010–2014

As we enter the fourth year under this government it is right to make assessment of progress. Nobody could have predicted, even on polling day 2010, the way in which the economy would come to define the coalition's time in office. The emergency budget presented shortly after taking office set the terms of the political debate and the backdrop to all decisions taken in Whitehall. At the time when the coalition took office there was a deficit of £159bn – this was largest budget deficit in the G20 and second largest in Europe.

Yet amidst the early days of economic crisis, some important structural revisions were made, namely the establishment of a Social Justice Cabinet Committee and, in time, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (on which I sit).

And through the publication of the Social Justice Strategy in 2012, led by that Cabinet Committee, ministers attempted to put into practice some of what Iain Duncan Smith wrote about in *Hardest to Reach?*, the precursor to this pamphlet, in 2010.

In writing for the CSJ, Iain Duncan Smith identified five things which had to change in the way politicians set about helping people with multiple needs. They were: a programme of prevention – getting ahead of problems before they

took root or spiralled out of control; a joined-up approach in Whitehall and at local level to ensure people worked together and planned efficient support; the utilisation of the key worker model, based on the success of programmes like the Family Intervention Projects; an effort to reduce worklessness, which the CSJ had found triggered other forms of disadvantage; and commissioning for outcomes, not only to ensure better value for taxpayers but to invest in life-change rather than process. It seems fair to make brief consideration about what progress has been made in relation to each.

The work of prevention, by its very nature, is difficult to measure and can take years to bear fruit. It also offers little help to those already in the depths of difficulty. But it is crucial and we should encourage all politicians to lay stronger foundations for the future, even if the credit falls to their successors years later. With this in mind the coalition should be commended for its introduction of the Early Intervention Foundation, breaking new ground in the funding of relationship support, the Troubled Families programme and some important education reforms, including a new commitment to provide financial literacy lessons for young people. More disappointingly though, we have seen much less progress in terms of drug and alcohol education, and radical action to stabilise family life has fallen victim to Conservative/Lib Dem compromises.

Efforts have also been made to bring more co-ordination across Whitehall on social justice issues. The establishment of the Social Justice Cabinet Committee provides a useful forum for ministers to agree policy, work through disagreements and try to avoid 'silo strategies'. This committee, supported by a unit currently located in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and set to work against a Social Justice Strategy, should be retained by whoever enters office in 2015. Alongside this is the Social Mobility and Child

Poverty Commission, which is able to challenge and improve the work of several key Whitehall departments. The task for the next phase of joined-up government, however, has to be improving the use and sharing of data, especially in regards to those with complex and multi-layered problems, and more effective local and national budget sharing agreements which target specific areas of geographical need.

The Troubled Families model is perhaps the most high-profile of the initiatives built on the key worker principle. Not only is the programme designed to provide help for families with numerous needs, it pioneers a new approach which aims to avoid the duplication, waste and inconsistent intervention which has characterised the experience many such families have known. The Troubled Families programme could certainly be improved and the language used to 'sell' it has been disappointing at times, which the CSJ has written about previously, but as a model it holds great potential for the future of public service delivery and multiple disadvantage.

Very welcome progress has also been made in relation to reducing worklessness. Under the previous government the number of households where no member has ever worked almost doubled from 136,000 to 269,000 between 1997 and 2010, according to the Office of National Statistics. Looking ahead, reform along the lines of the Australian approach is required to maximise the efficacy of job centre plus, and the Work Programme model could be reviewed to consider how smaller charities might be engaged to move those furthest from the workforce back into its view. The successful delivery of Universal Credit must also remain a priority for whoever leads the country after the general election, because there has to be a credible next step into work for those ready to take it.

The fifth and final one of the themes identified by Iain Duncan Smith in 2010, commissioning for outcomes, has become a major focus for ministers. Across the public policy community there is agreement that payment-by-results is right in principle, and probably irreversible, though concerns remain about implementation and its ability to positively impact on those with the most complex needs. The shift to commissioning for outcomes, and the idea that through social investment other funders can hold the risk, is beginning to transform the way public services are designed. A positive start has been made, namely through the introduction of 13 Social Impact Bonds, the establishment of Big Society Capital, the Innovation Fund and the way in which Britain's leadership on social investment was recognised by the G8 last year. But this must mark only the beginning. The social investment market remains small and poorly understood. Moving it from pilot to general practice will be the real test for a new government.

The road to 2015 and beyond

Thanks to the introduction of fixed-term parliaments, we know we are fast approaching another general election. There are strong signs of welcome economic recovery, but as we all know there remains a great deal of work to do to ensure a better future lies ahead for every one of our citizens. Politicians cannot rest on the assumption that a rising tide lifts all boats – the most recent period of economic growth proved how naïve that view is – and deep social problems remain.

I would argue that despite the extremely difficult backdrop, the compromises inherent in governing by coalition, and the complexity of helping people with multiple needs,

that this administration has made crucial progress in the way national (and local) government seeks to assist individuals and families.

But turning the tanker around was never going to be a 'one term or one issue' mission, and the path of deficit reduction that faced whichever party entered office in 2010 meant the mission became harder still. We will never know how a Labour government would have reacted to the economic pressures or how they would have set about balancing the books in a 'fairer way' as they claim. And to the average observer, the endless political back-and-forth between all sides of the House of Commons often only adds to the confusion.

But what we need now is continued commitment to focus on these root causes of social injustice and multi-layered disadvantage from all political parties seeking office in 2015. The language may change and records will be attacked, but the principal focus must not relent.

In particular those planning for power should consider how to take public service intervention and integration even further. In Margate they calculate which streets, even which households, generate the most need and which will provide tangible returns from public investment. Where appropriate and helpful the local agencies share information, sometimes even in conversation across the office, in a way that co-location makes so easy. The model working so well in Margate proves that it is possible to construct co-ordinated services that concentrate efforts in response to geographical demand, rather than through the catch-all approach which has defined many systems in the past. The piloting of Whole Place Community Budgets gives further hope that better co-ordination and strategy can be achieved.

Linked to this is the need to break down further the broader data barriers which make life harder for our professionals. Take, for example, those leaving the military. There

is currently no structure in place by which the Ministry of Defence and the DWP can inform each other as to the employment outcomes of military service leavers. Consequently, the employment landscape for those individuals leaving the military remains unclear, and is dependent on small data sets recovered by each department individually.

The same goes for the way we respond to alcoholics. Thousands of people are readmitted to hospital with alcohol-related conditions and maintained with incapacity welfare payments. Despite their interaction with the state at numerous points, not to mention tens of thousands of pounds per year, our interventions are not effective in treating the underlying condition of alcoholism. A period in rehab or a dedicated support worker begins to look cheap when compared to a decade on incapacity benefit.

The economic backdrop has made life tougher for those on the margins of our society. But the challenges of multiple disadvantage have been in play for decades and the work of genuine change is slow. There is welcome success to commend as we study the last few years, even though financially things have been very tough for millions of people. But for many, life was incredibly tough when the economy was booming too. It is not possible to spend your way out of multiple disadvantage – the last government proved that. There will never be a welfare cheque big enough to lift all people out of poverty and to deal with the root causes of deprivation. Instead, we need a reliable safety net and we need to change the way services are delivered. That is what really changes lives, in good times and bad.

4. BLAMING THE PILOT

Lord Michael Bichard

While the aviation industry responds to accidents by methodically identifying system failures, in public services we are obsessed with blaming the pilot. Instead of structural reorganisations, the place to start is with the clients with the most complex problems; to understand why they are being failed by the system, what they need from the system, and how best to create a system or service which is seamless, affordable, functional and built around their needs. The Total Place programme was an attempt to improve services without further reorganisations and should be developed, to encourage agencies to work together at a local level, to rethink the way in which they meet local need and to deliver better services at lower cost.

The way in which we deliver our public services means that the most vulnerable and those with complex problems inevitably get a raw deal. And yet we seem incapable of changing.

For a start, when services are deemed to be unsatisfactory we still see structural, rather than systemic, reform as the only response. That is what Andrew Lansley's reforms of health were about, as well as Michael Gove's education reforms. Much the same criticism could be made of most of Tony Blair's public service reform agenda. None of this is surprising, because structural reorganisations give both officials and politicians the impression of

having done something and short-term action is attractive to those who are building careers or reputations. The problem is that reorganisations hardly ever deliver better services to clients, citizens, users or patients because they rarely address the systemic reasons why they – especially the most vulnerable - have been receiving poor services, and of course cause massive disruption and often demotivation. Often, too, reorganisation is accompanied by yet more intense regulation and performance management, as those responsible for delivery become ever more desperate to demonstrate that things are improving. In fact, all the attention does achieve is to identify failure more efficiently.

In the recent past structural reorganisations have further exacerbated our problems by repeatedly fragmenting our systems of governance, making it ever more difficult for agencies to work effectively together. And this has been made even worse by setting endless performance management targets for separate agencies, which sometimes conflict, often encourage each to work in isolation, and rarely make sense from the client's perspective. And when things inevitably go wrong, the only thing that seems to matter is to blame someone rather than look for ways in which the overall system has failed.

If you think this is an exaggeration, then look at the way in which we have responded to the death or serious abuse of children and vulnerable adults over the past 30 years, with the systemic failures exposed by serious case reviews rarely being effectively addressed. And contrast that to the way in which, for example, the aviation industry responds to accidents or near misses. While that industry seeks methodically to identify and rectify system failures, we in public services are obsessed with blaming the pilot. As a result the aviation industry, improves training, ensures that pilots are better prepared to react to problems as they arise and ensures that

systems and equipment are redesigned to minimise future risk. Whereas in public services we continue to blame individuals and then respond with surprise as the same systemic failures re-occur again and again.

None of this is to suggest you never need to reorganise public services or indeed manage performance or hold people to account. It is to suggest that structural reorganisation is not the place to start. The place to start is with the clients or users and in particular the clients with the most complex problems. The objective should be first of all to understand why they are being failed by the system, what they need from the system, and how best to create a system or service which is seamless, affordable, functional and built around their needs. In spite of two decades of rhetoric we still have services which are more often than not designed for the convenience of providers rather than to meet the needs of clients and users. When Jonathan Ive and Steve Jobs were facing huge losses at Apple, they did not start by reorganising the company. Instead they set about designing products which reflected the way in which potential customers worked, lived and behaved. Their products were not just attractive, but designed to be accessible, seamless, affordable and intuitive. It is very rare to find public services which are any of these things and complex, poorly-designed services do most damage to the most vulnerable and the least articulate.

Sadly, when public service reform is discussed it fails to engage the public or the most senior policymakers because it seems to be about dry theories of bureaucratic administration. But the consequences of the way in which we have mismanaged public services is waste and personal suffering. Recently I heard of an elderly lady who was in hospital when told she was reaching the end of her life. Like most people

she wanted to die at home and the hospital staff wanted to help her fulfil that simple wish. In the event it took the involvement of 25 different teams, 23 separate assessments and the convening of two funding panels before she was able to leave hospital three months later, only to die at home within a fortnight. That is but one example of the human cost of fragmented governance, an obsession with structures and a lack of service design capacity. Sadly, all this becomes even more problematical as we face up to the challenges of an ageing society. As more people live longer they more frequently have co-morbidities, which this fragmented system finds especially difficult. It must seem to some older people that each condition requires them to access a different organisation in a different location with no one dealing with them as a whole person, and the same is true for those who face multiple needs.

Five years ago I was tasked by the then chief secretary to the Treasury to look at how our public services could best respond to the expected period of austerity. One of my recommendations was to develop the Total Place programme to encourage agencies to work together at a local level, to rethink the way in which they met local need and to deliver better services at lower cost. Total Place was an attempt to improve services without further reorganisations and proved immensely popular. However, because it was associated with the then Labour government it did not survive the 2010 election, although it did provide the inspiration for community budgets, the Troubled Families programme and city deals.

Total Place, for me, demonstrated several other important points relevant to this discussion. Firstly, it showed that the more effective integration of services around clients requires genuine devolution of power. Local bodies and local citizens need to be able to make decisions about relative priorities if services are to be responsive to local needs. Secondly, Total

Place demonstrated that Whitehall and its determination to continue to work in silos and centralise often stood in the way of developing effective local collaborations. It was all too often the case that good local initiatives which benefitted clients happened in spite of the system and not because of it. And, thirdly, it showed the importance of civil society to improving the quality of people's lives. Very often, government – local and central – has thought solely in terms of delivering services, whereas the primary aim should be to help citizens lead better lives – and that is not the sole preserve of the public sector. Instead, it requires the liberation of all the potential which exists within a community, much of which remains unrealised for reasons ranging from the structure of the benefits system to the paternalistic attitudes still apparent in the statutory sector.

In a way, many of our problems derive from a, doubtless well-intentioned, belief that the public sector can alone solve the problems faced by the most disadvantaged members of society. As a result, many feel disempowered and sometimes at the mercy of insensitive bureaucracies. Although we have long spoken about the importance of consultation and participation, there has been much less said, let alone done, about co-production or co-design. These, of course, require a shift of power from professionals and policymakers to citizens and therein may lie the reasons why they have so rarely been achieved. They do, however, offer the chance of policies and services which make sense to clients. They might also result in clients feeling able to use their own resources and initiative to better effect to improve the quality of their lives. That kind of approach is a long way from relying on bureaucratic reorganisations and inspections but it might just stand a better chance of improving the quality of living for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

5. THE HARDEST TO REACH
Insights from an evidence base

Julia Unwin

The evidence is unequivocal about the complexity of multiple needs and the scale of policy and practical challenges that it raises. But it is also clear about the right way forward. By focusing on joined up and preventative working, getting the relationships right, and seeing the whole person, we can stop people with complex needs falling through the cracks in service provision.

Poverty is a scar on our nation, but it is neither uniform nor simple to describe. For one group of people – those facing multiple needs – poverty is just one of a series of issues such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental health problems, street activities like begging or prostitution, and experience of institutions such as prisons – which combine to place people at the margins of our society.

At the Joseph Rowntree Foundation we have long been aware of the complex interrelation between these issues. But until recently, the evidence base was weak. Five years ago, in partnership with the Economic and Social Research Council, Homeless Link, Communities and Local Government, the (then) Tenant Services Authority and Department of Health we launched the Multiple Exclusion Homelessness Research Programme. This aimed to better understand how the issues referenced above related to each other, and, in particular, to the most visible of them - homelessness. The evidence

from the programme is unequivocal about the complexity of multiple needs and the scale of the policy and practical challenges that it presents for today's society.

The research found that nearly half of those interviewed reported experience of institutional care, substance misuse, and street activities (such as begging) *as well as homelessness*. It also found that using hostels or applying to the council as homeless commonly happen *after* contact with *non-housing* agencies (such as mental health or drug agencies, criminal justice system, social services) and also *after* periods of invisible homelessness such as sofa-surfing, suggesting that homelessness is often the visible end-result of a combined series of systemic failures from other agencies.

Not unexpectedly, the extent of childhood traumatic experiences among street homeless people also stands out in the research; as does the extent of mental health needs and the disproportionate number of homeless men, especially in their thirties, among those with the most complex needs.

Statistical analysis of the extended interview survey conducted for the research showed there were a number of risk factors for multiple needs. These included: being male; being aged between 20 and 49 years old (especially 30s); having suffered physical abuse or neglect, or homelessness, as a child; having parents who experienced drug, alcohol, domestic violence or mental health problems; poor experiences of school, such as truancy or exclusion; and having been in receipt of welfare benefits for most of your adult life.

The recommendations from the Multiple Exclusion Homelessness research are worth examining in this regard.

First, the report argues, we need to develop a *greater focus on prevention*, by increasing recognition of the childhood experiences that lead to multiple needs. There is a pressing need for the wider system as a whole to understand the routes into multiple exclusion and the critical intervention

points for prevention, with key services such as mental health, substance misuse and social care working together to prevent people slipping into deep exclusion. Public spending contraction combined with demographic change and declining living standards have made this task both harder and more urgent.

Secondly, the importance of getting the *relationships* right: relationships between people and their family and friends; between people who use and who deliver services; between practitioners working in the same and in different sectors. The Multiple Exclusion Homelessness report recommends more reflective practice within services; better joint working so that agencies work in partnership rather than in parallel to each other; recognising and developing the role of cross-sector coordinators who can mentor and advocate for individuals; and helping professionals to learn and share from each other. It also points to the need to bring positive social networks and relationships into the core of an individual's recovery.

Thirdly, we need to learn to create services that recognise the *whole person:* we all have a past and a future as well as a present. In particular, the research suggests that as a society we must learn how to support the large proportion of people whose multiple needs stem from childhood sexual abuse, as little attention has been given to creating a support system to assist people – especially men - through such trauma.

None of these are new messages. I am struck by their resonance across JRF programmes of research, across all ages and life-stages, across a wide range of support needs. And all of them are achievable.

One example is the growing concern about the strength of social security – the safety net – in the UK. Recently released statistics reveal the realities of a more stringent system of welfare conditionality and sanctions which was introduced in October 2012. In the period between October 2012 and

June 2013, sanctions have been applied to job seeker's allowance claimants 580,000 times and, additionally, over 11,000 times for employment and support allowance claimants. This 13 per cent increase in the number of sanctions applied raises questions that surely go to the heart of social exclusion and social justice in the UK.

All welfare systems have conditions attached to them. But a socially just system of conditionality requires clear communication of conditions, and reasonable application of reasonable sanctions. Sanctions should be a last resort only, and should surely never result in destitution that removal of all or even a moderate percentage of income would entail. Yet stories are beginning to emerge of short-term destitution, and warnings are being sounded by frontline voluntary, community and faith groups of the harmful and counter-productive effects that harsher sanctions may have. I suspect we may find similar over-representation of men in their twenties and thirties, with complex needs, experience of multiple exclusions and traumatic pasts, among this number. What are the risks that some of them will fall out (drop out or opt out) of the social security system entirely?

As our labour market becomes ever more 'hour-glass' shaped, characterised by a business model premised on insecure, low-paid, low-skilled jobs with limited opportunities for progression – so we see more evidence of a 'continuum' of labour exploitation. The experience of forced labour is at the extreme end of that spectrum, and JRF-funded research suggests that the numbers in forced labour in the UK may run into several thousand. But the broader issue is one of insecure 'zero hour' contracts, which fail to make work pay and draw growing numbers into work-based poverty.

As I write, my fear is that we are entering a decade where we witness the re-emergence of destitution in the UK, and that the 'faces' of destitution will be more diverse than in the

past - from migrant women whose status means they have 'no recourse to public funds', to single young men leaving care with mental health problems and no qualifications, to fearful workers exploited for their labour and with no idea where to turn for help.

There has never been a more important time to highlight the challenges of multiple needs in the UK, to shine a light on the hardest to reach, and to develop a new welfare settlement that aims to reduce multiple disadvantage rather than accept it as a by-product of the current rush to growth.

6. A LOCALIST REVOLUTION

Simon Parker

Centralism creates unnecessary divisions between services that need to work together more effectively. And as austerity continues to bite, giving councils the freedom to integrate local services around the needs of vulnerable people is also becoming one of the few ways that local government and many of its partners can survive. The details vary from council to council, but the broad model some of the more imaginative councils are starting to develop is similar – deal with problems in the community first, rapidly direct people to the right public service to tackle their problems correctly first time and then maintain a strong social work service to deal with the really difficult cases.

Our current approach to supporting vulnerable people just does not work. Anyone who spends time in and around local government will have heard numerous heart-breaking case studies of people with profound mental and physical needs who end up being bounced around a fragmented system between the NHS, police, councils, housing associations and the voluntary sector. All too often, success stories are the result of a brilliant and committed worker finding a way to bypass or break the rules.

It would obviously be silly to blame this situation entirely on the overly centralised nature of the British state. There are plenty of local barriers to change which would still exist if

Whitehall somehow evaporated tomorrow. But the powerful control that departments exert on local service providers certainly does not help.

The key problem is that centralism creates unnecessary divisions between services that need to work together more effectively.

The organisational and cultural gulf between the NHS and local authority social care services is perhaps the best example. Some 30 per cent of Greater Manchester's hospital beds are used to treat long-term conditions such as dementia and a quarter of emergency calls are due to older people falling. Better co-operation between the two silos could reduce both figures dramatically, for instance by shifting resources into sheltered housing and intermediate care, or sharing data to ensure social services are able to identify people at risk of mismanaging their conditions. This will lead to better outcomes for service users and reduce costs – in fact, estimates suggest a new system could eventually deliver up to £8bn of savings.

This leads to a broader problem of centrally-imposed, unnecessary bureaucracy. One study found that front-line local authority workers dealing with what are now called 'troubled families' can spend up to an astonishing 74 per cent of their time on administration, 14 per cent coordinating work with other agencies and only 12 per cent on actually working with local people. Add to this the sheer number of external agencies that often work with vulnerable people and you have a system which is often baffling to those who use it.

As Louise Casey – the government's troubled families tsar - has put it: "We talk a lot about troubled families and dysfunctional families. I can assure you that from their perspective it is the system that looks pretty troubled and dysfunctional." The same comment could be made of most services for those with multiple needs.

We are already accumulating evidence of how a more locally-driven approach can help. Casey was appointed after the 2011 riots to lead a national programme to deal with the multiple needs of problem families. Recognising that councils were already doing a lot of work with these groups, she put local government in the driving seat of coordinating services, and invested £448m in supporting them, some of it on a payment by results basis.

The Troubled Families programme is one of the coalition government's great successes. Ministers claim the scheme has improved the lives of 22,000 families while saving the public purse a great deal of money. Councils have appreciated the freedom to improve and redesign their own local initiatives. Some officials are considering whether the same approach could work for other groups with multiple needs.

Giving councils the freedom to integrate local services around the needs of vulnerable people is clearly the right thing to do. But as austerity continues to bite it is also becoming one of the few ways that local government and many of its partners can survive. Local authorities face ballooning demand for their social care services at the same time that their budgets are being remorselessly squeezed by the chancellor.

Some councils have felt forced to respond by starting to reduce the number of people who can access help from local services – almost half of upper-tier authorities have tightened eligibility for some of their services and voluntary sector umbrella bodies point to evidence that the same is true for their members. This is arguably short-sighted, as people who have low-level and moderate needs today may well develop acute problems tomorrow. But with many councils estimating that they will be unable to fund all of their 1,200 plus statutory duties by 2017, it is inevitable that some areas will see services cut back to the legally-required bone.

To try and avoid this scenario, some of the more imaginative councils are starting to develop new approaches to supporting vulnerable people. The details vary from council to council, but the broad model is similar – deal with problems in the community first, rapidly direct people to the right public service to tackle their problems correctly first time and then maintain a strong social work service to deal with the really difficult cases. These models have three key components.

First, the public sector has to support the creation of a wide range of new community services. These can be as simple as training volunteers to act as coordinators for vulnerable people in their area, helping them to understand the convoluted public service system and to find the right help first time. Initiatives such as Casserole Club, which encourages people to cook for their elderly neighbours, and GoodGym, which asks people to check in on their older neighbours whenever they go for a run, may also provide a template for a new approach to care.

Second, councils and their voluntary sector partners need to find ways to create multi-skilled teams from across different public services who can act as a combination of first response and triage service for vulnerable people. For instance, Leicestershire's police force works with the county council to deliver a service called 'triage car', in which social workers accompany officers to calls which may involve mental health problems.

Finally, councils need to find the best way to reduce and reconfigure their social care workforce, perhaps sharing some of the most expensive professionals with neighbouring councils.

There are numerous local barriers to this sort of system emerging. Local government and the health service are the two biggest players, but they frequently struggle to under-

stand each other's cultures and incentive structures. This is not made any easier by the aftershocks of the massive structural upheaval in the NHS and the fact that the health service itself faces steeply rising demand, reducing the scope for acute trusts to shift spending from day-to-day delivery to fund prevention.

The voluntary and community sector has a huge role to play in making any new system work, but too often councils see this sector as a cheap method of service delivery, rather than a genuine partner for change. These two sectors need to revolutionise their relationship, moving away from a client/provider relationship which inevitably revolves around money to a new form of partnership where they work together to analyse and address need in their area, worrying about the cash later.

The key national policy reform that government needs to get right is around funding. At present, councils are often asked to make heavy investments in new forms of service provision that primarily save money for other agencies. Take health and social care integration, where the estimates suggest that councils might see perhaps a quarter of the total saving, with the rest accruing to the NHS.

At a time when budgets are tightening across the public sector, we need a way to help councils see a better return for the work they are putting into supporting vulnerable families and individuals. The coalition government has created a new £3.8bn pooled budget to help overcome this problem, with clinical commissioning groups (CCGs) and councils able to share what amounts to £1.8bn of new money from 2015. This is a good start, but it leaves acute trusts out of the picture.

We need to explore a range of new localist models for funding a system shift in services for vulnerable people. Some councils, for instance, have argued that NHS trusts should be able to hold their own reserves locally. This would give them

a means to enter into a payment-by-results agreement with the council to reduce hospital admissions. Similar arrangements could be put in place with other local and national services, for example, with councils being rewarded for reducing national costs to the criminal justice system.

Ultimately, we may need to move to a situation in which councils, the health service and other agencies are able to pay a form of preventative tariff. This would be a standardised payment which any provider could earn if they proved that they had reduced demand for social care or hospital beds. Local health and wellbeing boards would bring the NHS and local government together to agree how the new arrangements should work, with councils providing upfront capital and CCGs paying out as results were delivered.

This would enable the creation of a market of voluntary and social enterprise organisations who would be funded through a combination of grants and payment by results, to create a new generation of preventative community services. Local government could also earn payments for providing better social care, or reducing contact with the criminal justice system.

System shifts of this sort need the engagement at all levels of government, but it has become increasingly clear that it cannot be driven from the centre. If austerity is not to mean pulling the rug out from beneath people with multiple needs, we need a localist revolution.

7. MAKING THE CASE FOR SUPPORTING THE MOST VULNERABLE

Deborah Mattinson

As the public begin to feel more optimistic about economic recovery, how can we ensure that the most vulnerable people get the support they need too? BritainThinks has come up with a five point plan for campaigners. First, it is important to start your argument in a place where you know the public can agree; second, resist bombarding the public with stats; thirdly, empathy trumps sympathy; fourth, where possible, demonstrate a concrete benefit to a wider audience rather than just the poor or multiply excluded; finally, an important part of developing a persuasive argument is having credibility to act.

The context – what are people worried about?

George Osborne had the most positive story of his career to tell when he got to his feet for last year's autumn statement. But although economic optimism had risen significantly during 2013 – up more than 25 per cent - most voters are still telling us that they have yet to feel the uplift in their own pockets. Many continue to struggle to make it through the month and remain worried about the high cost of living with basics like fuel, food and household bills topping the list.

As we move into 2014 voters are worried about what the future holds, too. More than half describe themselves as

'squeezed', and BritainThinks research shows 71 per cent agree 'I spend money more carefully than I used to', while 65 per cent say 'they do not have enough money to live comfortably', 59 per cent fear losing their jobs and almost as many fear losing their homes. The Westminster village may be speculating about the European elections and looking beyond those to the Scottish independence vote, but the cost of living crisis is the context that is framing many voters' views.

Unfairness or desert?

Against this backdrop, what are the prospects of mobilising public support for tackling the entrenched issues of multiple needs? The number of people who rate poverty as one of the 'main issues facing Britain' has risen from single figures in 2010 to mid teens. However, it still lags far behind the economy, NHS, crime and unemployment. They are all seen as issues which 'affect me' while poverty is seen as 'someone else's problem' despite the obvious inter-linkages.

Nevertheless there is, at face value at least, solid support for a broad equality agenda: 94 per cent agree that in a fair society every person should have an equal chance to get on, but the majority feel this isn't the case in Britain today - 79 per cent think that children from better off families have more opportunity. We see, though, that this enthusiasm wanes when voters are asked how they feel about possible solutions. Only a third agree that 'government should redistribute wealth to make society more fair', and in a forced choice poll YouGov recently found 10 per cent more support for 'faster growth' than for 'reducing the gap between rich and poor'.

It's easier to understand these contradictions when we look at what people understand to be the causes of poverty and disadvantage – and, conversely the causes of success. Even after the banking crisis and notwithstanding the ongoing collapse of trust in authority, most of us seem eager to justify high incomes with talent, ability or sheer graft. The British Social Attitudes Survey tells us that 69 per cent believe that 'success in life is ultimately down to the individual', 84 per cent say it's all about 'hard work', 71 per cent say it's about ambition while just 12 per cent say it's about coming from a wealthy family and only 7 per cent connect success to gender, religion or ethnicity.

It seems we are equally eager to find reasons to find the poor to be undeserving. Twice as many agreed than disagreed that 'if someone is not ill and they've been unemployed for more than a year, it's probably because they've not been trying hard enough to find work' in a recent BritainThinks poll. 26 per cent think that people live in need because of 'laziness or lack of willpower', while 19 per cent think it's because of injustice in society. When asked: 'how many welfare recipients are 'scroungers' who lie about their circumstances', 25 per cent say a small minority, 39 per cent say a significant minority 22 per cent say around half and 7 per cent say most. That's 68 per cent agreeing some are scroungers against a paltry 3 per cent saying very few or none. People who themselves earn between £10,000 and £19,000 were the group most likely to over claim on numbers of 'scroungers'.

So fairness and desert (or lack of it) are intimately linked. 69 per cent think that 'Britain's welfare system has created a culture of dependency' while 74 per cent feel that 'the government pays out too much in benefits' and 47 per cent feel the government is not 'tough enough' on benefits.

Underlying these views is a strong sense that too many people are taking advantage of an overly relaxed system, which at worst does not make work pay and at best encourages them to be workshy.

This comes through clearly in focus groups where people are keen to draw the distinction between people like themselves who they generally feel do not get enough support – especially true of the so-called squeezed middle who self-define as people too hard up to manage without state help but too well-off (in the state's eyes, they think) to be eligible for help. There is much talk of lack of reward for people who 'do the right thing' (a turn of phrase colonised by many a politician) while the 'less deserving' (generally determined by levels of contribution made in the past) thrive. Thus particular groups are targets for contempt: long-term unemployed, recent immigrants, single parents, people with multiple needs.

Busting the myth of myth busting

The political activists' knee jerk response is to challenge what they see as the widely held myths. A year ago the TUC attempted to tackle this by publishing a YouGov poll designed to expose these myths. They revealed for example, that people think that 41 per cent of the welfare budget goes on benefits (the real figure is just 3 per cent), that people estimate that 27 per cent of the welfare budget is claimed fraudulently, while the government's own figure is 0.7 per cent and that people tend to over estimate the amount that Jobseekers' Allowance pays out – to the tune of £35 per week - for a family with two kids. The poll's aims were to showcase the true figures and also showcase – and hopefully correct - the public's misconceptions.

Extensive work that we've conducted at BritainThinks indicates that the 'if only they knew what I know' school of persuasion has very limited appeal. The problem is, we've learned, that if you don't start your argument where people actually are, they will simply switch off and your efforts to 'educate' them are wasted. Against the backdrop of deep levels of distrust in public institutions, particularly government, official statistics are, at the best of times, easy to dismiss. When these statistics also attempt to tackle head-on these deeply held, often emotionally-driven views, they are frequently rejected. This failure of the use of rational arguments to counter emotionally-driven views has been extensively documented by psychologists and social scientists – and is the reason why politicians have switched to talking in stories ("Last week, I met a single Mum called x…") rather than statistics.

Frustrating though it may be for campaigners anxious to do a spot of myth busting, and put the public right, we'd conclude that this simply doesn't work. We've explored how to change minds in a number of policy areas where public attitudes, often passionately held, do not always coincide with the facts (immigration for example). We've found again and again that arguments are more likely to land if their starting point is the public's beliefs as they truly are, not where the campaigner wishes they were. This can be achieved by engaging the voter through acknowledgement of some aspect of their current view, and only then going on to persuade or change their mind. As Mrs Thatcher's advisor, Tim Bell, used to say, 'perception is reality'.

Making the case

To explore such strategies for making the case, my colleague, Ben Shimshon has conducted research exploring one specific

group – chosen in part because they are generally felt to be deserving - children living in poverty. We can extrapolate some more general guidelines from his findings that might provide some lessons for sustaining political will to help those facing multiple needs and exclusions.

The statistics on this indicate that most people are not child poverty 'deniers': 43 per cent believe 'there is some child poverty' in Britain today, while 36 per cent believe there is 'quite a lot'. They are also more likely to agree that child poverty is on the increase – 46 per cent say this while 35 per cent think it has stayed the same and just 12 per cent think it has decreased. An even larger proportion, 51 per cent, think that over the next ten years child poverty will increase more. It is thought to be a very important issue by 82 per cent and one that is squarely the responsibility of central government (79 per cent) rather than the people who are living in poverty themselves (46 per cent).

However, when we look at the perceived causes of child poverty a more punitive angle creeps into the public mind-set: given a wide range of options to chose from, the public were significantly more likely to choose those that 'blamed' the children's parents (parents suffer from addiction 75 per cent, parents don't want to work 63 per cent) rather than those which were to do with structural societal problems (inequalities in society 5 per cent, living in a poor quality area 5 per cent).

Our qualitative work in this area confirmed how equivocal the public can be. On the one hand, children living in poverty deserve compassion: they are innocent, they should not be denied opportunity, thinking of children provokes feeling of empathy as they also think about their own kids, and, importantly, they can see value for society as a whole in

addressing the problem before it becomes ingrained, leaving an individual to live a lifetime on benefits and in poverty.

Yet on the other hand, the children's parents are often linked to the problem in public perception and as such given short shrift: here the empathy leads the public to think about themselves and reflect that if I can do it, why can't they?'

Thus benefits are resented and spending habits critically scrutinised: expensive brands, cigarettes and alcohol seen as examples of misplaced priorities. This story is often told to great effect by tabloid papers using vivid and memorable case studies.

With this in mind, a number of guidelines emerge that could help campaigners and politicians to make an effective case to support those who experience multiple needs.

First, it is important to start your argument in a place where you know the public can agree. Beginning with a challenge will only lead them to switch off. For example, previous polling for the Fabian Society found that respondents would be more sympathetic towards people with multiple needs if they had: looked for help and not found it (63 per cent), were motivated to improve their situation (58 per cent), had poor mental wellbeing (54 per cent) or had suffered abuse in childhood (47 per cent). It also found that making a long-term case – that spending on multiple needs is a form of investment to allow people to contribute themselves in the future – could prove a fruitful strategy.

Second, resist bombarding the public with stats. The successful 'scrounger' narrative is rooted in anecdote, stories and symbols, not statistics. Challenging like with like will succeed where counter intuitive stats will not. It would be relatively easy to exemplify how the current system fails the people who need it most, by showcasing at

a national level the stories of individuals who are shunted from pillar to post by disjointed government and local services.

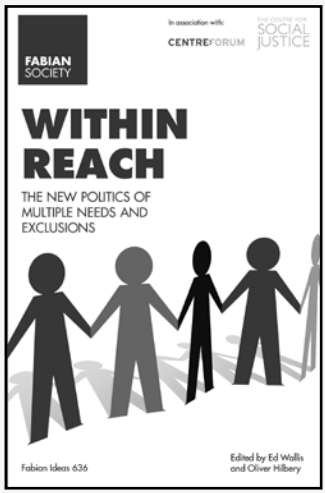
Thirdly, empathy trumps sympathy – choose examples that everyone can identify with, rather than simply feel sorry for. The narrative that anyone could fall into the spiral of multiple needs is a powerful one, but people need to believe it and to be able to recognise the fragility of a stable life. Empathy for people who may have fallen on hard times and who now need help to help themselves could be a powerful driver.

Fourth, where possible demonstrate a concrete benefit to a wider audience rather than just the poor or multiply excluded. At a time when every public penny spent must be accounted for, the huge long-term savings of a lower crime rate and stronger communities should be at the forefront of any campaign.

Finally, an important part of developing a persuasive argument is having credibility to act. Here, the two main parties each occupy their own distinctive – and sometimes difficult - territories. Recent work that BritainThinks has conducted for *Progress* magazine shows that while Labour is believed to be compassionate, it is too often seen as not having the competency to achieve what it would need to do in government. The Conservatives' image is the opposite – the party is seen as able to 'take the tough decisions that might be necessary to be effective' but it still tends to be seen as the 'nasty' party: out of touch with the needs of the less well off.

For Labour to build a campaign for the most disadvantaged it will therefore need to show that it has a properly costed programme that can succeed. The Conservatives, meanwhile, will need to show that they are committed to social justice and that action on multiple disadvantage is part of this.

Voters will need to look at all three party's visions in 2015 and understand the positive implications for, ahem, the many, not the few.



Discussion Guide: Within Reach

How to use this Discussion Guide

The guide can be used in various ways by Fabian Local Societies, local political party meetings and trade union branches, student societies, NGOs and other groups.

- You might hold a discussion among local members or invite a guest speaker – for example, an MP, academic or local practitioner to lead a group discussion.
- Some different key themes are suggested. You might choose to spend 15–20 minutes on each area, or decide to focus the whole discussion on one of the issues for a more detailed discussion.

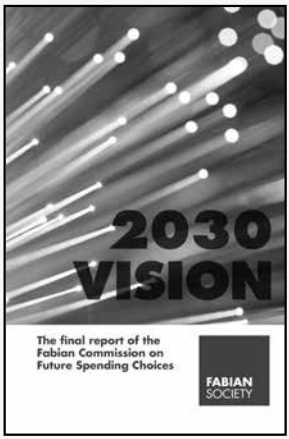
A discussion could address some or all of the following questions:

1. In the run up to the 2010 election, the Fabian Society published Hardest to Reach? In it, Iain Duncan Smith argued "that if we are to transform the lives of those with multiple needs then a truly joined-up approach is needed". He argued that funding should be attached "to the delivery of policies which are cross-departmental…[with] buy-in from all relevant Secretaries of State via a coordinating body" and work "overseen and coordinated by someone at cabinet level." However, with so much of the DWP's agenda defined by drastic spending cuts and its attempt to radically reshape the benefit system through universal credit, have things changed for the better for people with multiple needs under the coalition?

2. Labour's new thinking on the creation of a more 'relational state prioritises the importance of human relationships in the delivery of public services. Can a 'relational state' really be created within services that are currently stretched for resources, bureaucratic and to which people with multiple needs often present in challenging ways?

3. While Conservatives and Liberal Democrats have long been champions of localism, it has tended to be viewed with suspicion on the left. However, there is a renewed interest in the concept on the left, in part due to the diminishing returns achieved from the centre over 13 years of Labour government, and in part due to a growing recognition of the potential democratic empowerment that could be harnessed by central government 'letting go'. What are the possibilities for a radical rethink that can unlock the positive potential of localism to address the specific needs of a particular area?

Please let us know what you think
Whatever view you take of the issues, we would very much like to hear about your discussion. Please send us a summary of your debate (perhaps 300 words) to debate@fabians.org.uk.



2030 Vision

The final report of the Fabian Commission on Future Spending Choices

This is the final report of the Fabian Society Commission on Future Spending Choices, which was established to explore the public spending choices facing government over the next two decades, including in the next parliament. It asks how these decisions can be made in a way that maximises prosperity, sustainability and social justice.

Over the short term, the Commission proposes an approach to reducing the deficit that returns the public finances to a sustainable position in a timely manner without neglecting the economic and social investment which will lay the foundations of national success in the future. 2030 Vision assesses a number of scenarios for public spending from 2016 onwards and concludes that the next government can afford to spend more, but must spend in line with long-term objectives.

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Within Reach

The new politics of multiple needs and exclusions

Across the country there is a small group of people who face multiple problems such as homelessness, substance misuse, mental health problems and offending. They slip between the cracks of mainstream public services and they fall out of a political debate that is unrelentingly focused on majoritarian concerns.

As we approach 2015, politicians from all parties are beginning to define the ideas that will shape our public services for the future. But what does this thinking really mean for those facing multiple needs and exclusions?

In *Within Reach: The new politics of multiple needs and exclusions*, politicians and policy experts from across the political spectrum outline how our services need to change to provide the kind of support the most vulnerable in our society really need:

- Lisa Nandy MP, shadow minister for civil society, looks at how to invest in relationships
- Richard Reeves, associate director of CentreForum, says that independence, not inclusion, should be the goal of a liberal approach to disadvantage
- Christian Guy, director of the Centre for Social Justice, assesses the impact of the coalition on social justice
- Lord Michael Bichard, cross bench peer, asks why changing public services is so difficult
- Julia Unwin, chief executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, takes a look at what the evidence tells us about the most excluded
- Simon Parker, director of the New Local Government Network, considers the potential power of localism
- Deborah Mattinson, director of BritainThinks, assesses public attitudes to the most vulnerable

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