BURNING BRITAIN?
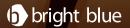
Tackling 'burning injustices' that blight Britain

Edited by Eamonn Ives and Frank Soodeen

bright blue

JRF JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION

BURNING BRITAIN?

Tackling 'burning injustices'
that blight Britain

Edited by Eamonn Ives and Frank Soodeen

bright blue

JRF JOSEPH
ROWNTREE
FOUNDATION

Contents

Acknowledgements

Foreword

Ryan Shorthouse and Campbell Robb

When Theresa May delivered her first speech as Prime Minster on the steps of Number 10 Downing Street, she proclaimed that the mission of her Government was to tackle the 'burning injustices' that still blight Britain.[1]

In her speech, she focused on describing racial, gender and class inequalities. That day, the Prime Minister was, encouragingly, signalling that her Government would be compassionate and radical on domestic reform.

Preparing for Brexit has dominated the thinking and actions of Theresa May's Governments since then. But there has been some progress, with the introduction of new policies to try and rectify some 'burning injustices'.

A new Domestic Abuse Bill will widen what constitutes abuse, and toughen sentences for it involving children.[2] The publication of the Race Disparity Audit by the Cabinet Office late last year shone a spotlight on the unequal treatment and outcomes of people from different ethnic

---

1. Theresa May, "Statement from the new Prime Minister", https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/statement-from-the-new-prime-minister-theresa-may (2016).
2. Theresa May, "Our new domestic violence bill will outlaw economic and physical abuse", *The Guardian*, 8th March, 2018.

backgrounds in British public services.[3] The Government has very recently invested significantly more in mental health services, especially for children, with a new aim that no young person will have to receive treatment for their mental health away from their local area by 2021.[4]

Unquestionably though, there is much more that needs to and can be done. Britain is, broadly, a prosperous country with plentiful opportunities for individuals from all walks of life. But there are too many people and places that are sometimes or always locked out of the prosperity most of us enjoy. They should be the priority of this Government – any, in fact.

Parliamentarians from all political parties can be – indeed, have been – both sources and champions of fresh policy ideas to fix injustices they care deeply about. Despite the caricature, most politicians from most political parties are principled and passionate people, desperate to use their influence to do good. The Prime Minister has an impressive resource from which she can nurture ideas and allies for her 'burning injustices' agenda.

> "Despite the caricature, most politicians from most political parties are principled and passionate people, desperate to use their influence to do good"

Backbench parliamentarians especially are in a uniquely powerful position. The 2017 General Election produced a minority Conservative Government and hung parliament, enabling backbench MPs to pressurise the Government to accept amendments and bills that garner support from those in different political parties.

Already, for example, the Labour Party's Stella Creasy MP successfully proposed a popular amendment to the 2017 Queen's Speech, which

3. Cabinet Office, "Race Disparity Audit: summary findings from the ethnicity facts and figures website", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650723/RDAweb.pdf (2017).
4. Full Fact, "NHS spending on mental health", https://fullfact.org/health/nhs-spending-mental-health/ (2017).

ultimately led to the Government to change its original position and enable women from Northern Ireland to access NHS-funded abortions for free in Great Britain. Another Labour MP, Geoffrey Robinson MP, saw his private members' bill to introduce an opt-out organ donation system in England, pass through its second reading in the House of Commons unopposed, which means it will highly likely become law next year. The Homelessness Reduction Act, originally a private members' bill from the Conservative Party's Bob Blackman MP, places new duties on housing authorities to provide advice and support to a much wider group of eligible people who are homeless or threatened with being so for an extended period of up to 56 days.[5]

For the rest of this parliament, likely to last right until 2022, the development of powerful and progressive policies from parliamentarians on all sides of the House of Commons ought to be strongly encouraged. They can be the engine of the necessary and popular 'burning injustices' agenda.

That is why Bright Blue and Joseph Rowntree Foundation, two independent organisations both committed to ensuring that people who are usually overlooked are better supported in public policy, have commissioned and published a new essay collection that brings together 13 prominent backbench MPs from all of the UK's main political parties. This publication is intended to shine a spotlight on the key 'burning injustices' in Britain and provide original and credible policies to help remedy them. It is hoped it will catalyse MPs to work together more on a cross-party basis to get the Government to prioritise policymaking that supports those struggling in our country.

The 'burning injustices' explored are numerous and wide-ranging, ranging from destitution and drug abuse, to life in prisons and on the streets. The danger is that every phenomenon or problem now becomes

---

5. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, "Homelessness Reduction Act: policy factsheets", https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/homelessness-reduction-bill-policy-factsheets (2018).

labelled a 'burning injustice', to attract attention and resources. This risks delegitimising and diluting the agenda. We need to be clear: not every inequality is a result of injustice; and not every injustice is 'burning'. Government, all of us, must focus on those injustices that are most clear, pressing and shameful.

We do not claim that these essays provide a comprehensive survey of the challenges facing our country, or indeed highlight the most pressing ones. Parliamentarians campaign on the causes closest to their hearts. But there are common trends in their thinking.

First, MPs of all stripes recognise that the 'burning injustices' that blight Britain have arisen because of a myriad of complex reasons, not just the policies of their opponents.

Second, there is a recognition that progress has been made in rectifying many 'burning' injustices, thanks in part to the policies of past and different Governments; that, for most injustices, we are in the middle of a journey towards better outcomes, not the start of it.

Third, there is no fatalism. Parliamentarians strongly believe there are practical answers to social and economic problems, which can be drawn from historical and international evidence.

This publication really should be what politics is all about, what politicians should be rated on and rewarded for: generating incisive and pragmatic policies, which can command a consensus, to help those who truly are vulnerable in our society. It is this type of politics, the politics of problem-solving and bridge-building, that can lead Britain to a place where the 'burning injustices' that presently blight it truly are extinguished.

Ryan Shorthouse is the Director of Bright Blue, an independent think tank and pressure group for liberal conservatism.

Campbell Robb is the Chief Executive of the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, an independent social change organisation working to solve poverty in the United Kingdom.

An agenda for gender

Achieving true equality

The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP

In her Downing Street speech on the day she became Prime Minister, Theresa May was careful to include, as one of her 'burning injustices', the fact that if you are a woman you will earn less than a man.[1] As a woman who had got to the very top of British politics, which is still a very male-dominated environment, this was an important statement for her to include.

But why is the Conservative Party always playing catch-up on gender issues? We have had, after all, the first two female Prime Ministers, and a Conservative Home Secretary who oversaw legislation which – in 1918 – gave some women the ability to vote for the first time.

Is it because, as Conservatives, we are suspicious of calls for equality of outcome? Is it because Conservative politicians seem unconvinced by identity politics? Even now, this Conservative Government is proposing that the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which includes sections on equality and prohibiting all forms of discrimination, does not need to continue to be an explicit part of UK law after Brexit.

Of course, women's rights have come a long way over the last century.

1. Theresa May, "Statement from the new Prime Minister", https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/statement-from-the-new-prime-minister-theresa-may (2016).

It is very easy for women in the twenty-first century to take for granted our right to vote, our ability to take out a mortgage or a loan without a male guarantor, that we have much greater control over our own bodies including the decision to have or not to have children, and that we can do almost any job we want, marry who we want, have property in our own names, and so on.

> "Gender discrimination starts early. So, there must be a more explicit focus on it within the education system"

But, even with all those advances, that does not mean that gender discrimination does not exist, and that we should not, as firm believers in equality of opportunity, champion a continued push to end it. Because the fact is that gender discrimination today is more insidious and, as the evidence given to the House of Commons Treasury Select Committee's recent *Women in finance* inquiry shows, the biases are often unconscious.[2] That means they are both harder to spot and harder to deal with; but they still need to be called out.

Gender discrimination starts early. So, there must be a more explicit focus on it within the education system. In the same way that we need more male primary school teachers, we need more female head teachers: more flexible working patterns in our schools and colleges is essential. More investment in careers provision via the Careers & Enterprise Company, which I helped to establish as Education Secretary, and other organisations such as Speakers for Schools, will be crucial. Any organisations involved in careers advice and guidance should have included in their mandate the tackling of gender biases.

We will never have enough female engineers if too many girls drop the necessary subjects too early. The importance of all students doing a broad variety of subjects for as long as possible cannot be overestimated.

---

2. Treasury Committee, "Oral evidence: Women in finance, HC 477", http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/treasury-committee/women-in-finance/oral/79385.pdf (2018), 21.

Any government's future curriculum reforms must facilitate this.

If we do not tackle this early, then we end up with a situation where it is inevitable that we see never-ending occupational segregation and a gender pay gap. We know that there are still not enough women holding senior roles in the private and the public sectors. We know that there also inequalities in areas such as pension entitlements and financial literacy, and therefore financial security.[3]

It is not just in education and employment, but also in wider society, that women face unjustifiable barriers. The Office for National Statistics Crime Survey for 2016-17 showed that one in five women in the UK has experienced some kind of sexual assault.[4] In England and Wales, in 2015-16, there were 4,094 sex discrimination cases taken to an employment tribunal.[5] And, horrifically, in spite of a long list of criminal offences outlawing domestic violence, two women a week are killed by their current or former partners in England and Wales.[6]

> "If we do not tackle this early, then we end up with a situation where it is inevitable that we see never-ending occupational segregation and a gender pay gap"

Laws have been passed to clamp down on sexual harassment, abuse and stalking, yet projects such as 'Everyday Sexism' record the deliberate and casual misogyny which girls and women still have to put up with. In many cases, harassment happens because powerful men take advantage of their status to harass women they work with. Is it time for an 'abuse of

3. Tabea Bucher-Koenen, Annamaria Lusardi, Rob J.M. Alessie and Maarten C.J. van Rooij, "How financially literate are women? An overview and new insights", http://gflec.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/WP-2016-1-How-Financially-Literate-Are-Women.pdf (2016).
4. Office for National Statistics, "Sexual offences in England and Wales: year ending March 2017", https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/crimeandjustice/articles/sexualoffencesinenglandandwales/yearendingmarch2017 (2018).
5. Equality and Human Rights Commission, "One year on: an update on discrimination claims in the employment tribunal", https://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/file/19966/download?token=8b0H_r6G (2016), 5.
6. Women's Aid, "How common is domestic abuse?", https://www.womensaid.org.uk/information-support/what-is-domestic-abuse/how-common-is-domestic-abuse/ (2018).

power' offence? Could whistleblowing protections be extended to those who call out harassment? Should non-disclosure agreements in such situations be outlawed?

Many health conditions faced by women now, happily, attract fierce attention and widespread support. Breast cancer, for example, receives significant levels of funding. But there are still issues – for example, early screening for ovarian cancer or tackling the taboos around the menopause – which need greater focus. Every woman goes through the menopause, but are affected differently, some very negatively. Women should not have to face inconsistent support from employers during what can be a very difficult time.

At around this time of life, women often become carers. In the way that flexible working around childcare has become an easier conversation for parents to have – although, disappointingly, not everywhere – carers exercising their right to flexible working needs to become more mainstream, too.

Finally, let us not forget about men. Gender discrimination works the other way, too. Educational under-achievement of white working-class boys, in particular, is often overlooked.[7] Suicide is the biggest killer of men aged under 45 in the UK.[8] Too many boys lack male role models in their lives. These are all things, and there will be others, which we must talk about too, if we are to end gender discrimination.

The Rt Hon Nicky Morgan MP is the Chair of the Commons Treasury Select Committee. She was formerly the Secretary of State for Education and the Minister of State for Women and Equalities. She is the Conservative Party Member of Parliament for Loughborough.

---

7. Philip Kirby and Carl Cullinane, "Class differences: ethnicity and disadvantage", https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/Class-differences-report_References-available-online.pdf (2016).
8. Campaign Against Living Miserably, "Suicide", https://www.thecalmzone.net/help/get-help/suicide/ (2018).

A race not yet won

Reducing racial discrimination

The Rt Hon David Lammy MP

As a black Member of Parliament, representing one of the most ethnically diverse constituencies in our country, I have always taken my responsibility to speak on behalf of Britain's ethnic minority communities seriously.

My parents arrived in this country to signs reading 'no blacks, no dogs, no Irish.' I grew up under the spectre of race riots, 'sus' laws, and skirmishes with the National Front. Today mixed-race marriages may well be on the up – including in the Royal Family – and more black students than ever before are going to university, but we should be under no illusions about the persistence of yawning, entrenched inequalities in our society.

As I said on the day that the Government launched its Racial Disparity Audit, while this may well have been a useful exercise in setting out the challenges that we face, we have yet to actually see anything concrete when it comes to government policy that will even begin to change the record that has been playing all of my life.

In this respect, the Government's Audit merely confirmed what many of us have long known to be true – there are long-standing and deeply embedded inequalities across income, poverty, living standards,

employment, housing, and health that are holding Britain's ethnic minority communities back. Inequality is also an intersectional issue – the overwhelming majority of the pain of austerity has been borne by women since 2010, and it is women of colour who have suffered the most.[1]

Just before Christmas last year, it was a great privilege to unveil a portrait of my predecessor as Member of Parliament for Tottenham, Bernie Grant – a politician who ploughed a lonely furrow in the corridors of power alongside the Rt Hon Diane Abbott MP and the Rt Hon Keith Vaz MP during the 1980s. Talking about Bernie's story was a timely reminder that we stand on the shoulders of giants, and when I returned to Parliament following the General Election last year it was a source of great pride to find that there are now enough black and minority ethnic Members of Parliament to fill an active and lively WhatsApp group – an accessory that has become something of a rite of passage in SW1 in recent times.

> "There have been times where it felt as though race had fallen off the agenda and we were fighting an uphill battle to get issues of racial inequality noticed. This is no longer the case"

As the long-serving Chair of the Race and Community All-Party Parliamentary Group, there have been times where it felt as though race had fallen off the agenda and we were fighting an uphill battle to get issues of racial inequality noticed. This is no longer the case. In addition to the Race Disparity Audit, back in 2016 the then Conservative Prime Minister, David Cameron, asked me – a Labour backbencher and former Minister – to undertake an independent review of the treatment of black and minority ethnic individuals in our criminal justice system.

---

1. Sarah-Marie Hall, Kimberly McIntosh, Eva Neitzert, Laura Pottinger, Kalwinder Sandhu, Mary-Ann Stephenson, Howard Reed and Leonie Taylor, "Intersecting inequalities: the impact of austerity on black and minority ethnic women in the UK", https://www.runnymedetrust.org/uploads/PressReleases/Correct%20WBG%20report%20for%20Microsite.pdf (2017), 1.

I published my final report last year, and what I found was deeply troubling, with black and minority ethnic Britons facing bias, including overt discrimination, in parts of our criminal justice system.

A quarter of all prisoners are from black, Asian, and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds, while over 40% of young people in custody are from BAME backgrounds.[2] There is in fact greater disproportionality in the number of black people in prison here than in the United States of America. BAME defendants are 240% more likely than white defendants to receive a custodial sentence for drug offences, even when prior criminal history and plea decisions are taken into account, and overcoming a significant and entrenched trust deficit within ethnic minority communities will take serious and sustained action.[3]

Last year, I published data secured following Freedom of Information requests showing that only three Oxford colleges made offers to a black British A Level applicant every year between 2010 and 2015, and an average of 13 colleges did not make a single offer to a black British A Level applicant each year.[4] Oxford refused to even break down the data for different black ethnic groups, and while Cambridge were more forthcoming with the figures, they fared only marginally better – with a quarter of colleges not making a single offer to a black British A Level applicant each year.[5]

When I raised concerns around possible systemic bias inherent in the admissions process I was met with a wall of obfuscation and denial, a refusal to even engage with the figures I presented or consider the merits of the evidence-based reforms that I recommended. I was even accused by one Principal of putting off prospective applicants by publishing the

2. David Lammy, "The Lammy Review: an independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf (2017), 45.

3. Ibid., 33

4. David Lammy, "Oxbridge access data", https://www.davidlammy.co.uk/single-post/2017/10/20/Oxbridge-access-data (2017).

5. Ibid.

data in the first place. Another criticised me publicly for not including foreign students in an analysis of black British students.

It was a similar story when I challenged the BBC over their consistent failure to improve diversity, despite a whole host of strategies, initiatives, approaches, and action plans spanning almost two decades. In the four years to 2015 we saw a 0.9% increase in BAME employment.[6] Only 10.3% of the BBC's senior leadership team is BAME.[7] The BBC's ten-person executive committee is all white.

Yet we are supposed to be satisfied with our national broadcaster, paid for by each and every one of us, paying lip service to diversity in terms of hiring junior staff whilst letting diverse talent fade away further up the food chain, and the people who call the shots at the top remaining a closed club.

In trying to speak out on behalf of under-represented communities I have seen first-hand that many of the problems that I raise when it comes to ethnic minority communities are equally if not more relevant to our country's white, working-classes, and workless-classes. The Race Disparity Audit revealed that white pupils from state schools had the lowest university entry rate of any ethnic group in 2016, and the proportion of offers that Oxbridge made to applicants from the top two social classes actually increased between 2010 and 2015.[8] Over a six-year period, Cambridge made almost 5,000 offers to applications from eight wealthy areas in the South East, and just eight offers to their contemporaries in eight poorer areas in Wales, Northern England and the Midlands.[9]

What I have also learnt is that whenever someone tries to speak truth

6. David Lammy, "House of Commons Hansard: BBC: diversity", https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2016-04-14/debates/16041436000002/BBCDiversity (2016).
7. BBC, "BBC equality information report 2016/17", http://downloads.bbc.co.uk/diversity/pdf/equality-information-report-2017.pdf (2017), 35.
8. Cabinet Office, "Race Disparity Audit: summary findings from the ethnicity facts and figures website", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/650723/RDAweb.pdf (2017), 10.
9. David Lammy, "The Lammy Review" (2017).

to power, and questions the big beasts of our establishment like the BBC and Oxbridge, the answer is always the same – the talent pipeline is not there so we will have to settle for incremental change, or we will see changes come about over time if we just wait. The fact of the matter is that if social mobility is ever going to be more than Westminster jargon, we need to shake the roots of entrenched privilege and tackle social apartheid.

"We need to shake the roots of entrenched privilege and tackle social apartheid"

Incremental change does not cut it – whether we are talking about mentoring schemes or undergraduate students going to speak to pupils at their old schools then incremental change is simply not good enough anymore in dealing with structural inequality. If we are actually going to be in the business of dealing with inequality then we have to be in the business of systemic change. It feels to me like people are in the mood for systemic change – so it is up to the Government to listen, and keep up.

The Rt Hon David Lammy MP is the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Race and Community and the author of the Lammy Review, a government-commissioned, independent review of the treatment of, and outcomes for, black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system. He is the Labour Party Member of Parliament for Tottenham.

Left behind no longer

Supporting the white, working-class

The Rt Hon Justine Greening MP

In spite of the rising standards which the Conservative Government's education reforms have helped to drive, alongside the hard work of the teaching profession, many children have not experienced those improvements in their own education.

Although 1.9 million more children than in 2010 are in primary or secondary schools that are now rated good or outstanding,[1] there are still one million children who are in schools that are not at that level yet.[2] In other cases, children may be in good or outstanding schools, but not progressing as much as their peers. When you look at these children, it is impossible not to notice one simple fact – many are from white, working-class families. The Prime Minister's Race Disparity Audit, published last year, showed this up in sharp relief: in terms of attainment, in most white-ethnic groups pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) made less progress than the average for all

1. Ofsted, "Data view: view regional performance over time", https://public.tableau.com/profile/ofsted#!/vizhome/Dataview/Viewregionalperformanceovertime (2018); Full Fact, "Nearly 2 million more children are in good or outstanding schools since 2010", https://fullfact.org/education/2-million-children-outstanding-schools/ (2018).
2. Ibid.

other FSM pupils.[3]

In London, the desire of newly-arrived, migrant families to do well has translated into a focus on their children's education. But even in London, where schools have been transformed, the performance of white, working-class children is broadly the same as those around the rest of the country.[4] These children have every bit as much talent as anyone else. They deserve an education that unlocks it. We should not stop until our education system delivers that for every child and young person, everywhere.

> "These children have every bit as much talent as anyone else. They deserve an education that unlocks it"

How do we do that though? The Government's Social Mobility Action Plan, launched last year, is a blueprint to deliver better outcomes for these left behind communities and children.[5]

First, it sets out how the Department for Education will continue to shift its national strategy to a more national one, with more local tailoring. We need to understand that any national policy will 'land' differently in different places. The twelve Opportunity Areas I launched when Secretary of State were the Department for Education's first step into looking at how a place-based education strategy could work.[6] The Opportunity Areas not only involve supporting school improvement to help teachers drive up standards, they also focus on working with local communities and businesses. The initial work suggests its localised focus is more powerful than purely having a regional strategy, still remote to

3. Cabinet Office, "Race Disparity Audit: summary findings from the Ethnicity Facts and Figures website", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/686071/Revised_RDA_report_March_2018.pdf (2017), 22.
4. Ibid, 21.
5. Department for Education, "Unlocking talent, fulfilling potential: a plan for improving social mobility through education", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/667690/Social_Mobility_Action_Plan_-_for_printing.pdf (2017a).
6. Department for Education, "Education Secretary announces 6 new opportunity areas", https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-announces-6-new-opportunity-areas (2017b).

communities wanting to see local schools immediately on the doorstep get better. The Opportunity Areas are in places like Derby, Oldham, Doncaster, Norwich, Hastings, and West Somerset: this means they focus on lifting the education prospects for children from white, working-class families, though as part of a broader community, of course.[7] I think the next steps are to look at the next wave of Opportunity Areas and also to look at how this approach can work in places that perhaps face different levels of challenges, but would still benefit from a more tailored approach – places like Kettering and Knowsley, for example.

Second, we need to recognise that the work to improve a child's home learning environment – in other words, the crucial role that parents play in supporting their child's education – really matters. Building the evidence base about what works, drawing on the analysis from the Early Intervention Foundation and the Education Endowment Foundation, is crucial.[8] In the past, Governments have steered clear of this area, worried about accusations of being overly interfering with parents. But in my experience, overwhelmingly, parents want to do their best for their children, and want to know how to do that and what works best. Once they are able to work closely with schools to get advice on what steps they can take to help, many find it easy to make simple changes that have a big effect on their child's progress.

> "I believe business is part of the solution, especially on how we provide more and better opportunities for young people from white, working-class backgrounds"

Third, getting employers into schools is essential. Labour are painting business as solely a problem to be fixed. But I believe business is part of the solution, especially on how we provide more and better opportunities

---

7. Ibid.
8. Early Intervention Foundation, "What is early intervention?", http://www.eif.org.uk/what-is-early-intervention/ (2018); Education Endowment Foundation, "Our mission", https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/about/history/ (2018).

for young people from white, working-class backgrounds. The skills reforms, including the introduction of T-levels and the Apprenticeships Levy, are at the centre of how we will make post-16 choices for young people stronger.[9] That is why I want all companies to commit to my new Social Mobility Pledge,[10] which requires organisations to partner with local schools, and provide work experience and apprenticeship opportunities for people from disadvantaged backgrounds. It is already supported by the Confederation of British Industry, British Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses. I think all major parties need to back it, so we can see the new Social Mobility Pledge as standard from business.

The Prime Minister's Race Disparity Audit showed, starkly, the relatively poorer educational outcomes for children from white, working-class backgrounds.[11] Delivering on the promise of the Department for Education's Social Mobility Action Plan, which I launched when Secretary of State, will be critical if we are finally to see outcomes improve for all our children.

The Rt Hon Justine Greening MP is the former Secretary of State for Education and Minister for Women and Equalities. She is the Conservative Party Member of Parliament for Putney.

---

9. Department for Education, "Education Secretary announces first new T levels", https://www.gov.uk/government/news/education-secretary-announces-first-new-t-levels (2017c).
10. Department for Education (2017a), 30.
11. The Social Mobility Pledge, "About the pledge", https://www.socialmobilitypledge.org/aboutthepledge/ (2018).

Matters of the mind
Improving mental health provision

The Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP

When Theresa May took office promising to tackle society's 'burning injuctices', it was heartening that she singled out the lack of support available for people experiencing mental ill health. One in four of us will be affected by a mental health problem in any given year, costing the economy an estimated £105 billion.[1] But rather than being treated with the urgency and compassion that society would demand for a physical condition, mental illness has been scandalously hidden and neglected.

> "One in four of us will be affected by a mental health problem in any given year, costing the economy an estimated £105 billion"

The good news is that public attitudes towards mental illness are changing. Efforts to raise awareness and understanding of mental health, driven by campaigns like 'Time to Change' and 'Heads Together', have helped to promote open conversations and break the stigma that so often leaves people feeling ashamed, embarrassed, and unable to seek

---

1. Mental Health Taskforce Strategy, "The five year forward view for mental health", https://www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Mental-Health-Taskforce-FYFV-final.pdf (2016), 10.

help. Well-known figures from entertainment, sport and politics have bravely opened up about their own personal struggles, helping to bring mental health out of the shadows. Now more than ever, #ItsOkToTalk about your mental wellbeing.

But there is still a long way to go to achieve genuine equality for those who suffer from mental ill health. Too many people suffer in silence, worried that their depression or anxiety will be seen as weakness. It shames our country that suicide is the biggest killer of young people under the age of 35 in the UK.[2]

When people do seek help, access to support and treatment is woefully inadequate. Often known as the 'Cinderella service of the NHS', mental health services are under-resourced, and of variable quality across the country. Furthermore, those with mental illness have not enjoyed the same rights to access treatment, on a timely basis, as those with physical conditions.

As Care Minister in the Coalition Government, I made it my mission to unpick this historic discrimination at the heart of our NHS. We introduced the first ever maximum waiting time standards in mental health care, along with an ambitious strategy for modernising mental health support for children and young people with a much greater focus on prevention.

Yet, despite heightened political attention, services continue to be in a state of distress. Inadequate resources and a chronic workforce crisis leave patients waiting interminably for treatment. Shamefully, we now have 7,000 fewer mental health nurses than in 2010, while the number of consultant psychiatrists working in child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) fell by 5% in the two years to September 2017.[3] So it is little wonder that services are buckling at a time of unprecedented demand.

2. Mental Health Foundation, "Suicide", https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z/s/suicide (2018).
3. Ibid.

Across much of the country, our treatment model is hopelessly dysfunctional. Institutional care is prioritised over early intervention and prevention, with vast amounts spent on containing people in inpatient settings, often inappropriately, for months on end. With the bulk of the money spent at the acute end of the spectrum, there is very little left over for preventive care that could stop health deteriorating and massively improve people's lives.

Meanwhile, scandalous practices persist on a scale that would never be tolerated for physical health conditions. All too often, we see people who are experiencing a mental health crisis shunted across the country because there are no beds available locally. The heavy use of force is widespread, including the dangerous practice of face-down restraint. When budgets are tight, we regularly see money being diverted away from mental health services with the result that promised investment does not reach the frontline.

And almost a quarter of children and young people are turned away from specialist services, often because they do not meet outrageous thresholds for treatment.[4] The teenager with anorexia denied support because their body mass index is not severe enough. The disturbed youngster told they will not be treated unless they have repeatedly expressed suicidal thoughts. It is like telling someone with cancer to come back when they are at death's door, and wholly contradicts the principle of early intervention.

Now that the Brexit process hangs over everything, there is a real danger that mental health will slide down the Government's agenda. But failing to tackle these historic barriers to effective mental health support would be a profound betrayal of the many thousands affected by this national scourge. Increased spending and a major recruitment drive are urgently needed to strengthen access to evidence-based treatment. But we should also be looking to radically shift resources from acute care

---

4. Emily Frith, "Children and young people's mental health: time to deliver", https://epi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/time-to-deliver-web.pdf (2016), 7.

to preventive services and early intervention, reducing length of stay in hospital and providing better support in the community.

> "Failing to tackle these historic barriers to effective mental health support would be a profound betrayal of the many thousands affected by this national scourge"

However, the solutions to Britain's mental health crisis do not simply lie in the NHS. If we want to confront the growing prevalence of poor mental health then Government must commit to tackling the myriad of social challenges that appear to be driving this. Economic insecurity, financial stress and poor housing are just some of the recognised causes, while there are serious concerns about the role of social media in causing anxiety and low self-esteem among children. Addressing these would reduce the incidence of mental ill health rather than having to cure it once it is there.

This argument is powerfully made by Johann Hari in his challenging new book, *Lost Connections*. He traces the root causes of anxiety and depression in modern society to the breakdown of traditional communities and disconnection from work, meaningful values and the natural world. His study covers a range of issues from a lack of empowerment in the workplace to the long-term effects of childhood trauma, which is being examined by the Science and Technology Select Committee in early 2018.

Evidence shows that by providing early and evidence-based interventions to those who suffer trauma and neglect in the early years, you can stop the trauma becoming entrenched, reduce the need for long-term mental health support, and dramatically improve prospects in later life.[5] So it should be a priority of public policy to ensure that we are responding to the needs of victims, such as those who suffer child

---

5. Early Intervention Foundation, "Social and emotional learning: supporting children and young people's mental health", http://www.eif.org.uk/publication/social-and-emotional-learning-supporting-children-and-young-peoples-mental-health/ (2017).

sexual abuse, in a systematic and evidence-based way.

Given that 75% of mental health problems begin by the age of 18,[6] there must also be a stronger focus on children's mental wellbeing more generally – with better support for children in school and a renewed emphasis on building emotional resilience.

Finally, we should learn from public mental health strategies emerging in cities like New York, which offer the potential to focus much more effectively on prevention across entire populations. Similar work is already being done in the UK. I recently chaired a commission which looked at the impact of mental ill health in the West Midlands. We produced an action plan with a focus on access to good housing through 'Housing First'; getting people with mental ill health back to work using the internationally-recognised Individual Placement and Support model; and keeping people in work through a 'Wellbeing Premium' – a tax break for employers that take concrete steps to improve wellbeing in the workplace.

Delivering Brexit must not come at the expense of the social reform promised at the start of the Prime Minister's premiership. When it comes to tackling the burning injustice of mental ill health, we know what needs to be done. All that is required is the political will to act. Ultimately, the economic and moral case for doing so could not be clearer: the state will save a fortune, and it will transform countless lives.

The Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP was the Minister of State for Care and Support from 2012 to 2015 in the Coalition Government. He is currently the Chair of the Commons Science and Technology Select Committee and the Liberal Democrat Member of Parliament for North Norfolk.

6. MQ, "Young people's mental health", https://www.mqmentalhealth.org/articles/children-and-young-people (2016).

Hitting rock bottom

Dealing with destitution

The Rt Hon Frank Field MP

The poor and the working-class have, for much of history, been seen as one group. During my political life they began to form two distinct groups. A certain degree of movement between the two groups has always existed – as people moved in and out of work, for example – but fundamental differences between what it meant to be poor and working-class remained largely intact.

> "An overarching aim of successive post-war governments, was to peg the living standards of the poor to any increase in living standards enjoyed by the rest of the population"

Those differences helped shape two political programmes which ran parallel to one another throughout the post-war period. Campaigns to advance the interests of the working-class had, as their main objective, the creation and defence of secure jobs that paid family wages. Campaigns for the poor centred instead on people at the very bottom of the pile who, for the most part, were dependent on the safety net that had been knitted together by the Attlee Government.

An overarching aim of successive post-war governments, and

particularly the Macmillan Government, was to peg the living standards of the poor to any increase in living standards enjoyed by the rest of the population.

Ever since my appointment as Director of the Child Poverty Action Group in 1969, and then my election as Birkenhead's Member of Parliament in 1979, I had thought of this aim as being symbolised by a train journey – the wealthiest groups were sat in first class at the front, while the poor were in the rear carriage. Other groups filled up the centre carriages. But all of the carriages were moving together in the same direction as the country embarked on a common journey.

The past decade, though, has brought huge disruption to that journey. While the first-class carriage at the front of the train has continued travelling at high speed, the two carriages at the rear which carry the poor and the working-class have been uncoupled from the rest of the train and are now travelling at a heavily reduced speed. The doors separating these rear two carriages have also been flung open, so passengers now move more freely between them than they ever did before.

Most disturbingly of all, we have begun witnessing some passengers being thrown off the train altogether. It is those passengers that form a new and not insignificant sub-group within the ranks of the poor: the destitute.

To be destitute in modern Britain means to go without food, gas, and electricity, while either being homeless or persistently on the verge of being so.[1] It remains a largely hidden phenomenon, but, following a request from Feeding Britain – a national food poverty charity – the Office for National Statistics is now starting to piece together a picture of destitution: the numbers of families and individuals sacrificing meals and disconnecting from their energy supplier, in a last-ditch attempt to try and keep a roof over their heads.

How can we explain the disruption to our train journey which has

---

1. Joseph Rowntree Foundation, "Destitution in the UK", https://www.jrf.org.uk/file/49074/download?token=czEJOvcM&filetype=findings (2016).

necessitated such an exercise? Two forces stand out.

First, the labour market of the past decade has been characterised by the growth of exploitative companies placing more of their staff on low-waged agency, zero-hours or bogus self-employment contracts.

Former Chancellor George Osborne's National Living Wage will eventually be seen as a game changer here – it has already cut the numbers of low-paid employees to record lows.[2] But the growth in non-standard employment during a decade in which the combined costs of food, utilities and rent have risen together for the first time in post-war Britain, has blurred the distinction between the poor and the working-class – it has become much more difficult for people to escape poverty and the accompanying dependence on benefit, by working.

The Prime Minister, Theresa May, has crafted for herself an opportunity to reset the rules of the game at the bottom of the labour market. Legislation to distinguish more clearly between 'workers' and those who are genuinely 'self-employed', as well as to implement some of the more attractive recommendations from the Taylor Review,[3] would enable the Prime Minister to extend the protection of the National Living Wage to millions more vulnerable workers who are currently exposed to poverty pay.

It is through the benefits system that we are introduced to the second disruptive force: the changing role of the Government; from representing a line of defence against destitution, to becoming an active agent in its creation.

There was a common thread which ran through the National Assistance Board, Supplementary Benefits Commission, and Benefits Agency: no claimant, if they were in danger of becoming destitute, was allowed to leave the benefits office without money. That thread has now been broken

---

2. Phillip Inman, "National living wage brings 'biggest fall in low-paid workers since 1970s'", *The Guardian*, 12th October, 2017.
3. Matthew Taylor, "Good work: the Taylor Review of Modern Working Practices", https://assets. publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/627671/good-work-taylor-review-modern-working-practices-rg.pdf (2017).

by the Government's flagship welfare reform, Universal Credit.

To ministers and civil servants, Universal Credit is a long overdue simplification of the benefits system which seeks to apply middle-class values to the lives of the poor. To the poor themselves, it is an obstacle course of unreliable computer systems, arcane rules, massive delays, and maladministration which goes against the grain of life in the real world.[4]

Some families in Birkenhead have been pushed to the brink of destitution by having to wait two or three months before receiving their first payment of Universal Credit, for example. Others have been pushed there by incorrect and totally unrealistic timescales for the repayment of emergency loans, or even as a result of officials deleting their claims in error and then taking several months to restart them.

The Government's main task in this regard must be to redesign the welfare contract, so that it sets out clearly from the moment a claim has been registered the duties the government must fulfil in placing claimants into work and protecting them from hunger and homelessness, as against claimants' duties to look for work.

A rolling programme of reform will need to be built upon a reduction in the time taken to process and pay Universal Credit, as well as putting right those instances of maladministration that currently bring destitution into play.

As a first emergency move, though, the Government should send local authorities and housing associations data each day showing which households are set to move onto Universal Credit. Using this data, local authorities should try creatively to use Council Tax relief as a means of preventing arrears being built up, as well as local welfare assistance. Likewise, housing associations should seek to renegotiate rent accounts during that period when income is likely to be tightest (or non-existent), to minimise the risk of homelessness.

There is a role here, too, for the 'big six' energy suppliers. One of the

---

4. Patrick Butler, "Universal Credit: why is it a problem and can the system be fixed?", *The Guardian*, 2nd Oct, 2017.

first moves made by Feeding Birkenhead – a coalition of organisations working to eliminate hunger in my constituency – was to secure an agreement with npower, to set up one of the country's first fuel banks.[5] Over the past two years, it has provided two weeks' free gas and electricity for thousands of families who were staring destitution in the face. The other main energy suppliers must throw their weight behind the fuel bank scheme, to extend this layer of protection to the whole country.

One further element of the welfare contract needs to be put right quickly. Under Universal Credit, sanctions are being used for the first time ever against low-paid workers as a means of pushing them to increase their hours or move jobs. The human, not to mention political, consequences of this policy will be toxic.

A young lad in Birkenhead who had recently found a part-time delivery job was beginning to feel as though he was making something of himself. But as he was deemed by the Job Centre not to have been putting enough time into increasing his hours or finding another job, he was sanctioned. He had to give up his job, as he could not afford to get to work without Universal Credit, and as a result he is back on the road to destitution.

If, as part of a package of reforms, Universal Credit is to be built into a line of defence against destitution, rather than an agent in its creation, a more careful application of sanctions against the low-paid will require urgent attention.

The Rt Hon Frank Field MP is the Chair of the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee and the former Minister for Welfare Reform. He is the Labour Party Member of Parliament for Birkenhead.

---

5. npower, "npower Fuel Bank", https://www.npower.com/home/about-npower/in-the-community/fuel-bank/ (2018).

No more lows?

Stopping deaths and injuries from drugs

Caroline Lucas MP

The drug crisis in the UK is, without doubt, a 'burning injustice'. Not only are thousands of people dying every year because of failing drugs policies, but thousands more are needlessly criminalised too.

The statistics on the issue really do speak for themselves. The Office for National Statistics said 3,744 people – 2,572 men and 1,172 women – were fatally poisoned by both legal and illegal drugs in England and Wales in 2016, the highest number since comparable statistics began in 1993.[1] About 70% of the deaths were a result of 'drug misuse', with the highest rate coming in the 40-49-years-old age category.[2] Shockingly, almost one in three drug overdoses in Europe were recorded in the UK. The biggest killer, by quite a margin, is heroin.[3]

The war on drugs – which criminalises people who need help, protects nobody from drug related harms, and has been ineffective at tacking the real criminals getting rich from the drugs trade – is clearly failing.

---

1. Office for National Statistics, "Deaths related to drug poisoning in England and Wales: 2016 registrations", https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/deaths/bulletins/deathsrelatedtodrugpoisoninginenglandandwales/2016registrations (2017).
2. Ibid.
3. Sarah Barber, Rachel Harker and Alison Pratt, "Human and financial costs of drug addiction", http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/CDP-2017-0230 (2017), 3.

My home city, Brighton and Hove, has pioneered an evidence-based approach to drug policy, yet the failure of national policy can be seen on our streets – with shop owners recently finding pavements splattered with blood and needles. With Public Health England saying that a large number of heroin-related deaths are among people not in treatment, we urgently need better ways to reach out and save lives.

> "If cannabis were regulated by the government, taxation from sales and savings on criminal justice costs could net the Treasury up to £1 billion per annum – and regulation could destroy the drug's attraction as forbidden fruit"

We must consider on a case-by-case basis in communities across the country whether drug consumption rooms would help reduce drug-related harms. These 'rooms' are safe and supervised places where people who use drugs can inject or inhale illicit substances without fear of prosecution, and they could be saving lives right now. Similar schemes operate in ten other countries, including Australia, Germany, France, Ireland and Switzerland.

Not only do these spaces save lives, decrease the risk of users contracting HIV and other diseases, and clear related paraphernalia from our streets and parks, they also help people better access support services, such a healthcare, housing and benefits. They can help people take the first step in the journey from harmful addiction to a healthier life – specifically because they provide safety from the hard hand of the law, and the endless downward spiral that starts with being criminalised for drug use.

The Government's own advisory board – the Advisory Board on the Misuse of Drugs – agrees, and has recently recommended medically supervised drug consumption clinics be considered in some localities.[4]

---

4. Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs, "Reducing opiod-related deaths in the UK", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/576560/ACMD-Drug-Related-Deaths-Report-161212.pdf (2016), 36.

The Government should also develop a new approach to cannabis – and one which is in line with the evidence. Cannabis is the most widely used illegal drug in the UK, with 6.6% of adults aged between 16 to 59 using it in the past year, according to the Home Office.[5] There is no doubt that cannabis misuse can cause people harm, including serious mental health problems – but continued prohibition simply has not tackled the problems associated with it. As a report by the Adam Smith Institute and Volteface said recently: "The Government strategy is based around three main pillars: reducing demand, restricting supply and building recovery. All three are failing."[6] Prohibition does not affect everyone equally, either, with black people being at least eight times more likely than white people to be stopped and searched, for example, even though it is statistically less likely for drugs to be found on them.[7]

If cannabis were regulated by the government, taxation from sales and savings on criminal justice costs could net the Treasury up to £1 billion per annum – and regulation could destroy the drug's attraction as forbidden fruit, with benefits that could include safe access to cannabis of known strength and quality, alongside information about side effects of the different means of ingestion.[8]

Last year, the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform carried out a seven-month inquiry into medicinal cannabis – taking evidence from 623 patients, doctors, and experts. It also commissioned neurologist Professor Mike Barnes to review 20,000 studies going

5. Home Office, "Drug misuse: findings from the 2016/17 Crime Survey for England and Wales", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/642738/drug-misuse-2017-hosb1117.pdf (2016), 3.

6. Boris Starling, "The tide effect: how the world is changing its mind on cannabis legalisation", https://static1.squarespace.com/static/56eddde762cd9413e151ac92/t/582eecc6e3df2844237ca6dc/1479470281332/The+Tide+Effect+WEB+VERSION.pdf (2016), 4.

7. Vikram Dodd, "Stop and search eight times more likely to target black people", *The Guardian*, 26th October, 2017.

8. Mark L. Bryan, Emilia Del Bono and Stephen Pudney, "Licensing and regulation of the cannabis market in England and Wales: towards a cost-benefit analysis", https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/research/publications/521860 (2013), 116.

back to the 1960s.[9]

His report concluded that medical cannabis helps alleviate chronic pain, anxiety and muscle problems, particularly linked to multiple sclerosis and the side effects of chemotherapy. "The results are clear," he said, "cannabis has a medical benefit for a wide range of conditions."[10]

We know that many hundreds of thousands of people in the UK are already taking cannabis for primarily medical reasons. It is totally unacceptable that they should face the added stress of having to break the law to access their medicine.

> "It is time to shift away from a drug policy framework that is dripping with moralism while utterly lacking humanity and effectiveness"

Following the evidence on drugs policy – whether it is safety for heroin users, or the laws around cannabis – is the key. Drug consumption rooms and the legalisation of medicinal cannabis should be just the start of wider changes to the legal and political deadlock we find ourselves in. It is time to shift away from a drug policy framework that is dripping with moralism while utterly lacking humanity and effectiveness. The evidence is utterly clear on this: making drug use illegal does not stop people doing it, and does not protect them from harm.

Make no mistake, prohibition kills – and a refusal to change direction at this juncture is unforgivable.

Caroline Lucas MP is the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Drug Policy Reform. She is the Green Party Member of Parliament for Brighton Pavilion.

---

9. Michael P. Barnes, "Cannabis: the evidence for medical use", http://www.drugpolicyreform.net/p/med.html (2016).
10. Michelle Roberts, "MPs call for medical cannabis to be made legal", http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-37336678 (2016).

Sleeping safe and sound
Ending homelessness

Will Quince MP

"In a civilized society, it is unacceptable that people should be faced with the fear of homelessness." Listen to any speech in the House of Commons and you will often hear this phrase repeated by politicians from all sides of the political divide. However, much as it may sound obvious, it needs to serve as a rallying cry to tackle this issue.

It is an unfortunate reality that homelessness has been on the rise over the past few years. In 2016-17, there were 59,220 households accepted by local authorities in England as homeless and in priority need compared to 44,160 households in 2010-11[1] – a 34% increase. This is not even the full picture: rough sleeping – those who are not even able to sleep in suitable accommodation – is estimated to have increased by 134% between 2010 and 2016, with London accounting for 23% of all rough sleeping in England.[2]

For those it affects, homelessness is more than simply not having somewhere to live. It places a tremendous burden on everyday life

---

1. Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, "Live tables on homelessness", https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-homelessness (2018).
2. Department for Communities and Local Government, "Rough sleeping statistics Autumn 2016, England", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/585713/Rough_Sleeping_Autumn_2016_Statistical_Release.pdf (2017).

whether through increased day-to-day costs, restricting the ability to work and causing poor development in children both physically and educationally.[3] There are also clear links between poor health and homelessness: 78% of homeless people report having a physical health condition and 44% a mental health diagnosis, compared to 37% and 23% of the general population respectively.

> "Homelessness is more than simply not having somewhere to live"

Ask anyone who has become homeless and they will tell you that it is a stressful, lonely, and traumatic experience.[4] If we want to give people the best possible chance in life, we need to tackle homelessness. There are often many complex reasons why households become homeless, but there are policy areas we should be looking at.

First, there is a lack of housing. In 2015-16, a total of 168,600 dwellings were completed in the UK[5] – yet the Barker Review over a decade ago suggested that we needed 250,000 new homes per year just to meet current demand, and a recent report by the House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs has suggested 300,000.[6] Constrained supply and ever-increasing demand is pushing up house prices as well as rents.

Linked to this has been successive Right to Buy policies for tenants to purchase their properties from their local authority. It is right to support those who work hard and aspire to own their own home, yet

---

3. Shelter, "Green Book 50 years on: the reality of homelessness for families today", http://www.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1307361/GreenBook_-_A_report_on_homelessness.pdf (2016), 33.
4. Ben Sanders and Brianna Brown, "'I was all on my own': experiences of loneliness and isolation amongst homeless people", https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20504/crisis_i_was_all_on_my_own_2016.pdf (2015).
5. Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, "Live tables on house building: new build dwellings", https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-house-building (2018).
6. House of Lords Select Committee on Economic Affairs, "Building more homes", https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201617/ldselect/ldeconaf/20/20.pdf (2016), 4.

these properties have not been replaced at the same rate they have been bought. The safety net of affordable and emergency housing to catch those struggling to make ends meet has shrunk, all at a substantial cost to the Treasury.

There is also a problem with insecure tenancies – after all, the ending of a private sector tenancy has overtaken all other causes to become the biggest single driver of statutory homelessness (those households which are unintentionally homeless and in priority need) in England.[7] We have the shortest private sector tenancies in Europe with minimum tenancies of six months whilst many continental European countries have permanent or semi-permanent contracts of four to five years, or over ten years.[8]

The final policy area which we must address is welfare reform. The introduction of Universal Credit is a much-needed change to our fragmented benefits system. However, the waiting period and issues with payments has put some tenants into arrears, and moving to the housing element of Universal Credit being paid to the claimant has made private sector landlords hesitant to let to those receiving benefits. Only 20% of private landlords, in fact, are willing to rent to people receiving Universal Credit.[9] We also must be conscious that whilst private rents in England rose by 2% in the year to April 2017, Local Housing Allowance has been frozen, putting pressure on the incomes of poorer households.[10]

So, what must be done? The good news is that there has been a step-change in how we approach homelessness. The Homelessness Reduction Act 2017 requires local authorities to provide meaningful support to those faced with the possibility of losing their home, and also underlines

---

7. National Audit Office, "Homeslessness", https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Homelessness.pdf (2017), 6.
8. Shelter, "Time for reform: how our neighbours guarantee stability for renters", https://england.shelter.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/1289615/Time_for_reform_FINAL.pdf (2016), 7.
9. Kesia Reeve, Ian Cole, Elaine Batty, Mike Foden, Stephen Green and Ben Pattison, "Home: no less will do", https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237166/home_no_less_will_do_crisis.pdf (2016).
10. Office for National Statistics, "Index of private housing rental prices, Great Britain: April 2017", https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/inflationandpriceindices/bulletins/indexofprivatehousingrentalprices/apr2017 (2017).

the principle that a focus on prevention is vital to significantly reduce homelessness.

> "If the Government is to end rough sleeping by 2027, we need to go further"

Further, a number of simple proposals have been put forward by the APPG for Ending Homelessness (which I Co-Chair) on preventing homelessness amongst prison leavers, care leavers and victims of domestic abuse. These include increasing the value of the discharge grant so as to ensure that prison leavers are able to afford accommodation on their first night of freedom, introducing an England-wide housing reciprocal initiative for survivors of domestic violence to ensure they are able to secure new accommodation without losing their current secure tenancy, and exempting care leavers from the Shared Accommodation Rate up the age of 25.[11] These are small changes that would make a big difference to these groups.

We have recently seen action to protect the most vulnerable when it comes to welfare. In the Autumn Budget, we saw a reduction in the waiting period for Universal Credit and increased Targeted Affordability Funding to increase Local Housing Allowance rates in areas with the highest rent inflation.

If the Government is to end rough sleeping by 2027, we need to go further. An independent review of existing homelessness legislation undertaken by a panel established by Crisis – a homelessness charity – proposed placing a duty on local authorities to provide emergency temporary accommodation for 28 days for all people who are homeless and have nowhere safe to stay, providing a window of opportunity to

---

11. All-Party Parliamentary Group for Ending Homelessness, "Homelessness prevention for care leaves, prison leavers and survivors of domestic violence", https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/237534/appg_for_ending_homelessness_report_2017_pdf.pdf (2017).

support them into alternative accommodation.[12]

We must also support those who rent their home and ensure that longer tenancy agreements are an option for those who want them. The argument will be made that just because an agreement only lasts a year does not mean that it will not get renewed. However, the insecurity that comes with the possibility of having to move every year is a burden on tenants, particularly those with children who have to worry about schooling arrangements. The Government should require that all Buy to Let mortgage contracts no longer have a maximum tenancy period, enabling flexibility amongst landlords.

Finally, and perhaps rather obviously, we need more affordable housing. We have pushed for development on brownfield sites as a priority, yet all too often the requirement for affordable housing is dropped by local authorities as developers plead viability. The Government needs to take action and, in addition to building the homes needed to meet demand, tighten the viability loophole by reviewing the level of profit set out in the National Planning Policy Framework so that developers play their part in building affordable housing.

> "Homelessness is not inevitable. We just need the right policies to prevent it"

The Prime Minister has championed her desire to tackle the burning injustices facing our country. Homelessness is not inevitable. We just need the right policies to prevent it.

Will Quince MP sits on the House of Commons Home Affairs Select Committee and is the Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Ending Homelessness. He is the Conservative Party Member of Parliament for Colchester.

---

12. Crisis, "The homelessness legislation: an independent review of the legal duties owed to homeless people", https://www.crisis.org.uk/media/20606/crisis_the_homelessness_legislation_2015.pdf (2015).

Behind bars

Making prisons safe and effective

Bob Neill MP

On assuming office, the Prime Minister was absolutely right to set her focus on tackling the United Kingdom's 'burning injustices.' A number of these enduring, multifaceted problems fall within the remit of the House of Commons Justice Select Committee, including, of course, the disproportionally large number of individuals from black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds caught up in the criminal justice system, something the Rt Hon David Lammy MP's excellent report shone a light on last year,[1] and which he writes about in this essay collection.

There are a number of worrying, interrelated failures that span across the justice sphere, not least of all the ongoing crisis in our prisons. This is not a new problem, nor is it one that has escaped the media's gaze, or for that matter, evaded detailed Parliamentary scrutiny: just look at the raft of questions, debates and statements it has been the subject of in the House of Commons over the last few years.

The first challenge we face is realising the sheer scale of this particular

---

1. David Lammy, "The Lammy Review: an independent review into the treatment of, and outcomes for, black, Asian and minority ethnic individuals in the criminal justice system", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/643001/lammy-review-final-report.pdf (2017).

injustice. When every day we are confronted with the news of a new, burgeoning 'emergency' in one of our public services, it can prove difficult to separate the genuine, urgent crises from the usual media hubbub and distracting noises off. However, the ample and damning evidence of rapidly deteriorating prison standards speaks for itself, and should be enough to kick us into action.

> "Prisons should be a place of meaningful education, positive social interaction, and, where it is needed, comprehensive support for a range of acute mental health needs"

Of the 29 local prisons and training prisons inspected during the course of last year, 21 were judged to be 'poor' or 'not sufficiently good' in the area of safety.[2] Even more concerning, the Prisons Inspectorate concluded last year that not one establishment in England and Wales was safe to hold children and young people.[3] Taken with the recent serious failings at HMP Liverpool and HMP Nottingham – squalid conditions, rampant drug abuse, and violence – it is clear that urgent action is required.[4]

Across the prison estate we have witnessed an exponential increase in violence, so much so that there were 6,844 assaults in 2016 on staff alone.[5] There are soaring levels of self-harm and suicides, with a prisoner, whose welfare the state is ultimately responsible for, taking their own life every 3 days.[6] More offenders are, perversely, leaving the system with a

2. HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons, "HM Chief Inspectorate of Prisons for England and Wales: annual report 2016-17", https://www.justiceinspectorates.gov.uk/hmiprisons/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2017/07/HMIP-AR_2016-17_CONTENT_11-07-17-WEB.pdf (2017), 7.
3. Ibid., 9.
4. Howard League for Penal Reform, "Howard League responds to Liverpool prison inspection", https://howardleague.org/news/howard-league-responds-to-liverpool-prison-inspection/ (2018).
5. Ministry of Justice and Office of National Statistics, "Safety in custody statistics bulletin, England and Wales, deaths in prison custody to March 2017, and assaults and self-harm to December 2016", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/611187/safety-in-custody-statistics-q4-2016.pdf (2017), 1.
6. Howard League for Prison Reform, "2016 becomes worst year ever recorded for suicides in prisons", https://howardleague.org/news/suicidesinprison2016/ (2016).

drug addiction than when they entered it.[7] And Inspectorate reports consistently find far too many prisoners living in fear, with some self-isolating themselves for months at a time.

This is all made worse by the severe overcrowding that, according to Ministry of Justice figures, affects 69% of prisons in England and Wales.[8] Indeed, it is not uncommon to see three inmates share a dilapidated cell that was designed by the Victorians for one.

> "Squalid conditions, rampant drug abuse, and violence – it is clear that urgent action is required"

Prisons should be a place of meaningful education, positive social interaction, and, where it is needed, comprehensive support for a range of acute mental health needs. Instead, due to staff shortages, a reliance on confinement is widespread, with many prisoners locked up for 23 hours every day. Despite the best efforts of our dedicated prison officers, resources are now so overstretched it is impossible to adequately monitor inmates.

This inevitably puts a considerable strain on the system, doing nothing to provide the sort of conducive environment for reform we should be fostering. After all, rehabilitation should be the key focus and ambition of every custodial sentence, as the Government's Prisons and Courts Bill in the last Parliament was right to stress.

As it stands, quite the opposite is happening. Reoffending rates remaining tragically high, with nearly half of adult prisoners reoffending within 12 months of release.[9] In fact, of the adult offenders who completed a custodial sentence between October and December 2015,

---

7. Full Fact, "How many prisoners are drug addicts?", https://fullfact.org/crime/how-many-prisoners-are-drug-addicts/ (2013).
8. Grahame Allen and Chris Watson, "UK prison population statistics", http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN04334#fullreport (2017), 15.
9. Home Office and Ministry of Justice, "2010 to 2015 government policy: reoffending and rehabilitation", https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/2010-to-2015-government-policy-reoffending-and-rehabilitation/2010-to-2015-government-policy-reoffending-and-rehabilitation (2015).

48% reoffended within 24 months, on average committing 5.2 proven offences each.[10] So what do we do?

First, we must change the tone of the public debate. Prison reform is one of the great social causes, something we should not forget. We need to alter the national discourse to recognise that the current status quo is indeed an injustice.

The prison service plays a vital role in keeping us safe from those who pose a risk to public safety, and undoubtedly, there will always be those who say: 'throw away the key.' But this should not diminish the fact that our prisons house some of Britain's most vulnerable individuals, many of whom have had a disruptive childhood, suffer from ill mental health and have a history of severe alcohol or drug dependency. They must receive the support they need to forge a second chance for themselves.

> "Prison reform is one of the great social causes, something we should not forget"

From a more hardnosed, financial perspective, we should be appealing to people's pragmatism. Prisons are a hugely expensive intervention for the taxpayer and their benefits not always certain, particularly for those serving short sentences. The incarceration of the average prisoner costs the government upwards of £40,000 every year.[11] We must face the reality that all but the most serious offenders will one day be released, and that in many cases, as it stands, prisons simply make bad people worse.

Second, we need to get on with what we have already known for a long time needs doing. Reduce the prison population by looking at alternatives to custodial sentences in less serious cases. Recruit more staff and, importantly, retain experienced officers. Reform the prison estate so that it remains fit for purpose. And make education and

10. Ministry of Justice, "Proven reoffending statistics", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/655106/proven-reoffending-Oct15-Dec15.xlsx (2017).
11. Ministry of Justice, "Costs per place and costs per prisoner", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/471625/costs-per-place.pdf (2015).

training opportunities central, providing support to help offenders find employment and housing once released. To ensure this happens, we should be placing the role of the Prisons Inspectorate and the Prisons Ombudsman on a statutory basis, giving them the levers they need to initiate and enforce change.

Only by going back to the basics will we be able to halt the vicious cycle that engulfs far too many offenders. The evidence is there to support a bold, ambitious plan, and the Ministry of Justice, working with the sector, must now have the courage, nous and determination to see it through.

Bob Neill MP is the Chair of the House of Commons Justice Select Committee and the former Parliamentary Under Secretary for Communities and Local Government. He is the Conservative Party Member of Parliament for Bromley and Chislehurst.

The sound of silence
Making loneliness history

Rachel Reeves MP

At the start of this year, the Prime Minister committed to doing everything she could to "bring an end to the acceptance of loneliness in our society."[1] The terms of debate on loneliness are moving from that of personal misfortune, best treated by charity and sympathy, to a matter of public policy and debate about the kind of society in which we want to live.

Jo Cox came into Parliament wanting to end loneliness. She talked about her own experience of loneliness, tackling a taboo and debunking the belief that it only affects older people. Jo advocated a cross-party approach by seeking out Seema Kennedy, a Conservative MP. They worked with 13 organisations, representing children, refugees, carers, disabled and older people, as well as the business sector, and together began to set up the Commission on Loneliness. After Jo's murder, I joined the campaign, and co-chaired the Commission with Seema.

The Commission found that nine million people in the UK report they are always or often lonely.[2] One in three children say they have felt

1. Theresa May, "PM's speech at Downing Street reception to celebrate the legacy of Jo Cox: 17 January 2018", https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-downing-street-reception-to-celebrate-the-legacy-of-jo-cox-17-january-2018 (2018).
2. British Red Cross, "Our work with Co-op to tackle loneliness and isolation", https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/partner-with-us/our-partners/co-op (2018).

lonely in the last week. Eight out of ten carers have felt lonely as a result of looking after a loved one.[3] Fifty-eight percent of migrants and refugees in London described loneliness and isolation as their biggest challenge, and almost a quarter of disabled people feel lonely on any given day.[4] We noted a link between loneliness and moments of transition, after a relationship breakdown or being widowed, losing a close friend, moving home, changing jobs, retirement, redundancy or becoming a parent or carer. Loneliness can, and probably will, come to us all, and for some it will become a spiral of withdrawal.

> "The terms of debate on loneliness are moving from that of personal misfortune, best treated by charity and sympathy, to a matter of public policy"

Some seek out solitude, but being lonely and lacking companionship hurts. Loneliness significantly increases your risk of early death.[5] Research has linked loneliness to depression, cardiovascular disease, stroke, diabetes, dementia and high blood pressure.[6] Put simply, being lonely is as bad for you as smoking 15 cigarettes a day.[7]

Loneliness hurts society too. General practitioners report that at least one in ten people attend their surgery mainly because they are lonely.[8] Employers estimate that loneliness costs them £2.5 billion per year in

3. Carers UK, "8 in 10 people caring for loved ones 'have felt lonely or socially isolated'", https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/news/8-in-10-people-caring-for-loved-ones-have-felt-lonely-or-socially-isolated (2017).
4. Action for Children, "Charity reveals 'devastating impact' of loneliness on UK parents, children", https://www.actionforchildren.org.uk/news-and-blogs/press-releases/2017/november/charity-reveals-devastating-impact-of-loneliness-on-uk-parents-children/ (2017); The Forum, "This is how it feels to be lonely", https://migrantsorganise.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/Loneliness-report_The-Forum_UPDATED.pdf (2014); Sense, "A right to friendship?: Challenging the barriers to friendship for people with disabilities", https://www.sense.org.uk/umbraco/surface/download/download?filepath=/media/1591/campaign-loneliness-a-right-to-friendship.pdf (2015).
5. Campaign to End Loneliness, "Threat to health", https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/threat-to-health/ (2018).
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Campaign to End Loneliness, "Lonely visits to the GP", https://www.campaigntoendloneliness.org/blog/lonely-visits-to-the-gp/ (2018).

reduced productivity and sickness absence.[9]

Julianne Holt-Lunstad, an American academic, summarises the position: "Many nations around the world now suggest we are facing a 'loneliness epidemic'. The challenge we face now is what can be done about it."[10]

I believe that the neo-liberal settlement has put economic growth ahead of people. That our economy has provided many of us with an abundance of choice, but at the cost of both social and economic security. We spend a greater proportion of our day by ourselves. Many of us live alone, and many of us work alone, conveniently available to receive the package we ordered online, from a delivery driver who also works alone. While being alone does not equate to be lonely, it restricts the opportunities for interaction and to make new connections.

We no longer come together in our work canteen, at the pub, the local Post Office, or through a place of worship. That is not to say I believe there was a pre-loneliness halcyon time to which we should wind back the clock. Instead, we need a new settlement to fit who and where we are today.

The Government accepted the Commission's recommendations: we have the world's first Minister with responsibility for loneliness; civil servants are being pulled in from a wide range of departments to work on a national strategy; a fund will be created; and the Office for National Statistics is working on a universal measure of loneliness.[11]

The Commission also recommended further research about what is making us lonely and how to make us less lonely. The following thoughts are reflections from my year co-charing the Commission.

During the year we came across a concept that we labelled the

---

9. The Co-operative, "What loneliness costs UK employers", https://www.co-operative.coop/campaigning/cost-of-loneliness (2017).
10. Julianne Holt-Lunstad, "So lonely I could die", http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2017/08/lonely-die.aspx (2017).
11. Theresa May, "PM's speech at Downing Street reception to celebrate the legacy of Jo Cox: 17 January 2018", https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/pms-speech-at-downing-street-reception-to-celebrate-the-legacy-of-jo-cox-17-january-2018 (2018).

'permission of snow'. It is the permission we give ourselves to speak or act, often when the unusual happens – when it snows, or the train breaks down. That unexpected connection leads to a good feeling. So why do we not do it more often? How do we normalise that sense of solidarity, and make starting a conversation an act of community service? Some will argue this is not a job for Government. I disagree.

> "Loneliness is an issue that employers will increasingly realise is less a charitable cause than an issue that impacts them directly. Engaged and resilient people make better employees, customers, and service users"

We could learn a lot from the Government's national suicide prevention strategy to reduce suicides through better data, changing how the media reports suicide, and requiring every local area to have a multi-agency plan. Network Rail's well-researched campaign to reduce suicide on the rail network, #SmallTalkSavesLives, aims to give travellers the confidence to act and the reassurance that they will not 'make things worse' by starting a conversation with a stranger who they think may be contemplating suicide.

It is a simple idea, but one that could be expanded. We should all take responsibility for talking to neighbours, phoning a family friend, and being 'happy to chat' in a supermarket queue. But creative public awareness campaigns by government and other agencies can and should be used to shift our behaviour.

As part of a new settlement with the public, the Government should strengthen and expand the family test to a 'relationship and connection' test. The new test would not just check how a new policy would affect families, friendships, and communities, but drive policy development. Unlike the current test, it should be mandatory, with results routinely published, and annual updates given to Parliament. There should also be some retrospective testing of existing policy to see what the impact on relationships and connections has been.

Like environmental sustainability years ago, loneliness is an issue that employers will increasingly realise is less a charitable cause than an issue that impacts them directly. Engaged and resilient people make better employees, customers, and service users. Schemes to tackle loneliness – perhaps encouraging remote employees to meet up, or giving a telecommunications engineer the time to have a conversation with a customer, or linking a retiring member of staff with an apprentice – could benefit employees, customers, and ultimately a company's profit margin. Government needs to provide incentives for business, and as a massive employer and service provider itself, both model and test new approaches.

Throughout the year, the Commission uncovered examples of social media bringing people together: from new parents messaging in the middle of the night to families Skyping across continents. But we, the grown-ups, halt our real-life conversations with colleagues and loved ones at the buzz of a notification from our phone. We do not yet know the true impact of the instant gratification of social media. But we need to teach children that forming and sustaining the four or so close friendships that decades of research by Professor Robin Dunbar has shown that we need, is not always easy, but is ultimately more rewarding than getting likes on a social media post.[12]

Interventions, like Sure Start or 'Stay and Play' sessions, should also be used to connect parents and carers too. Our young people also need to build social capital. Programmes like Independent Visitors, which match volunteer mentors with young people in care, should be expanded. Schemes like the National Citizens Service for teenagers should be widened to enable older people to participate, or be extended so participation can last a longer period of time.

Anecdotal evidence seems to show that bringing people together from different backgrounds reduces loneliness, as do activities with a

---

12. Robin Dunbar, "The anatomy of friendship", *Trends in Cognitive Sciences* (2018), 32-51.

common endeavour, like gardening or learning a new skill. We need to work out what works, tell others, and then do more of it.

The Prime Minister's strategy on loneliness is a real opportunity to create a new settlement between the public, business, voluntary groups, government, and politicians from all parties. It is unlikely we will agree on everything, but I hope we can agree that doing nothing is not an option.

Rachel Reeves MP is the current Chair of the Commons Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Committee, and was formerly the Co-Chair of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness. She is the Labour Party Member of Parliament for Leeds West.

Generation games
Reducing intergenerational inequity

Kate Green MP

The temptation to address inequality 'one generation at a time' misses the point that poverty is cumulative, deepening and becoming more entrenched over the life course. If you are born and grow up poor, you are more likely to experience poverty in adulthood, and penury in old age. Poor parents and, in particular, poor mothers have poor children.

If that sounds gloomily fatalistic, let us remember this state of affairs need not be inevitable: we should not accept that 'the poor will always be with us'. Between 1997 and 2010, child poverty fell by one million children, and pensioner poverty halved.[1] Progress on child poverty reduction outperformed every other OECD country.[2]

No single policy delivered these impressive results. A holistic strategy included: improving family incomes through benefits for children; making work pay with the introduction of the minimum wage and tax credits; investment in early years through the introduction of Sure Start and in high-quality, affordable childcare to support working parents;

1. Robert Joyce and Luke Sibieta, "An assessment of Labour's record on income inequality and poverty", https://academic.oup.com/oxrep/article/29/1/178/402517 (2013).
2. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, "Doing better for families", https://www.oecd.org/els/soc/47701118.pdf (2011).

the introduction of the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) to encourage children from low-income families to continue with post-16 study; public health measures that helped halve the infant death rate; and the introduction of pension credit, which boosted the income of the poorest pensioners.

Much of this progress has now gone into reverse, not as an inevitable post-financial crash consequence, but as the result of recent policy choices and design. The Government's policy response is taking us backwards. This is despite the introduction of the pension triple lock, and the lowest level of unemployment in 42 years.[3]

Pensioner poverty has increased since 2012-13,[4] while cuts and freezes to benefits have led the Institute for Fiscal Studies to predict that child poverty will have risen by one million by the end of the decade.[5] Meanwhile, while work is often heralded as being the best and surest way out of poverty – and it should be – the growth in underpaid, insecure and unsustainable work means that the majority of poor children live in households where at least one adult works.[6]

What is really concerning about this is not just the poverty that children face today: it is about the impact on their short and long-term prospects. Nearly half of children in my constituency who receive Free School Meals do not reach the expected level of speech and language skills at age 5, compared with 27% of all local children.[7]

Sure Start had a positive impact on family functioning and home learning environments, a less chaotic home life, and improved

3. BBC News, "UK unemployment falls to new 42-year low", http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-40947087 (2017).

4. Daniel Wright and Rachel Case, "UK poverty 2017: country reaches turning point after rises in child and pensioner poverty", https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/uk-poverty-2017-country-reaches-turning-point (2017).

5. Randeep Ramesh, "One in four UK children will be living in poverty by 2020, says thinktank", *The Guardian*, 7th May, 2013.

6. Sean Coughlan, "Record levels of poverty in working families", *BBC News*, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-39291999 (2017).

7. Kate Green, "Kate concerned over lack of support for disadvantaged children", http://www.kategreen.org/kate_concerned_over_lack_of_support_for_disadvantaged_local_children (2018).

parent-child relationships.[8] Those Children's Centres which experienced budget cuts or restructuring show worse outcomes than those that remain fully funded. It is of huge concern that between 2010 and 2017, the number of Sure Start Children's Centres in England fell by 1,240. This included cuts to more than 40% of centres in the North-East and London, and the closure or restructuring of all but two out of 18 in my own local area.[9]

Perhaps most shocking of all is the number of children without a secure home, as housing costs outstrip family incomes. A Shelter report put the number of children in temporary accommodation in Britain last Christmas at 128,000.[10] In Greater Manchester, the number of households in temporary accommodation has more than tripled since 2010, which is partly attributable to cuts to housing and other benefits.

It might have been hoped that the younger generation aged 18-25 would have been protected by the progress made in child outcomes since the turn of the millennium. But it is clear that good effects can quickly fade if investment in young people is not sustained as they enter adulthood. Recent policy has been exceptionally hard on this age group. They do not automatically qualify for the National Living Wage.[11] Most universities have set their tuition fees stand at an eye-watering £9,250 per year. Maintenance grants have been replaced with maintenance loans, while bursaries for nursing and other students have been axed.[12]

---

8. Department for Education, "The impact of children's centres: studying the effects of children's centres in promoting better outcomes for young children and their families", https://assets.publishing. service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/485346/DFE-RR495_ Evaluation_of_children_s_centres_in_England__the_impact_of_children_s_centres.pdf (2015).
9. Marc Walker, "A third of Sure Start children's centres in England lost, says Labour", *The Guardian*, 5th April, 2017.
10. Shelter, "128,000 children in Britain will be homeless on Christmas Day", https://england.shelter. org.uk/media/press_releases/articles/128,000_children_in_britain_will_be_homeless_on_christmas_ day (2017).
11. GOV.UK, "National Minimum Wage and National Living Wage rates", https://www.gov.uk/ national-minimum-wage-rates (2018).
12. Universities and Colleges Admissions Service, "Changes to maintenance grants and loans", https:// www.ucas.com/connect/blogs/changes-maintenance-grants-and-loans (2015); GOV.UK, "NHS bursary reform", https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/nhs-bursary-reform/nhs-bursary-reform (2017).

Plans to deny housing benefit to 18-21-year-olds have, thankfully, recently been reversed.[13] Even so, young people are eligible for only the single room rate in housing benefit until they reach the age of 35.[14] Meanwhile, the Resolution Foundation found that millennials are facing an affordability crisis, spending far more of their income on housing than either baby boomers or 'the silent generation' – those born between the mid-1920s and early-1940s. They also found that half of millennials would be renting when they are in their forties, and that a third could still be doing so by the time they claimed their pension.[15]

By contrast, pensioners are often characterised as enjoying exceptionally favoured treatment – benefiting from free prescriptions, the triple lock on pensions, winter fuel payments, free bus passes, and not having to pay national insurance if they continue to work. But this ignores wide divergence in living standards and access to services across the country: between women and men, between older and younger pensioners, and between those with good occupational pensions and decent savings and those without assets.

> "Some immediate fixes could relieve poverty within generations now, and lay down a solid base to narrow gaps in and between generations in the future"

These inequalities in older age reflect the cumulative effects of poverty throughout life. But government policy exacerbates the situation. Most notoriously, women born in the 1950s face a lengthy and unexpected wait for a pension they expected to receive at age 60, worsening a gender

---

13. BBC News, "Ministers U-turn on housing benefit axe for 19-21-year-olds", http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-43587595 (2018).
14. Shelter, "Shared accommodation rate for under 35s", https://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_advice/housing_benefit/shared_accommodation_rate_for_under_35s (2018).
15. Resolution Foundation, "Up to a third of millennials face renting from cradle to grave", https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/media/press-releases/up-to-a-third-of-millennials-face-renting-from-cradle-to-grave/ (2018).

pension gap of 43%, wider than the EU average of around 39%.[16]

The post-crash austerity agenda has served to widen divisions both within and between generations, and our unequal society cannot be remedied simply by removing intergenerational differentials. It has, however, taken the harsh reality of austerity to highlight the need for policies that support people as they journey through their life course, rather than a series of atomised initiatives for different generations.

Some immediate fixes could relieve poverty within generations now, and lay down a solid base to narrow gaps in and between generations in the future.

First, roll back the cuts to benefits for children, and increase work allowances in Universal Credit so that families can thrive. Second, reinvest in Sure Start, supporting children and families today, and improving long-term outcomes. Third, reintroduce the EMA to allow 16-19-year-olds to continue to learn irrespective of household income. Fourth, ensure the National Living Wage is paid to those aged 18 or over. Fifth, address the injustice faced by 1950s-born women who may spend many years in retirement, reducing the risk of penury in old age that will damage their health and wellbeing, and limit their social participation.

Tackling poverty cannot be a zero-sum game, but rather must be a process of cumulative and interdependent investment across the generations. These steps will serve to put the poorest back on their feet now, while acting as early building blocks for stronger, more resilient families in the future.

Kate Green MP *was formerly the Shadow Minister for Women and Equalities, and currently sits on the European Scrutiny Committee. She is the Labour Party Member of Parliament for Stretford and Urmston.*

---

16. Liam Foster, Ruby Chau and Sam Yu, "Britain is doing less than other countries to end pensioner poverty for women", http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/european-policies-defamilisation/ (2017).

Home time

Fixing the broken housing market

George Freeman MP

Affordable housing is one of the key policy challenges of our time. But as with so many other major policy problems, we face a continued lack of imagination that leads many to think that the housing crisis can be solved with more of what worked last time, commanded from offices in Whitehall. This is not 1955. We need new thinking, and new approaches. In particular, we need to recognise that rural and urban areas face very different challenges and need different solutions.

In rural constituencies like mine, the way to unlock new housing is to incentivise councils and communities to build according to local need, not national targets, and to keep the tax revenue from new homes to invest in local infrastructure. If we just continue to fuel demand and incentivise the high-volume house dumping that too often passes for development, we will not solve the problem.

We must be clear about the scale of the challenge. Nowhere is the breach between the generations more profound than in housing. Housing was right at the heart of that post-war, 'Macmillan-ite' model of growth: the idea that each person will be better off than the next with the promise of owning a home as their principal asset. The post-1980s house price boom, South East nimbyism and the Great Crash of 2008

brought that dream to an end. But to recover that ideal we must now seize the moment and be truly bold.

To be fair, we have already made a start. As the Chancellor set out in the 2017 Autumn Budget, the only sustainable way to make housing more affordable over the long-term is to build more homes in the right places.[1] The housing supply has increased to 217,000 by 2016-17, and further measures were announced in the Autumn Budget to raise the housing supply by the end of this Parliament to its highest level since 1970s, on track to reach 300,000 per year.[2] Equally, £15.3 billion of new financial support for housing will be made available over the next five years, bringing total support for housing to at least £44 billion over this parliament.[3] The Government will aim to provide 225,000 units through the Affordable Homes Programme up to 2021, and the Chancellor set out a funding increase to £9.1 billion for affordable housing.[4]

But we must not fool ourselves. The real work must still be done. But that cannot just mean incentivising the big housebuilders to build mass commuter-housing around the South East as we have tried before. The old idea of suburban living – two cars, endless traffic jams – is rapidly becoming a 1950s model in a twenty-first century age. Today, the younger generation want to use public transport, work flexibly, and embrace a much healthier lifestyle.

For the last 20 years, long before becoming a Member of Parliament, I have argued that our planning model is broken. The developer-led model, enshrined in the 1940s Planning Acts, in which the planning system simply sets out which areas cannot be developed and areas where it is recommended by the council as a guide for applications for developments, which are led by developers, is not really a planning system. It is a development application control process. Ultimately, for

1. HM Treasury, "Autumn Budget 2017", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/661480/autumn_budget_2017_web.pdf (2017).
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid.

high density housing and high quality development, we need to move to a system which is 'plan-led', whereby the elected representatives of communities put together a vision for their town, covering planning, infrastructure, and other elements, including social care, and then approach developers to build it, rather than the other way round.

In the 15 years before I came to Parliament, I was building businesses in East Anglia and helping to develop the Cambridge cluster. In the Cambridge cluster, housing is seen as the most urgent issue of, and for, the local economy. But quality and sustainable housing is being held back by woeful infrastructure, endless top-down 'initiatives' from Whitehall to boost supply, and a lack of local government and private sector leadership.

I used to be on the board of the Greater Cambridge Partnership, helping put together a private sector-led vision of how the greater Cambridge cluster should develop, and saw the problems first-hand. The lessons were simple and remain so: lack of real local leadership, and freedom for local council leaders and businesses to build what is needed. The Cambridge cluster could have used the £1 billion City Deal to raise a multi-billion pound infrastructure bond, but were not able to do so.[5]

> "Quality and sustainable housing is being held back by woeful infrastructure, endless top-down 'initiatives' from Whitehall to boost supply, and a lack of local government and private sector leadership"

We need major structural reform to the system, and we need it now. We simply cannot go on letting developers lazily dump houses on the easy roadside sites all across places like East Anglia. As my planning debate in Parliament showed recently, this is driving a 'NIMBY' counter-

---

5. Matthew Ward, "City Deals", http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07158 (2017), 10.

reaction.[6] Along the Cambridge-Norwich corridor, thousands of new houses have been dumped in our towns and villages along the roads, whilst the railway line is neglected. Our roads are being turned into car parks and we are building exactly the sort of unhealthy, 1950s living – high car use, commuting, sedentary lifestyles – which in turn is fuelling the obesity and diabetes time bombs, and increasing pressure on local public services.[7]

> "We simply cannot go on letting developers lazily dump houses on the easy roadside sites all across places like East Anglia"

The truth is that long-term infrastructure investment has been one of the great failures of the post-war years in Britain. For too long, infrastructure funding in the UK has been the preserve of central government. The privatisations of the 1980s did much to open up the monopolies, and unlocked massive investment in some areas, but road, rail, and energy infrastructure has remained in the hands of Whitehall quangos or a few big companies wholly reliant on Whitehall. As a Member of Parliament, I see first-hand the stall cycle of local areas left lobbying for Whitehall infrastructure spend, instead of having given the freedoms to get on and build the infrastructure we need.

For inspiration, we should look back to our Victorian forebears. The genius of the Victorians was to finance the infrastructure through the profits they made on housing. They blazed a trail in the second half of the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries with a massive wave of infrastructure investment which still shapes much of the modern landscape – the towns and cities, roads and railways, utilities, universities – we know today.

6. Hansard Online, "Town and village plans", https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2018-01-30/debates/DC2B6A99-8A08-4CE5-A7F8-85C8F81088BC/TownAndVillagePlans#contribution-C90426E1-8210-4A2C-A889-7DEC2121983D (2018).
7. NHS England, "Action for diabetes", https://www.england.nhs.uk/rightcare/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/08/act-for-diabetes-31-01.pdf (2014), 8.

That is why I have long been calling for the Government to look at facilitating more New Towns, mutual Infrastructure Companies, and Local Bond finance models.[8] In the Eastern region, for example, we could build a new town on the Cambridge-Norwich technology corridor.

So how do we achieve the necessary investment and leadership to unlock this model of affordable housing?

> "I have been calling for a new model of incentives in planning and across the public sector, so councils keep and reinvest a portion of their savings to boost infrastructure"

First, we must be much bolder and think of new models like creating debt-free, asset- backed, real economic engines of growth to invest in. Let us create a new generation of building societies locally, and give them the power to raise infrastructure bonds to invest the private sector billions we need for new high quality housing spread around a network of fast rail, road, and broadband links. Let us liberate our Mayors and let them also raise a bond in the private market.

Second, let us sort out the Labour Party's botched nationalisation of the railways and explore the potential of reintegration of the rail track and train operating businesses, granting 20-year franchises to run integrated local rail networks. At a stroke, we could create major sustainable businesses of FTSE 100 standing, capable of raising finance in the capital markets to invest in UK infrastructure and growth. A new system of 'Mutual Rail'. This is especially relevant to East Anglia and the South West, which lend themselves naturally to it. If an economy that works for everyone is going to mean anything, it must also mean giving people a stake in the growth. Why not let season ticket holders own shares?

---

8. George Freeman, "Localism should mean localism!", http://www.georgefreeman.co.uk/content/localism-should-mean-localism (2018).

Third, the time for talking about things like building on public land are over. We need tax breaks for companies and councils who provide houses. That is why I have been calling for a new model of incentives in planning and across the public sector, so councils keep and reinvest a portion of their savings to boost infrastructure. We need measures to force companies not to landbank, and look at ideas like compulsory purchase.

Finally, instead of allowing developers to develop housing estates in our villages, why do we not build some more new towns and commutes within the railway infrastructure? There are 52 railway stations across East Anglia. Most of them are woefully underused, often with large areas formally owned by Network Rail that are now redundant. They are the perfect place for 20 or 30 flats with a small supermarket, and a local café, shops and business centres. But that will never happen as long as no one knows who owns the land or has an incentive to do anything about it. As a matter of urgency, we need to create a simple model for railway station refurbishment.

Housing can only ever be viewed in the context of wider economies. We will not solve this problem in Whitehall. More than any other policy issue, housing needs to be locally-led by giving local areas the freedom to find and plan the housing they actually need. Every entrepreneur will tell you to start local, with the facts on the ground. That is what we must do now. To solve the housing crisis we need local incentives to drive better development that better realises the needs of local economies. As with so many policy problems the answer is not in Whitehall. It is out around the country.

George Freeman MP is the Chair of the Conservative Policy Forum and the Founder of the Capital Ideas Foundation and the Big Tent Ideas Festival. He was formerly the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Life Sciences and is the current Conservative Party Member of Parliament for Mid Norfolk.

Places of prosperity

Addressing Britain's regional inequalities

Lucy Powell MP

The buzz phrase of the recent past was that with the advent of the internet age, the world would become flat, and riches and success would follow anywhere which was connected to the World Wide Web. However, this vision of a flatter future has not come to pass. Indeed, the world is becoming more and more spiky, to coin the alternative phrase, than ever.

Just as in the industrial revolution, when people migrated from countryside to the new towns and cities seeking employment and prosperity in the engines of industrial growth, the jobs of the knowledge, digital, and creative economy of the future are also being driven by cities, where a critical mass of knowledge and ideas mesh with know-how and well-serviced communities. In Britain, this has exacerbated regional inequalities as London grows ever stronger, boosting the prosperity of the South and East of England at a much faster rate than elsewhere.[1]

This presents further profound challenges for rural communities and towns, which, especially in the North of England, are very poorly connected, and have yet to reinvent themselves following

1. Larry Elliott, "UK economy is being sucked into London and south-east, says TUC", *The Guardian*, 28th April, 2017.

deindustrialisation and post-mining decline. This has long been a problem for successive governments and policy-makers and, in post-Brexit Britain, the politics of 'towns' is growing in prominence, with excellent initiatives like the new Centre for Towns think tank.

> "To end regional inequality we must develop at least one more global-sized 'spike', preferably in the North of England"

However, the history of regional inequality in Britain lies with the growth of just one global 'spike', and the current gulf between North and South will continue to widen without a real strategy to address this. It would be a massive mistake to think that our other cities will automatically thrive in the future. Moreover, towns in the South are, in many cases, undergoing a renaissance. From Margate to Hastings, their proximity and connectivity to London is enabling them to reimagine their futures afresh.

To end regional inequality we must develop at least one more global-sized 'spike', preferably in the North of England. Compared with other countries, our cities – apart from London of course – fare badly, with none appearing in the top 128 in the Global Cities Outlook 2016-17.[2] In contrast, Germany has four cities on this index, Canada three, Italy, Spain, and Australia each have two, and China now totally dominates, with more than 19.[3]

By any independent analysis of the data and assets, there is only one 'mini-spike' that has the potential to compete on this stage – which centres around Greater Manchester, but with the right strategy would stretch from Liverpool to Leeds, and beyond. This should not be controversial, and is not a new thought. In fact, this thinking grew throughout the 2000s, leading to the Northern Powerhouse project.

---

2. A.T. Kearney, "Global cities 2017: leaders in a world of disruptive innovation", https://www.atkearney.com/documents/10192/12610750/Global+Cities+2017+-+Leaders+in+a+World+of+Disruptive+Innovation.pdf/c00b71dd-18ab-4d6b-8ae6-526e380d6cc4 (2017), 10.
3. Ibid.

This is not about putting all our eggs in one basket, and certainly as a nation we should have the ambition to identify and plan the growth of other spikes accordingly – including around Birmingham in the Midlands, Bristol in the Southwest, and elsewhere. Nor is it a zero-sum game. But without a clear national drive to create a global Northern Powerhouse, there runs the constant risk of delayed plans, compromise, watered down proposals, and parochial politics making the same mistakes of the past – leading to many small-scale plans which together amount to little. This has been the hallmark of much regional policy over recent years.

> "Investment in infrastructure, science, and transport are all overly-focused on London and the South East"

Investment in infrastructure, science, and transport are all overly-focused on London and the South East. As IPPR North – a think tank – recently revealed, the North receives £2,555 less per person than London in transport investment.[4] Whilst London is pushing ahead with Crossrail Two, rail to connect the great cities and towns of the North is not even off the drawing board.

The devolution agenda, however, is one of the exceptions. The creation of strong Combined Authorities, metro mayors, and bodies like Transport for the North, together with real powers over resources and decisions, are a good start. Devolving further powers, and devolving these powers further down, will not only help in the rebalancing of the country, but will be absolutely critical to creating the sort of good, inclusive growth the North so desperately needs. We do not want to, nor need to, recreate some of the worst aspects of London: deep-seated inequalities, especially in housing with overheated house prices for homeowners; and a chronic shortage of social and affordable options

---

4. IPPR North, "New transport figures reveal north to receive "indefensible" £2,555 less per person than London", https://www.ippr.org/news-and-media/press-releases/new-transport-figures-reveal-north-to-receive-indefensible-2-555-less-per-person-than-london (2018).

for everyone else; and, despite improvements in education, entrenched lack of social mobility.

So, this agenda is not just about boosting Manchester as a regional centre, or already affluent areas such as Cheshire. It is about ensuring every person has the chance to access the skills, networks, and opportunities that a second global city should bring. Travel to work time, access to high skilled and well-paid jobs, and secure and affordable housing are all vital. Take my own constituency – Manchester Central – which the names suggests should be at the heart of benefiting from the Northern Powerhouse. Yet far from it. Manchester Central has been in the top ten constituencies with the highest number of children living in poverty in Britain for years,[5] and many places within it – like Moston, Newton Heath and Clayton – feel much more like the forgotten towns of much of the rest of the city region.

So, we need the big vision and the big bucks, for things like transport and infrastructure, alongside a radical agenda of the redistribution of power and priorities so we can create communities and places which are fully included in the prosperity that should follow.

Take, for example, investing in our people for the economy of the future. Childhood development and the school readiness gap between poorer children and their peers are larger in the North than London;[6] school results, access to skills training, and skills spending are all better in the South than the North, and levels of adult literacy and numeracy are lower.[7] Yet the devolution agenda has had little to do with education, skills, and the early years thus far. This is madness when local economic plans are only as good as the people to fill the jobs.

I am delighted to be leading the Mayor of Greater Manchester's

---

5. Mike Keegan, "Manchester Central has highest percentage of children living under poverty line in UK", *Manchester Evening News*, 20th February, 2013.
6. Jonathan Clifton, Anna Round and Luke Raikes, "Northern schools: putting education at the heart of the northern powerhouse", https://www.ippr.org/publications/northern-schools-putting-education-at-the-heart-of-the-northern-powerhouse (2016).
7. Northern Powerhouse Partnership, "Educating the north", http://www.northernpowerhousepartnership.co.uk/media/1208/npp-educating-the-north.pdf (2018).

ambitious agenda to tackle school readiness in Greater Manchester. But I could achieve much more if schools were required to be at the table, rather than in a voluntary capacity as it is now.

> "The devolution agenda has had little to do with education, skills, and the early years thus far"

Regional inequality lies in power inequalities, too, with the vast majority of decisions affecting local areas still made in Whitehall rather than town halls.

So, to truly tackle regional inequalities, we need to ditch the buzzwords, and develop, implement, and sustain a real package of devolution of power and funding into the hands of local leaders who must rise above parochial politics. Britain needs a truly global second super city in the North, but critically one whose growth is fundamentally based on inclusive growth, reaching all parts, not relying on trickle-down, which has only increased inequalities elsewhere.[8]

Lucy Powell MP is the Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Greater Manchester, and Vice Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Mobility. She is the Labour and Co-operative Member of Parliament for Manchester Central.

8. The Equality Trust, "The scale of economic inequality in the UK", https://www.equalitytrust.org.uk/scale-economic-inequality-uk (2017).

A good job

Tackling poverty pay

Kevin Hollinrake MP

Poverty in the UK has been steadily declining for a number of decades.[1] However, poverty remains one of the most troubling issues facing our society: there are still almost 14 million people living in poverty in the UK today.[2] Almost half are in employment, showing employment and poverty are not necessarily separable.[3] This is totally unacceptable.

The best route out of poverty is, of course, through employment.[4] Good quality work can serve as a basis for a healthier, happier society, with demonstrable links to better physical and mental health, and improvements in personal well-being.[5] Adults in workless families are four times more likely to be in poverty than those in working families.[6]

1. Feargal McGuinness, "Poverty in the UK: statistics", http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07096 (2017), 8.
2. Helen Barnard, Ashwin Kumar, Andrew Wenham, Eddie Smith, Ben Drake, Aleks Collingwood and David Leese, "UK poverty 2017: a comprehensive analysis of poverty trends and figures", https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/uk-poverty-2017 (2017), 10.
3. Ibid, 30.
4. Peter Kemp, Jonathan Bradshaw, Paul Dornan, Naomi Finch and Emese Mayhew, "Routes out of poverty", https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/routes-out-poverty (2004).
5. Gordon Waddell and A. Kim Burton, "Is work good for you health and well-being?", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/214326/hwwb-is-work-good-for-you.pdf (2006), 36.
6. Feargal McGuinness, "Poverty in the UK: statistics", http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN07096 (2018).

Children in workless households are five times more likely to be in poverty than those in households where all adults work.[7]

The Government's record on employment is to be celebrated. Unemployment has now fallen to 4.2% and there are now over 32 million people in work, up more than three million since 2010.[8] This equates to an employment rate of 75.4%, the highest since records began in 1971.[9]

> "Good quality work can serve as a basis for a healthier, happier society, with demonstrable links to better physical and mental health, and improvements in personal well-being"

Work does not provide the whole solution; it is, however, a start. It is not just about having a job, it is about being paid a proper wage. The Government has helped people on low pay not only by increasing the personal tax allowance, but by increasing the National Living Wage. The Office for Budget Responsibility estimates the National Living Wage to reach £8.57 an hour by 2020.[10]

Businesses should be encouraged to extend the National Living Wage to employees under the age of 25. Gradually, the National Living Wage should rise to match the voluntary 'Living Wage', which is currently £8.75 across the UK and £10.20 in London.[11] The rates are calculated annually by the Resolution Foundation and are overseen by the Living Wage Commission,

7. Kit Malthouse, "Children: poverty: written question – 124710", https://www.parliament.uk/business/publications/written-questions-answers-statements/written-question/Commons/2018-01-24/124710/ (2018).
8. Office for National Statistics, "Unemployment rate (aged 16 and over, seasonally adjusted", https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peoplenotinwork/unemployment/timeseries/mgsx/lms (2018).
9. Office for National Statistics, "Employment rate (aged 16 and over, seasonally adjusted", https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/timeseries/lf24/lms (2018).
10. GOV.UK, "Largest rise in National Minimum Wage rates for young people in a decade", https://www.gov.uk/government/news/largest-rise-in-national-minimum-wage-rates-for-young-people-in-a-decade (2017).
11. Living Wage Foundation, "Explaining UK wage rates", https://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-real-living-wage (2018).

based on the best available evidence about living standards in London and the UK. The basket of goods draws on the Minimum Income Standard to identify everyday living costs through public consensus.[12]

Businesses can and want to help to reduce in-work poverty. They can encourage their employees to save, for example. Or they can provide access to hardship funds, which are loans that can be repaid through salaries. Small businesses can also alter working hours to allow more flexibility.[13] Inflexible hours can put people off seeking work, so offering flexible working hours will help incentivise people with children to seek work.

Universal Credit, which is being gradually rolled out, is helping people to move into work quicker, to progress through work faster, and to stay in work for longer. In fact, 86% of people under Universal Credit are actively looking to increase the hours they work, compared with only 38% on the old system of Jobseeker's Allowance.[14] The smooth taper rate gives incentives to take on more hours because, unlike the old system, people can see more clearly the money in their pocket for every extra hour they work.

But there have been difficulties. Last year, following concerns raised by constituents and my local Citizens Advice Bureau, I – along with a number of my parliamentary colleagues – suggested important changes to be made to Universal Credit, including shortening the initial timescale to receive the benefit from six weeks, and to provide and advertise upfront payments to new claimants. Happily, the Government accepted our recommendation, including enabling claimants to access a full month's payment as an advance within five days of applying.

Three million people live in poverty in the UK because of housing issues.[15] We desperately need more new and affordable houses. The rate

---

12. Living Wage Foundation, "The calculation", https://www.livingwage.org.uk/calculation (2018).
13. Ibid, 9.
14. Department for Work and Pensions, "Universal Credit at work", https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/autumn-budget-2017-philip-hammonds-speech (2015), 9.
15. Rebecca Tunstall, Mark Bevan, Jonathan Bradshaw, Karen Croucher,
Stephen Duffy, Caroline Hunter, Anwen Jones, Julie Rugg, Alison
Wallace and Steve Wilcox, "The links between housing and poverty: an evidence review", https://www.york.ac.uk/media/chp/documents/2013/poverty-housing-options-full.pdf (2013), 21.

of new houses being built was down to 107,870 homes a year when the Government took office in 2010, but the net new home addresses for the latest year had risen to 217,000.[16] The new funding from the 2017 Autumn Budget to meet an ambitious target to deliver 300,000 new homes in England each year is welcome.[17] Cutting Stamp Duty for almost all first-time buyers is also another important step to ensure that young people in particular get on the housing ladder.[18]

> "The causes of poverty are complex and multifaceted. Government can, and does, do a lot to address poverty. However, it cannot do so alone"

The causes of poverty are complex and multifaceted. Government can, and does, do a lot to address poverty. However, it cannot do so alone. Individuals, charities, companies and communities do and should continue to play their part.

Kevin Hollinrake MP is the Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Poverty and is the Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. He is the Conservative Party Member for Thirsk and Malton.

16. Shelter, "Housing supply", http://england.shelter.org.uk/campaigns_/why_we_campaign/housing_facts_and_figures/subsection?section=housing_supply (2018); Office for National Statistics, "Housing supply; net additional dwellings, England: 2016-17", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/659529/Housing_Supply_England_2016-17.pdf (2017).
17. HM Treasury, "Autumn Budget 2017", https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/661480/autumn_budget_2017_web.pdf (2017), 3.
18. Ibid.

The Prime Minister has, from the outset of her premiership, proclaimed her desire to tackle Britain's 'burning injustices'. Whilst there has been some early progress, negotiating Brexit has inevitably limited the radicalism of her domestic reform agenda.

The outcome of the 2017 General Election, in which the Conservative Party lost its ruling majority, means that backbench parliamentarians are in a uniquely powerful position to influence the current Government. This collection of essays, authored by prominent backbenchers from all the UK's main national political parties, seeks to highlight some of Britain's 'burning injustices', and provide solutions to help address them.

bright blue

JRF JOSEPH ROWNTREE FOUNDATION