

Welfare Reform Bill marks a ‘once in a generation opportunity’ for necessary and radical reform

PRESS RELEASE FROM THE CENTRE FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE

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The Centre for Social Justice (CSJ), one of the country's most influential think tanks, commends the Government's introduction of the Welfare Reform Bill today.

Through its analysis and policy recommendations the CSJ has led the debate about Britain's overly complex and unrewarding benefit system for many years. In publishing its Breakthrough Britain and Dynamic Benefits reports, commissioned at the time by former CSJ Chairman the Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP, the CSJ has heavily influenced the coalition Government's reform agenda.

There is cross-party consensus that the present system is fatally flawed; five million are trapped on out-of-work benefits because too often work simply does not pay, almost two million children live in workless households (one of the worst rates in Europe) and welfare-related public expenditure is out of control.

If implemented successfully, these reforms (both through Universal Credit and the Work Programme) will begin to redress these failings. In doing so they will engage a section of the population utterly detached from the workforce until now.

We also welcome efforts to reduce the perverse couple penalty in the tax and benefits system. The present scenario – which discourages couple formation and relationship stability – is bad for individuals and society. It forces low-earning families to choose between a higher income and a family life in which both parents can live with their children.

In response to the Bill's introduction the CSJ's Executive Director, Gavin Poole, said:

“This Bill should be welcomed right across the political spectrum. The CSJ believes it offers a once in a generation opportunity to overhaul a dysfunctional and chaotic benefits system that locks people in poverty and stifles aspiration. Most people now recognise that work is the best route out of poverty, but this is a sign that the Government will turn its commitment into action.”

With regards to the couple penalty he added:

“It is also crucial that the Government honours its commitment to end to this perverse penalty in which people are forced to choose between family and income. We will now remain fully engaged with the welfare debate to ensure that the implementation of these reforms achieves their stated objective of helping the long term unemployed out of poverty and into work”.

For media inquiries, please contact Nick Wood of Media Intelligence Partners Ltd on 07889 617003 or 0203 008 8146 or Alistair Thompson on 07970 162225 or 0203 008 8145.

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The Centre for Social Justice is an independent think tank established, by Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP in 2004, to seek effective solutions to the poverty that blights parts of Britain.

In July 2007 the group published Breakthrough Britain – Ending the Costs of Social Breakdown. The paper presented over 190 policy proposals aimed at ending the growing social divide in Britain.

Subsequent reports have put forward proposals for reform of the police, prisons, social housing, the asylum system and family law. Other reports have dealt with street gangs and early intervention to help families with young children.

The Rt Hon Iain Duncan Smith MP stood down as Chairman of the Centre on his appointment as Secretary of State for Work and Pensions in May 2010 and is now the Founder and Patron.