Title Welfare and Responsibility:

A qualitative study of the demise of social morality and the rise of personal ethics in welfare discourses

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Welfare and Responsibility:

A qualitative study of the demise of social morality and the rise of personal ethics in welfare discourses

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Abstract

Much attention has been devoted in the social sciences to the reorganisation of the moral order of society (Smart, 1999). This reorganisation means that responsibility for welfare is now located with the individual. In spite of the salience given to privately held responsibility for welfare in social policy, little work has been carried out on the discourses underpinning this way of distributing responsibility (Finch and Mason, 1993, Duncan and Edwards, 1999, Rowlingson, 2002). Work on this issue is especially timely as New Labour continues the privatisation of responsibility for welfare in a way that, many people believe, neglects a moral dimension. Instead, New Labour favours a more ethical construction that exhorts the individual to do her duty by which they mean she should work for her own betterment and well-being (Levitas, 1998, Giddens, 1998, Jordan, 1998, Lund, 1999).

This work begins by situating responsibility as a historically variable and discursive construction, uncovering how the understanding of responsibility changed as the problem focusing the minds of social engineers altered from one of poverty to one of security in the 1970s. While responsibility has only recently been identified as a particular issue for social policy academics (Roche, 1992, Dwyer, 1998, Dean et al.,

2004) philosophers and sociologists have paid close attention to responsibility over the past decade (Bauman, 1993, 1995, Habermas, 1990, 1995, Apel, 1989, 1996, Etzioni, 1995, Schmidtz, 1998, Goodin, 1998). Building on the issues raised by these authors, this work presents a qualitative study of government press releases, interviews with benefits recipients, members of the general public, welfare advisors and welfare benefits administrators to explore the rational structure of the discourses of responsibility for welfare. As a result, I develop the argument that while the reconfigured moral order promotes a private acceptance of responsibility for welfare, people still want a way of interpreting responsibility taking in a more public way.

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Introduction: Responsibility in hard times

Introduction

In the "golden age" of the welfare state a socialised responsibility was a responsibility that was both the property of the individual and a property of the collective (Pierson, 1998). Responsibilities were shouldered, either by the individual who was free to tackle them as she saw fit, and co-operatively as an issue that could be handled by the state administration, or various other experts. This mixture of freedom and co-operation drew on the altruistic and solidaristic attitude of mind promoted by the experience of war and described by Titmuss (1970). Of course the situation has changed such that the current Third Way ideology is built on the idea that this social settlement promoted a passive dependent attitude of mind (DSS, 1998, but see Dean and Taylor-Gooby, 1992). But the classic welfare state struck a balance, precarious and ideologically loaded in favour of the white male breadwinner, between the public and private burdens of responsibility (Williams, 1989). Insofar as issues were conceived in terms of their social dimension and thus the terrain of experts, bureaucrats, professionals, and philanthropists, then they had a public dimension. This public dimension has been losing ground through the New Right's New Managerialism and New Labour's Third Way. While the Third Way promotes a consensus politics, it also continues the dispersal of governance to businesses, individuals, and communities. Much of this is to be welcomed as a

genuine increase in personal freedom (Rose, 1999), but my concern is that this extension disperses responsibility to people and networks in civil society, effacing the public face of responsibility.

This is a concern shared by many theorists who discuss ideas of culture and citizenship. For example, Levitas (1998) understands this dispersal of responsibility as a Durkheimian hegemony based on colloquial understandings of morality and responsibility. Taylor-Gooby (2001) comments on the 'new individualism' formed by the individualising of responsibility. Newman (2002), Heron (2001) and Dwyer (2000) note the increased emphasis on responsibility in civil society and community, shifting morality and responsibility out of the welfare state and into a welfare society (Rodger, 2000). Jordan (1998, 2000) notes the privatisation of justice and the reordering of welfare professionalism along the utilitarian lines of 'tough love'. This relocation of welfare responsibility with the individual and in civil society is the substantive focus of this work which seeks to systematically describe the discourses surrounding the relocation of responsibility in the private domain. It deals with this relocation, not by looking at the status of concepts like citizenship (Roche, 1990, Dwyer, 2000), identity (Williams etc.), risk (Beck, Taylor-Gooby, 2000) or justice (Lund, 2002), but at responsibility.

Responsibility in sociology and social policy

While responsibility is well recognised as a central organising concept in society in sociology and social policy it is a concept that is frequently used yet infrequently

addressed in a systematic way. Responsibility is dealt with as a complement to other central concepts, in particular rights (Roche, 1992) and more recently risk (Giddens, 1999), or as a theme within specific sectors. In relating responsibility with rights, commentators have typically used the discourse of rights to delineate and describe the responsibilities of the state (Strydom, 2000, Wainwright, 2003), and more recently, of the individual (Selbourne, 1992).

Philosophers have long addressed responsibility as a concept in its own regard, dealing with it as a property of the subject and of society. Phenomenologists have, since Kierkegaard (1987), explored the way people develop a sense of their responsibility for the other, a line of thinking that has been incorporated into psychological theories of the subject (Mead, 1965, Habermas, 1995). Ontologists and existentialists have dealt with the way people are positioned as responsible in what Heidegger (1962) called, the 'thrown project'. In line with this anybody following Sartre (1946) would see the person as condemned to be responsible in the world in which she finds herself. At the same time, philosophers have characteristically turned their attention to the way society is organised, and how responsibility taking plays a role in the complex web of human relations. Writers working in the utilitarian tradition see people as adopting their responsibilities in light of the benefits and rewards that accrue from such forms of action (Mill, 1991, Kymlicka, 1990). Similarly, rationalists following Kant, discuss the way people adopt responsibility on the basis of good reason, and how such reason could be successfully institutionalised in society (Rawls, 1979, Habermas, 1990, Apel, 1998). On the other hand, thinkers who align themselves with Aristotle have emphasised

how adopting anything like a responsible moral attitude is only ever based on feeling and emotion, and outside the realm of reason (MacIntyre, 1988).

As previously noted, sociology and social policy have frequently touched on the phenomenon of responsibility, but have infrequently directly addressed this phenomenon. For example, responsibility has been a central theme in relation to the professions (Freidson, 2001), the family (Finch and Mason, 1993) and in relation to crime (Young, 1999). However, the link between responsibility and social citizenship has been successfully conceptualised by the neo-conservatives (Mead, 1986, Murray, 1984, Etzioni, 1995) and while it was raised as an issue for discussion by Roche (1992), this connection has received only limited attention (Dwyer, 1998, Rodger, 2000, Dean et al. 2004). In effect, there is a need for those of a more liberal or Marxist framework to tackle the connection between welfare and responsibility and to develop conceptions of this connection that might be offered as alternatives to those concepts developed by the neo-conservatives and communitarians. Challenging these is one area to which this thesis is intended to make a contribution.

Responsibility in a state of crisis

In general terms, the crisis of responsibility can be understood in four ways. Firstly, the rise of managerialism as a form of control promotes a responsibilisation of the individual and of civil society (Rose, 1999). Secondly, the increasing power of the market in the production of culture encourages a privatisation of responsibility and a demoralisation of society (Bauman, 1993, 1995, Fevre, 2000). Thirdly, changes in

the public sphere replace redistributive politics with a recognition politics that shifts responsibility to social groups to produce reasons backing their claims for resources (Fraser, 1997, Honneth, 1995). Finally, a further process can be discerned which involves the diversification of fate and the collapse of collective steering (Driver and Martell, 1998).

Managerialism and responsibilisation

The general framework organising responsibility today can be understood in terms of the changes in the forms of knowledge used by institutions and organisations (Clarke and Newman, 1997). The emergence of such new forms of knowledge challenge our understanding of social responsibility. This challenge is reflected in the plethora of work on new forms of governance, the decentralisation of power, and new styles of management which alter social arrangements and the moral order. Thus, for example, Rose's (1999) discussion of responsibilisation and autonomisation is similar to Clarke and Newman's (1997) discussion of managerialisms' claim on the right to manage, as the way in which organisations devolve power to managers in order to increase effectiveness, efficiency, and accountability. In the context of welfare, these new forms of knowledge are applied to the mediating role that civil society can play between the state and the citizen (Coote and Mattinson, 1997). Most important here is the role of community as advanced by the communitarians (Etzioni, 1995), but also citizen involvement and partnership in decision making processes through citizen panels or citizen juries. These initiatives resituate power in civil society promoting the self-governance of

individuals and organisations (Newman, 2002), while eroding the ethos of professional cultures in the name of market consumerism (Jordan, 2000).

The increasing power of the market and the erosion of responsibility

The discourse of responsibility can also be understood as a response to the gradual increase in the capacities for control that have been developed by the market. As the power of market grows, thus encroaching more and more into the private lives of individuals, the structure of responsibility taking changes. For Bauman (1993, 1995, see also Fevre, 2000), responsibility taking is not an attitude that needs to be inculcated in people, but is part of the natural and fundamental implications of ethics and the moral call made by others in the world. As a result, the structure of responsibility is under threat precisely because of calls made on the self and by the incursion of the market into the moral and social relations of people in everyday life. Resulting from the erosion of the expert legislator or intellectual and the rise of so many competing voices asserting authority, moral calls enter into market relations with each other and a sense of moral ambivalence enters into public communication (Bauman, 1992). As a result a new moral framework emerges that challenges moral rules will emerge (Bauman, 1993, Fevre, 2000). Bauman (2001) characterises this as a framework where it is:

> the fragility of [social and communal] bonds, their in-built transience and 'until-further-noticeness', coupled with temporariness of commitment and revocability of obligations, that constitutes the new frame (if perpetual frame-breaking can be called a frame) of power relationships (Bauman, 2001: 140).

This is a perspective that looks at how the social is increasingly fragmented and the temporal dimension comes under greater pressure. The private sphere and its cultural logics are set free from the social and structural spheres so that symbolic forms become endlessly pliable and lose their public dimension. As the market encroaches the personal and internal life of the subject, the willingness to 'be there for the other' is weakened as the ethical relation with others, the relation of love is undermined and what is left in its stead is an aestheticised, amoral, selfish subject (Bauman, 1993). The crisis of responsibility appears as a genuine crisis of a culture structured by the market.

Restructuring civil society and the demise of redistribution

The emerging discourse of responsibility can also be understood as a "consequence of an increase in moral sensibility" (Honneth, 2001: 44). This new moral sensibility has come about as a result of the struggles of, amongst others, feminists, environmentalists, gay rights activists, the disabled and ethnic minorities. These groups have campaigned to have their interests and concerns accepted as mainstream issues (Payne et al., 2000). The politics of identity that underscores these struggles have contributed to an increase in moral awareness in the public sphere (Eder, 1996, Lara, 1998). This moral sensitivity is characterised by a struggle for recognition of individual identity and the responsibility of the individual for their own destiny (Honneth, 1996). Such responsibility, it is claimed, is manifested by a desire to be an authentic personality, a person who determines herself (Heller, 1999) and by the increasing burdens these processes place on people to judge the morality of action (Habermas, 1995).

This process can be related to the current emphasis on governance and be understood as a further elaboration of power mechanisms (Rose, 1999). The dispersal of power instigated by governance discourses (see Clarke and Newman, 1997) tends to make individuals and groups more responsible for themselves, thus creating space to respond to the demise of redistributivist thinking as an opportunity to assert claims on society for the resources necessary to secure an identity in new, creative and solidaristic ways (Leonard, 1997).

Responsibility after the collapse of systemic steering

The final dimension refers to the rise of responsibility as an issue related with the demise of socialism and collective steering, and the rise of market collectivism and individualism. In this way responsibility becomes a theme because the autonomous person is no longer provided with a moral map with which she can steer her own way through life. The paternalism of experts and professionals has been eroded and their ideas shown to be mere ideology while the choices of the consumer in the market have turned out to be an effective way of organising society (Freidson, 2001, Jordan, 2002). This moral vacuum has been filled by the triumph of capitalism replacing socialism (Driver and Martell, 1998). The resulting loss of an overarching transcendental idea, some utopian goal to strive for, means that society loses some of its capacity to place fairness and justice at its centre. The properties of society come instead from market individualism (Fitzpatrick, 1998, Driver and Martell, 1998). While New Labour's Third Way is tailored to steer a course between these poles of socialism and capitalism, it concentrates on the

individual while ignoring the ideals underpinning social systems (Driver and Martell, 1998). Thus, the outcome is that the reorganisation of society after the collapse of systemic steering leads not only to a resurgence of the importance of civil society that, for all of its difficulties, still implies a use of publics. But it also implies an extension of the market.

A cultural approach to responsibility

Underlying each of these processes we can discern the individualisation of the social (Beck, 1992, Bauman, 1994) and the responsibilisation of the individual (Rose, 1999). In effect, through managerialism and responsibilisation, the rising power of the market, the restructuring of civil society and the collapse of systemic steering, the individual is increasingly expected to take responsibility for her own welfare. These processes are symptomatic of a wider shift in the normative core of modern society (Bauman, 1994, Rose, 1999). One way of understanding this shift is to examine the changing way in which justice is socially constructed has changed from a basis in social class to a basis in social identity and social status (Bradley, 1996). Whether this change implies a shift from redistribution to recognition as Honneth (1995, 2004) and Taylor (1998) hold, or implies a relativisation of issues of redistribution to issues of recognition as Fraser (1995, 2004) and Lara (1998) argue, is of less importance than the fact that the interests and concerns of the individual are increasingly important. This change therefore has major implications for justice as a normative concept. In this work, I focus on the concept of responsibility to gain access to research informants' understandings of the

changing nature of social and moral issues. In effect, I make use of responsibility as a prism through which responsibility is refracted and therefore addressed.

Such a cultural approach (Inglis, and Hughson, 2003) to responsibility enables me to understand responsibility as a socially constructed phenomenon based on communication and discourse (Strydom, 2000). Such a cultural approach allows me to understand discourse in two ways. Firstly, discourses come about in response to shared perceptions of problems and through these discourses, possible solutions involving various meanings and practices are developed that encapsulate ways of constructing responsibility (Foucault, 2000, Strydom, 2000). In this way of understanding discourse, norms are formed, institutionalised, and internalised into people's personalities through communication. Understood in this way discourse refers both to norms, and the practices through which norms are institutionalised (Howarth, 2000). Analysing discourse in this sense means analysing the construction and meaning of norms concerning responsibility, and the way in which people are expected to take up roles and positions in relation to these norms.

The second way of understanding discourse relies on an account of the cultural frameworks used to organise responsibility and stems from an argument that responsibility is not a category or idea in itself, but a social location within a cultural framework. Questions about the nature of the individual's responsibility: how these responsibilities accrue to her? How much responsibility is she expected to deal with herself? And how much others or society is supposed to accept? Are responsibilities dealt with using cultural or ideological forms of knowledge? This

second understanding of discourse follows Habermas (1984, 1987) in understanding discourse variously as 'forms of knowledge', 'rational structures', 'norms', 'understandings' and 'reasons' and recognises that responsibility is a form of knowledge that is structured in light of individual interests, motivations and positions.

Swidler (1986: 273) theorised culture as a 'repertoire' or 'tool-kit' comprised of "habits, skills and styles" or various kinds of symbols that provide a means through which social action and outlook could be co-ordinated. Swidler's (1986) point was that the causal significance of culture lay, not in the Weberian sense of defining the ends of action, but in providing the tools to construct recurrent strategies of action. Swidler expanded on this view of culture as a 'tool kit' that is used to organise behaviour by elaborating on 'settled' and 'unsettled' lives. That is, she distinguishes between how culture operates in routine situations and in situations of change, and how in times of change tools that otherwise remain tacit or even irrelevant are articulated and ideologies gain a temporary public saliency. Thus, culture can be seen both in terms of the forms of knowledge that organise the way people perceive the world, and in terms of the way knowledge is used by people, that is, both from ideological and symbolic interactionist points of view (de Certeau, 1988).

The idea that culture is a 'tool kit' made up of ideas, models, and symbols used in a dynamic fashion to make sense of the world, is an idea that has become axiomatic to all the major traditions of cultural theory and analysis (Inglis, and Hughson, 2003, Silber, 2003). In order to explore constructions of responsibility, I make use of

Habermas's (1984, 1987) version of this framework because he offers an approach that can integrate both the interactionist and ideological elements of culture. In terms of ideology, discourse is used here to understand and explore the way settlements become destabilised and new settlements are reached. In terms of social interaction, Habermas (1984, 1987) offers a theory of how people construct issues in relation to aspects of their lifeworld. I outline this framework here in detail because it is of central importance to the way this work is organised.

Habermas's three worlds

Habermas's (1984, 1987) action theory divides the world into three parts and shows how the individual relates with these three worlds. He (1984, 1987) takes his theoretical starting point from Weber's action theory, but moves beyond Weber by looking on purposive action as a particularly narrow form of rationality (Habermas, 1987). It begins by noting that there is an objective world that people need to master in some form or other. This world is comprised of anything that people can take an objective attitude towards, as such it includes material things, events, institutions, people and so on. People can take a manipulative approach to these objects, in other words, people can intentionally intervene in the world to realise a desired state of affairs. This manipulative rationality refers to the use of reason to make the best use of available means to realise a desired state of affairs. Ordinarily, this means evaluating the different courses of action to choose the most effective or efficient means of reaching a clearly defined goal. But the objective world consists not only in things and events, but also in relations between these things, between the actor and the object(s), and the actor with her action plans and

other actors and their action plans. Strategic action refers to the use of reason to calculate the best, most effective or efficient, way to realise desired ends in light of observations about how other actors have made their own plans.

Alongside the objective world is a *social world*, but relating to this world means going beyond simply relating to the objective world. This is because the social world forms a normative context that establishes the legitimate forms of interaction for a social group. As members of a social group, people are oriented towards shared norms. Thus, in situations where a norm applies, people either adhere to the norm or break it. The social or normative dimension refers to the sense in which a norm is valid for all of the members of a social group, and the shared, often implicit, agreement that they will abide by these norms and so each member has a right to expect others to do the same. Relating to this social world means simultaneously relating to the objective world. For example, abiding by a norm can mean obeying a law (or legal norm), for example observing a speed restriction. In such cases conforming to norms is about taking cognisance of circumstances like financial penalties, or points on a licence. On the other hand, conforming to a norm can also mean considering values. In these instances the norm does not simply have validity in light of circumstances, but also in light of moral considerations. For instance many people may ignore speed restrictions if they think they will not be punished or because they think the restriction is set unreasonably low, however, most people would not kill another person simply because most people think it is unacceptable to do so. Therefore such a value has a moral validity in addition to a legal validity:

> This means that a socially competent agent must be able to distinguish between the factual and normative elements of an action situation, i.e. to distinguish between having to relate to 'circumstances' and having to relate to values (so that we do not treat people as things and vice versa) (Eriksen and Weigård, 2003: 29).

The trouble with identifying the peculiar quality of normative knowledge lies with trying to identify the precise nature of this knowledge.

The *subjective world* relates to the person's own inner world, their feelings, emotions, thoughts, wishes and intentions. This internal subjective world is made accessible when one actor meets an audience and, through dramaturgical action, gives this audience a picture of her subjectivity:

> A performance enables the actor to present himself to his audience in a certain way; in bringing something of his own subjectivity to appearance, he would like to be seen by his public in a particular way (Habermas, 1984: 90).

The concepts of 'drama' 'performance' 'expression' 'presentation' are, of course, taken from the world of theatre. But the central idea here is that in making a presentation of her self to others the actor is not relating an external or acquired feeling or desire, since she cannot possess these in the same way as she can possess a weight or colour. Instead she is, at will, expressing the feelings and desires that she experiences as she plays her own role in her own life. She is also constantly switching between taking the role of actor and the role of audience. The central issue for the relation with the subjective world is whether or to what extent the subject expresses her own feelings and desires: does she express the feelings and desires she wants her audience to believe she has? or might she be deceiving

herself that the feelings she expresses are really her own? The point is that the subjective world presupposes an internal world demarcated from an external world, cut off, that is, from physical and social objects (Habermas, 1984: 93). Because it is marked off as separate, the subject can decide to act wholly cynically or completely sincerely. This opens a wide range of possible positions of which three are important here.

Firstly, the cynical person tries to manage how her audience receives her presentation as a means to achieve an end. This is not a purely strategic type of action because the use of strategy is about finding the most effective way of achieving an end in light of the plans of others. Rather, this subject makes statements that appear to be subjectively true for her to a judging public. Only if this public recognise that the presentation is based on cynical manipulation does the communication switch to openly strategic action. Secondly, the subject can make a presentation that she earnestly believes in, but that turn out to be based on some falsehood. For instance, she may feel she has responsibilities to care for her estranged husband's mother, but upon reflection conclude that she has no such responsibilities. The third mode of action that is of interest here calls up a range of problems that will be discussed at a later point. It relates with the how the public is supposed to decide that an actors self presentation is authentic. The fact remains that it is impossible to judge the truth of a self presentation on the grounds of rationality. But the truth can be judged in terms of the consistency of the different things the person says, or between what they say and how they behave. Authenticity calls up questions about who is best placed to judge whether what a

person says about their feelings and desires is true, the person themselves (on the liberal account) or the society (on an authoritarian account). Habermas, ever the liberal, believes that it is for the person themselves to judge the authenticity of their own statements about themselves by clarifying their claims with the help of others.

The precise meaning of responsibility in this formulation will be made clearer in the chapters that follow. But the overarching theory is that people use reason in ways that is appropriate to their context and interests, and therefore the meaning of responsibility changes as the situation and interests of actors change. The form of knowledge that gives expression to responsibility communicates meanings and organises practices, is related in some way to the reality of the situation and the constructions that are to a certain extent logically structured by context, and formulated by relevant actors.

Viewing ethics and morals using a discourse ethical methodology

Insofar as this work is concerned with responsibility, it is concerned with ethics and morals. The distinction between ethics and morals that I have already alluded to is of central importance here because it relates to the dividing line between issues of the good for the self and the just for everyone in society. Since questions about responsibility are intimately bound up in normative issues about the best way of valuing and supporting people in society, then issues of an ethical and moral kind quickly emerge. Therefore, at this it is necessary to describe the way I understand ethics and morals; the connection that I make between ethics and morals and the way I use the terms 'ethics' and 'morals', in this study. This is important given that

fact that I take my understanding of these concepts from the discourse ethics of Habermas (1990, 1995) and Apel (1998) and not from more 'traditional' sources of understanding (Kymlicka, 1990)

Within moral philosophy, as Fraser (2004: 27-28) notes,:

> ... questions of justice are usually understood to be matters of "the right", which belong squarely on the terrain of "morality." Questions of self-realisation, in contrast, are considered to be matters of "the good."

While, this may be "a matter of scope" (2004: 28) as Fraser intimates, this distinction is at the heart of discourse ethics. Discourse ethics makes this distinction by retaining a narrow meaning for morality. In effect, in discourse ethics, ethics are understood as the various kinds of 'good life' that the individual or collective seek to clarify. Whereas morality is concerned with only those issues that have implications for others and that raise questions of fairness or justice (Habermas, 1990, 1993, Apel, 1998, Rehg, 1994). This narrows the meaning of the moral "ought" from its broad conception in everyday life where a moral can be understood in terms of the right course of action given the situation, to a narrow conception where only those "ought" claims that impact on others are considered as moral issues (Rehg, 1994). While this approach means holding ethics and morals in a distinct and highly abstract way, it enables social scientists to conceptualise and analyse discourses of responsibility in relation to ethical and moral issues. Questions of responsibility can then be related either with issues of the 'good life' and questions about "who I am and who I want to be" (Habermas, 1993), or with questions of justice which arise as various interests collide and some form of resolution that recognises the interests

and claims of each affected party is needed. This distinction is central to this thesis and will be returned to again in subsequent chapters.

The structure of the thesis

Following this introductory chapter I include two related chapters. These chapters deal with the way responsibility has been used to organise British society. Chapter 1 looks at the uses of responsibility in historical context by examining how responsibility has been positioned in various ideologies that dominated at different points of time. Chapter 2 presents a more detailed examination of the way responsibility has been constructed in more recent times under New Labour's Third Way, and also includes a discussion of the model of responsible action that I adopt in the substantive component of this thesis. In Chapter 3, I examine various pertinent social theories of responsibility paying attention to what these theories say about contemporary society and the ways of organising society to help people better accept their responsibilities. Chapter 4 contains a detailed description of the research design, methodology and qualitative data used in the substantive component of this project. In effect, these first four chapters provide a rationale for the overall research programme.

In the next three chapters, an analysis of the findings generated in the fieldwork is presented. The data is organised and presented in line with the various themes that emerged from the data and in relation to the theory of motivation to accept responsibility detailed in Chapter 2. In Chapter 5, I analyse the ideas about responsible action communicated by the New Labour government and ideas drawn

on by people working to implement government social policy around welfare benefits. In this way, I analyse concepts about responsibility that have a direct effect on people's lives. In Chapter 6, I present an analysis of the constructs the research informants used to discuss their own personal responsibilities. Chapter 7 covers the social and public dimension of the research informants discourses of responsibility by looking at perceptions of the issues faced by responsibility in society and at discussions about the way welfare should be organised to better reflect the way people accept their responsibilities. Finally, the concluding chapter draws together the discourses identified in the analysis to explore the potential for a more discourse oriented approach to responsibility as a response to the challenges of reflexivity amid the individualisation of welfare responsibility in contemporary society. In this chapter I draw conclusions from the research material and discuss how discourse ethics might provide New Labour's Third Way ideology a with more moral dimension.

Chapter 1: Socio-Historical Constructions of Responsibility

Introduction

The election of the New Labour government in Great Britain in 1997 brought with it the ascendancy of a politics that thematises responsibility (Lund, 1999). Placing rights alongside responsibility signifies a semantic shift, a shift in the relation between discourse and practice, and consequently, a change in the moral order of society (Foucault, 2000). But what is the nature of this shift, and how is it historically specific?

In this Chapter, I address this question by approaching responsibility as a culturally organised phenomenon. I deal with responsibility as a socially constructed response to the problems facing people and society at particular points in society's history. If responsibility is not seen as a social fact, but as a cultural phenomenon constructed through discourse in a socio-historical time and space, and as a response to the particular problems perceived in society (Strydom, 2000), then it is possible to analyse the constructions of this phenomenon. I recognise that the discourses proffered by various actors are also ideological, and as such, it is

necessary to focus particularly on the hegemonic versions of responsibility and the kinds of society these ideologies are used to create (Mannheim, 1991).

In order to make sense of the various constructions of responsibility operating through the history of the British welfare state, I take up Strydom's (1999a) thesis that the basic problem organising and coordinating the sense making and knowledge producing efforts of people in society changed in the late 1970s. Up to this point the preoccupation of policy makers had been with poverty, but changed to risk. Whereas Strydom (1999a) identifies risk as the problem faced by a society endangered by its relationship with nature, I follow Vail et al. (2000) in focusing on security as the problem facing a society endangered by its precarious position in the global economy.

Discourses of welfare responsibility amid the problem of poverty

The problem of poverty appeared everywhere in Britain in the early part of the nineteenth century. Poverty, of course, has always been a problem in society, but poverty became a problem *for* society during this period as industrialisation and urbanisation transformed society (Dean, 1991). As mechanisation and new farming methods came into use and people began to move to the cities in search of work, they came to perceive the problem and danger of poverty. This problem was highlighted by experiences of poor housing, poor sanitation, widespread disease, poor diet, and the insecurity that the sickness or death of a breadwinner brought to the family (Finlayson, 1994). These were problems that repeatedly arose for public discussion (Dean, 1991). A major response to these problems were the various

Friendly Societies and Co-operatives that sought to remedy such social ills (Finlayson, 1994). As a result, I conceive of the welfare state as a phenomenon that, historically, developed with the rise of this co-operative movement (Finlayson, 1994, here I focus on the British context which, of course, has quite a distinct history (Kennett, 2001, Esping-Anderson, 1990)). Here, I follow Finlayson (1994) in understanding the welfare state as a range of programmes and institutions that were made possible by, and developed out of, the various kinds of Friendly Societies and co-operative movements that were growing in influence and number around the 1840s. The peculiar structural context in which discourses about poverty carried by the various Friendly Societies and co-operative movements arose, and from which they drew their saliency, was the experience of industrialisation, urbanisation, and the perception of the problem of poverty as a guiding social concern. Therefore, responsibility for welfare was first treated as a matter for people and organisations in civil society and the market. Although the problem of poverty was discussed within the political public sphere, as will be shown, it was not until the early part of the twentieth century that those in government had the kind of knowledge at their disposal to deal with this problem (Dean, 1991).

The shift in the construction of poverty as a private matter to one that could potentially be dealt with in a public way is reflected in the various discourses during the period between the mid nineteenth and the late twentieth century. Hence the middle to late nineteenth century context is structured by locally based welfare institutions.

The mid- to late- nineteenth century context: The Poor Law and the Friendly Societies

Two welfare institutions dominated nineteenth century Britain: the Poor Law and working men's associations. The Poor Law raised questions about the grounds for entitlement to benefits (or poor relief) and how best to deal with claimants. A range of practices and ideas were developed over its long history. According to Fraser (1984) these included returning vagrants to their own parishes (1984: 34, 36), collecting taxes to support the poor (1984: 33), setting up the poor house (1984: 35) providing outdoor relief (1984: 38), and legislating for local administration and custom (1984: 36, 38). Approaches were often based on a general fear of the vagrant, and concerns with demoralisation and the perverse appeal of destitution (1984: 46, 47, 48). Proposed solutions were set out based on the "concept of 'setting the poor to work'" (1984: 34), by using distinctions between the impotent, the able bodied and the persistent idler (1984: 35). The point, however, is that in the nineteenth century, the Poor Law organised responsibilities through a set of disciplinary practices that instilled particular kinds of moral agencies into the poor (Dean, 1991, Rose, 1999). On the one hand, through the dehumanising prospect of the workhouse, the Poor Law sought to generate a kind of moral agency that could thrive in the market. The prospect of the workhouse, it was assumed, would instil the self-discipline into the poor so that they would work in order to avoid the workhouse and maintain their freedoms (Poovey, 1995: 106-111). On the other hand, the Poor Laws enabled the creation of a range of spaces through which a civilised moral agency could be inculcated (Rose, 1999). The workhouse, along with the school and family life, could also be used to "invent the conditions in which

subjects themselves would enact the responsibilities that composed their liberties" (Rose, 1999: 72).

Alongside the Poor Law were a range of practices organised around the ideas of self help and mutual aid (Fraser, 1984, Finlayson, 1994). These took a variety of different forms. Friendly societies were organisations that "offered a means of insuring against the vicissitudes which could so easily overtake a working-class life" in the industrial society; illness, old age and death (Finlayson, 1994: 24). According to Finlayson (1994), who carried out an exhaustive survey of such forms of working class voluntarism, these Friendly Societies often operated as local mutual societies, and were frequently in danger of going out of existence due to a lack of understanding of underlying actuarial principles, or excessive expenditure on drink (1994: 25, 26). National forms also operated which, according to Finlayson's (1994: 26, 27) survey, were often based in London, and for whom mutuality "was embodied in monthly or annual social occasions." Mutualism was also expressed in trade unions and co-operatives (1994: 28, 29, 30) which developed schemes for relief during strike action, sickness or unemployment or, in the case of co-operatives, developed the more Owenite idea of forming a co-operative society. These organisations operated local and mutual institutions largely because they distrusted what they feared might turn out to be a despotic centralised state (1994: 100, 101). In doing so, these Societies generated a form of market collectivism, and developed ideas about how individuals could come together for mutual benefit in the market. They also served to institutionalise and normalise discourses and forms

of discipline concerned with thrift, cleanliness and the moral responsibilities of family members for one another (Finlayson, 1994, Rose, 1999: 74, 75).

Together, the nineteenth century Poor Laws and the range of social movements organised around the problem of uncertainty in an industrialised world, contributed to the formation of knowledge about the proper attitude of the responsible subject and her responsibilisation in the context of the market (Dean, 1991, Rose, 1999). On the one hand, through the institution of the Poor Law, knowledge was developed about the strategic exploitation of welfare provision and modes of policy intervention that promoted responsible action by discouraging such exploitation. On the other hand, through trial and (frequently disastrous) error, the Mutual and Friendly Societies developed actuarial knowledge alongside knowledge concerning the need for social integration and personal self-discipline. These were seen as prerequisites for the smooth and reliable running of these organisations as modes of risk and responsibility sharing (Finlayson, 1994). Thus, forms of knowledge about how to deal with the objective world of welfare were developed relating to intervention into the welfare of the vulnerable, the strategic manipulation of these forms of intervention, and a shared understanding of how to apportion risks and responsibilities. As part of these modes of stabilising welfare, ideas were also developed about the need to moralise certain behaviours through appeal to certain values (Dean, 1991, Rose, 1999). This required the use of knowledge of a more normative kind.

Ideological constructions of responsibility in the mid- to late- nineteenth century: Liberal Individualism or Duty Individualism

Welfare ideology in the nineteenth century placed responsibility on the individual whilst stressing the importance of associations in civil society (Finlayson, 1994). Within this ideology, fulfilment was seen as issuing from the individual's own efforts, hence "the importance of effort and perseverance, hard work and sobriety, self-control and self-improvement – and the need to struggle to show independence, initiative and character to develop inner potential" (Finlayson, 1994: 20). For the first time the idea that personal fulfilment could be achieved through personal improvement, an idea that was derived from radical Protestantism "with its ideal of the self-governing congregation and the belief in the importance of individual calling and awakening for salvation" (Davies, 1997: 43) was being promoted. This idea was coupled with a communitarian notion of the individual as a 'free - standing' agent produced through social interaction and constituted by cooperation with others. The individual could become free standing through others, and so individualism was predicated on a pragmatic collectivism, a collectivism aimed at enabling and enhancing this individualism (Davies, 1997). Together, these ideas formed "the doctrine of the moral responsibility of the individual for his actions and the important belief that virtue is only possible where, and to the extent that, actions are freely chosen" (Davies, 1997: 43). Moreover, Protestantism placed a new concept alongside working class voluntarism, that of middle class commercialism, and both were changed.

Since it was based on these two concepts, this ideology could be used to bring a description of the situation of individuals, with an ideal tailored to their contexts. Hence the normative content could alter for both working class voluntarism and middle class commercialism by altering what seeking help from within meant in each context. On the one hand, help was sought from within the community in order to deal with the social and economic disadvantages of industrialisation, and on the other, help was sought from within the person in order to exploit the opportunities offered by this industrialism (Finlayson, 1994: 22, 23). The advantage of these concepts lay with how they could be used to legitimate the concentration and exploitation of capital. Seeking help from the community through various kinds of mutual aid or friendly associations enabled a concentration of power in civil society by building on ideas about how to share risks and burdens. Similarly, developing a self-help mentality within the person enabled an exploitation of arising opportunities that a burgeoning capitalism produced (Finlayson, 1994). The important point here though is that responsibility for welfare was placed with the individual who "had within his grasp the power to find his own salvation" (Fraser, 1984: 47). Thus "the key to general welfare is the welfare and happiness of individuals" and welfare in the wider society was "a consequence of, the welfare of the individuals composing it" (Davies, 1997: 43). Finlayson (1994: 101) points out how this lead to a legislative paternalism "exercised to shield those who could not be expected to exercise individual effort and responsibility; but again, this was not intended to interfere with the workings of a state primarily designed to enable individual effort to prosper, and agencies devoted to further such effort to flourish." Similarly, Fraser (1984: 47) points out how such ideas of personal salvation cast society as "a loving parent

inflicting sharp, painful punishment on the miscreant child." In short, people were encouraged to take responsibility for themselves through cooperation with others and ideally become the free standing individual who was valued by society.

This ideology complemented the use of norms to govern and responsibilise action by moralising certain values. It brought together an idea drawn from the relationship with the personal world – that people could realise themselves by attending to their own personal calling, that they could become authentic persons – with an idea drawn from relations in the social world – that the individual could realise this projected subject through interacting with others in society or the market. This served to produce a highly potent ideology that could legitimate paternalist policy interventions that, nevertheless, did not interfere with the very liberal conception of the individual cast as realising their own personal calling. It could, simultaneously, legitimate and valorise, and thereby make a duty of, acting in the market and in the associations of civil society for personal purposes (Rose, 1999). The Protestant and liberal individualist assumptions of this framework broke down towards the end of the nineteenth century in large part because it "put insufficient emphasis on external circumstances and matters over which the individual had little control" (Finlayson, 1994: 102), and partly due to secularisation processes that undermined the idea of a calling (Fraser, 1984, Finlayson, 1994). On the other hand, the idea of placing a duty on the person to secure their own welfare through the market and civil society came under pressure, particularly during the 1890s, as perceptions of dietary, health, and education problems, or the problem of poverty, were

increasingly taken up in mainstream political discourses that highlighted their social dimension (Fraser, 1984, Finlayson, 1994).

The context in the early twentieth century: Welfare Statism

As problems with the liberal individualist or duty individualist ideologies were exposed towards the end of the nineteenth century, a new situation was emerging where society, and not the individual, could be understood as a site of action (Finlayson, 1994, Davies, 1997, Rose, 1999). The modes of responsibilisation instituted in the nineteenth century were carried out in the name of the liberal individual, and sought to create this person by inculcating the attitudes and dispositions of the liberal person (Dean, 1991, Rose, 1999). As Rose (1999) shows, this responsibilisation was continued by the logic of the separation of the market from society. The economy came into view through a consciousness of territory delimited to the nation state, and the organisation of economies within the nation state through the limits placed on the economy by borders, customs, and money. This consciousness was consolidated in the twentieth century through the responsibilities of the state to ensure the security and well-being of the economy in order to secure the nation and the people, and through the formation of knowledge about the economy and the development of policies aimed at enhancing economic performance (1999: 102). Whereas, the economy was seen in terms of laws and causalities, a sphere which followed its own internal logics and therefore could not be acted upon by the state, the moral was seen as the proper sphere for action "by politicians, the churches, philanthropists, and others" (1999: 103). Within this context, the thinking that Davis (1999, above) refers to as incorporationism is

shown by Rose (1999) to have particularly involved sociologists in the sense of Bauman's (1995) legislators. That is, groups of politicians and scientists of the 'social' who worked to engineer society in order to ameliorate or correct, the problems of crime, alienation, individualisation, urbanisation, and fragmentation caused by industrialisation. In effect, the terrain of the social became the panacea for the problems of a society seeking to manage and control itself in its industrial environment. Thus problems were translated into social issues and dealt with as social problems.

The social became a panacea with perceptions of the successes and colossal failures of voluntarism and in conjunction with doubts regarding the effectiveness and adequacy of the minimal state support provided through the Poor Law (Finlayson, 1994: 136-155). Perceptions of the administrative possibilities embodied in the voluntary associations and the rising problem of poverty that the Poor Law not only seemed unable to tackle, but that also stigmatised the poor, generated the conditions wherein new forms of knowledge were sought on how to stabilise society. The 'New Liberals', a political party who emerged in the latter part of the nineteenth century, had seen how such new forms of knowledge needed to be predicated on a new conception of the individual (Fraser, 1984, Finlayson, 1994). The idea "that there was such a thing as a 'free-standing' individual, independent of, and divorced from, his social environment" seemed increasingly mistaken, as did the focus of paternalism on individual cases of poverty but which was "impervious to the idea that anything might be wrong with the general working of the industrial system" (Finlayson, 1994: 156). Instead the New Liberals believed

that social intervention needed to pay greater heed to social justice and the wider context of social action while their socialist contemporaries took a more radical view of structural inequalities (1994: 156, 157, 158). Nevertheless, a political context was formed in which the state was seen as having "a role in setting right the shortcomings of an economic system which had produced poverty on such a scale as would put self-improvement beyond the capacity of the individual" (1994: 161). Such a role included a new form of societal manipulation differing from intervention, a form of manipulation that Claus Offe (1985) calls 'production'. That is, a kind of rationality that develops social policy as institutions which operate as organisations shaping the context in which other organisations and commodities operate. Moreover, in the context of the extended franchise, the idea that people should have social rights alongside their civil and political rights gained support and credence amongst all the major parties (Fraser, 1984: 162, 163, Strydom, 2000). These ideas provided the framework in which new forms of state intervention were developed that centralised welfare provision into an administrative body offering uniformity, professionalism and expertise (Fraser, 1984).

Ideological constructions of responsibility in the early twentieth century: A Liberal Individualist Duty Collectivism

The shifting of the burden of welfare responsibilities away from the individual and towards some form of collective, or towards the state, was criticised by proponents of liberal individualism who resisted the centralisation of power in the state (Fraser, 1984, Finlayson, 1994). The collectivisation of welfare responsibility was based on the idea that individuals are "largely determined by the network of social relations of

which they are elements, so that factors and forces outside the individual or outside his control play a great part in determining his character and actions" (Davies, 1997: 60). This shift from an individualist to a more social perspective that put people's ability to participate in their social group at the centre, "led to the idea of a generalised collective responsibility for the welfare of others and to the perception that a moral wrong or poverty in one part of society imposes a duty upon all" (Davies, 1997: 60). This idea was taken up by a turn to the twentieth century New Liberalism that:

> directed the emphasis of traditional liberal beliefs in individual effort and achievement more towards the needs of the individual in the community. 'Let liberalism proceed with its glorious work of building up the temple of liberty in this country,' said Lloyd George in 1903, 'but let it also bear in mind that the worshippers of that shrine have to live' (Finlayson, 1994: 124).

This compromise between liberalism and collectivism enabled an acceptance of state intervention to prevent the accumulation and concentration of wealth and to prevent the exploitation of the poor through redistributive measures operating in conjunction with self-help organisations:

> By this means would emerge a general spirit of social responsibility, a strengthening of charity, self and mutual help, which would remove the need for long-term state intervention (Thane, 1982: 58).

The effect of this compromise was that the twentieth century would involve a definition of a moral framework around a collectivisation of duties (Thane, 1982). The normative content of this framework brought together a social description of society with a discourse about the possibilities for engineering a more equal

society, offered by the state in conjunction with civil society (Davies, 1997). While looking at society in terms of its structural effects on individuals, this discourse could appeal to the ideal of a well-ordered society stabilised and collectivised through state intervention while upholding liberal individualism. For example, the "[t]wo great protagonists [of social insurance], Lloyd George and Churchill, saw no place in insurance for the concept of the undeserving poor, since it was irrelevant to the issue, which was universal entitlement earned by contributions" (Fraser, 1984: 150, 151). By taking a social point of view, these architects of social insurance could bypass arguments about how duty collectivism would undermine the moral fabric of the working classes and point instead towards the capacity of this system to incorporate the lower classes into society through this social contract. Henceforth the problem of poverty was placed firmly on the public agenda.

The result of this process of deprivatisation was "a more democratic and collectivist state which sought to create what has been called 'a more organic relation' between the individual and society and to establish a citizenship of entitlement" (Finlayson, 1994: 198). Resulting from the growth of an organic notion of society; a social consciousness could develop that took a social and moral point of view that can be understood in terms of a duty collectivism. However, the need to align liberal individualism with this emergent duty collectivism, in the political context of the rise of socialism, led to a compromise and the formation of a liberal individualist duty collectivism (Davies, 1997). This did not mean that the burden of responsibility for welfare was shifted to the state, but instead that the state centralised the administration of welfare while still placing the onus on the individual to make the

necessary contributions. In this people who were deemed by Friendly Societies or Co-operatives as too risky to be insured could, through state provision access insurance thus enabling the development of a more just system. State collectivism served not only the interests of justice but also of liberalism since it distinguished between people's public activities and private burdens. Historically speaking, this moral framework did not break down. Rather its social utopianism, the idea that the state together with civil society could engineer a good society, was to be energised through the successes of state mobilisation of the society and the economy during the First World War (Thane, 1982).

The inter-war context: The Welfare State

The collectivisation of welfare provision and the centralisation of responsibility in the state continued in the inter-war period through the development and refinement of methods of stabilising society in its industrial environment. The problems posed by the environment were dramatised in this period by the experience of the possibilities of mass collective mobilisation drawn from the First World War, and the qualitatively new experience of unemployment brought about by demobbed troops. This situation of structural unemployment made the reasons to collectivise risks and responsibilities as a way of stabilising society ever more plain (Fraser, 1984: 185-198). In this context, actors began to search for ways of more effectively collectivising responsibility for welfare. Finlayson (1994), in his history of voluntarism, stresses how voluntarist activity continued in this period. Indeed, he argues that the institutions expressing a state collectivism were formed in response to the weaknesses noted in voluntarism and in its local complement, the Poor Law

(1994: 250-253). Like Fraser (1984: 178-184), Finlayson (1994: 254, 255) notes how centralised state planning was very much 'in vogue' in the years directly after the First World War, but that this energy did not return until the 1930s. Fraser (1984: 197, 198) stresses how the strengthening of centralised planning brought about the demise of the Poor Law and demonstrated the weaknesses of *Laissez-faire* capitalism. In response to these processes, new forms of knowledge about how to organise welfare using the agencies of the state to stabilise the problems faced by society in its industrial environment were sought. Such ideas were famously put forward by Keynes and Beveridge.

At this time, the forms of knowledge that were developed were focused on the economy and society as an object. As such, society and the economy were identified as units that could be manipulated using policy frameworks based on an enhanced understanding of their structures (Rose, 1999). Hence, the gradual development of knowledge about the economy led to the possibility of a Keynesian economics that focused on manipulating demand (Pierson, 1998). The concept of collectivism did not change so much as its link with liberal individualism was weakened.

Ideological constructions of responsibility in the inter-war years: Social Democracy and the utopianism of Duty Collectivism

The effect of the Second World War on welfare policies was to extend the collectivist component of the moral framework developed during the early part of the twentieth century (Sullivan, 1996: 32-36). In particular, the Fabian Socialist idea

of collective responsibility for welfare which postulated a society into which all social groups could be incorporated through the benevolent work of well trained welfare professionals, gained currency in a state at war seeking to boost morale through encouraging solidarity (Thane, 1982). The result was a new approach to the problem of poverty based on a redistributive moral agenda that brought together state intervention with citizen participation in a way that was supposed to enhance a sense of solidarity. Titmuss (1970) identified this idea as the basis of the 'Gift Relationship':

> what unites it [social policy] with ethical considerations is its focus on integrative systems: on processes, transactions and institutions which promote an individual's sense of identity, participation and community and allow him more freedom of choice for the expression of altruism and which, simultaneously, discourage a sense of individual alienation (Titmuss, 1970: 224).

The basis of this moral order was the idea that poverty resulted in exclusion from social participation, an idea that perhaps received its clearest articulation in Peter Townsend's seminal study of poverty in 1979:

> Individuals, families and groups can be said to be in poverty when they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least are widely encouraged and approved, in the societies to which they belong. Their resources are so seriously below those commanded by the average individual or family that they are, in effect, excluded from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities (Townsend, 1979: 32).

Here, again, we find a bringing together of a description of the problem of poverty in society with an ideal. This description organises reality as a space in which people live out their lives within the context of a society where certain basic ways of living

have become customary, and where everybody should be able to participate in social life. This idea was first given broad expression in the conception of citizenship offered by T. H. Marshall (1950), which gave a historical legitimacy and coherence to collectivism. Citizenship, for Marshall, "involves an equality of membership status and of ability to participate in a society, and it refers to what the society collectively acknowledges as legitimate and enforceable citizens' rights in respect of the various elements of the concept" (Roche, 1992: 19). With these arguments the collectivist framework provided certainty and direction to state welfare provision. This was a socialist duty collectivism insofar as it placed emphasis on the state to ensure that people could participate in the social world of which they were a part. It remained up to people to better themselves but in the sense of moving up in the class system. Duty became more of an issue for the state and the collective than for the individual within this framework, and justice went beyond issues of participation and into issues of redistribution (Roche, 1992).

However, this framework focused on "the development of *rights rather than duties*" (Roche, 1992: 20). As Roche (1992: 19-21) points out, a framework which stresses rights over duties may have been suitable in the context of a society where people felt they were owed something after the hardships of war, but such a one-sided stress also laid the foundation for its breakdown. It was a "relatively duty free and unreciprocal conception of citizenship. If this is so, then it can also be argued that it has risked presiding over a diminution of the freedom and moral autonomy of those depending on it (promoting welfare dependency etc)" (Roche, 1992: 31, 32). Furthermore, such a de-moralising consequence also has affects in the political

realm where "[d]e-moralized individuals are unlikely to be able to see themselves as being credible bearers of the civil and political powers, the identity and status, of full citizenship" (1992: 35). Of course, the social democratic compromise broke down for reasons other than morals; also important were the fiscal crises of the seventies which generated an uncertainty that reached right into the framework of knowledge about welfare and its moral content (c.f. Pierson, 1998, Taylor-Gooby, 1991). This framework, which placed primary responsibility on the state to incorporate its citizens into society, broke down under its own entitlement and rights orientated logic, a breakdown that was given particular shape by Mead (1986) and Murray's (1984) critique and reappraisal of individual and collective welfare responsibilities.

Discourses of welfare responsibility amid the problem of security: The late 1970s to the present

During the 1980s the common perception of a whole range of social concerns altered. No longer was poverty understood as the basic social concern, although it retains a prominent place in people's thinking about the nature and organisation of society. Instead, during this period, a new concern with security took its place. The problem of security first made its appearance in public communication with the oil crisis of the 1970s, then again with the growing awareness of economic globalisation, the recession and the fiscal crises of the 1980s. This awareness of the problem of security became exacerbated in the context of the nuclear threat (Chernobyl, Three Mile Island), the world balance of power after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the insecurity that accompanied economic globalisation, the Twin

Towers, the two Gulf Wars, and al-Qaida. The central position that poverty once took as a concern that people needed to address has been sidelined in favour of security. This shift has had a significant impact on the welfare state and social policy as institutions designed to combat the problem of poverty (Pierson, 1998, Gilbert, 2000). This shift has been witnessed by writers concerned with the question of a world beyond the welfare state, the meaning of a shrunken or entrenched welfare state, or the politics of welfare in an insecure global environment.

The late twentieth century context: The Security State

The form of knowledge that developed in the context of this critique and reappraisal of the welfare state centred around the idea of remodelling the welfare state in a manner closer to the market, and of managing change (Clarke and Newman, 1997). The new form of knowledge about the social organisation of welfare has been conceived as a reorganisation of the state into a Schumpeterian Workfare Postnational Regime (SWPR) (Jessop, 1994, 2002), a managerial state (Clarke and Newman, 1997), or more broadly, an enabling state (Gilbert, 2000). These writers articulate the formation of a state that is more concerned with security then poverty, albeit in different ways. For example, both Jessop's (1994, 2002) SWPR and Clarke and Newman's (1997) managerial state share a focus on processes that place the interests of security above those of poverty.

Firstly, Jessop's SWPR "is Schumpeterian insofar as it tries to promote permanent innovation and flexibility in relatively open economies" (2002: 250) through supply side economics and increased structural competitiveness in the knowledge

economy. This Schumpeterian competition state's focus on flexibility and innovation affects responsibilities by organising the values and horizons of responsibility within the networked, knowledge, and global economy (Jessop, 2002). For Jessop (2002), and Clarke and Newman (1997), this has meant the valorisation of flexibility, enterprise, and innovation. More particularly, these values have been incorporated into the welfare state using management discourses that point to the possibilities of effective management strategies (Clarke and Newman, 1997). Through these discourses, not only could the state be altered; but the generation of flexibility and innovation through discourses about change could be used to make individuals and managers more responsible for their role. This, so the argument goes, needed to be done to secure the state in the global market (Clarke and Newman, 1997: 39).

The SWPR is "a workfare regime insofar as it subordinates social policy to the demands of economic policy" (Jessop, 2002: 251). By variously recommodifying the citizen and seeking to reduce public spending, the workfare state "give[s] rise to a new institutional framework that subordinates social welfare policies to economic considerations, and the imposition of limits on deficit spending" (Gilbert, 2002: 43). Gilbert (2002) calls this the 'enabling state', linking it with a market orientation. It has been brought into the welfare state through management principles that narrow the distinction between the public and private sectors, and management's capacity for discretion (Clarke and Newman, 1997: 21). Nevertheless, the generation of new values in welfare around value for money, efficiency, consumer choice, customer care and competition, has not resulted in obvious benefits for the people living in poverty (Gilbert, 2002). This serves to privatise responsibility for welfare by

relieving the state of its responsibility for social provision and politicising such provision as a contractual matter for the individual's relation with the state. It also allows the state to conditionalise provision by linking "incentives and sanctions to behavioural requisites, such as accepting work, performing community service, and attending training sessions and clinics" (Gilbert, 2002: 45). This commodification of labour further privatises responsibility along contractualistic lines, making the recipient aware that if she does not attend to her part of the bargain, her status as a commodity is jeopardised, and the state can withdraw future investments in her.

This post 1970s focus on extending the market sets the scene for a new environment in which people could shape their identities, orient their action, and legitimate themselves. People could now understand themselves as individuals in the market and work around the values of choice, efficiency, and competitiveness. But this regime could take the context further. On the one hand, the sense of insecurity has been exacerbated by the postnational dimension of SWPS. That is, the postnational "trend [is] occasioned by the increased significance of other spatial scales and horizons of action, which make the national economy less susceptible to effective macroeconomic management and the national territory less important as a power container" (Jessop, 2002: 252). As such, the state is less effective as an instrument that can be deployed to secure society in this global environment. On the other hand, the state compensates for this ineffectiveness by becoming more 'regime-like'. This is "reflected in the increased importance of non-state mechanisms in compensating for market failures and inadequacies in the delivery of state-sponsored economic and social policies" (Jessop, 2002: 254), and in the

increased importance of governance through networks and self-organisation (Clarke and Newman, 1997, Rose, 1999). This is achieved by combining decentralisation with centralisation (Clarke and Newman, 1997: 21, 23). That is, the promotion of flexibility and competitiveness is frequently routed through an indirect management of governmental power, and is coupled with a centralisation of some forms of power. This enables a dispersal of power to organisations that are supposed to relate with themselves as businesses and manage themselves (1997: 58-60). This dispersal of state control involves an expansion of state power "exercised through regulation, contracting, monitoring, and surveillance" (1997: 26), and involves a selective expansion of the voluntary sector and an expectation that this sector become more organised to deal with this new form of state control. This has been coupled with a privatisation of aspects of welfare and of public assets, a privatisation of welfare agencies in the sense of an expectation that these agencies are operated in a businesslike fashion, and a shift of responsibility from the public into the private domain of the family (Starr, 1989). The point for Clarke and Newman (1997), is that these processes of privatisation have not simply taken the form of transferring tasks away from the state, but have also engaged agents with the state. Managerialism then, is a form of knowledge that combines a focus on strategies that manage intervention in welfare with the valorisation of a range of values that underpin and draw together these strategies (Clarke and Newman, 1997). It enables a restructuring of the welfare state in the context of concerns about the future of that state while providing a framework in which people could shape their identities as consumers in a market (Clarke and Newman, 1997).

Rose (1999) traces the logics and underlying processes behind the formation of an intelligent, enabling state. Rose (1999) characterises these processes as a shift from the social and collectivist perspective dominant in the early to late twentieth century which gave way to an entrepreneurial perspective that reconceptualised social behaviours in economic ways (Rose, 1999: 140-142). In this new context the citizen "is understood in terms of the activation of the rights of the consumer in the marketplace" (1999: 165) and "rights and responsibilities [are] contractualized" (1999: 165):

> The politics of the contract becomes central to contests between political strategies concerning the 'reform of welfare', and to strategies of user demand and user resistance to professional powers (1999: 165).

For Rose (1999) this means that power has been dispersed away from the centre of the knowing, planning, and steering state and returned to society; to businesses, organisations, localities, communities, and individuals. The point for Rose (1999: 174-175) is that this process is based on a responsibilisation of these social forms. This implies that these social actors are both made free and responsible for their own destiny, which also makes them the custodians of the destiny of society, hence the emphasis on "individual morality, organisational responsibility and ethical community" (1999: 175). Rose (1999: 175-186) shows how community, understood in this way, becomes a conduit of governance that involves a multiplication and fragmentation of culture and identity, and how communitarians contribute by helping to consolidate this conduit by moralising community so that communities can call on their members and other communities to behave in moral, responsible,

and tolerant ways. For Rose (1999), these developments amount to a new form of governance that he terms 'ethico-politics':

> ...ethico-politics concerns itself with the self-techniques necessary for responsible self-government and the relations between one's obligation to oneself and one's obligations to others (1999: 188).

This new politics puts ethics at the centre of discussion, a trend Rose (1999: 192) welcomes because it shifts arguments out of the cognitive domain of science and into the moral domain. But he also recognises how this new form of control:

> ...help[s] maintain order and obedience to law by binding individuals into shared moral norms and values: governing through the self-steering forces of honour and shame, of propriety, obligation, trust, fidelity, and commitment to others (Rose, 2000: 324).

As a result, the security state governs within the context of an unstable global environment that it incorporates into its own structures and makes a property of society. Within this state, people orient themselves by making themselves capable of accepting responsibility to others, and acting in relation to values of competitiveness, efficiency, customer care, consumerism and so on. Thus, responsibility becomes, not a straightforwardly individual matter, but a matter of how the individual relates to themselves, others, and a range of values that anchor a sense of responsibility.

Hegemonic constructions of responsibility in the 1980s: The New Right and the New Individualism

The first attempt to restructure the welfare state along the lines of a post-social security state was made by the conservative governments of the 1980s. The New Right famously combined seemingly irreconcilable ideas and arguments to produce a stable discursive coalition:

> Neo-liberal economics underpinned widespread privatisation, and justified growing inequalities in the name of incentives. But neo-conservatism, which developed alongside neo-liberalism, was concerned with order rather then freedom, with family nation and morality – and held no brief for a minimal state (Levitas, 1998: 14, 15).

The point about these two apparently contradictory sets of ideas, for Levitas (1998), is that they mutually reinforce each other. The free market of neo-liberalism needed the strong state of neo-conservatism to police unrest, pacify resistance, and institute reforms. The strong state relied on people's dependency on the free labour market "as a potent source of social discipline" (Levitas, 1998: 15). In the language of George and Wilding (1985), the New Right combined anti-collectivism with reluctant collectivism in its stance towards state provided welfare. The New Right remained trapped within an incorporationist thinking because of its combination of a reluctant neo-conservative acceptance of the need for state collectivism, which the New Right nevertheless sought to overturn using neo-liberalism's outright attack on collectivism (George and Wilding, 1985). The point is that the New Right could address the problem of poverty and the problem of security simultaneously.

But poverty did not disappear as a major problem for society; instead, as I have highlighted, it set alongside security as a growing concern. The New Right addressed the problem of poverty against the background of an increasingly unstable global economic environment by taking up the neo-liberal themes of accountability, efficiency, and freedom (Levitas, 1986: 82-91). By linking accountability with the idea of the minimal state, making actors accountable to consumers, linking efficiency with the idea that organisations should meet effective demand (not need), and defining freedom as freedom from restraint (1986: 91), the neo liberal strand of the New Right gave individuals the space to deal privately with their responsibility, in light of the possibility of poverty. The neo conservative strand of the New Right valued traditional values, institutions, and social order, and resisted experimenting with new institutions (Levitas, 1986: 92-97). Thus it offered insulation against changes in the social composition of society. In effect, the New Right offered an ideology tailored to securing the market in the global environment by combining a discourse concerned with the needs of the market with a discourse concerned with conserving tradition and order (Levitas, 1986).

As a moral framework, the New Right offered a qualitatively new form of knowledge (Levitas, 1986). Whereas previous ideologies took normative positions, broadly combining a description of society with some form of ideal, the New Right took a far more political approach. This involved combining, not a description of society with an ideal, but a range of concerns with social and public policies with an ideal (Levitas, 1986). Dwyer (2000) summarises this as follows:

> The belief that a reduction of the state's welfare role is both positive and progressive, coupled to the idea that the future welfare of citizens will be best served by a system that encourages greater individual responsibility in meeting welfare needs, with only limited, often highly conditional, state provision, have become central tenets of the British Conservative Party's welfare policies (2000: 64).

Hence the New Right shifted the lines of debate onto a level of arguments about arguments and away from a direct concern with real social conditions. It is an understanding concerned with the moral erosion of society brought about by state collectivism that postulates the individualisation of welfare responsibilities as a panacea to this erosion (Dwyer, 2000: 64-68).

In spite of the widespread panic about the future of the welfare state accompanying the New Right, the uncertainty it produced and the contradictory form of individualism it promoted served to undermine the dominant welfare paradigm rather more successfully than produce a viable alternative (Glennerster, 2000). In particular, the New Right's counter-revolution called into question the socialist and collectivist enterprise as a whole (Leonard, 1997). Indeed, in terms of moral frameworks, the New Right successfully undermined collectivism and incorporationism while its market individualist alternative was never realised to the extent that the previous state collectivist models were (Glennerster, 2000). The New Right sought to relocate welfare responsibilities with the individual in civil society by promoting a market individualism. But without the ethical dimension provided by Protestantism or the utopian society provided by state collectivism, the New Right could only promote a possessive individualism that it tried to discipline using unemployment and family policies (Levitas, 1986).

The context at the turn to the twenty first century: Entrenching the Security State

The discipline of social policy has become acutely aware of the relativisation of the problem of poverty to the problem of security. Dean (with Melrose, 1999a) explores the way people's discourses of poverty and riches are connected with ideas about security. Through their study, Dean (with Melrose, 1999a) shows how people harbour a sense of fear about the prospect of poverty, confirming the view that "the 'comfortable' majority [are] troubled by insecurity and the prospect of poverty" (1999a: 48). On the other hand, on exploring attitudes towards wealth, Dean (with Melrose, 1999a: 71) concludes "that the spectre of poverty is more potent than the spectacle of riches", thereby showing that while poverty is a persistent concern in people's lives, it is now understood in relation to security. More recently, Taylor-Gooby (2000) reports on research which shows how a sense of insecurity has become a more prevalent part of (particularly poorer) people's lives.

Social policy analysts have also had little difficulty identifying and explaining the shifting moral order. For example, Tony Fitzpatrick (1998: 15) argues that a new political space has opened up in the wake of the neo-liberal attempt to recast the social democratic welfare state along the lines of market individualism. This has given rise to a market collectivism that combines the state collectivism of social democracy with the market orientation of neo-liberalism. According to Fitzpatrick (1998: 28), responsibility has been constructed as "*the collectivisation of duties and the individualisation of rights with a system of post social security*" (1998: 28, italics

in original). In effect, as Driver and Martell point out (1998: 182-183), a new consensus has emerged which replaces the consensual socialism of social democracy with a consensual capitalism that is supposedly beyond left and right. The basic idea of social democracy – that democracy provides a means to make society into a socialist society – has given way to a capitalism in which we all have responsibilities (Driver and Martell, 1998). Thus duties are collectivised but without being concentrated in the state, and rights are individualised within capitalism.

The Commission on Social Justice (1994) contributed ideas about how the state should operate in this broad context. According to the Commission, the antecedent welfare state operated at a high level of abstraction, taking a social point of view on questions of risk and poverty, and seeking to redistribute wealth using state powers over capital. This form of state was articulated in conjunction with old labour socialist and Marxist approaches and labelled 'Levellers' by the Commission. For the Commission, this approach was no longer feasible in the global market, given the changes in the labour force that enabled more women and other flexible labour to take part, and given the changes in the relationship between the state and the citizen. Instead, the Commission (1994: 96) offered a new approach termed the 'investors strategy' based on "a new combination of active welfare state, reformed labour market, and a strong community." The idea behind this 'investors strategy' is that social justice can be achieved through the capacity to exploit economic opportunities. Whereas the welfare state had been characterised by a focus on the spatial distribution of capital, and had sought to incorporate people into society by redistributing capital and thus also power, this 'strategy' focuses on the temporal

dimension. It looks at how the individual might be put into a position to exploit the opportunities that arise in the market. It attests to a resuscitation of the ideas current in Victorian Britain, but where the Victorian ideology emphasised pooling capital in spaces like co-operatives or friendly societies, this new ideology sees that capital is already being pooled in the state but seeks to revitalise spaces in civil society. Hence it focuses on community and citizen participation. The subject becomes 'free standing' through policies that encourage seizing opportunities, policies like 'welfare to work' (Hewitt, 2002) or 'lifelong learning' (Griffin, 1998, 1999).

The Third Way, as envisioned by Giddens (1998, 2000), takes up this idea as a renewal of social democracy in response to change (2000: 27). Giddens (1998, 2000) presents the Third Way as a modernising ideology, repairing and reforming organisations and institutions to meet the demands of a changed world. It is about revising and rethinking policies that were damaged by the break between social democracy and Marxism (2000: 28). The Third Way sets itself the task of "reconstructing and renewing public institutions" in response to globalisation (2000: 29), on the basis that this is necessary in order to "*re-establish* continuity, *re-create* social solidarity and *repair* the civic order" (Sevenhuijsen, 2000). Responsibility is a central concern in Giddens' Third Way, and is strongly linked with another the concept of freedom conceived as autonomy. Connecting responsibility with autonomy rather than justice reflects the demise of socialist and incorporationist ways of thinking, and the trend that Rose (1999) identifies as a responsibilisation

through autonomisation and self government. As Giddens puts it, this is about 'life politics' rather than 'emancipatory politics':

> Life politics is about how we should respond to a world in which tradition and custom are losing their hold over our lives, and where science and technology have altered much of what used to be 'nature'. These transformations nearly all raise value or ethical questions, but not only to do with social justice (2000: 40).

While issues of justice continue to arise, in the Third Way they no longer arise within a fixed moral universe where the idea of social emancipation through a paternalist systemic steering make sense. Instead both ethical and moral issues become thematic, that is, asking questions about, to use Giddens's (2000: 39, 40) own example, both the value assigned to, and the proper role of, older people in society and the morality of redistributing resources to those in society's care. The ascendance of ethical questions relativises issues of morality and justice without abandoning them. The question for the Third Way is how to bring both of these together, and how to encourage people to act in responsible ways in their freedom and autonomy while doing so in the light of principles of equality, social cohesion, social justice and emancipation. Giddens's (1998, 2000) answer is to foster autonomous responsible action based on capability and social capital (Prabhakar, 2002) and through a new welfare contract. In effect, people's capacity and freedom to contribute to their well being and fulfilment themselves (Giddens, 2000: 49, 87-89), and:

> ... 'no rights without responsibilities'. Those who profit from social goods should both use them responsibly, and give something back to the wider social community in return (Giddens, 2000: 52).

Essentially, Giddens (1998, 2000) wants to enhance people's capacity to adopt their responsibilities themselves and for them to do so within an institutional framework which balances the responsibilities of different actors in different spheres in a fair and just way.

Ideological constructions at the end of the twentieth century: New Labour, New Opportunity?

By coupling responsibility with capability and connecting justice with the exploitation of economic opportunities, this framework incorporates forms of knowledge that further the process of responsibilising the individual. Under this framework, the individual is supposed to learn to take responsibility for themselves, read as the ability to seize opportunities in the market and civil society. Using this idea, managerialism has been continued and sharpened to bring social policy right down to the local level where people are at most risk of poverty (Turner and Balloch, 2001). This has been achieved through the use of re-badged forms of means testing such as Tax Credits (McLaughlin, Trewsdale and McCay, 2001), an emphasis on social inclusion through paid employment (Levitas, 1998), a focus on partnership (Ambrose, 2001, Turner and Balloch, 2001), and a reshaping of social work into what Jordan (2000) has termed the 'tutelary bureaucracy'. The focus that partnership discourses bring on networks has been institutionalised alongside governance, a statist model of hierarchy, and the New Right's market focused managerial model of welfare provision (Newman, 2002: 105, 106). Moreover, this mode of governance appears utilitarian and managerial insofar as it is based on a selection of 'what works' (Ambrose, 2001, Rouse and Smith, 2002) and exhorts

people to be realistic and ethical in acting to meet their responsibilities. However, it is the welfare subject who is exhorted to meet their responsibilities and is "is obliged to demonstrate that they are seeking to rejoin the labour market, taking responsibility for their own 'individualised' form of welfare consumption, looking towards a traditional family network for (or to provide) welfare support, and/or adopting a specific sexual orientation" (Burden, Cooper and Petrie, 2000: 287-288) While managerialism represents an autonomising and responsibilising discourse, its method of dispersing power has been applied to communities and individuals "as partners in the prevention and solution of social problems through voluntary and community-based activity, self help and responsible lifestyle choices" (Newman, 2002: 144). The welfare subject is no longer simply exhorted to be more autonomous and responsible; instead the use of such an array of policy measures to make her capable of being responsible, she is expected to take responsibility for herself and not look to the state for assistance should she fall on hard times.

Among those who take this Third Way position, there has been a consensus that justice can be achieved by enhancing people's capability to be responsible for themselves in the market (Fitzpatrick, 1998: 29, Driver and Martell, 1998: 182). This contrasts with the politics of wealth redistribution, which is linked with the idea of de-commodifying the citizen, and off-setting capital's tendency to concentrate in the hands of the few (Fraser, 1997). Adopting this redistributionist politics entails an entanglement in the market by seeking to alter its conditions in the interests of the collective. But in the new consensus, the politics of redistribution have become unsustainable. Instead Blair understands "the basis of this modern civic society ...

as [an] ethic of mutual responsibility or duty. It is something for something. A society where we play by the rules. You only take out what you put in. That's the bargain" (Blair, 1997, quoted by Jones and Novak, 1999: 180). Thus the idea of justice for all has been pushed aside in favour of the good life for me (Jordan, 1998: 32) and individual "[r]esponsibilities and moral cohesion have received an emphasis at least equalling that of rights" (Driver and Martell, 1998: 176). The basic idea underpinning this shift has been articulated as the 'post social' condition (Fraser, 1997, Rose, 1999), and is that social integration is no longer of primary concern. The focus instead shifts to socialisation processes and the formation of personal characteristics that enable people to accept responsibility for themselves in the market.

Communitarian ideas and the consensus around the idea that the market presents a route towards social justice enables New Labour to produce a politics suited to late modern and post modern times (Driver and Martell, 1998). As Driver and Martell (1998: 28) note, communitarianism "offers Labour modernizers' a political vocabulary which eschews market individualism, but not market capitalism; and which embraces collective action, but not the state", thus allowing New Labour to slip into a post-social environment. As Jordan (1998: 38-43) notes, situating justice in the market is based on a perspective that emphasises the freedom to enter into exchange relationships. This is to emphasise the temporal dimension of opportunity seizing rather than the spatial dimension of solidarity associated with continental Christian Democracy (1998: 38). The post social environment that New Labour align themselves with, is located within a national space, although it remains

blinkered in regard to its context. It emphasises flexibility and employability in the labour market, a strong work ethic, and a rendering of rights conditional on responsibilities (Dwyer, 1998). Each of these connects with people in a temporal sense. These policies build a capacity in benefits claimants to seize market opportunities as they arise, emphasises the benefit to society if everybody takes their opportunities and makes their contributions, and highlights the need to compel some people to seize their opportunities (DSS, 1998). In this sense New Labour's welfare reforms go beyond the social by emphasising the temporal inside the social domain of the nation state. This at a time when "international corporations are larger and stronger than nation states, where the division of labour over the production of most traded goods is global rather than local, and where First World countries are increasingly emerging as the centres for the *financing* of such production rather than the manufacture of these goods" (Jordan, 1998:43). This capacity to slip into a temporal way of thinking and evade spatial considerations allows New Labour to drive through a modernisation of governance aimed at improving effectiveness and efficiency in the interests of the consumer, and to adopt a post modern stance professing maturity and reflexivity in making considered decisions. The focus on enhancing the ability of people to help themselves and to take their opportunities legitimates a modernisation of services that seeks to decentralise power and to continue to pursue neo-liberal reform, all, we are told, in the interests of the customer (Newman, 2002, Jordan, 2000). Furthermore, by emphasising community, this strategy also emphasises networks in civil society as the appropriate locus for responsibility, thus shifting responsibility from an abstract state into a society that the state intelligently helps and promotes

through enabling, intervening, contracting and so on (Gilbert, 2002). In effect, market collectivism is used as a means of sharpening people's perception of their responsibilities in respect of welfare.

Summary and conclusion: New Labour's discourse of responsibility

In summary, the perception of problems posed in society has altered. Where once the problem was poverty and the stabilisation of society in its industrial context, now the problem is security and the stabilisation of society in its global context. The contexts in which these perceptions have been formed have themselves altered with the production of new kinds of knowledge and rationalities used to organise practices and organisations (Jessop, 2002). While both the ideologies and specific descriptions of context are open to dispute, constructions of responsibility are formed and developed that take cognisance of the situation and promote what are perceived to be appropriate practices and behaviours.

As has been shown in this Chapter, the contexts and the relevant ideological constructions of responsibility were organised in a way that was mindful of the problem of poverty in the period from the mid nineteenth to late twentieth century and mindful of the problem of security since the late 1970s or early 1980s. Of course there have been many problems occupying the minds of British citizens in these periods, not least war, geo-political disputes, even the search for a cure for cancer and so on. The point is that the problem facing the people charged with organising society, those whose professional life is dedicated to this issue, and the

day-to-day experiences and perceptions of the people who perceive issues they feel their politicians should be prioritising, can be organised only very loosely. The problems perceived, and ideologies formed, in the period from the mid nineteenth to the late twentieth century can be organised around the problem of poverty to the extent that the construction of responsibility promoted in this period was supposed to address this problem. As I have shown, the responsibilities promoted through the poor house, the working men's associations, and the concept of liberal or duty individualism were all designed to promote participation in civil society and the market. As I have also shown, these initiatives were based on the idea that the individual can secure her own welfare herself through cooperation with a community, or by developing the traits of a liberal personality. As the situation changed, and the social came into focus as a discernable unit of analysis and society had certain properties which could themselves be manipulated using policy instruments, new constructions of responsibility were formulated that located duties with the individual and collective (Roche, 1992, Dwyer, 1998). The growth of knowledge about the nature of social organisations and the potential of collectivism gave rise to another ideology that placed responsibility primarily with the collective and gave new rights to the individual. While the perception of poverty altered, even if its nature did not, knowledge and ideology was produced to deal with poverty in an age of insecurity (Dean with Melrose, 1999).

In line with this argument I have argued that poverty has been, since the late 1970s, redefined in relation with security as the problem organising knowledge and ideology production. In relation to this argument I hold that the processes of

constructing a post-social and security state have been undergoing change since this period. In this context the New Right provided an ideology tailored to the purpose of securing the market in a global economy by promoting an individualisation of responsibility for welfare using neo-conservative concepts that safeguarded social values while responsibilising individuals, and by introducing market principles into welfare provision. A new construction of individualised market based responsibility for welfare was promoted. This construction was modified by New Labour. The neo-conservative ideas were reformulated using communitarian concepts and the neo-liberal arguments taken into a modernising social democratic language. This ideology continues to tackle the question of the security of the economy in its global environment, while the politics of redistribution is relegated to a shy second place.

Chapter 2: Social policy, responsibility, and the rise of an ethical sensibility

Introduction

In Chapter 1 I presented a reconstruction of ideological discourses in terms of how these discourses made use of the concept of responsibility. Through this reconstruction, it became clear that ideological discourses of welfare responsibility were, from the mid-nineteenth century, organised around the problem of poverty. However, since the late twentieth century the problem of security has become paramount. In this chapter, I focus on this more contemporary construction of the concept of responsibility around security. The purposes of this chapter are to describe how the discipline of social policy deals with responsibility, to review the relevant literature on responsibility as a concept, and to clarify the reasons why it is necessary to look more closely at this concept.

I begin by looking at the processes of privatisation and responsibilisation as identified in social policy literature in a theoretically informed manner. By undertaking this review, I show how these processes are related with the rise of neo-liberal arguments, and with the wider process of the individualisation of the social. In order to show how this has occurred, I turn attention to empirical studies

of responsibility before returning to the existing theoretical literature on responsibility as it exists in social policy. I do this to highlight the concerns raised by the various contributors. However, by way of conclusion, I outline a framework for considering discourses of responsibility that I draw from Habermas (1990, 1995). These constructions are introduced as an integrated mechanism for dealing with the various aspects of discourses of responsibility identified in the social policy literature.

Responsibility and society

The first task here is to understand both the logic and meaning of the privatisation of welfare responsibility. The privatisation of responsibility for welfare is widely commented on in the social policy literature (Clarke and Newman, 1997, Goodin, 1998, Gilbert, 2002), but precisely what privatisation means in terms of the reality of people's lives is the main concern of this literature review. In order to understand this process, I first outline a conceptual framework designed to sensitise analysis to the practical meaning of privatisation. This framework is then used to help comprehend analyses drawn from research literature.

As I have shown, the relationship between society and responsibility centres on the power and complexity of the commonly held system of norms. These norms can esteem and reward or denigrate and punish, certain ways of performing ones' will responsibly (Honneth, 1995). As Doyal and Gough (1991: 93) point out, norms define the value of duties to the extent that the individual's contribution has a value for those who expect this duty to be carried out and therefore have a right to expect

it. If this duty is valued, then the person performing it has a right to the goods and services she requires to perform it. Conversely, if this duty is not valued, then those expecting it to be carried out would have little interest if the performer suddenly found she could no longer fulfil her duty (Doyal and Gough, 1991: 94). Hence, at minimum, the distribution of responsibilities in society is ordered according to a system of recognition by which the value of a contribution to social goals is defined as worthy of esteem and regard (Honneth, 1995). She who accepts valued responsibilities is provided with some degree of positive support, which enables her to continue to fulfil her duties, and she is provided with the forbearance to continue without impediment, while she whose responsibilities are not valued need to find new modes of contribution (Doyal and Gough, 1991: 95). Furthermore, the pursuance of a socially valued duty may require more resources than minimal support and forbearance will allow, and may require the individual to be fully committed to performing her duties to the best of her abilities (1991: 99). In such cases, the individual has a right "to the goods and services necessary for their best effort to be a realistic possibility", which puts a duty on the collective to cater for their needs within the confines of what is reasonable in her society (1991: 100).

Therefore, the value of a contribution is not fixed by some social or institutional order existing independently of people, nor is it based on some objective value of the outcome. Rather, it is the product of cultural and social struggle (Woodward, 2002). This value is directly related with achievements or goals that are sanctioned as worthy of recognition, respect, esteem (Honneth, 1995: 121-129) forbearance, capital, and support (Doyal and Gough, 1991: 98-102). Through an analysis of the

kinds of goals that are sanctioned, the sorts of responsibilities deemed acceptable, and the way resources are channelled to these responsibilities, it is possible to gain an understanding of practical meaning of welfare responsibilities today. In the following sections I will use this framework to gain such an understanding.

New Labour's social policy and responsibility

Within academic social policy, two related lines of analysis are used to understand the transfer of responsibility from the state to civil society and the individual, the trajectory of neo-liberal reforms and the individualisation process. In the following sections, these two modes of privatisation are analysed in turn using concepts drawn from the foregoing discussion.

Neo-liberalism and the privatisation of welfare responsibility

While neo-liberal discourses take a variety of forms (Levitas, 1998, Waddan, 2003, Wainwright, 2003), the basic tenets of neo-liberalism are concerned with the minimisation of the role of the state in society, and the promotion of the market as the central mode of social and societal co-ordination (Leach, 2002: 191-195). Academic social policy has tracked the increasing hold that neo-liberalism has on welfare policies, by exploring the impact of this discourse on the welfare state (Pierson, 1998, Lund, 2002), the welfare professional (Clarke and Newman, 1997), and the welfare recipient (Lund, 1999, Dean, 2001a, Taylor-Gooby, 2001). The focus of this section is on how neo-liberal discourses serve to privatise welfare responsibility and the practical implications of this privatisation. To illustrate this, I

will look in particular at investigations of long-term care for the elderly and vulnerable and at pensions' reforms.

In an examination of the transfer of responsibility for the long-term care of the elderly, frail, and vulnerable from the state to the individual, Player and Pollock (2001) discuss the rise of market collectivist discourses and their implications for these vulnerable people. Since the implementation of the post-war welfare settlement, long-term care has been an area "of rhetorical flourish, conceptual uncertainty and inconsistent resource allocation" (2001: 223). The privatisation of long-term care took place in the wake of cuts in NHS funding for the provision of beds for the frail and elderly under a Conservative government, heavily influenced by New Right thinking (see discussion in Chapter 1 above). The impact of these cuts was initially mitigated by the voluntary sector's response which was to secure resources from local DSS offices (2001: 234). However, a gap appeared in the provision of care "to residents in local authority Part III homes, or NHS institutions, or for community services delivered to people in their homes. This led the local and health authorities to encourage people to opt for private care subsidized by the social security budget" (2001: 235). This in turn paved the way for private companies to enter into this market. The introduction of such companies into the long-term care sector was consolidated by New Right efforts to channel funding in such a way that the voluntary sector was squeezed out of this market (2001: 239, 240), and incentivising local authorities to encourage people to use private companies (2001: 240). The market in long-term care has been consolidated in the hands of the private sector over the past decade (2001: 241-248). For Player and

Pollock (2001), these trends mean that the responsibility for the provision of care for the elderly has become fragile. The companies providing care have shown themselves to be unattractive investments (2001: 248-249). The standards of homes expected of providers is seen as curtailing company profits so that the "danger is that residential care standards will suffer" (2001: 249), while increases in the cost of providing qualified staff "may also impinge on staff hours per resident that companies are willing to provide" (2001: 249). In addition there are problems of staff turnover and indifferent staff created by the industry's use of casual labour who are paid a minimum wage, and who are not provided with the benefits of sick pay or training (2001: 250).

This adds up to a valorisation of the way responsibilities are secured through market companies on the one hand, while conflating "significant aspects of vulnerability for an already vulnerable group" (2001: 248) on the other. While private companies are seen as behaving responsibly by seeking to secure a profit by providing care to the elderly, this vision of responsible behaviour is of a minimal sort. A contradiction lies in the fact that it is not seen as irresponsible for these companies to make a profit by paying their staff the wages that would make caring for the elderly to the best of their abilities a realistic and rewarding pursuit.

A similar process can be seen in the context of pensions (Ward, 2000, Ring, 2002). Again the narrative begins with the lack of a clear policy framework (Ward, 2000: 158-162) compounded by some popular myths that do little more than confuse the situation (2000: 163-165). Added to this is contradictory government thinking on

economics which, for example, urges people to take out personal pensions and contract out of the state earnings-related provision (SERPS) by encouraging insurance companies to offer private pensions to people on low pay with "a one-off, unrepeatable, backdated special offer with government backing" (2000: 160). The contradictory element relates to how such rebates actually cost more in terms of National Insurance than would otherwise have been the case (2000: 161). The New Labour government has continued with the Conservative government's liberalisation of pension provision by abolishing SERPS and replacing it with the State Second Pension (S2P), contracting out provision of this pension to the private insurance industry, and encouraging people earning more than £9,500 "to contract out of the S2P through membership of an occupational, personal or SHP (Stakeholder Pension) scheme" (2000: 166). At the same time, New Labour have introduced a Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG, or 'guarantee credit'), which, "aimed at the very poorest pensioners, is effectively increased income support. For those unable to build up any or insufficient S2P benefit and/or private pension, the MIG will 'kick in' to provide baseline support" (Ring, 2002: 554).

In terms of responsibility, this means that responsibility for pension provision is increasingly transferred to private companies in the market. This means that "for the majority of those whom the government is concerned to help, this will be publicly *financed*, at a higher cost and with less efficiency than if it was publicly *provided*, through NI rebates, collected by the state and passed on to the private providers" (Ward, 2000: 178, emphasis in original). Moreover, the provision of private insurance becomes ever more precarious as the insurance industry moves

towards greater segmentation of customers and the unpooling of risks in a highly competitive market, forcing both the insured and insurer "to engage in risky behaviour with immoral consequences" (Ericson, Barry and Doyle, 2000: 537).

Overall, as Ring (2002) has shown, New Labour's pension policy institutionalises 'contractual' obligations which, in practice, mean entrenching means-testing and diminishing the meaning of social rights. As Ring (2002: 555, 556) points out, the problems with means-testing include the low take-up of benefits by those who are entitled, and the problem of disincentives. While the New Labour government exhorts people to take responsibility for their own pensions by saving 'enough' for their retirement, and to carefully choose a pension scheme that will provide the pension the individual wants, if offers no real clues about what saving a 'sufficient' amount might mean. In effect, "you need to know what your current level of contributions is likely to provide in terms of pension at retirement" (2002: 560). The government seeks to achieve this objective by making people aware using projections based on current earnings, but as Ring (2002: 560, 561) notes, such projections "cannot convey the rationale behind these assumptions or all of the uncertainties that they mask." Similarly, to effectively engage in the activity of choosing a scheme that will provide the individual with the pension she wants, she would need an investor's expertise to properly appraise the risks and returns involved in her choice of a scheme (Kind, 2002: 561). She is expected to be responsible for her own pension and to act to secure a scheme that operates in her best interests. In this regard, Ring (2002: 565) discusses the government's promotion of 'decision trees', flow charts designed to help inform consumers in their

decision making processes, which may "replace the need for [professional] advice." Not only is the consumer supposed to make her own decisions regarding welfare, she is supposed to do so by herself, by becoming an expert herself, and without necessarily taking advice from recognised professionals.

The effect of neo-liberal market discourses is to promote forms of responsibility taking that place responsibility with the individual in the market and with businesses in civil society (Smart, 1999). In effect, it is the individual who is expected to bear the burden of the risks associated with the privatisation of welfare provision, risks that imply she must bear the brunt of reductions in service quality (Player and Pollock, 2001) or bear the risk of making decisions about her welfare investments (Ring, 2002). Such a policy framework is problematic to the extent that those who do not accept responsibility are constructed as irresponsible even though there "are good reasons why some people do not appear to be behaving 'responsibly' in terms of private pension planning" (Rowlingson, 2002: 633). These reasons include the constraints people face in thinking about their future, the sense in which people plan their future based on their perceptions of those around them and the amount of security and resources that people command. Rowlingson's (2002, see also Taylor-Gooby, 2001) argument is that government policy, based on a mixture of incentives and rewards, is based on a misunderstanding of these reasons and casts people who do not take responsibility for their own pensions as irresponsible, when in reality people find it difficult to think about, plan, or act effectively to secure their future (Rowlingson, 2002).

Social policy and the individualisation of responsibility

Underscoring these neo-liberal discourses is the social process of the individualisation of responsibility. Individualisation refers to the trend in modern societies in which patterns of identity formation increasingly centre on the individual and move away from traditional social systems. Bauman (1994: 144) understands individualisation as:

> [the] emancipation of the individual from the ascribed, inherited and inborn determination of his or her social character: a departure rightly seen as the most conspicuous and seminal feature of the modern condition... 'individualisation' consists in transforming human 'identity' from a 'given' into a task – and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task.

Discussions of individualisation draw attention to two central issues. Writers like Habermas (1995) and Honneth (1995) discuss individuation and the way people develop an individualised sense of themselves through socialisation processes. By contrast, Beck (1992) and Giddens (1994, 1998) develop a more formal and functionalist account of individualisation that articulates the way in which people are expected to deal with their identities and responsibilities as an individualised task. The individualised task is to work in return for which the individual is bestowed rights and responsibilities (Giddens, 1998, Levitas, 1998). Whereas, for Habermas (1995) and Honneth (1995), the task of individuation is to socialise people to develop the skills and abilities to make decisions about their own lives themselves. In effect, individualisation focuses on the systems that demand that people accept the responsibilities thrust upon them (Beck, 1992, Giddens, 1994, 1998), while individuation takes up the point of view of the individual who understands her own acceptance of responsibilities as her own individual achievement (Habermas, 1995,

Honneth, 1995). These twin conceptions are discussed in connection with lifelong learning (Edwards, Ranson and Strain, 2002) and welfare to work (Ferguson, 2003). These frameworks draw attention to how the individualisation of responsibility is being propounded, while the corresponding individuation process is neglected.

In a study of UK and European academic and policy literature on 'lifelong learning', Piper (2000: 535) finds that 'individuals' and 'people' are constructed differently. The individual is constructed as a phenomenon that is more frequently acted upon, but where she is the actor, she is seen as having "abilities and responsibilities" (2000: 524) and is exhorted to play her "part in underpinning the UK government's principles for maintaining competitiveness" (2000: 525). For Piper (2000: 523), this appears to support the thesis that contemporary discourses of individualisation and, by implication, responsibility, are constructed "to the individual" because these discourses are structured in order to persuade the individual to act as an agent and to accept her responsibilities. Furthermore, "while *individuals* are expected to take rational decisions, be responsible citizens and stage their own lives, they have to do what they are enabled to do by someone else" (2000: 526). The individual is called upon to be responsible at the same time as this responsibility is enabled by government policy. Thus, individualisation is a process of creating a policy climate wherein the subject is called on to be responsible and orient her life accordingly. Such findings are in keeping with Edwards, Ranson and Strain's (2002) analysis of policy discourses of lifelong learning which, they argue, serve to structure a context in which the individual is supposed to adapt to risk and uncertainty through

continuous learning, rather than supporting capacity to engage with the processes of change that learning is supposed to respond to (see also Cunningham and Lavalette, 2004).

The New Labour government's use of a primarily functional meaning of individualisation is well captured by Prideaux (2001), who argues that New Labour's discourse takes some of its cues from American functionalist theories that have long been discredited in sociology, and on Giddens's (1994) concept of the 'autotelic self'. Prideaux (2001) argues that these concepts are brought together under the thesis "that a morally acceptable social generation of 'motivation' – through the provision of 'opportunity' – can sufficiently fuel and satisfy 'aspiration' so as to inspire a renewed social order based on feelings of 'obligation' alongside 'responsibility'" (2001: 86). In effect, the argument that Prideaux (2001) believes to be central to New Labour's discourse is that the autotelic opportunity seizing person can be motivated by the opportunities that are presented to her. She can aspire to actualise her own will, and this aspiration can help generate a social order structured around feelings of obligation and responsibility. According to this logic, these feelings of obligation and responsibility would result from the way the person seizes her opportunities because, since she is autotelic, and therefore orientated towards self-actualisation, she has "no obsessive desire to dominate others" (2001: 87). Because she is only interested in actualising her own will, a will she can realise by seizing her opportunities, she has no reason to be jealous of others who also seek to realise their own will. Thus, her own pursuit of the good can coincide with the good for all because, having realised her own projections of the good for

herself, she becomes interested in helping others realise their own vision of the good (2001: 87). This motivation is to be secured through policies that expect the individual to adapt to the provision of new opportunities so that the desired individual characteristics would develop.

On Prideaux's (2001) own analysis, setting out a policy context in which people are supposed to adapt by using or developing the relevant characteristics deemed by policy makers to be pertinent to them, actually works to further stigmatise and demoralise benefits recipients rather than to provide a route out of unemployment. Therefore, this policy initiative represents a mode of contractualising duty (Gilbert, 2002, Rose, 1999).

Popular perceptions of the privatisation of welfare

Since, as shown above, New Labour's policies serve to valorise people seizing opportunities in the market and securing their own welfare in civil society, the question of how people perceive this privatisation of welfare responsibilities needs to be dealt with. Responses to this question have been formulated using both quantitative (Hills and Lelkes, 1999) and qualitative (Dwyer, 2000) research methods.

Hills and Lelkes (1999) have used data from the British Social Attitudes Survey to show some of the changing and competing ideas about responsibility that people hold. First of all, they highlight a widespread agreement that the gap between rich and poor is too large and that it is the government's responsibility to narrow this gap

(1999: 5), although they also note that people are less inclined to agree that the government should tax the better off to spend on the poor. However, respondents tended to express worries about the kind of people the welfare state produces, expressing the feeling "that welfare benefits can discourage people from seeking work" (1999: 9). Such worries, as Hills and Lelkes (1999: 8, 9) show, have been steadily increasing amongst the populations surveyed. This feeling was reiterated in the survey data in perceptions that "most unemployed people could find a job if they really wanted one" and the feeling that "people on the dole are fiddling the system in one way or another" (1999: 10). Moreover, when the concern with fraud and the perception that people are eligible for benefits they fail to claim are taken together, it becomes apparent that "there is a widespread perception that too many people who are eligible are missing out and that too many people who are ineligible are getting away with it" (1999: 10).

This data suggests that people hold a contradictory set of ideas about the sort of person generated through dependence on the welfare state, and the role of the state in society. On the one hand, people feel that the state should work to redistribute wealth, while on the other, people express anxiety about the consequences of such redistribution, in particular, the personality characteristics thus promoted. Hills and Lelke (1999) also found that people favour the state giving equal payments of unemployment benefit and retirement pension to everybody regardless of current earnings, with over half supporting giving disability benefit to all disabled people and 45% supporting such an approach in respect of child benefit. Thus people appeared to take a view in opposition to the government with

regard to targeted benefits in the context of unemployment, pension and disability benefits, but appeared to support such targeting in the context of child benefit, particularly with respect to low paid workers (1999: 15). Similarly, those responding to the survey tended to support the targeting of benefits on single mothers who take up paid employment (1999: 16). In effect, people appeared to support both universal and targeted provision of state welfare.

Dwyer (1998, 2000) has also investigated this repositioning of the normative understanding of welfare using qualitative methods. Dwyer (2000) introduces the views of welfare users to this debate, presenting these views under three broad headings; provision, conditionality, and membership. Each of these categories identifies a normative issue. Provision confronts the issue of "the appropriate role of various agencies in providing for the welfare needs of citizens" (2000: 125). Conditionality deals with the idea "that eligibility to certain basic, publicly provided, welfare entitlements should be dependant on an individual first agreeing to meet particular compulsory duties or patterns of behaviour" (2000: 129). Finally, under the category of membership, Dwyer (2000: 171) "consider[s] the ground rules which are seen by welfare service users as being pertinent for individuals to be included in, or excluded from, arrangements for the collective provision of welfare benefits and services." In his analysis of these issues, Dwyer (2000) identifies a similar mixture of discourses as identified by Hills and Lelke (1999).

Firstly, on the level of provision, Dwyer (2000: 192) finds that users of welfare services supported the view "that the state should continue to have a centrally

important role in meeting future welfare needs." The conception of the centrality of this role was tempered by an awareness that "social citizenship provides no more than a universally available guaranteed minimum of welfare, a minimum that is subject to constant redefinition and one which appears to be increasingly subject to reduction" (2000: 126). In short, the users informing Dwyer's (2000) study supported the combination of a strong state and a free market in the provision of welfare by combining a sense of the ethics involved in the individual realising the good for herself, and the morality of a collectivist and universalistic approach that gives rights of redress to the vulnerable and those in need.

Secondly, on the level of conditionality, the users participating in Dwyer's (2000) study were acutely aware of the situations where conditionality might be applied. The idea that services might be linked with behavioural expectations was strongly resisted in the context of healthcare provision. However, conditionality was supported in relation to housing, and substantially supported in relation to social security. The link between behavioural responsibilities and welfare benefits was construed in such a way that the interests of the individual could be promoted. This implied protecting her basic rights in the context of health, balancing the interests of the 'nuisance' tenant with those of her neighbours in housing, and promoting the interests of the claimant in social security. Dwyer's (2000) study shows that welfare service users carefully weighed moral with ethical arguments. He shows how the interests of everybody are balanced against the interests of the individual.

Finally, in relation to membership, Dwyer (2000) notes the continuing relevance of 'community' to discussions of welfare. In specific, he notes the connection between membership and conditionality and how exclusionary arguments draw on arguments similar to those citied in support of conditional welfare rights. More importantly here, Dwyer (2000) discerns how:

> [a] substantial number of users also appear to believe that it is reasonable that an individual should accept certain communally defined responsibilities before enjoying the benefits of any of the welfare provisions that a given community may bestow on its members (2000: 188).

Such arguments draw on exclusive ideas of shared visions of the good. This was in contrast with more universalistic and moral visions expressed by some informants that "tended to stress universalistic justifications of a guaranteed base line of welfare provisions available for all" (2000: 189).

These studies demonstrate how the norms connected with responsibility that organise social integration are increasingly based on a combination of ethical and moral discourses. While Hills and Lelkes (1999) show that concerns about the individual securing her own welfare herself have grown, albeit set alongside moral discourses advancing redistributivist arguments, Dwyer (2000) shows how these arguments are combined in complex ways depending on the context in question. Here we see how the connection between people's reflections on the norms organising their world and their personal experiences of the reality of their lives, enables people to understand the phenomenon of responsibility in complex ways.

The objective of this work is to further explore these connections by addressing the concept of responsibility itself.

How do people accept their responsibilities?

At this point it is necessary to investigate what the literature says about how people actually understand and accept their responsibilities. Leaving aside wider social theoretical issues about stimulating a responsible motivation using different kinds of social policies, we may seek answers to questions such as the following: How is responsibility constructed by people in contemporary British society? To what extent is responsibility socially constructed? To what extent is it individually held? The existing literature presents relatively few answers to such questions.

Finch and Mason (1993), in their study of responsibility among kin networks, have explored how people reconcile their personal interests with family norms and come to accept family responsibilities. In so doing, their study demonstrates the socially negotiated and constructed nature of accepting responsibility. In their analysis, they identify four aspects to the process of socially constructing responsibility.

The first aspect of the construction of responsibility that Finch and Mason (1993: Chapter 2) identify, surrounds the process of reciprocating exchanges of help and support. Central to this is the idea of "'a proper balance' between giving and receiving" (1993: 58); that relationships involving exchanges of help are considered appropriate amongst kin networks, and that these exchanges are organised to maintain a proper balance to the relationship (1993: 58). Finch and Mason (1993)

identify a range of sub-processes that operate around this process. Their point is that family responsibilities help integrate family members and enable members to protect or promote a sense of solidarity based on how they treat one another.

The second aspect to constructing family responsibility centres on the process through which obligations are developed, that is, processes of negotiation (1993: Chapter 3). By looking at family obligations as the outcome of negotiation processes, Finch and Mason (1993) focus on the structures of these processes to explain variations "in the extent to which people – even within the same family – get involved in helping their relatives, and acknowledge responsibilities towards them" (1993: 61). Finch and Mason (1993) argue that through negotiation, people create and develop their commitments to one another and therefore that responsibility is a socially constructed phenomenon.

The third cultural logic Finch and Mason (1993: Chapter 4) identify, arises from the products of negotiation as the meanings of responsibilities constructed through negotiation. They focus on excuses as a vehicle to help understand the "justificatory accounts which get deployed within negotiations, and how legitimacy gets constructed within that context" (1993: 98). Through their analysis, Finch and Mason (1993: 125) find that the legitimacy of justificatory accounts does matter to people. Moreover, the process of justifying the acceptance or avoidance of responsibility has implications for one's moral standing or reputation.

This gives rise to the fourth cultural logic (1993: Chapter 5) which is concerned with the moral dimension of how the individual manages their moral identity or reputation in the family. On this level, Finch and Mason (1993) argue that reputations "provide the basis on which exchanges of assistance can be negotiated" and therefore "provide a *structure for negotiations* about assistance within kin groups" (1993: 159, emphasis in original).

This study shows how responsibilities are constructed on the basis of rules about the proper balance of responsibilities within family networks. Against these background rules, responsibilities are constructed through processes of negotiation that take cognisance of people's positions within the kin network, and their ability to contribute to the task of securing responsibilities. These negotiation processes are oriented towards producing tasks and responsibilities that are both justifiable, maintaining balance within relationships, and legitimate. Finally, knowledge about someone's acceptance or otherwise of responsibilities is attached to these individuals in the form of their moral reputation in the family. The key implication of Finch and Mason's (1993) study is that responsibility is constructed in a local way, specific to the particular family network, the relationships operative within this network, and the kinds of tasks that family members can legitimately be expected to perform.

In their study of the 'gendered moral rationalities' used by lone-parents, Duncan and Edwards (1999) uncover the 'socially negotiated' and 'socially patterned' rationalities that people use to position themselves in a moral way in relation to

social norms. They build on Finch and Mason's (1993) insight into the negotiations involved in constructing task related responsibilities. Their analysis of interviews with lone mothers identifies three different kinds of moral rationalities. These rationalities model "the key variations and features of the conceptual relationship between motherhood and paid work" (1993: 120). They are methodological constructs that are supposed to map the modes by which lone mothers rationalise the moral decisions they make about motherhood in the capitalist market. Duncan and Edwards (1999: 120, 121) map these modes as Weberian ideal types, that is, in terms of the goal or ideal of:

- being a mother who "gives primacy to the moral benefits of physically caring for their children themselves over and above any financial benefits of undertaking paid work" (1999: 120);
- integrating mother with worker so that "lone mothers see financial provision through employment as part of their moral responsibilities towards their children" (1999: 120);
- being a worker who gives "primacy to paid work for themselves separate to their identity as mothers" (1999: 120).

Using these identity orientations, Duncan and Edwards (1999) map some of the topography of lone parents' discourses. The point they make is that lone mothers make use of a particular kind of rationality, a form of moral reasoning. This moral reasoning is individually held and socially constructed through relations with kin, locality and national community, and this rationality provides a greater amount of explanatory power for the behaviour of lone parents than conceptions of the lone

parent as a calculative actor as assumed in policy discourse (Duncan and Edwards, 1999). Therefore, while lone mothers accept their responsibilities as individuals, they understand the process of negotiating their responsibilities as obtained through negotiation with their own family, local social networks, or national policy frameworks.

Because they identify 'gendered moral rationalities' using a methodology that constructs these rationalities as ideal types, Duncan and Edwards (1999) are insensitive to moral rationalities that might exist outside the purview of this framework. This obtains in spite of the insight they gain into how lone mothers construct their responsibilities. Therefore, while Duncan and Edwards (1999) expand on Finch and Mason's (1993) work on the social construction of responsibility, neither of these studies systematically address the rationalities people use in acting to realise their responsibilities.

Responsibility, as we have seen, is socially constructed against the background of rules, and through a process of negotiation (Finch and Mason, 1993). People negotiate their responsibilities within their own life context by engaging with other individuals as well as local and national discourses (Duncan and Edwards, 1999). The objective of this study is to expand on these insights by investigating the structure of discourses of responsibility and how people are currently using them.

Critical commentaries on New Labour's reforms

While empirical studies have not contributed to the understanding of the actual rationalities people use to deal with their responsibilities, social policy commentaries are replete with arguments about how moral constructions are, under New Labour, sidelined in favour of ethical constructions (Levitas, 1998, Jordan, 1998). In the following, I focus on a few seminal examples as a way of exploring this issue. I begin with Jordan (1998), Lister (2001), Taylor-Gooby (2001), Fitzpatrick (1998), and Levitas (1998) to identify the meaning of this shift. I then discuss Le Grand (1997), Hoggett (2001), and Dean's (2002) contributions of systematic ways of addressing this issue.

Jordan (1998) offers a nuanced analysis of the contradictions in the moral order developed in what he calls the 'Blair/Clinton orthodoxy'. He (1998: 79-82) argues that the correspondence generated between rights and civic duties or obligations made by New Labour "is quite misleading" because "[t]he liberal theory of citizenship insists that fundamental rights are only to be suspended for the most serious offences, and then only after careful judicial consideration" (1998: 81). The very idea behind liberalism has been the separation of moral obligations from freedoms in order to enter into contracts in civil society and discuss common interests in the public sphere (Habermas, 1989). The connection between rights and duties is a connection that is made in the communitarian critique of liberalism and which flies in the face of the careful separation of rights from duties made in liberalism (Jordan, 1998: 81, 82). So, inferring from Jordan's (1998) analysis, the

connection between rights and responsibilities is an example of what Bauman, (2001: 140) describes as a frame breaking moral framework:

> the fragility of [social and communal] bonds, their in-built transience and 'until-further-noticeness', coupled with temporariness of commitment and revocability of obligations, that constitutes the new frame (if perpetual frame-breaking can be called a frame) of power relationships.

The connection between rights and responsibilities made by New Labour breaks the rules of liberalism to select particular groups of people (breaking the impulse towards anonymity and unconditional rights) who are burdened with restrictive obligations (breaking the rule of weak conditional duties). Added to this is the temporary nature of some social rights and the 'revocability' of the government's duties towards the individual if they fail to observe their duties to the government, and so for example, receipt of social security benefit is predicated on the recipient searching for work. The contradictions that Jordan (1998) goes on to identify provide further substance to Bauman's (1993, 2001) theses. The new power relationships that are formed under the ambivalence, temporariness and revocability of moral commitment and obligation are relations focused on the poor. He highlights how globalisation has meant that "[g]overnments have lost the power to compel mobile factors; but they can now compensate themselves by coercing immobile ones." The immobile are the people "who cannot shift themselves or their resources to other countries" by use of "a double dose of their authority" (Jordan, 1998: 82).

Finally, Jordan (1998: 83) identifies how the concept of the moral is a truncated one, based "on the idea of a club" or small voluntary association. But his charge against the new orthodoxy is that it effectively misunderstands the role of government. It imposes duties on society in order to help reinforce society's social glue when it is the quality of the glue (re)produced in civil society that is at issue. Political authority is no substitute for societal norms (1998: 83). But the politicians are imposing a morality they see as good for the society, one that will 'shore up' (to use Etzioni's (1995) imagery) the cement of society, when what may be lacking is a social and moral point of view capable of taking the place of redistribution in forging social norms. Underscoring this is the sense that the challenge for morality is to take the social point of view (Habermas, 1990), so the challenge for government is to be there for its citizens and not imposing conditions on how it accepts its duties and responsibilities.

The concern here is that the displacement of justice and the social in national welfare states in favour of the promise that social justice can be achieved through competition in the global market, places disproportionate risks and burdens on the poor and immobile. Lister (2001) admits her feeling of ambivalence towards this shift. The shift away from taking a social and structural perspective on inequalities has led to a productive emphasis on the connections between apparently different issues. As Lister (2001) notes, "the breaking down of departmental boundaries rather than of structural divisions" (2001: 433) is "less threatening than and diverts attention from the need for more systemic cultural change" (2001: 434). The real problem for Lister (2001: 428-430) lies with New Labour's tendency to woo rather

than lead the electorate, but she accepts that this approach does at least acknowledge the complexity of social divisions even if it fails to tackle them adequately. Taylor-Gooby (2001) is more critical, drawing attention to the ideological underpinnings of this relocation of justice. He uses qualitative and quantitative data to show how ideas of reflexivity in the risk society damages and obscures the interests of weaker members of society who are more vulnerable to risks and uncertainties.

Underscoring the post social argument, that "the 'community' is now replacing the 'social' as the main point of reference" (Fitzpatrick, 1998: 16), is the diagnosis that the moral is being eroded. A similar line of argument is offered by Levitas (1998) who contends that "we are all Durkheimians now" by pointing out that the central concerns of the newly arising discourses are "social integration, solidarity and social cohesion" (1998: 178). The thrust of this argument is that in the face of social and moral disintegration, discourses that draw attention to basic ideas and morals that we can all share are being formulated, but at the expense of glossing over and suppressing conflict. This is a serious concern for those who wish to promote a more universal concept of responsibility because it implies that the social point of view, where issues are resolved in a socially relevant way is being eclipsed by a more personalised or group specific thinking. What is clear from Levitas' (1998) analysis is that morality in the Durkheimian hegemony is 'colloquially' understood as "an attitude ... a set of beliefs, precepts and behaviours we may individually and collectively choose to adopt and foster" (1998: 185). If moral and social points of view are eroded, then what takes their place is a morality truncated by what is good

for us. The morals that are thus collectivised are those that suit the needs desires and interests of people in the capitalist market and are not the social and moral issues of a principled justice. The 'colloquial' morality is a morality narrowed to comparisons made between the norms or values of people who share our interests in the market place. In effect, we are limited to norms that suit our purposes and that we want to foster. The challenge of morality is always to take a more social point of view and enter into conversations with others, to converse with the other of our reason, which amounts to considering an-other reason (Habermas, 1990, Bauman, 1993, 1995, Smart, 1999, see Chapter 3 below).

Responsibility and empirically oriented theories in academic social policy

The theoretical question about how people accept their responsibilities is currently being deliberated within social policy under the theme of individual agency (Le Grand, 1997, 2003; Deacon and Mann, 1999; Taylor-Gooby, 2000; Hoggett, 2001; Greener, 2002). Le Grand (1997) discusses the shift made by policy makers from conceiving of state administrators, welfare professionals and taxpayers as either altruistic 'knights' interested in helping their fellow citizens, or passive and unresponsive 'pawns', to the idea that such people are closer to self-interested 'knaves'. Using this straightforward theory of agency, Le Grand (1997) draws attention to the possibilities of a more 'robust' policy framework that deals with people as both Knaves and Knights, thus supporting a public spirited knightly attitude while dealing constructively with self-interested knavish behaviour. In this way, Le Grand (1997: 690) envisages a social democracy that engages with

communitarian arguments for a reassertion of civic responsibility. Le Grand (2003) further develops this analytical framework by introducing the concept of 'queens' to distinguish an active and autonomous agent from the passive and constrained 'pawn'. Using this expanded framework, Le Grand (2003) argues that New Labour's policy regime effectively transforms welfare providers from knights into knaves, and transforms welfare recipients from passive and powerless pawns into powerful free market queens.

While Le Grand (1997, 2003) himself is less interested in how changes in policy frameworks effects individual motivation, and focuses instead on the justice and efficiency of the frameworks themselves, there is some debate about the existence of evidence in support of his thesis that social policy can shape responsible motivation. In a review that compares the literature on intrinsic value based motivation and instrumental rationally calculated motivation, Jones and Cullis (2003) draw attention to the situations in which increased 'knightly' behaviour is identified as an outcome of policy intervention. Among their findings is the observation that "[t]here is widespread support for the proposition that reduced welfare state spending, coupled with tax incentives, generates both reason and resource for private charitable donation" (2003: 532). In effect, a socially responsible behaviour can be, and has been, stimulated by social policies that have intervened by operating on the value of goods.

The problem this poses, however, is that to argue that responsible behaviour is stimulated by policy frameworks gives credence to all of those who would argue

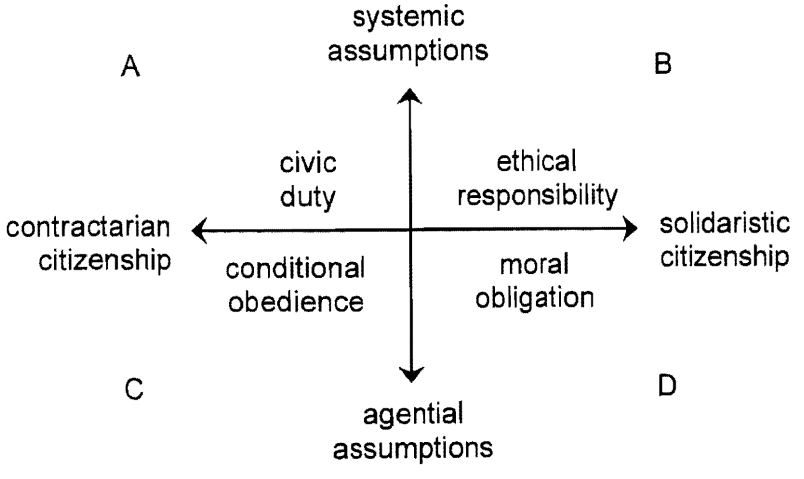
that social policy has contributed to the formation, in benefits recipients, of an agency that can be described in terms of an active, free market, 'queen' (Le Grand, 2003). This is a form of agency linked with a demoralisation of people (of welfare benefits recipients in particular) and a wider sense of post-emotionalism (Rodger, 2003, Mestrovic, 1997). The basis of this thinking is that people have become preoccupied with their own interests and desires as a result of the focus of individualising and responsibilising social policies. Countering such arguments, Dean (2003) argues that post-emotionalism amounts to a new myth that the responsibilisation of the individual will help generate 'savvy' 'heroic' consumers shaped by, and suited to, life in the 'risk society'. Dean (2003: 703, 704) counters this thesis by pointing to the lack of clear adherence among research informants to this heroic identity. Dean (2003, Dean and Rodgers, 2004) accepts that people's motivations are shaped in part by the wider policy context, but he also shows how people draw their discourses from wider conceptual frameworks than the purely self-interested nature of post-emotionalism would suggest.

Conceptions of the wider conceptual frameworks from which people draw their understandings of responsibility are offered by Hoggett (2001, see also Greener, 2002) and Dean (2002). Hoggett (2001) conceives of individual motivation in terms of a constructive connection between the individual's own emotional situation and societal discourses. He approaches motivation as based on a range of competing and contradictory psychosocial states and constructs responsibility in relation to these states. Hoggett's (2001) approach sidelines an analysis of norms and discourse in favour of psychosocial constructions within the wider society. It is, in

effect, an alternative approach to the analysis of responsibility than the one adopted here and because this study is focused on discourses of responsibility, the approach offered by Hoggett (2001) was not pursued.

Dean's (2002) work, however, is of particular interest here precisely because he is interested in the relationship between the repertoires used by people in relation to welfare and policy discourses, and because he develops an empirically oriented theory that is sensitive to moral responsibilities. Dean (2002) offers an interpretation of discourses of responsibility that he represents using the following diagram (figure 2.1). The vertical axis represents a distinction between systemic and agential assumptions underpinning discourses of responsibility and the horizontal axis articulates a distinction between contractarian and solidaristic conceptions of citizenship:

Figure 2.1 Interpreting cultural discourses of responsibility



Source: Dean, 2002: 200.

To summarise briefly, Dean (2002, see also Dean and Doheny, 2001) understands quadrant A in terms of the rights of the individual to freedom from infringement, corresponding with duties that "arise from the need to ensure, as far as can reasonably be expected, that one's interests can be met without unfairly prejudicing the interests of other individuals" (2002: 200). Quadrant B articulates a "notion of responsibility that is essentially rational, reflexive and democratic" (2002: 200). Quadrant C is concerned with the perception that "[s]elf-interested behaviour in the absence of systemic self-regulating duties is likely to result in irresponsibility and, in this context, the function of the state relates not to the promotion of responsibility, but to the governance of irresponsibility" (2002: 201). Finally, quadrant D refers to the way "[r]esponsibility is constructed with reference to collective loyalties and traditions; to moral norms and shared values; to the necessary and incontestable expectations that arise from membership of a particular community" (2002: 201). I would suggest, however, that in view of the systematic use of the concepts of ethics and moral used in this work, quadrant B is misnamed 'ethical responsibility'. The "rational, reflexive and democratic" concept that Dean (2002: 200) has in mind is closer to a moral and universal construction than an ethical concept where ethics is understood as the orientation towards the good life for the individual or community. Therefore, I submit that quadrant B be renamed 'moral responsibility' because it represents a way of constructing responsibility that equally is in the interests of everybody, which means one that is just and fair to each person's interests.

Dean's (2002) taxonomy is a useful tool to help think about, and reconcile in some way, the different discourses of responsibility that New Labour draw on. It is a

framework that I will make use of later in an analysis of New Labour's discourses of responsibility in Chapter 5. However, like all models, the difficulty with this framework is that it encourages writers to rigidify discourses into entities when the important aspect of discourses about responsibility is, for Finch and Mason (1993), Duncan and Edwards (1999) and Dwyer (2000), that such discourses are fluid and open to negotiation. While I would not suggest that Dean (2002, with Melrose, 1999) is guilty of this, it is however necessary to use a framework that attends to the anticipatory character of discourses of responsibility. It is for this reason that I take up Habermas's (1990, 1993, 1995) work.

Deriving a theory of responsibility from Habermas

In order to conceive of discourses of responsibility in such a way that a distinctively moral discourse can be identified alongside ethical, strategic and conformist discourses, I take up Habermas's (1995) theory of reflexive individuation. As was outlined in the introductory chapter, Habermas (1984) conceives of the relations to the personal sphere as taking three forms. Firstly, the individual can take a deceitful relation to their real feelings and emotions. She can hide her feelings from those around her, effectively using a form of strategic action to cynically manipulate them. Secondly, she can role play. This means that she can take up the role she is expected to occupy and play at being the person that she is 'supposed' to be. Thirdly, she can become clear on her own interests, desires, and motivations, and seek to realise the kind of person she wants to be. This is a highly reflective way of relating to the personal world where the person clarifies to themselves and others how the person they are condemned to be is reconciled with the person they want

to be and how the two people are critically interrogated in relation to their situation in socio-cultural history.

In each of these positions, the individual accepts responsibility in a different way. In the first instance, the subject acts strategically and is more or less irresponsible in the sense of accepting less responsibility than other people could reasonably expect; the second approach is more a norm-directed sense of behaving responsibly where accepting responsibility simply means following social norms; the third is a more principled sense of critically examining incumbent responsibilities in light of motivations, interests, desires and cultural expectations. In the following, I will develop these three models further by drawing on Habermas's (1995) work where he takes up the social psychology of George Herbert Mead, to elaborate on a theory about how the individual comes to accept her responsibilities in light of her social context, the expectations of others and social norms.

Before outlining this framework is it necessary to make two central points. Firstly, Habermas's (1984, 1990, 1995) framework is based primarily, not on subject perspectives, but on a learning theory. It takes the model of the growing child who develops an expanded cognitive map to deal with ever more complex social situations. The exact nature of the learning process is not important here, but in contrast to Habermas's critics who claim that this approach is too utopian and lacks critical capacity, the point needs to be made that this framework outlines the various relationship with norms that the person develops. Taken in the context of a broader theory of communicative action, this framework articulates the possibility of

unfolding reason in a more moral and universal direction (see How, 2001). This model is in fact always critical in the sense that it shows that even the person who reflects on universality and morality can find herself taking on a strategic or calculative attitude in response to social norms that leave her with no other choice. Thus, this approach attends to the different ways in which people process the world, in constructive relationship with meaning and discourse.

Habermas (1990, 1993, 1995) works out the structure of discourse in relation to context by tracing the way reason unfolds its moments as people engage with the everyday reality they face in an increasingly critical and reflective way. I reconstruct Habermas's (1990, 1995) work using a variety of substantive labels to refer to the ways in which individuals construct their responsibilities in relation to social norms. The labels I have chosen are egoist, conformer, reformer and reflector, and are used to highlight different ways or relating with social norms. While these are not concepts that Habermas himself would use or necessarily endorse, they are not intended to suggest a natural phenomenon, but only to operationalise concepts drawn from Habermas's (1990, 1995) work.

The egoist

In Habermas's (1990, 1995) framework, the person who acts egotistically to secure her own interests is a person who looks on other people as objects. Drawing on Mead, Habermas (1995: 175) conceives of this person as one who takes an objectifying attitude towards others, looking upon them as social objects that can be influenced by her own behaviour. In the context of more recent developmental

psychology, Habermas (1990: 148, 149) uses the notion of reciprocity to fill out this attitude. Here Habermas takes up research on the growing child who relates either with the demands of an adult, or the needs of equals, to model this attitude. On the one hand, the child, who is relating with the adult, responds to the demands of the authority figure either by seeking to avoid sanction or maximise the chances of securing rewards. On the other hand, the child, by looking on her peer as a social object, is able to use deception to secure her own interests. The point is that this is not a form of action that is governed by norms of any kind. By looking on others as social objects, she is able to deceive others as to her personal intentions, and to manipulate others in order to secure her own interests. In the case of the person relating with authority, responsibility is about obeying authority because it is a convenient way of receiving a reward or avoiding punishment (Habermas, 1990). For the more deceptive and strategic actor, responsibility has no social meaning, she is simply out to secure her own interests or desires.

The conformer

Whereas the egoist deals with others as objects, and therefore treats norms as a feature of the situation that can be drawn into rational calculations, norms take on a more social meaning where the person sees herself as "the social object of an other" (Habermas, 1995: 179). Again Habermas elaborates on two models of action here, both of which apply to a social conformer. The first model is about the person who conforms to the norms of her immediate social group because she accepts these norms as convention. The second model is about the person who conforms

to norms because she recognises and accepts the reasons for organising action in particular ways.

The social conformer goes beyond looking on others as objects that can be manipulated. She sees that others have legitimate expectations of her because, looking on herself from their position, she can see what their rights and her duties are, or what their wishes or needs are, and how she can help achieve them. On this level, the individual begins to conform to the role expectations of those closest to her, and accepts these roles because they embody the duties and expectations that appear legitimate within her social group. To be responsible in light of social convention is to do one's duty because this duty is based on the legitimate expectations of real others, and to fulfil these duties is to conform to roles. This conformer buries the interests and desires so important to the egoist and "adheres to the conventions and practices of a specific group", exercising her will in "blind subjugation to external controls" (1995: 182).

The second kind of conformer does not merely conform to convention because that is what is expected of her. Her own personal interests and desires resurface, and she wants the reassurance of knowing that she has a free will and is capable of spontaneous action. She gains this reassurance by realising that her roles are not arbitrary but rather embody the "community will" (1995: 181). By taking this 'community will' together with her own personal will, the conformer begins to see herself as a morally accountable person who has "the capacity either to follow or also to violate the expectations that are held to be legitimate" (Habermas, 1995:

181). Once she realises this, the meaning of responsibility changes. She does her duty in accordance with roles that are now seen as norms. Therefore she is an accountable person because she can account for herself in relation to these norms.

However, following convention does cause problems for the subject simply because she still does not recognise her own identity, her real or authentic self. Because she sees herself as the social object of another, she evaluates herself using communal norms. She has adopted a social role or conformed to norms, but these are still external to her own will. She is able to evaluate herself as praiseworthy or blameworthy, pat herself on the back or attack herself in blind fury (to paraphrase Mead 1964: 288 quoted in Habermas, 1995: 181) because she uses recognisable norms. Thus "the conventional ego-identity is at best a steward for the true one" (1995: 182).

The reformer

The ethical sense of responsibility arises when the person begins to take back the interests and intentions she had subordinated to her social role or to social norms. In doing this, she begins to reflect on the reasons for her acceptance of roles and responsibilities. On the one hand, the individual's responsibilities are mere obligations that she has because of the life she has led. On the other, in order to be an authentically responsible person she needs to take ownership of the life that is hers but that she did not choose and remake or reform it in the direction of her own interests. Her history and its attendant obligations are a part of her, of who she is and what she has become, and she has to deal with them as her own. For

Habermas, this means taking the "extraordinary decision to posit oneself" (1995: 165):

> ... in a paradoxical act, I must choose myself as the one who I am and want to be. *Life history* becomes the principle of individuation, but only if it is transposed by such an act of self-choice into an existential form for which the self is responsible (1995: 164, emphasis in original).

The act of positing the self is one whereby the individual seizes her life as her own, using it as the basis of her own will. She takes up the accidents of birth and life and chooses to see these accidents as determinants of the self for which she is responsible. In this way she brings together her own history with her own spontaneous will and makes an authentic person of herself:

> The authentic individual has himself to thank for his individuation: as this determinate product of determinate historical surroundings, he has made himself responsible for himself: "in choosing himself as product he can just as well be said to produce himself" (Habermas, 1995: 165 quoting Kierkegaard, 1987: 251)

In the midst of the recalcitrant material of her life she has chosen herself and taken responsibility for herself. This is a particularly personal innovation because it means accepting all of her accidentally given responsibilities as personal obligations. It means that the individual deals with her responsibilities as her own, as part of the life that makes her into who she is, so that she is able to posit her own will regarding them, and work to realise this will. She separates the accidents of fate from her own will and works to realise this will by reforming her life.

The reformer is the authentic person because, in contrast to the inauthentic person, she 'pulls' herself (Heller, 1999: 226-228) in the direction of the person she wants to be. The inauthentic person is a person who is pushed by "desires, by external circumstances, by false opinions or judgements, by the whims of fate" (Heller, 1999: 226). She is a 'passive slave' of her passions. Unable to impose her own will on her life she is at the mercy of her obligations. She responds passively to her obligations, allowing herself to be determined by the accidents of fate. In short, she does not take responsibility for herself in her social context and posit a state that, through the force of her will, she makes happen. The authentic person by contrast, is one who is 'pulled' by their own self-understanding. The authentic person translates the "push", those recalcitrant accidents of birth, into the "pull", the person she makes herself responsible for:

> Authenticity means to remain true to the leap, to one's choice of oneself. *Authenticity is to remain true to oneself.* Authenticity has become the single most sublime virtue of modernity, for authentic people are people who remain true to their existential choice, who are pulled and not pushed, who are personalities (1999: 227, emphasis in original).

The authentic person has enough self-respect and self-confidence to make her will a reality and therefore to reform her life accordingly. In the same way, she can seek to realise the good for people like her, and reform the collective context so that social and policy norms better reflect the interests, motivations, and realities for the collective of which she is part.

The reflector

To be responsible in the ethical sense, therefore, means deciding on what is good for the self and working to achieve this good. In fact, the reformer can equally be conceived as Giddens's (1994) 'autotelic self'. Like the 'autotelic self', the reformer strives to realise her own will. But the concept of the reformer taken up from Habermas's (1990, 1995) concepts does not directly incorporate a moral dimension. Whereas Giddens (1994) sees the 'autotelic self' as an authentic personality who is interested in helping others realise the good for themselves, the reformer works to realise her own will and has no necessary reason to consider the good for others. In fact, by drawing from Habermas (1990, 1995) a more moral conception of responsible consciousness emerges.

This consciousness arises when the person is not simply able to observe themselves as participants in interaction and see how other people observe themselves as participants and what their expectations might be, but is now able to think about these perspectives in a hypothetical manner. This reflexive consciousness involves an acute awareness of the conflicts of interest arising from convention. The reflector can look on the norms governing action as merely a matter of convention and reflexively think about how these norms should be organised to better suit all of the participants from their perspectives. This reflexive insight arises with the ability to hypothesise norms, to turn norms from convention into matters of moral or ethical significance (1990: 160). On this level the motivation to abide by norms is no longer based on a dutiful commitment to norms, an approach that from this perspective reeks of heteronomy or "dependence on

existing norms" (1990: 162) since such dependence is now seen as based on mere convention. Instead it is based on autonomy:

> With this notion of autonomy, the notion of the capacity for responsible action also changes. Responsibility becomes a special case of accountability, the latter here meaning the orientation of action toward an agreement that is rationally motivated and conceived as universal: to act morally is to act on the basis of insight (1990: 162).

To act responsibly here means one of two things. To act on the basis of values, now conceived more abstractly as principles, and to commit to these principles because they are just and reflect the needs and lived experiences of everybody. Or to act responsibly means to seek out justifiable norms by engaging everybody affected by controversial norms in a discursive procedure, a discourse ethics or a Rawlsian (1971) reflection from the point of view of the original position, that holds open the possibility of arriving at just norms, but does not guarantee that just norms are the inevitable result.

These four kinds of discourses represent ways of conceptualising the relationship between context and norms which can more fully explore the insight Finch and Mason (1993) made into the socially negotiated nature of responsibility, and the insight Duncan and Edwards (1999) made into the individually held and socially constructed character of responsibility. These constructions can help fill out these insights by opening up the kinds of discourses people use about the responsibilities they negotiate, and how this negotiation is carried out by the person and in relation to a community of others.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion has shown how responsibility has been made into an issue for social policy as a result of two processes. On the one hand, neo-liberal reforms valorise the acceptance of responsibility in the market and civil society. On the other, individualisation processes place the risks and burdens of responsibility with the individual and seek to generate a subject who accepts these responsibilities as opportunities. As the research discussed above has shown, people accept the logic of these reforms through the use of complex arguments that take together a sensitivity to the ethical good for the individual and the morally just for society. Yet, as this review has shown, relatively little is known about the discourses people use as they formulate such arguments. The literature does, however, provide insights into the socially constructed character of discourses of responsibility; provide frameworks for understanding such discourses; and provide observations on the meaning of the privatisation of responsibility from the morally just for society, to the ethically good for the group or club.

In order to increase sensitivity to the reflexive and negotiated character of discourses of responsibility, a Habermasian (1990, 1995) framework was introduced. Because this framework conceptualises the link between the reality of people's lives and the rational structure of the norms they use to comprehend their responsibilities, I argued that it provides the conceptual tools with which to fill out Duncan and Edwards (1999) insight into the individually held and socially constructed nature of discourses of responsibility. In so doing, this Habermasian (1990, 1995) framework complements Dean's (2002) work on the anatomy of

discourses of responsibility while providing deeper insights into the structures he identifies. Furthermore, the approach drawn from Habermas (1990, 1995) is sensitive to the distinctively ethical and moral aspects of discourses of responsibility, and to the rational processes involved in constructing such discourses. In this sense, this framework can aid the effort to systematically understand the discourses at issue in the transformation of moral discourses of responsibility into ethical discourses identified by Jordan (1998) Lister (2001) and Levitas (1998).

Chapter 3: The interventions of social theory and the challenge of responsibility today

Introduction

In the two preceding Chapters, I reconstructed discourses of responsibility in the context of British history, and in contemporary social policy. I have shown how responsibility has become an issue in the context of the emergence of security as a problem facing society, and how the forms of knowledge used to deal with poverty and security move in ever more local and individual directions. I have shown how, at the same time, knowledge about how to integrate society in responsible ways has been developed yet at the same time has benn marginalised in favour of more reactionary approaches. In addition, a large body of knowledge has been developed about how people actually construct their mutual responsibilities and develop the capacities to deal with them. In this Chapter I reflect on the forms of knowledge being developed at the level of social theory. Social theory is itself an ongoing discourse that reflects critically on the issues of the day. Dwyer (2000) has already contributed such a reflection in the context of discourses on citizenship and how these discourses situate rights and responsibilities. In this Chapter I take up the reflections of various influential theorists and look at how the theories contributed by each positions this issue. In so doing I seek to come to a systematic

understanding of the current situation by making use of social theory. Moreover, the concepts developed by these theorists will also be taken up and used to come to a clearer understanding of the research data underpinning this work.

In this Chapter, I again take up Habermas's (1987, 1984) conception of the three worlds, to look respectively at social theoretical constructions of responsibility within the personal or intimate sphere, the shared social or societal sphere, and the cultural institutional sphere. I therefore begin with Habermas (1995) and Bauman (1993, 1995) and Fevre's (2000) work on the challenges of socialisation in the consumer society. As we shall see, this challenge is also a challenge to the kinds of values we as a society assert, and as both Bauman (1993, 1995) and Fevre (2000) argue, our ability to assert values capable of producing responsible people is threatened by the very ideas propagated by capitalism. These authors recommend different kinds of strategies for resolving this matter that draw variously on cultural and social processes. The related question of how to ensure that people can successfully be integrated into society is dealt with by the contributors to the feminist ethics of care (Tronto, 1993, Sevenhuijsen, 1998, 2000), Apel (1987b, 1996), and Etzioni (1995, 2001). Each of these presents a different strategy for securing social integration, focusing variously on how society produces values and asserts these values as morally right or as rules to be followed. To complicate the matter further, the modes of social integration need to be stabilised and incorporated into the cultural and institutional fabric of society. Etzioni (1995, 2001), Schmidtz (1998) and Goodin (1998) assert, respectively, the importance of the

community, the market, and the expert, in stabilising the production and transmission of socially important values.

Images of how the person accepts responsibility

The first set of social theoretical discourses to be discussed here are concerned with the way in which the person comes to develop and accept their responsibility for their own lives themselves. In this context I believe that Habermas's (1995) social theoretic perspective and Bauman's (1993, 1995) and Fevre's (2000) work on the cultural impediments to this acceptance are of vital importance. However, having discussed Habermas's (1995) work in the previous chapters, there is no need to go into it in any great detail here. Bauman's (1993, 1995) and Fevre's (2000) work deserve much closer scrutiny.

Accepting responsibility amid the inadequate institutionalisation of discourse: Habermas's Discourse Ethics

As I have already shown (Chapter 2 above) Habermas (1995) considers that moral and ethical discourses presuppose one another. Moral discourses presume people can come to understandings of their own reality amid universality. Ethical discourses presume that people are granted the moral autonomy to make claims of an ethical nature. The particular focus of Habermas's (1996) social theory has been on how people become able to reflectively think about their situation and make moral and ethical claims. Starting from the observation that society has become highly diverse and that people are increasingly burdened with having to make moral and ethical decisions that their shared norms cannot help them with, Habermas

focuses on those sorts of practices that can help people clarify their situation and make such decisions themselves. Thus, Habermas's (1990, 1993, 1996) discourse ethics is about how reason can unfold through communication on an issue.

Habermas (1990, 1993, 1996, see Rehg, 1994) develops his discourse ethics in the direction of the three world perspective outlined in the Introduction. His discourse ethics identifies three distinct ways in which people relate with the world, and thinks through the processes of critical reflection through which people choose critically a course of action (while there is a fourth, theoretical discourse, related with the discourses of the sciences, it is of less importance here). In pragmatic discourses, the basic question is "what does she (do we) want?" or "how can I/we realise my/our preferences and goals?" The preferences in question are of a pragmatic sort like "what job do I want to further my career" or "how can we use current social policies to fund our projects?" Pragmatic discourse is concerned with how these personal preferences can be realised. Ethical-existential discourses are about the person asking such questions as "who I am and who would I like to be, or how I should lead my life" (Habermas, 1998: 26). In seeking answers to these kinds of questions, the individual takes assistance from their family, friends and work colleagues who play the role of critic as the individual clarifies their self understanding. Moral discourse starts out with an awareness of the social world. "In this instance the question is what kind of behaviour we are justified to expect from our fellow members of society, and what they are equally justified to expect from us" (Eriksen and Weigård, 2003:77). In pragmatic discourse, critical reflection is focused on the strategies and technologies suited to realising aims in an expedient

manner, and towards producing the most rational decision based on various recommendations. In ethical-existential discourse, critical reflection converge the person's understanding of their personal preferences and goals with the aim of clarifying these and realising the good for the self. In moral discourses, critical reflection centres on norms that are in the interests of everybody with the aim of finding just solutions to social conflicts.

However, Habermas's (1993, 1995) argument is that such practices require engaging with publics, in effect that people need to take up points of view that allow them to think about their interests in relation to universal discourses. Thus, ethical discourses require people to take up relations with a communication community that call on people to clarify who they are and want to be and how they will continue to be this person into the future so that making claims before this public means submitting the person's own confessions before a perpetual public. Moral discourses require people to take up relations with a communication community that includes all relevant voices, and so everybody who might possibly have something relevant to say about a subject. Habermas's point about these is that while people are increasingly pushed into entering such critical discourses because they find their social norms are of little use in complex contexts, they nevertheless find that they are unable to enter such critical discussions because society is not organised to provide them with the tools of reflection, or a viable context in which to learn these skills. In response to this, Habermas (1996, 1998) theorises a deliberative and procedural democracy with the aim of thinking up forums in which people can enter reflective discourse and develop these tools. Such a democracy

would institutionalise the arguments of discourse ethics thereby creating the context for critical reflection and providing a space for people to learn the skills with which they could come to reasoned decisions on an issue.

The culture of ambivalence and the pluralisation of the public sphere: Bauman's diagnosis of the state of moral culture

Underscoring Habermas's (1995, 1996) arguments is an appreciation of the phenomenon of individualisation. Like Bauman (1993, 1995), Habermas (1995, 1996) sees individualisation as both a formal process in which people are made into individuals, and a socialisation process that challenges people to incorporate the skills with which to make moral and ethical decisions themselves. But in contrast to Habermas (1995, 1996), Bauman (1993, 1995) emphasises the insecurity that results as people can no longer take guidance from social norms.

The trouble with the individualisation of responsibility is that there is no way of ensuring that the meaning of abstract norms can be successfully interpreted, made relevant to situations and communicated to people. In fact, the postmodern moral crisis consists in the lack of assurance endemic to the abstraction and pluralisation of norms:

> In so many situations in which the choice of what to do is ours and apparently ours alone, we look in vain for the firm and trusty rules which may reassure us that once we followed them, we could be sure to be in the right. We would dearly wish to shelter behind such rules (even though we know only too well that we would not feel at all comfortable were we *coerced* to surrender to them). It appears, however, that there are too many rules for comfort: they speak in different voices, one praising what the other condemns (Bauman, 1993: 20, emphasis in original).

Ambiguity creeps into our moral decision making. For Bauman (1993: 33, 34) post modernity is all about learning to live with the ambiguity and contingency that the abstraction and rationalisation of ethical codes has left us with. It is about coming to realise that moral responsibility is not something that can be imposed through ethical systems, but is something that needs to be nurtured because it is "somehow rooted in the way we humans are" (1993: 35). We have to follow our moral feelings and forget about using social norms because these norms are always being revised and so are chronically unreliable. Bauman (1993, 1995) effectively follows the French approach to everyday life that takes up an opposing view to Habermas (see Smith, 1999), and he advocates a humanism in contradistinction to Habermas's rationalism.

Bauman's (1993: 31, 84, 85) position is that with the rise of postmodern culture, the only thing that makes us into responsible beings is the call made by the other. He characterises modernity in terms of the production of a reason which sought to systematise ethics into an obligatory code legislated on people. Post-modernity exposes the limits of this project demonstrating how endemic uncertainty about conflicting ethical standards puts responsibility back on the shoulders of the individual. Thus, the individual is back at the centre of consideration where her moral spontaneity and impulsiveness is recognised for its moral worth:

> Rather than reiterating that there would be no moral individuals if not for the training/drilling job performed by society, we move toward the understanding that it must be the moral capacity of human beings that makes them so

> conspicuously capable to form societies and against all odds to secure their – happy or less happy – survival (Bauman, 1993: 32).

For Bauman (1993), the moral call implies three things. Firstly that the self gives the other the power to call on the self (1993: 85, 86). Secondly, that we willingly attend to the other waiting for their call (1993: 88, 89). Finally, that the way we are for the other follows the model of the loving caress (1993: 92, 93). In effect, the individual is simply there, in the world, lovingly and unselfishly being for the other (see also Smart, 1999: 102, 103).

Bauman's (1993, 1995) approach is somewhat idiosyncratic. While using concepts drawn from action theory, such as cognitive, normative and aesthetic 'spacing', he nevertheless makes use of a philosophically rooted theory of morality that cannot be verified in empirical research. Bauman's (1993: 70 - 75) approach is to make use of a weak form of realism that puts moral responsibility before ontology "in its own, moral sense of 'before'; that is, in the sense of being 'better'" (1993: 75). This sets responsibility as pre-ontological and ethical, arising from inside the subject's relations with social phenomenon:

> Responsibility conjures up the face I face, but it also creates me as a moral self. Taking responsibility as if I was already responsible is an act of creation of the moral space, which cannot be plotted elsewhere or otherwise (Bauman, 1993: 75).

This is about how the subject enters the moral space as a moral subject. The sociological difficulty with this thought is that it tends to consider all subjects as moral, which effectively means socially able and responsible adults. The

philosophical difficulty is that it tends to put God at the end of the other so that being for the other ultimately means being towards God, a situation which provides an implicit road map (see Smart, 1999). But the point here is that every subject is at least morally capable, simply because everybody is faced with moral calls emanating from somewhere. Furthermore, to be moral and responsible does not mean following the rationale of social norms, but to follow the moral impulse, to be there for the other in a loving and unselfish way.

The target of Bauman's (1992, 1993, 1995) work is precisely the difficulty one has morally embracing the other in a world without transcendental ethical guides or a belief in the moral impulse. Bauman identifies a range of difficulties which stem from the deinstitutionalisaiton of public morality and an aesthetization of the social. In effect, the argument is that without any moral or ethical guides that bring the subject in the direction of the other, or the willingness or courage to follow the moral impulse, the subject falls back on a range of cultural models that promote individualistic and amoral action. The reasoning underpinning a social morality that necessitates living with ambiguity is a reasoning that leaves the subject without socially sanctioned moral guidance, so she finds other kinds of reasoning to take the place of social morality. The reasons that are made available to us by our culture are those of the consumer.

In response to this, Bauman (1995: 278-281) endorses Hans Jonas' (1976, 1984) appeal for a collectivised responsibility based on fear and uncertainty. He envisages an ethical argument that focuses on the potential side effects of policies

and courses of action and weighs these policies according to the principle that they should not threaten the human species with extinction. This is to reintroduce an ethical guide back into a public culture that has become fragmented, but it is an ethical guide that has been developed in the context of environmentalism and its concern for the future of humanity. While Bauman (1995: 284-287) is not optimistic about the prospects for such an ethical guide informing some kind of transcendent idea in the political culture marked by consumerism, he holds out the hope that the democratic *polis* and the consumer can come together. The work of Fevre (2000) can help us understand how this might happen.

Morality and the capitalist market: Fevre's postmodernism

Ralph Fevre (2000 builds on Bauman's (1992, 1993, 1995) work, but focuses on how moral reasoning fares in competition with other forms of reasoning. Overall, his argument is that it is not the substitution of reason for morality that contributes to moral decay, but the universalisation of one kind of reason and its imposition on moral issues:

> ...there is nothing wrong with any sort of rationality, including the common sense version of it *per se*. The problems start to arise when common sense is applied in the wrong place. This happens all the time to a small degree ... but demoralisation has been the result when common sense has been applied where it would have been better to make sense in another way (2000: 18).

Fevre (2000) takes up Bauman's (1992, 1993, 1995) work in an ideological sense, analysing how economic reason and common sense competes with, and undermines, the moral impulse and moral reason. On Fevre's (2000) analysis of issues such as the Nazi Holocaust or the Clinton/Lewinsky affair, modern society is

characterised by the dominance of 'economic rationality' and 'common sense' (Fevre, 2000: 78-83). Hence, strategies for achieving goals or calculations about the good for the self win out over the moral and compassionate thing to do. For example, sentiment, an emotional faculty for taking an interest in one another, has been eroded by an amity that enables us to take less interest in one another out of common sense (see also Metsrovic, 1997). But what this common sense puts in the place of sentiment and economic reasoning is precisely what the moral will puts aside when it wills; desire, gratification, sensation and selfishness (Fevre, 2000). As Arendt (1978, 2) pointed out, it was Paul, in his letters to the Romans, who first discovered that the wills "conflict is between flesh and spirit, and the trouble is that men are both, carnal and spiritual" (1978, 2: 70). Fevre's (2000) argument is focused on how the logics of the flesh or common sense increasingly overtake the logics of the spirit as the social is aestheticised and personalised. What this means for social responsibility is that the reasoning of the moral will is increasingly subordinated to the reasoning of the desiring and carnal will. Moral reasoning loses ground as a way of thinking both in the private and in public spaces. The social responsibility of individuals is subordinated to sensation and gratification while the social responsibility of the collective is subordinated to private economic desires and personal common sense calculations.

In response, Fevre offers what he calls a "recombinant sensibility" (2000: 215-217):

> With cognition in charge I say, and everyone else agrees with me, that I am making sense when I say it, that I will do such-and-such because I will make money by it, or increase efficiency, or get a sexual sensation from it. With recombinant sensibility I will be able to say I want to follow this course of action

> because some emotional objective will be achieved; I am following a course of action that passion dictates (Fevre, 2000: 217).

Fevre's (2000) response is to put the moral will back on the agenda. Rather than rationalise decisions in terms of cost benefit calculations, to rationalise in terms of the state aimed at. He finds himself unable to envision how this representation of issues in terms of the moral will might work (2000: 217), but the structure takes the form of placing love, encouragement, support, help and so on above criteria such as desire, gratification, self-indulgence and sensation. So for example (2000: 219), when making the decision between balancing a career with child-raising, he wants people to make their decision fully cognisant of the importance of love in raising a child. Remoralising in this way means putting the moral will back on the public policy agenda:

> At each stage in policy formation – the identification of the problem, the research, the solution, the drafting and all the rest of it – policy-makers would keep the effect of their decisions on the new sensibility at the forefront of their minds. For example, policy-makers could be told by the citizens they serve that maximizing the time parents have for their kids is a priority. It would not be a priority because we believe parents should help their children with their homework in order to help them to become more productive worker-citizens but because we believe loving relationships require time (Fevre, 2000: 221).

Fevre (2000) wants the recombinant sensibility to make inroads into public policy making and for the moral will to receive expression in policy. This implies a remoralisation of both individual and collective thinking. However, after carrying out such a powerful critique of the perils faced by the contemporary moral will by economic and common sense reasoning, it is difficult to see what chance a recombinant sensibility has of motivating a moral will in the individual and of

seeping into public policy making. Fevre (2000) calls for individuals to become more aware of their social responsibilities, so that this awareness can be collectivised and enhanced in public morality. He sees recombinant sensibility as a cultural repertoire which would enable people to believe in the moral will. Its aim is to recombine "moral, emotional and aesthetic ideas and values" in a way of thinking "in which feelings are the things that do the work of explanation for us" (2000: 216). In other words, recombinant sensibility is the use of the moral will to rationalise and explain action. Recombinant morality accepts the moral claims made by the subject as sensible claims because it trusts her and resists using common sense or economic rationality to undermine the moral will's goal of contributing to the happiness or wellbeing of the other. Recombinant morality effectively defines a way in which social and moral thinking can enter into competition with other forms of thinking and can hope to effect action.

The problem with Fevre's (2000) contribution lies with identifying the meaning and structure of the recombinant morality. Although a form of reasoning that puts moral issues and concerns at its centre is needed, this kind of reasoning needs to find a place in public communication. But it is difficult to see how individuals or groups might sustain such a latently moral agenda and press arguments that embody a recombinant morality in the public sphere. Such groups would face serious challenges to their motivation were they to set out reasons that are primarily moral and do not also meet with their personal interests or their own visions of the good life. Furthermore, there is much evidence to show that a consensus around difficult political issues often takes moral forms, even if the consensus is to substantively

disagree. However, I take Fevre's (2000) central point to be that mainstream public communication lacks a moral sensibility.

Fevre's work also needs to be situated with reference to the sociology of everyday life which emphasises the creative and manipulative capacities of those dominated by elitist discourse. For example, de Certeau (1988) separates the production of culture from its consumption and looks at the tactics and uses to which the non-producers of culture (the vast majority of people (1998: xvii)) submit to the cultural packages communicated to them. According to this line of thinking the asetheticised cultural packages communicated by the producers of culture are transformed by consumers into a myriad of tactics for use in performing in social life, for taking opportunities or for making decisions. The point for de Certeau (1988) is that everyday life is a social space without a central axis, and that there is no space over which the person can have complete power. Without a spatial locus of power, the person is always being called on by those surrounding her and can only build power in the temporal dimension. She has to seize opportunities on the go, or manipulate events in order to make them into opportunities, synthesising them into practical decisions. Fevre (2000) focuses on culture, inferring logics of consumption from the culture produced. But social systems cannot fully control the everyday consumption of culture. The question is not so much what our culture says about us, but what sort of uses is it put to in everyday life?

Images of how society conditions responsible values

Inasmuch as the individual comes to a position where she can take responsibility for herself, she does so within the environment of a set of social relationships. The basic criterion here is that these relationships provide a range of legitimate norms; legitimate insofar as the norms are based on moral values that people find acceptable. In relation to this process the feminist ethics of care (Tronto, 1993, Sevenhuijsen, 1998, 2000) and the German philosopher Karl Otto Apel (1987b, 1998) have contributed interesting ideas.

Responsibility in the feminist ethics of care

In contrast with Fevre's (2000) moralistic approach, the feminist ethics of care is based on an interdependent, relational ontology, where individuality is understood as formed in and through relations with others (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, 2000, Tronto, 1993, Lara, 1998, see also Honneth, 1995). Tronto (1993: 127) identifies "four ethical elements of care: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, and responsiveness." She outlines each element in a sequential way, identifying its core analytical meaning, its relations with the meanings it subsumes and the problems posed to it in our society. Thus to attend to the other is to set aside ones own will "in order to recognise and to be attentive to others" (1993: 128); being responsible for the other follows and is characterised by the messy, practical reality of multiple and flexible caring responsibilities (1993: 131, 132); competence introduces the dimension of resources and consequences into caring work (1993: 133, 134); responsiveness flags the problem of how "care is concerned with the conditions of

vulnerability and inequality" (1993: 134) and the responses of the vulnerable to the caring work of others.

The problem of care centres on the value placed on care in our society, the morally disinterested and inattentive attitude accepted as part of our culture and the importance placed on independence, autonomy and stigmatising of vulnerability and dependence. Proponents of the feminist ethics of care set about developing an alternative to this dominant ideology which undervalues care. For Sevenhuijsen (1998: 111) this idea is quite straightforward:

> In the ethics of care, the central moral issue is not 'what am I obliged to do, in general terms?' but 'how should I deal with dependency and responsibility?' The political corollary of this is government policy which creates necessary conditions rather than imposing obligations.

The ethics of care, therefore, are about situated and bounded relationships, rather than formal and abstract rules (Sevenhuijsen, 1998: 108). They emphasise how the individual's responsibilities are particular to the practical and historically contingent situation in which she finds herself as she makes her choice. In a sense the ethics of care represent a renewal of the liberal project since they are concerned with shaping the contexts of decision making and instilling the values and attitudes of mind necessary for increasing the sense of justice in the choices made (see Skeggs, 1997, ch. 3). In this sense they also recognise the communitarian critiques of liberalism. Moreover, the policy proposals that the ethics of care make is about attending to the practicalities of responsible caring work.

The discourse ethical promise of co-responsibility

The discourse ethics of Habermas and Apel is concerned with generating universalisable ideas in post-traditional societies. In societies that have become fragmented and pluralised, discourse ethics offer a method for forming decisions that everybody can accept as legitimate (Rehg, 1994). Underscoring discourse ethics is a theory of morality that articulates the conditions needed for a public morality or a kind of morality needed to come to a moral point of view on issues and to form universalisable norms. Like Bauman, Habermas and Apel develop a theory of morality that is anthropologically generous insofar as it maintains that humans are capable of thinking and acting morally, and it starts from a phenomenological viewpoint (Habermas, 1998, Apel, 2001). But Habermas and Apel take a more realist and pragmatic view on the moral sensibility. In effect, they hold to the idea that humans are socialised as moral beings through their dealings with others (see also Honneth, 1996). Using this kind of weak naturalism, they (in particular Habermas) can theorise how social transformation is made possible by the immanent logics of the lifeworld and how socialisation into the shared system of norms forces the subject to rework its relation with itself at each stage of moral development. When it comes to the contemporary situation then, their focus is on the system of symbols about morality (symbols conceived broadly as bodies of knowledge or rationalities). They share the concern that the fragmentation of the cultural system places burdens on the subject to work out what the responsible course of action is, but they seek ways of reworking the institutional system to promote a public morality. Sociologists have taken up these ideas through the idea of social learning and deliberation (for example, Forester, 1999, and O'Neill, 2003).

Apel (1979, 1998) has contributed a version of discourse ethics that, in contrast to Habermas's more sociological focus on communicative action, individualisation and socialisation, focuses on reason and ethics and develops a concept of co-responsibility. In particular, Apel (1987a) notes a connection between the use of reason in discourse with the aim of solving a social problem and the ethics involved in this use of reason. With this connection in mind, Apel (1987b) works out how a shared ethic of co-responsibility might be formed at the heart of serious debate. As with Bauman, Apel (1987b) also takes up Jonas' (1976, 1984) *Principle of Responsibility* but in a critical way. He does so within the framework of discourse ethics. Discourse ethics involves the use of discourse as a special form of reflection where problems are treated as issues and questioned using reasons (see Rehg, 1994). For Apel (1998), this means that discourse ethics is also concerned with an ethics of responsibility for consequences since everybody is, in principle, capable of entering into debate and reflectively participating in the organisation of a solidaristic ethic of responsibility. This version of responsibility shifts the emphasis away from the individual and into the social and political spheres without, however, loosening the burden of responsibility on the individual. It involves the person as a member of a communication community being drawn together with others in view of a shared interest in an issue. For example, in the national context of the welfare state, it involves all members of this community who have an interest in the well being (if not happiness) of all of the other members of this community, and perhaps the well being of all other human beings on the planet. Co-responsibility for the well being of others can only be achieved through formal and informal discussions. As Habermas

also points out, the special forum for reflection and discourse, and thus also a kind of public space, is invoked wherever a grievance is thematised as an issue. Therefore a sense of co-responsibility can be fulfilled through the discussion of friends/colleagues, at meetings, seminars and nationally or internationally. Co-responsibility relates to how the socially shared dimension of the problem is stressed and how through communication and dialogue, people become conscious of the social and political nature of the problem. This consciousness does not in any way absolve people of their individual responsibilities, but by stressing the shared nature of the issue it "retains a participatory role for the individual in publicly relevant communication and thus also in the discursive shaping and treatment of such problems" (Strydom, 1999: 68).

For Apel (1998) the concept of co-responsibility gets away from the conservativism of Jonas's (1976, 1984) concept of collective responsibility. By putting communication and discourse about issues at its centre, and by inviting all those affected by an issue to participate in the formation of a shared understanding by highlighting their concerns, Apel (1998) anticipates that, thereupon, everybody can accept equal co-responsibility for the consequences of the accepted norms. Thus it does not require the norm formers or legislators to legislate in the best long-term interests of society, in the sense that Bauman (1995) takes up Jonas. Instead, Apel (1998) recognises, with Bauman (1995), that the power and role of legislators has rescinded. He also recognises that the idea of progress, although altered, cannot be overcome using an ethic of responsibility that focuses on the possible harmful consequences of progress. Instead co-responsibility calls for ongoing discussion,

debate and communication about issues highlighting their social relevance so that everybody participating in serious argument might come to accept co-responsibility for norms and the consequences of norms. While co-responsibility is discursively organised, it does not mean that the norms agreed upon will necessarily be just for everybody, but the invitation to participate in discourse always remains (Apel, 1998). People who feel genuinely aggrieved by a norm and cannot abide by its rules can always work to make their arguments heard and seek to have the repertoire reworked or abandoned in order to take their interests and concerns into account. Above all the ethic of co-responsibility does not of itself provide any new guiding transcendental ideas. It only points the way towards the social production of such ideas in complex societies by promoting discussion and debate and by inviting everybody to participate. However, even on Apel's (2001) own analysis of issues such as the environmental movement or the Nato/Kosovar war, such an ethic has not yet been fully realised.

Images of how culture elicits responsible behaviour

Having attended to social theories pertaining to how the individual comes to accept responsibility for themselves and how social relations can be ordered to produce legitimate values, we now need to look at theories of how society elicits responsible behaviour from the individual. The pertinent contributors to this debate are Etzioni (1995) Schmitz (1998) and Goodin (1998).

Reconstituting Moral Assurance: The Communitarian Approach

The central response to the fragmentation and detraditionalisation of the social in 'Blair's Britain', has been to follow the communitarian call to re-establish community by inviting greater community involvement and participation (Dwyer, 1998, Driver and Martell 1998, Heron, 2001). This has led to the call for the generation of social spaces within which people can become active members of their community, and the call to form such spaces on the communitarian model of 'community' (but see Driver and Martell, 1998) or Will Hutton's (1996) idea of 'stakeholding'. The concern here is with forming some new social space in a world that is increasingly temporalised, in order that the divisive and corrosive effects on morality might be stemmed.

Unlike Bauman (1993, 1995) and Fevre (2000), who want to emphasis the initial moral gesture, Etzioni (1995, 2001) wants to emphasis the ethical standards that assure us as to the right course of action. The concept of norm governed responsibility takes the form of a story set inside a concrete community. Using her spontaneous moral will, the person acts in ways that she thinks are beneficial to another and which are directed by conventional ethical codes. While Bauman (1993, 1995) and Fevre (2000) want to get away from the use of ethical codes on the grounds that they detract, even thwart, the exercise of the spontaneous moral will, Etzioni (1995) thinks these codes need to be developed and clarified, given "a critical going-over" (1995: 12) in order to re-engage people with their social responsibilities. What makes this approach so different from Bauman's (1993, 1995) and Fevre's (2000) is that it is not willing to leave moral responsibility with the

individual's moral impulse; rather responsibility is primarily the affair of the community:

> ... morality does not soar on its own wings. True, the ultimate custodian of moral conduct is a person's own conscience. However, individual's consciences are neither in-born nor – for most people – self-enforcing. We gain our initial moral commitments as new members of a community into which we are born. Later, as we mature, we hone our individualized versions out of the social values that have been transmitted to us. As a rule, though, these are variations on community-formed themes...
>
> Most important for the issue at hand is the sociological fact that we find reinforcement for our moral inclinations and provide reinforcement for our fellow human beings (Etzioni, 1995: 30-31).

The communitarian concern lies with "the wellbeing of 'community' because it [community] is identified as underpinning and sustaining morality by calling members to account, by making claims on them" (Smart, 1999: 168). Etzioni's (1995) view of moral responsibility is also strikingly similar to the view outlined by Habermas (1990, 1995). However, there is an important difference. Habermas (1995) envisions community as the context in which the subject develops a sense of herself as a morally responsible person. Etzioni (1995) envisages community as an other that continually calls on the subject to be moral and responsible. So while Habermas (1995) sees the subject as growing into and out of its communal surroundings, all the while internalising communal norms and developing an understanding of her own autonomous moral will, Etzioni (1995) thinks that the community always has to remind the subject of its moral will and to force her to abide by community values. Without community the subject will lose her 'social moorings' (1995: 31) and with it, her morality. In effect, we cannot expect people to use their moral impulse to be responsible unless there is a community there that

can, at least potentially, call them to account. This threatens to reify community into some kind of subject, ontologising a shared culture that is re/produced through discourse and communication and played out through social institutions. While community does indeed have an ontology, in its contemporary fragmented and plural forms its epistemological properties are far more important.

Setting this aside, Etzioni's (1995) argument is based on the belief that private self-interest can be squared with the public good by enhancing community values. For instance, he argues that the private interest in 'making it', that is in gaining a promotion or in advancing a career, is:

> ...an intrinsically *un*satisfying activity. Like other addictions and obsessions, the more one takes in, the more one requires – and the less one enjoys the process (Etzioni, 1995: 123).

The 'obsession' with pursuing private interests leads only to emptiness, so "[p]eople are better off when they combine their self-advancement with investment in their community" (1995: 124). To this end, Etzioni (1995) proposes a set of measures aimed at enhancing the communitarian 'nexus', or at shifting attention away from the self-interest of private individuals towards an interest in the public good. These measures include:

> ...changing orientation, changing the "habits of the heart"; working out conflicts between career needs and community bonds; redesigning our physical environment to render it more community friendly; and fostering volunteer endeavours that do not trivialise and squander our commitments to the commons (Etzioni, 1995: 123).

But as Smart (1999: 175) notes, although these measures acknowledge the need to move from a defensive self-interested perspective towards one that recognises the need and potential benefits of being for the other, Etzioni does not demonstrate how this 'transformation in attitude' might be realised. The thrust of Etzioni's (1995) argument is that if the self is made critically aware of how she benefits from being a responsible person, then she will become more conscious of her community and more willing to accept her responsibilities. The central difficulty with this argument is that it is self-perpetuating within a closed circle. As Smart (1999: 174, 175) points out, it avoids considering the root cultural and economic causes of the erosion and fragmentation of the moral. In particular, it does not provide grounds for understanding how being morally responsible for others is possible given the predominance of market forces and the isolated self-interested sovereign subject the market promotes. Nevertheless, viewed as a neo-Aristotelian and rhetorical argument, it does provide a way of dealing with the so called 'prisoners dilemma' (see Etzioni, 2001).

Etzioni's (1995, 2001) work achieves this precisely because it is a self-perpetuating argument within a closed circle. It starts with the assumption that people are increasingly isolated and self-interested, although without diagnosing the process of individualisation or detraditionalisation that leads to this situation (Smart, 1999). The prisoner's dilemma is that in order to better her life, she needs to co-operate with other prisoners but is only able to achieve this cooperation in very minimal ways because of the structural conditions of the prison. Similarly, the self-interested person is only marginally able to communicate with others because of the

restrictions imposed by her own self-interest. However, while it would be in everybody's interest if communication could be enlarged, the blinkers of self-interest make this difficult to achieve. Therefore, structures need to be put in place to entice this communication and such structures follow the model of the community (Etzioni, 2001).

Etzioni's (1995, 2001) communitarianism, therefore, is about re-establishing community values so that the individual can become more aware of her responsibilities and more willing to contribute to the community. This concern has two components to it. On the one hand, a concern with community and the moral order, its breakdown, fragmentation and need to be shored up with new values, and on the other, the kind of subjects produced by this dysfunctional moral order and the kinds of subjects a communitarian order would produce. Underscoring this is the belief that self-interest can be squared with a commitment to community.

Neo-liberalism and the argument for market collectivism

A similar range of arguments are made by David Schmidtz (1998). Schmidtz (1998) argues that people should internalise their own responsibilities; to see their own welfare, their own future or the consequences of their actions as their own problem and not anybody else's (1998: 8, 9). Like Etzioni (1995), he believes that some kind of culture should be institutionalised if it helps people take ownership of their responsibilities (1998, 10, 11) and he believes that nineteenth century institutions like Friendly Societies, based around the idea of mutual aid, provide examples of such cultures (1998, 60-79). Schmidtz's (1998) argument with the welfare state is

that it promotes 'externalising' responsibilities, enabling people to see their own welfare as somebody else's, in particular the government's, problem. His (1998) argument is that by looking at welfare and responsibility:

> ... from a static perspective, where the only question is how to comfort those who suffer, internalising responsibility seems beside the point. Thus, a static perspective naturally gravitates towards helping people in ways that externalise responsibility. That gravitation toward externalized responsibility, I believe, explains why current welfare policies have not been more successful. Crudely put, we are asking our institutions to guarantee that people will not need to fend for themselves (or each other) when we ought to be asking our institutions to make people willing and able to fend for themselves (and each other) (Schmidtz, 1998: 21-22).

The difficulty with arguing that people should take full ownership of their responsibilities is that it assumes that people can control the conditions through which to secure their responsibilities. To make this argument, Schmidtz (1998) talks about property rights and how the possession of property as a right enables people to take ownership, and to act on their responsibilities in meaningful and productive ways. Through this focus on property rights, Schmidtz (1998) can argue that the tragedy of the commons is less of a tragedy where people take ownership of property and accept responsibilities for it. The outcome is that where people are institutionally enabled to take responsibility, as through property rights, they internalise responsibility and contribute towards the commons.

This argument for a privatisation of responsibility is also an argument for market collectivism. The assumption is that where people have to pay into some form of collective insurance or where they, as a group, can control their own collective property, they are more likely to see their responsibilities for their common purpose

as their own and be more successful at organising and sustaining their property (Schmidtz, 1998: 56, 57, 61). Market collectivism, it is argued, avoids the 'tragedy of the commons' brought on by the collectivisation of responsibility into the state (1998: 76). Schmidtz (1998: 65-67) argues that the collectivisation of welfare in the market was, in the time of the Friendly Societies, and could be again, exceptionally effective and less expensive and he implies that it would be almost as inclusive as centralised state welfare. Moreover, Schmidtz (1998: 75) advances the argument that the externalisation of responsibility and its centralisation in the state administration initiated a process of social change that led to demoralisation and individualisation. The problem now is how to "instill a general ethos of personal responsibility, thereby helping people, and thus their babies, from falling into poverty in the first place?" (1998: 18). For Schmidtz (1998: 78), this means institutionalising market collectivism so that everybody knows that their "income is contingent on producing something that other people value." This means generating cultures and institutions that call on people to make provision for their own welfare themselves through the market, a trajectory that New Labour's welfare reforms have set in train. The aim of these policies is to get people to take the moral attitude of a rational adult towards their responsibilities. Justice, for Schmidtz (1998: 80-96), would ensue as a consequence of such policies since these policies work by "inducing behaviour that serves the common good" (1998: 88). That is, they contribute towards the generation of mature adults with a strong sense of self esteem who see the benefits in co-operative living arrangements (1998: 94, 95). After all, the logic goes, if everybody is contributing in some way, everybody will be

better off and the common good of a co-operative peaceful society will be advanced.

The classic liberal argument for moral collectivism

Goodin (1998) restates the classic liberal arguments to challenge market collectivism by advancing a theory of welfare responsibility based on moral collectivism. Generally speaking, the context for Goodin (1998) is defined by a privatisation of responsibility along the lines of a causal and blame oriented model of thinking. Single mothers on benefit, he notes, are blamed for their welfare dependency so that:

> ..."personal responsibility" and "taking charge of their own lives" seem primarily matters of getting control over their own fertility – not necessarily by means of abortion, which would widely be regarded as evading responsibility yet again, but rather through prudent contraceptive practices or (better yet) through sexual abstinence (1998: 105).

His argument is with all of those conservative and neo-conservative perspectives that expect people to take control over their own lives themselves, and accept responsibility for them as prudent mature adults. For Goodin (1998), life is more complex then these perspectives allow. For example, the pregnant single woman's choice not to have an abortion is widely accepted as a responsible choice, but her choice to stay at home and raise her children herself is seen as irresponsible where it is made by a woman who would have to live on welfare benefits and who is not independently wealthy (1998: 110, 111).

Goodin (1998) seeks to build an idea of social responsibility as a collectivisation of moral responsibility, which means a sharing of responsibility through some form of division of labour or by way of an organisation or institution (1998: 146, 147). He conceives of this collectivisation in instrumental terms. Sharing responsibility is a means to achieve the end of securing members material welfare. So collectivisation is justified only to the extent that it realises this end. Collectivisation does not disburden the individual of her responsibilities; rather she is "a means to discharging our shared collective responsibilities." Collective remedies are held at the ready for "whenever individuals themselves fail to discharge those responsibilities effectively for themselves" (1998: 147), since such responsibilities are ultimately shared (1998: 148). Furthermore, he circumscribes the collective he has in view to some group, conceived in the fuzzy terms as one that is already interacting in some way (1998: 148). Finally, the focus of collectivisation on his theory building analysis, is "merely for one another's *well being* or welfare" (1998: 149).

This conception is similar to the collectivist and incorporationist concept of responsibility identified with social democracy above. But Goodin (1998) gives it a twist by insisting that this moral collectivism should be 'forward looking' and 'task-oriented', a form that is always looking for ways of dealing with situations and the best remedies for particular or social problems (1998: 152). Its aim "is to tell us what to do in the future" and it works by "specifying whose job it is to see to it that certain tasks are performed and that certain things are accomplished" (150). He distinguishes this from 'backward looking' or 'blame responsibility', which holds that

"[t]hose who are responsible for causing an unfortunate situation are responsible for fixing it" (1998: 150). Moreover "those who are responsible [in a causal sense] should be held responsible. Insofar as they got themselves into this situation, it should be their responsibility to get themselves out of it" (1998: 151). The collective and the state can then simply shirk all responsibility for the blameworthy's problems.

The substance of Goodin's (1998: 155-171) argument is to show how the collectivisation of responsibility is ultimately a political issue and that institutionalising welfare responsibilities in state centred collectivities represents a better option in the long run. This is because pooling risks in market collectives is based on the idea that risks can be managed and accommodated by private insurance companies using actuarial principles. However, this way of pooling risks is inferior to state centred collectivities since the state can use other resources, like general taxation, to guard against risks should a recession occur. The issue in such situations is a matter of political will rather than market forces. In effect, for Goodin (1998) state centred collectives have provided, and can continue to provide, cultural and institutional frameworks that organise responsibilities in forward looking and task-oriented ways.

Summary

The theoretical arguments explored in this Chapter draw attention to the difficulties and challenges that the question of responsibility poses for contemporary society. These difficulties and challenges have been grouped under three main headings;

those connected with individuals becoming responsible; those concerned with the social organisation of responsible roles; and those concerned with responsible cultures. There are, necessarily, significant overlaps in these headings, but by making a theme of the personal, social, and cultural, these contributors call attention to precisely those issues that must be faced in incorporating policies around responsibility into society.

While Habermas (1993, 1995) holds out the possibility that people can learn the meaning of responsibility in complex modern societies, Bauman (1993, 1995) and Fevre (2000) draw attention to the ways in which a capitalist and consumerist culture undermines individual responsibility taking. The issue here is far more than simply taking sides on a matter of intellectual debate. If we take up Habermas (1993, 1995), and we support people's efforts to unfold the rationality of norms affecting their own lives and become people who are more responsible as a result, we adopt a politics that is open to reason. This kind of politics argues that people are as they are, not because it is their own or society's fault, but because we simply have not clearly understood the structure of reason from the personal perspective. Taking up Bauman (1993, 1995) and Fevre (2000) means adopting a form of politics where it is both the individual's and society's fault that people do not act responsibly. The unit of analysis is not reason, but the moral impulse. The fact that people do not follow this moral impulse is explained as resulting from their own moral failings and the ideas promoted by capitalism that make it easier for people to not follow the moral impulse. To adopt this view is to take a highly moralistic view of responsibility and to call for a wholesale reorganisation of society so that morality is

placed back at its centre. While this politics is useful as a means of calling for change, it is of less use as a politics informing the reengineering of society.

If the personal provides the basic focus for the analysis provided by Habermas (1993, 1995) Bauman (1993, 1995) and Fevre (2000), the social provides this focus for writers on the feminist ethics of care (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, 2000, Tronto, 1993, Lara, 1998) as well as Apel (1987a, 1987b, 1998). Each of these writers contribute arguments about the social organisation of society. In the case of the feminists (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, 2000, Tronto, 1993, Lara, 1998), the issue is how these relations place the burdens of caring responsibilities disproportionately on women, and these writers set out to challenge systematically this burdening. For Apel (1987a, 1987b, 1998), the way society organises responsibilities is an issue growing in importance, and processes need to be identified that can help organise these responsibilities in a fair and just manner. While the feminist ethics of care contributes arguments tailored to the needs and interests of women, Apel (1987a, 1987b, 1998) contributes ideas on how all such arguments could be received in discourse more generally.

The final section dealt with the cultural dimension, or more precisely, with arguments about how basic cultural forms institutionalise responsible practices in everyday life. The general focus of these arguments is centred on how society can be configured to sharpen the perception of responsibility for welfare. Etzioni (1995) holds that if the individual could perceive how behaving in socially responsible ways would benefit herself, she would be more likely to behave responsibly. To adopt this

politics is to take up an individually or communally focused approach to responsibility, promoting the good for the group or 'club' (as Jordan, 1998, notes). This involves actively seeking to reward good behaviour with the rewards of a good community. It pays no heed to the area beyond the local, or any other moral and universal argument. Schmidtz (1998) defends a market collectivism on the grounds that where people have a direct interest in their own welfare, they will adopt practices that promote these interests. The market provides an appropriate mechanism for collectivising and activating such interest because people have control over their own interests and will not expect an exterior body like the state to guarantee the security of their welfare. While this politics may appear attractive at a superficial level, the problem is that it means promoting institutions from which those with large amounts of social, cultural and educational capital, already benefit from. Goodin (1998) offers ideas for the institutionalisation of responsible practices that are more in keeping with the interests of the more vulnerable members of society. Goodin (1998) takes up the classic welfare argument that collectivising responsibility is both defensible and practicable as a way of securing the interests of all members of society. Politically, Goodin's (1998) moral collectivism offers a framework that has a clear moral dimension in an era when ideas emphasising this dimension are lacking. But it still means presenting arguments where it is organisations and institutions making up society, and not the individual, that perceives and deals with issues of responsibility.

Responding to these issues is not without difficulty since there is no single framework that can incorporate the interests, needs and concerns addressed by

each theory. However, searching for such a framework involves taking on two things. Firstly, the academic social scientist who is involved in the production of knowledge through research is called upon by the principle of justice to construct organisational forms that are in the interests of everybody and do not merely promote sectional interests. This requirement places a great deal of strain on the social scientist since she is supposed to deconstruct and critically appraise current practices and seek to develop new social norms that better serve everybody's interests. This is the particularly difficult task that the few social scientists who have deservedly been called critical have managed. Nevertheless, it is the task of the social scientist to look at ways of constructing social action that best secures the interests of all parties to a problem – for example, to think of ways of dealing with crime that deals with the issues facing the criminal and the victim of crime.

Secondly, it is the task of people interested in the equitable organisation of society to find ways of integrating these perspectives so that social forms can be developed that:

- promote peoples perceptions of their responsibilities without overburdening them or disburdening society,
- recognises and resources people's responsibilities in a just manner,
- and focuses the perception of welfare responsibilities for both the individual and society.

These are not objectives can be achieved using a single framework; rather what is needed is some combination of the sorts of ideas outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods

Introduction

In this chapter I present an overview of the empirical data underpinning this study. The peculiar quality of contemporary discourses surrounding responsibility was identified in Chapter 1 and frameworks for understanding discourses of responsibility were identified in Chapter 2. These frameworks either took the form of agent centred theories structured to describe the ways an agent accepts her responsibilities, or cultural theories that explain the social context conditioning this acceptance of responsibility. In response to these theories, a framework was outlined that drew on a theory about how the individual accepts her responsibilities by drawing on norms in a way that appears relevant to her situation. The need for a systematic investigation of this relationship, which is the relationship between individually held and socially constructed concepts of responsibility, was asserted through an examination of critical commentaries that demonstrate how moral constructions are elided in favour of ethical ones in contemporary ideology.

In order to investigate this relationship between the position of the actor and the constructions offered by reason and culture with respect to responsibility, I take up the Critical Theoretical approach in the tradition of the second generation of the

Frankfurt School (Kellner, 1989). The specific reason for this is that this tradition is critical of knowledge while theorising how knowledge is formed from the perspective of the actors involved (see Kellner, 1989). Such a framework offers an opportunity to use a theoretical scaffold to relate the perspective of an actor dealing with their world with the kinds of constructions of knowledge this actor uses and to treat these constructions in terms of wider constructions. Within this study, this involves the use of qualitative methods, and in particular, the semi-structured interview. In this Chapter I first elaborate on this perspective before detailing the empirical data used in this work.

Qualitative research and critical theory

The objectives that qualitative research is expected to fulfil are not easily achieved nor are the appropriate methods always obvious (Miles and Huberman, 1994, Sayer, 1992, Seidman, 1991). The difficulty with matching goals with methods is exacerbated when working in the tradition of Critical theory since, by its very nature, Critical theory disputes actual social reality by seeing this reality as historically created and dependent on asymmetrical power relations (Kellner, 1989, Brunkhorst, 1996). Against this, Critical theory casts the social sciences as serving an emancipatory project (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). The idea central to critical theory is that social theories are either critical, and reveal illegitimate power relations, or they will obscure suppression (Kellner, 1989). The emancipatory interest of Critical theory is based on the idea that if people are made aware of the relations that govern their lives and how these conflict with their interests, people can work together to change these relations (Brunkhorst, 1996: 103, 104). In

particular, such relations are not understood as mere facts of life that people have no choice but to adapt to, but instead they are seen as relations that can be analysed from within (Brunkhorst, 1996, Gouldner, 1975, How, 2003). Thus, the empirical work of social research in the tradition of Critical theory is aimed at reconstructing the rationale of discourses in order to understand the meaning of such discourses from the point of view of actors, and relate with these constructions in order to overcome suppressive situations through some kind of solidarity of action (Brunkhorst, 1996). The semi-structured interview approach can be used in the tradition of Critical theory as a means of understanding the meaning of discursive practices from the point of view of actors (Stoker, 1995, Steedman, 1991: 53).

The use of qualitative methods in Critical theory and the increasing interest in developing a qualitative methodology began as a response to positivism (Honneth, 1991, Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). By rejecting a more positivistic approach according to which the "truth or otherwise of a statement can be determined through systematic empirical observation" (Stoker, 1995: 14), Critical Theorists concentrated on process and context (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000). While this approach sees contextualised meaning and knowledge as drawn from wider social mechanisms, the downside is that by locating a cultural object in the wider social and historical context, Critical theory may lack the specificity associated with more tightly empirical approaches, like grounded theory or ethnomethodology (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000: 130, 131). Thus, Alvesson and Sköldberg (2000: 131) advise critically inclined researchers "to make use of existing empirical studies and

examples, and then to interpret or reinterpret them on the basis of the issues they have selected for study" and generally to "broaden one's receptivity to empirical data." However, because Critical Theorists see contextualised knowledge and meaning as structured by the interests and motivations of actors, and these interests and motivations are rationally structured, then it can organise its receptivity to data in accordance with these interests (Brunkhorst, 1996). This is the sense in which Critical theory is used here, as a framework that can relate the rational structure of knowledge and motivation from the actors point of view, to the wider social, historical, and cultural context (Brunkhorst, 1996, Strydom, 2000).

The task of the researcher working in a critical framework is to dispute perceptions of social reality and to "distinguish what is socially and psychologically invariant from what is, or can be made to be, socially changeable, and to concentrate on the latter" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000: 110). For this reason, the researcher's choice of which methods to employ in a qualitative study has emerged as an important topic for the social sciences. Thus, for example:

To say that sociologists are in the business of creating concepts means that they are in the business of proposing and fashioning ways of looking at, thinking and talking about – and hence contributing to the very constitution of – social objects and social worlds. They are not simply studying a social world-apart, but are contributing to the construction and destruction of social objects. (Gouldner, 1975: 175)

The implication here, that the researcher's ability to accumulate knowledge and learning about changes in social systems, attitudes and behaviours, is of central importance to critical theory (Alasuutari, 1998). This distinction between the invariant and the changeable in Critical theory coalesces around what is variously called knowledge constitutive interests (Apel, 1984, Kettner, 1996). This is the argument that knowledge is developed by people and in society in response to the interests and constraints posed in everyday life and in society more generally. Starting with this idea, it is possible to begin to look at knowledge as both fact and value; as something that is a part of our objective world, and as something that is a mere construction based on reason and principle. Understood in this way, knowledge can be dealt with as a construction appropriated from our common history. Thus knowledge can be analysed to expose its rationality so that it can be codified and transmitted or, where it breaks down, critically appraised (Strydom, 2000). Equally, knowledge can be analysed as a social value, as a construction that organises social relations and binds people together into a complex range of relationships. This also echoes Arendt's decision to stand "within the circle with her subject, rejecting all the viewing posts around the perimeter from where the experts might have claimed to speak knowingly about the gazed on subject" (Minnich, 1989: 134-135). This opens up the issue of the fairness or justice of social constructions (Habermas, 1996: 19-21). The idea of a knowledge constitutive interest binds knowledge conceived as fact and value together because the knowledge bequeathed to us by our common history represents a mode of action that reflects and organises the use of knowledge in everyday life (Apel, 1984,

Kettner, 1996). In effect, knowledge is not simply a product but also "a production context" (Knorr Cetina, 1999: 6).

Positioning a Critical Theoretical account of responsibility

Critical theory, as it is practiced by the Frankfurt School, is based, as Honneth (1994) points out, on the left-Hegalian notion that critique should be anchored in some real social need or a social movement. This implies that Critical theory should identify in some way with a social actor. In dealing with responsibility in the context of welfare a number of potential actors and social needs recommend themselves. For example, in discussions of welfare responsibility, the state, pensioners and lone mothers are particularly prominent. By identifying with one of these groups it would be possible to produce a form of knowledge that will "have practical political effects because its critique will be taken up and disseminated by those in whose name the critique is voiced" (Freundlieb, 2000: 83). But this, as Freundlieb (2000) points out, does not provide any reasons why such a critique would be justifiable. Why would it be necessary to identify with a particular actor when it is the relationship among actors and the knowledge they share that is important?

In this work I do not attempt to identify with any specific actor and their discourse on responsibility. Instead, I have carried out this work in line with Strydom's (2001) suggestion for a renewal of Critical theory. Strydom's (2001) approach focuses on the knowledge being constructed through communication among various actors to identify problems that need to be addressed. In putting together this work, I do not take up the position of any kind of objective observer of society on the model of

Rawl's (1971) 'veil of ignorance'. Instead I take the position of another person in society who has rights and responsibilities but who has concerns about the changing nature of responsibility in society. These concerns include the shift of responsibility for personal health and well-being to the individual person; for example, the call for the burden of healthcare provision to be shifted to the individual smoker who, it is argued, is responsible for the decline of their own health, and ultimately, the assertion that they be denied the standards of medical care that is available to the 'deserving' sick. My position is that of an interested citizen or an observing but not indifferent critic who wants to help to clarify the debate by critically examining the discourses used to deal with responsibilities.

A constructivist approach

The research presented here focuses on how responsibility is individually held and socially constructed. I take up Habermas's (1984, 1987, 1996) constructionist approach which brings together an action theory to focus on the individual as she makes her decisions and a social theory that observes how she uses language, discourse and narrative to construct and communicate knowledge (Habermas, 1987: 136, 137, Lara, 1998). In the social sciences more generally, social constructionism denotes a general approach to how knowledge is formed and used for social effect. As Burr (1995, 3-5) points out, constructionists typically take a critical attitude towards knowledge, looking on knowledge as historically and culturally contingent and as constructed through interactions between people. This constructionism focuses on the social production of knowledge, the structure of the knowledge thus produced and the relations between this knowledge and the

knowledge used to organise action in the wider society. While it does not completely overlook the context in which this knowledge is produced, these contexts are not accorded a high degree of methodological priority (Outhwaite, 1999, Delanty, 1997). By contrast, Habermas's (1996) constructivism directly faces the relationship between knowledge and action.

Critical realists have disputed the radicalism of constructionism (for example, Harré, 2002, for a review of this debate see Delanty, 1997). However, for Outhwaite (1999), Habermas's methodological integration of the individual's reality with the knowledge she develops and uses represents a compromise between constructionism and realism. The particular brand of constructionism that emerges from Habermas's (1984, 1987) work is critical of knowledge from the perspective of the reality of people's lives. In this sense, it represents the methodological foundation of Critical theory because being critical in this way means retaining a focus on emancipation (Brunkhorst, 1996). Criticising and appraising knowledge from the point of view of the real interests of everybody concerned holds open the possibility of constructively challenging and reconstructing this knowledge so that it more fully recognises everybody's interests (Rehg, 1994).

Responsibility in Habermas's concept of the lifeworld

The mechanics of this constructivism can be elaborated using Habermas's (1987) concept of the lifeworld. The reason for this is that Habermas's (1984, 1987) constructivism takes together a social theory in the tradition of Durkheim with an action theory in the tradition of Weber (Honneth, 1991). In addition, this lifeworld

theory (1987) presents some concepts about responsibility that have been used throughout this study require an explanation.

Habermas's (1987) two level concept of society, that is, society as simultaneously a system and a lifeworld has been heavily criticised (Giddens, 1987, Mouzelis, 1992, How, 2003). This criticism ranges from its dualistic or so-called 'boxer' characterisation of society when society is not that simple, to ultimate justification for functionalism contained in the two level concept of society (Honneth, 1991), and its perceived idealisation of the lifeworld. Such criticisms put this model beyond sensible use as a social theoretic concept (Strydom, 2000), however Honneth (1991) and Layder (1997) continue to defend this distinction. Rather than follow this system lifeworld dichotomy, I focus on how responsibility plays a key role in Habermas's (1987) concept of the lifeworld. While the lifeworld forms one part of this two level theory of society, it is also a theory of society that resolves Durkheim with Weber (Honneth, 1991). The concept of the lifeworld situates society as a space in which people communicate to resolve issues and stabilise social relations. Therefore it is based on the orientation towards solidarity and stability which, drawing on Durkheim, is based on the fact of morality and, drawing on Weber, recognises the deep-rooted nature of social conflicts (Habermas, 1987, Honneth, 1991).

Habermas (1987: 134, 135) takes up Schutz and Luckmann's (1973) concept of the lifeworld to articulate how an actor is both the initiator of actions for which she is responsible and the product of a cultural heritage that seems obscure but furnishes

her with the resources upon which to make decisions about actions. Indeed, Habermas (1987: 135) feels it is better to develop a concept of the real everyday lifeworld as a tool for social scientific analysis than to make use of a purely phenomenologically based action theory. To this end, he uses the idea of narration (1987: 136, 137) to develop a concept of the lifeworld that can explain how language, as a medium for coming to an understanding, takes care of the different tasks of the lifeworld. Habermas thereby identifies three functions:

> In coming to an understanding with one another about their situation, participants in interaction stand in a cultural tradition that they at once use and renew; in coordinating their actions by way of intersubjectively recognised criticisable validity claims, they are at once relying on membership in social groups and strengthening the integration of those same groups; through participating in interactions with competently acting reference persons, the growing child internalises the value orientations of his social group and acquires generalised capacities for action (Habermas, 1987: 137).

Language is used to arrive at a mutual understanding of an issue with reference to the shared 'stock of knowledge' or tradition. It is used to coordinate action and thereby helps to stabilise relations of solidarity and integrate members. Finally, language is used to help socialise people and so is instrumental in helping the child develop a sense of identity. For Habermas (1987: 138) these functions of language help maintain what he refers to as the 'structural components of the lifeworld': culture, society and personality. These three components clearly parallel the action theoretic idea of three worlds that people act in relation to. The point, for Habermas, is that the components of the lifeworld are not related in a simple one-to-one with the processes of coming to an understanding. Instead, each reproduction process makes a contribution to each structural component. However, the relation between

culture and cultural reproduction, society and social reproductionand between personality and socialisation are the core functions. The following diagram represents these core and subsidiary functions by marking the diagonal:

Figure 4.1 Contributions of Reproduction Processes in Maintaining the Structural Components of the Lifeworld

Repro-duction processes	Culture	Society	Personality	Dimensions of evaluation
Cultural Reproduction	Interpretive schemes fit for consensus ("valid knowledge")	Legitimations	Socialisation patterns Educational goals	Rationality of knowledge
Social Integration	Obligations	Legitimately ordered interpersonal relations	Social membership	Solidarity of members
Socialis-ation	Interpretative accomplishments	Motivations for actions that conform to norms	Interactive capabilities ("personal identity")	Personal Responsibility

Source: Habermas, 1987: 142, 143

Briefly, the process of cultural reproduction is primarily about securing the "*continuity* of tradition and *coherence* of knowledge sufficient for daily practice" (1987: 140) so that knowledge can be used and renewed in a way that is in keeping with inherited worldviews. These interpretative schemas are also necessary to secure society and to communicate patterns of appropriate behaviour that people can internalise into their personality. The criterion of success here is the rationality of knowledge transmitted which, if disrupted, results in people sensing a loss of

meaning and an inability to orientate or legitimate themselves (1987: 139, 140). The process of social integration is about keeping society together. Society is integrated by way of the establishment and use of norms that legitimately coordinate social relations. Thus, the norms in question relate with both institutions that provide norms that govern action and the norms that organise everyday interaction. This process assumes the existence of a system of culturally instutionalised ideas about normative obligations, while such norms contribute to the creation of a social identity in people so that they can feel like members of a social group or society. The success of processes of social integration can be identified in terms of the strength of feelings of solidarity which, if disturbed, becomes manifest as a sense of anomie and social conflict (1987: 139, 140). Finally, the process of socialisation is about how people develop the ability to interact with others in society. People's ability to interact is embodied in the development within them of a personality that they can use to handle new situations in a way that is "*in harmony with collective forms of life*" (1987: 141, emphasis in original). If people develop an identity in this way, they develop the ability to interpret their cultural tradition and they internalise the motivation to act in accordance with accepted norms. The success of this process can be identified in how responsible the new personalities are and whether disruptions manifest in "psychopathologies and corresponding phenomena of alienation" (1987: 141).

This schema, developed by Habermas (1987), has been largely accepted and utilised by his followers (for example, Eder, 1996). It is a theory about how society is reproduced and stabilised using language. On this account, responsibility plays a

role on the level of social integration and socialisation. Society is integrated using norms that establish obligations for each member of the community that are derived from the general culture, while the capacity of the individual to successfully interpret the cultural tradition and interact with others turns on their ability to take responsibility for action. A breakdown in the ideas and norms that people use to organise responsibility would, on the one hand, become manifest in the way that norms organise obligations and reverberate through the process of social integration unsettling the sense of collective identity and introducing a sense of social anomie and personal alienation. On the other hand, a disruption in the socialisation process would lead to a general diminution in the extent to which people take responsibility for their action. Such a disruption would reverberate throughout the kinds of characteristics and personalities that people in society develop. This would become manifest in a rupture in tradition as people can no longer successfully interpret received stocks of knowledge, a withdrawal of motivation to act in accordance with social norms, and an increase in psychopathologies as people develop amoral and perhaps criminal or aggressive tendencies (Habermas, 1987: 141-143).

Conceptualising responsibility

Using Habermas's (1987) concept of the lifeworld, I have been able to conceptualise responsibility in two directions. The analysis is focused on the kinds of knowledge that people use to stabilise relationships and the reality of life in an insecure world. On the one hand, I use Dean's (2002) taxonomy of ideological discourses of responsibility, outlined in Chapter 2 above, to conceptualise the forms

of knowledge presented as hegemonic and to which actors in society are expected to adapt in some way. On the other hand, I use a framework drawn from Habermas (1990, 1995, outlined in Chapter 2 above) to conceptualise the way in which people individually rationalise their responsibilities in connection with socially constructed norms of responsibility. By using two separate models, I sensitise the analysis to both hegemonic and individual discourses of responsibility.

Dean's (2002) taxonomy conceptualises the ways in which ideological discourses work to stabilise culture, society and personality by emphasising the need for useful knowledge, the sense in which values can orient society, the moral validity of values, or the capacity of the person to accept responsibility for their action. Society is stabilised using some combination of the following:

- a discourse of 'conditional obedience' that elicits responsible action from people who behave irresponsibly or strategically in light of their self-interest
- a discourse of 'civic duty' that operates using ideas about balancing rights with responsibilities in liberal societies
- a discourse of 'moral obligation' that calls on people to behave in in a way that conforms to collective loyalties and traditions
- and a discourse of 'ethical responsibility' that calls on people to behave responsibly through appeal to reasons, and reflexively arrived at decisions within a democratic society (see Dean, 2002: 200, 201, Chapter 2 above).

Complementing this is a framework designed to understand the individual's attitudes towards norms and how these attitudes structure the acceptance of

responsibility taken up from Habermas (1990, 1995). This framework enables me to conceptualise the way people use discourses that help them to interpret their situation in their culture, to draw the motivation to act in the ways society deems as responsible or to develop the ability to interact successfully with others. This framework can also be drawn into a taxonomy such as the following:

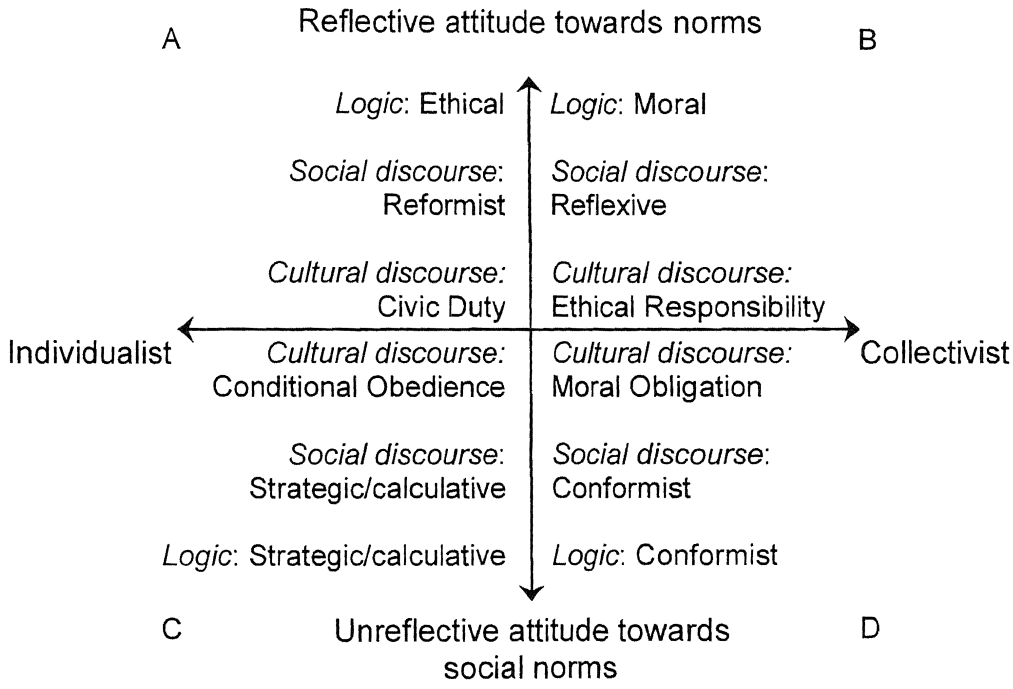


Figure 4.2 Taxonomy of discourses of responsibility from the actor's point of view

The above taxonomy (figure 4.2) draws together the different discourses around a vertical axis that distinguishes between a critical and reflective attitude to social norms on the one hand and a more unreflective attitude to social norms on the other. The horizontal axis distinguishes between a focus on the individual and one more orientated towards the collective. Within these axes a taxonomy can be

constructed that articulates how people stabilise their relationship with others and society by using:

- an ethical discourse about reforming (quadrant A) the norms governing the situation that the self or collective is in, so that she/they can secure conditions that are more favourable to the project of realising the good life for her/them, whilst being responsible means continuing to be the person she, or society they, claim to be
- a moral discourse (quadrant B) about reflexively considering the needs of the self and other in the formation of social norms, so that norms can be designed that adequately reflect these interests. Being responsible here means attending to the needs of others and seriously considering all arguments in the process of developing social norms
- a calculative discourse (quadrant C) in relation to authority and a strategic discourse in relation to others, so that being responsible means obeying the authority figure or ensuring that self and other gain equal proceeds from actions
- a discourse about conforming (quadrant D) to roles on the one hand and norms on the other, so that being responsible means dutifully acting in accordance with roles or in light of the norms valued by society

The objective in using both of these taxonomies is to critically analyse both the hegemonic discourses of responsibility that people are supposed to adapt to and the constructions that people actually use to make sense of, and deal with, their own responsibilities. In presenting the analysis, I make use of the three processes identified by Habermas (1987). Thus Chapter 5 deals with the kinds of knowledge

developed by New Labour to secure responsible action, thereby the norms people are supposed to adapt to. Chapter 6 deals with the personal relationship with norms adopted by the informants. Chapter 7 investigates the informant's views on the cultural fabric of responsibility and on social integration through welfare state institutions. However, first it is necessary to clarify how the empirical research presented here was gathered in the field.

The research project

The aim of this research project was to understand the social constructions of responsibility in a society where responsibility was deemed to be increasingly privatised. The research project was structured to address the question of the relationship between social constructions of responsibility and how these constructions are individually held. This was a central question that had been partially dealt with in the literature (Finch and Mason, 1993, Duncan and Edwards, 1999).

The analysis of the data presented in the following chapters takes up the Habermasian constructivism outlined above by first exploring the hegemonic construction of responsibility that people are expected to adapt to by way of an analysis of New Labour's press releases. The corpus of press releases consisted of 69 press releases issued by the New Labour government between September 2000 and February 2001 (copies of these press releases are provided in Appendix 2). A textual analysis of these documents was carried out, a process which contrasts with the second form of data collection and analysis that is based on interviews. In total,

31 interviews were analysed. The corpus of interviews comprises of a secondary analysis of 9 interviews with benefits administrators carried out by Dean and Rodgers (2004), and 22 interviews conducted and analysed more specifically for the purposes of this study. At the research design stage, it was envisaged that I would conduct interviews with benefits administrators within the environs of a wider research project conducted by Dean and Rodgers (2004). However, a number of difficulties were encountered in trying to access a large enough sample of benefits administrators to make this practical. I was granted access to the transcripts of Dean and Rodgers (2004) interviews, and the analysis presented in Chapter 5 of benefits administrators' discourses is based on these transcripts.

The interviews were conducted as a way of accessing the constructions of responsibility used by different groups; by administrators in the Benefits Agency, by people who work for various welfare rights organisations, by ordinary members of the public and by benefits recipients. Through an analysis of a corpus of New Labour's press releases and the discourses used by administrators working for the Benefits Agency (Chapter 5), hegemonic constructions are detailed and explored. By analysing the discourses of responsibility used by members of the public, people who work for welfare rights agencies, and benefits recipients, I investigate the discourses people use to discuss their responsibilities and to present themselves as responsible persons (Chapter 6) and to deal with matters of responsibility in society and welfare (Chapter 7). While the research proposal was initially designed to draw comparisons between these different groups, in the analysis phase it was felt that there were few significant differences in the discourses used by the

informants drawn from these groups. Therefore, the analysis that is presented here is of the discourses used by the primary research informants on the one hand (Chapters 6 and 7 below) and of the secondary analysis of interviews with benefits administrators on the other (Chapter 5 below). This distinction is used in view of the differences in the interview schedule used in these contexts.

The ethics of researching responsibility

The research data presented here is taken from three sources, press releases made available on government websites, interviews carried out as part of this research, and a secondary analysis of interviews carried out as part of a related project (Dean and Rodgers, 2004). A number of ethical issues arise through the use of these data sources.

The issue of consent was particularly important in the context of the interviews with administrators in the benefits agency. A related research project presented by Dean and Rodgers (2004: 111) aimed to carry out similar interviews (with a greater emphasis on dependency and rights) with the same group of people (the interview schedule used in the two projects are included in appendix 1 below). However, this research encountered difficulties when trying to gain access to these informants. There was the problem of the 'gatekeeper' (Bulmer, 2001: 51) in the context of a rapidly changing organisation. Therefore, it was felt that a secondary analysis of Dean and Rodger's (2004) interviews would provide a way of accessing data that was constructed for similar purposes, while avoiding the difficulties that Dean and Rodgers (2004) encountered in accessing these research informants.

Informed consent is particularly important in qualitative research since it means "that those who are researched should have the right to know that they are being researched, and that in some sense they should have actively given their consent" (Bulmer, 2001: 49). While no form of signed consent was sought from the 22 informants interviews for this project, the interview was prefixed with a short exposition explaining the context and reasoning behind the study. This preamble went as follows:

> You've probably noticed politicians these days always seem to be talking about people's rights or responsibilities, and the governments of both parties have been changing the basis of our rights. They've been trying to make people more responsible for their own lives and less dependent on the state. I'm just wondering what you make of your rights and responsibilities. What I want to talk to you about are your own responsibilities; your work responsibilities, your responsibilities to your friends, family society whatever, and what you think you have a right to expect from other people or the state.

The purpose of this preamble was to clearly demarcate the context and reasoning behind the study. It highlighted the context as the changing relationship between rights and responsibilities as discussed in political discourse and pointed out that the questions were about the informant's own views on their personal and social responsibilities. As such, I clearly identified myself as an academic researcher who was asking the informants questions about their views, and who was in no way trying to set up a duplicitous relationship (see Bulmer, 2001: 49, 50) with the informant. Furthermore, assurances were given to the informants that the data would be stored and disseminated in a way that maintained confidentiality and anonymity.

Recruiting the informants

The informants were recruited using a purposive or non-probability technique. Such techniques are frequently used to explore or develop theories, to develop research instruments, or as a way or accessing the factors judged relevant to a study without incurring the cost of carrying out a large-scale study (see Arber, 2001: 61, 62, Briggs, 1998). In this case, since the objective was to develop an understanding of discourses of responsibility surrounding welfare, it was felt that a small sample of people purposively selected because they were cash benefits recipients, welfare rights advisors, or members of the public more generally, was appropriate. The benefits recipients and welfare rights advisors were contacted through relevant local agencies. Of these, the informants included in the group called 'general public' informants were the least defined. These could have been sampled for educational qualification, class status, ethnicity, gender, age and occupation. However, the research proceeded without defining these features. This was because the purposive sample was not based on any list of possible candidates. Instead, the research process relied on snowballing. Snowballing "involves contacting a member of the population to be studied and asking him or her whether they know anyone else with the required characteristics ... The nominated people are interviewed in turn and asked to identify further sample members" (Arber, 2001: 63). Snowballing is useful where the researcher is a member of existing networks that she can use to find people to interview. It presented difficulties for this researcher who, being relatively new to the area, did not have a local network of contacts and had to rely on the small number of work based contacts to gain

informants. This turned out to be a very inconvenient method of producing a sample that was supposed to be convenient.

The interview

In order to retain a high degree of flexibility, the interview was semi-structured using a topic guide, and carried out in accordance with Lofland and Lofland's (1994) 'guided conversation'. The interview was not designed to find out the frequency with which certain kinds of discourses were being used, it was only designed to identify the kinds of discourses that people are using. For this reason, the non-standard interview format, where the interviewer takes a flexible approach to the interview using a topic guide, was used (Devine, 1995).

Fielding and Thomas (2001) endorse Lofland and Lofland's (1994) advice to develop the interview guide by "thinking over what you find problematic or interesting about it [the topic]" and "teasing out what you find puzzling about the phenomenon" (2001: 132). Fielding and Thomas (2001: 132) describe a method of turning these puzzlements into clusters of topics that can be ordered into a guide and they emphasise the importance of designing probes. For this research, the topic guide was developed on the basis of two puzzles; How do people understand their own and other people's, responsibilities? how do people understand the responsibilities of the state and the individual with regard to welfare? The topic guide was developed in a pilot interview with a colleague. This unrecorded pilot interview provided an occasion where the researcher could become comfortable with the guided nature of the conversation and gain confidence that the topics could

be seen as meaningful for potential respondents. As a result of the pilot interview a number of alterations were made to the topic guide, such as the inclusion of additional prompts and a certain amount of refining of some questions (Devine, 1995). The interview was designed to uncover moral rationalities by inviting the informant to discuss the context of action. As Mason (2002) explains:

> in practical terms, this means that instead of starting the from interview questions which invite generalities or abstractions like 'What is good parenting?', the researcher needs to devise questions and modes of asking which both anticipate and discover the range of contexts in which moralities of parenting get done by or in relation to the interviewee. Questions, therefore, might focus upon the detail of how they 'do parenting' on an everyday basis or at 'definitive moments' (2002: 227)

The topic guide itself took three parts. The first part of the interview was focused on the informant's own background and sought basic information such as age and occupation. The first topic was the informant's own responsibilities. The second was on how they perceived that other people accepted their responsibilities. The third topic of conversation was intended to directly address the connection between individual and state responsibilities for welfare.

The conversation directly addressed these topics. The topic of the person's own responsibilities was raised with the question "what would you say your responsibilities are?" This was explored using a range of prompts about the actual nature of these responsibilities, the way these responsibilities are managed and shared and the sense in which the informant worried about them. How people more generally deal with their responsibilities was raised using the question "Generally speaking, do you think that people take their responsibilities seriously enough?"

This topic was explored using the informant's own examples, concerns or observations. Finally, the issue of the connection between the individual's and the government's responsibilities for welfare was raised using the question "do you think it is all right to be dependent on the state?" This topic was explored in relation to the extent to which the state should take responsibility for the individual.

Of these topics the final one, which raised the question of the individual's and the state's respective responsibilities for welfare through the lens of dependency, may appear as somewhat controversial. It may be argued that to raise the question of dependency is to bring up a theme distinct from responsibility and thereby somehow contaminate the data. The interview was clearly defined in a preamble as being about rights and responsibilities and each of the questions, up to the point where the issue of dependency was raised, were all directly connected with responsibility. Moreover, the question of dependency was initially used as a probe but it tended to elicit a more interesting response from the informants and appeared to directly deal with the question of individual and state responsibility for welfare. Hence the question of dependency was placed at the centre and was probed for concepts of responsibility and rights.

More generally, the adoption of a qualitative approach using the guided conversation was favoured since it offered a way of handing over much of the power once held by the researcher to the respondents. The task of critical research is not to identify patterns or "regularities or causal connections" (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 2000: 110). Instead, the objective of qualitative research is to enable

people to form their own constructions. The interview was used as a tool to allow informants create and control the space in which they discuss their responsibilities.

The data

Initially the press releases were to be selected using the criteria that they were in some way connected with the cash benefits system. Press releases were sought that dealt with maternity benefit, disability living allowance, housing benefit and jobseekers allowance. However, in practice this proved quite a difficult criterion not merely because, strictly applied, it turned up far too few press releases, but also because the press releases that did deal with these benefits tended to deal with responsibility in a rather oblique fashion. In the end the criterion of cash benefits was used only as a guide, selecting press releases that in some way dealt with how the welfare system might affect the income of its clients. Using this broader definition press releases were included that were concerned with Tax Credits, Stakeholder Pensions, benefit fraud and the benefits system more generally. The press releases were accessed through the government's websites, and the corpus was limited to the six months between September 2000 and February 2001. In all, 69 press releases were included in the corpus (copies of these press releases are provided in appendix 2 below).

Two sets of interviews were used in this research. Since the aim of this research was to investigate constructions of responsibility in different locations of society with an emphasis on welfare, it was felt that it was important to interview welfare administrators, welfare advisors/advocates and welfare benefits claimants. As

already mentioned, at the time of this research a related ESRC funded project (Dean and Rodgers, 2004) encountered difficulties accessing welfare administrators and, as a result, the data on benefits administrators discourses is drawn from this work. These interviews focused on the conceptions of rights, responsibilities and dependency as used and deployed by welfare administrators.

In total, 22 interviews were conducted and transcribed verbatim for this project. When the nine interviews with welfare benefits administrators are included, a total of 31 interviews were analysed. Details of the 22 informants interviewed for this study are listed in table 4.2 below:

Table 4.2 A list of the interviews

Group	Occupation	Gender	Ethnicity	Identifier
Welfare advisors	Co-ordinator of an Independent Living Project	Female	White English	WA1
	Housing Association Manager	Female	White English	WA2
	Senior Case worker	Male	White English	WA3
	Manager of a branch of a large national charitable organisation	Male	White English	WA4
	Advisor for large national charitable organisation	Male	White English	WA5
	Disability advocate	Female	White English	WA6
Benefits claimants	Unemployed health and safety worker	Male	White English	BC1
	Unemployed/Disabled labourer	Male	White Irish	BC2
	Unemployed cleaner	Male	White English	BC3
	Unemployed Accountant	Male	Black African	BC4

Members of public	NHS porter	Male	African Caribbean	MP1
	Student	Male	White English	MP2
	Housewife	Female	White English	MP3
	Disabled student	Female	East African Asian	MP4
	Academic	Female	White English	MP5
	Retired policeman	Male	White English	MP6
	Student	Female	British Asian	MP7
	Bartender	Male	White Scottish	MP8
	Corporate manager	Male	White English	MP9
	Quantity surveyor	Male	White Irish	MP10
	Clergyman	Male	White English	MP11
	Retired county councillor	Female	White English	MP12

While nothing statistically representative can be claimed for this sample, nonetheless it does include voices from various social groups. The age of the informants ranged from twenty-three to seventy. In terms of their ethnicity, most (15 in total) of the informants were White English, with one person who would be classed as White Scottish and two as White Irish. Of the remainder of the informants, one was Black African, one African Caribbean, and two were Asian.

Finally, of the nine benefits administrators, two were men, seven women, one under 40 years of age, eight aged over 40. Seven of these administrators worked in senior managerial roles, two in mid level management, and one administrator was from a minority ethnic group, the remaining eight were white (see Dean and Rodgers, 2004). These informants are identified in the text using the prefix DWP, to

stand for the Department of Work and Pensions, with an added numeral to identify different respondents.

Analysing the data

On completion, the interviews were fully transcribed but the decision was made to avoid using computer software packages or conversational or discourse analysis to analyse the transcripts. While software packages offer many benefits in organising and sorting data for ease of comparison (Fielding, 2001) the effective use of these packages depends on the researcher developing a sense of their research objectives and priorities before beginning to analyse and code interviews (Lewins, 2001: 306, 307). This assumes a level of experience that was only gained through this study.

The analysis presented here draws heavily on a particular theoretical framework. In this regard it does not make use of discourse analysis which, in various ways, looks at how discourses are constructed using descriptions in specific situations and for particular ends (for example, Fairclough, 1995, Van Dijk, 1999, Wooffitt, 2001). Nor does it make use of the concept of repertoires which, whether of the linguistic (Gilbert and Mulkay, 1984, Wooffitt, 1993) or moral (Dean and Melrose, 1999a) kind, are "sets of discursive resources with which people constructed versions of the world for specific social purposes in specific social situations" (Wooffitt, 1993: 293-294). The repertoire is supposed to capture the functional and dynamic character of these resources by systematising the ranges of descriptions and references that are used to different ends.

Whereas a discourse analysis exposes connections between descriptions, situations and the interests of actors, and a repertoire analysis exposes the mental maps that are drawn on for particular purposes, the analysis presented here seeks to explore the rational structure of discourses of responsibility. In this regard it comes closer to the tradition of frame analysis (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, Snow and Benford, 1992, Johnston, 1992). The metaphor of a frame has been developed in the new social movement literature as a means of understanding how cultural knowledge is organised into "an interpretative schemata that simplifies and condenses the 'world out there' by selectively punctuating and encoding objects, situations, events, experiences, and sequences of actions within one's present and past environment" (Snow and Benford, 1992: 137). Frames are essentially problem solving devices, schemes or models that are based on past experiences or cultural templates and that are drawn on to interpret or deal with current situations (Johnston, 1995). By using the metaphor of a frame, forms of knowledge can be seen as elastic, symbolic or "accentuating devices that either underscore or embellish the seriousness and injustice of a social condition or redefine as unjust or immoral what was previously seen as unfortunate but perhaps tolerable" (1992: 137).

Thus a frame is supposed to capture the way in which knowledge is based on models or schemes that are cultural in character and held by individuals. The idea of the frame draws on Swidler's (1986) more abstract concept of culture as a 'tool kit', but takes this further by investigating how this 'tool kit' organises perceptions of

the world and shapes the way people relate to their interests in the light of social constructions. Moreover, frame analysis provides a supplementary methodological framework to the Habermasian schema adopted here, since it looks into the constructions people use to frame, make sense of and interpret their responsibilities. Thus, it allows for a micro-level analysis of the rational structure of knowledge.

Within this general cultural approach, I carried out an analysis of responses to interview questions. The aim of the analysis was to highlight similarities and differences between the accounts of responsibility used by the different informants. In so doing, a range of themes were identified and analysed. Theme analysis (Leininger, 1985; Taylor & Board, 1984) is not without its critics. For example, Strauss (1987: 57) finds that theme analysis is a useful method, but that when it is systematically applied, it amounts to nothing more than a "particularly careful journalism." It is used here as a way of picking out the prevailing meanings that informants attached to the phenomenon of responsibility. As a process, theme analysis first involves collecting data in such a way that the patterns of experience discussed by informants, and the attitudes towards the experience, are explored in the interview (Constas, 1992). The various themes are then related so that all of the data relevant to a theme is brought together. The next step is to examine the sub-themes, that is, to focus on the concepts or motivations that order the various themes. It is the analysis of these sub-themes that is presented in this study. Such themes are identified by "bringing together components or fragments of ideas or experiences, which often are meaningless when viewed alone" (Leininger, 1985, p.

60). The emergent themes are pieced together to form a comprehensive picture of the informant's collective experience of their responsibilities. In effect, theme analysis is a variant of an interpretative approach where the concepts, categories and motivations identified in the themeatic patterns are elaborated on in an interpretative fashion.

Issues of consistency and cohesion in carrying out both primary and secondary analysis of interview data

While the above described method of analysis was used on all of the interviews, the act of bringing together interview data from two projects, however related, raises questions about the overall coherence and consistency of the results. Even where the research question is very similar, and the purposes of carrying out the research projects overlaps in significant ways, minor differences in the ways in which the data is collected, in the phrasing and sequencing of questions, can and does yield distinct results. This challenges the researcher to take differences in research questions into account and to present any findings in such a way that the relevant differences are accounted for. In reflecting on, and dealing with, this challenge two related issues need to be considered. Firstly, with regard to the context of the interview the issue arises as to what extent do the interview tools differ. The second issue relates with the way the data is to be handled. This is a more epistemic issue about the nature of the constructions developed in the interviews, and how these can be reconstructed as a systematised form of knowledge.

The research through which the secondary data that is used in this work was produced, was a related project carried out on the basis of similar research questions and for similar purposes. However, the interview schedule was different and the interviews were carried out by a research assistant employed on the project (copies of both schedules are contained in appendix one). Nevertheless, the schedule was set up in such a way that informants were informed that the interview sought to elicit how these informants understood dependency, responsibility and rights, and responsibility was introduced as the first theme in the interview. Because responsibility was introduced as the first theme, the informants could construct their responses without the risk of bringing in issues raised in other contexts. Moreover, the important point is that in both sets of interviews the informants were invited to construct their understandings of responsibility as they understood it, and were allowed the space to draw on whatever aspects of situations, norms, morals or values they felt were relevant to the context. Since the focus of this work is on constructions of responsibility, this freedom to construct responses is of central importance.

Conclusion

As the above discussion has shown, this thesis makes use of a qualitative approach in order to explore and analyse discourses of responsibility. In my analysis, I take up the tools of a qualitative approach, using theme analysis to reconstruct the accounts of responsibility used by research informants and in the New Labour government's press releases. A Critical Theoretical approach has been adopted as a way of understanding the various kinds of discourses that are

used, particularly the relationship between knowledge and norms about responsibility which are brought to bear on situations, and interactions in everyday life which require some way of ordering action. Thus, the Critical Theory developed by Habermas (McCarthy, 1984) was used because it offers a way of integrating social theory and action theory.

Chapter 5: New Labour's Hegemonic Discourse of Responsibility

Introduction

As has already been noted, the approach taken here is to analyse the hegemonic discourses that people are expected to adapt to on the one hand, and those that people make use of in dealing with their own responsibilities on the other. In this chapter, one hegemonic form of discourse is addressed by analysing the constructions of responsibility used firstly, by the New Labour government through an analysis of press releases (a version of this analysis has already been presented in Doheny, 2004), and then by Benefits Agency administrators through an analysis of interview transcripts. Through this analysis, the structure and meaning of the discourses about responsibility that people adapt to is elaborated.

Constructing citizens through the news media

Within the government's publicity machine, the press release constitutes a channel through which information is circulated into the public sphere, where it becomes a text that people can use to gather information or ways of understanding issues. Because of these characteristics the press release is both an institutionalised channel through which information flows as news, and it is a text that people take

up and read and perhaps retell to others (copies of these press releases are provided in appendix 2). It can therefore exert power across time and space. If the government is successfully to manage the frameworks for understanding the world that citizens use, it is important that press release writers successfully communicate information that conveys the government's preferred frames. This means the press releases have to be written to maximise media exposure and to grab the attention of target audiences (Jacobs, 1999a, 1999b). As a text available in the public sphere, press releases consistently communicate information and New Labour's frameworks of understanding. It is a highly managed form of communication (Gaber, 2000).

The corpus of press releases that I am about to discuss consisted of 69 statements relating to a variety of cash benefits, government schemes to promote labour market participation, and the state regulation of private pensions that were issued within the six month period between September 2000 and February 2001. The majority of the press releases were issued by the former Department of Social Security, while six were issued by the former Department for Education and Employment. All the press releases were available from government websites.

My analysis of these texts suggests they implicitly construct for news editors four kinds of reader/listener/viewer, corresponding to four kinds of citizen: the Heroic Citizen, the Passive Citizen, the Good Citizen and the Recalcitrant Citizen.

The Heroic Citizen

For the heroic citizen, the publicising role of the press releases was restricted to either providing information or informing about other sources of information. There was no need to construct elaborate discourses, rather the press release writers could get straight to the point (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1 Press releases for Heroic Citizens

Claim Your Pension over the Phone: New Tele-Claim service for Pensioners People who are about to retire can now claim their State Pension by telephone rather than by filling in a form Alistair Darling, Social Security Secretary, announced today. Mr Darling said: "This new service will give people about to retire active assistance when they claim. It will provide a smooth, efficient and accessible service. This is part of my aim to modernise the services that the DSS offers (DSS, 2000e). Or: **Want Information on Stakeholder Pensions? Ring a New Helpline** People who want more information on stakeholder pensions can now ring a new helpline for impartial information, Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced today. Launching the helpline Mr Rooker said: "Stakeholder pensions will, for the first time, offer millions of people a good value, secure and flexible second pension (DSS, 2000c).

Both the press releases in Table 5.1 relate to the promotion of a new kind of specially regulated stakeholder pension scheme designed primarily for people with relatively low incomes. They follow the same format. The titles bring two statements together, combining some kind of action with a solution. These are highly charged insertions into the public sphere designed to gain the attention of people who are actively trying to find rational solutions to problems. But the particular issues raised

in these attention-grabbing headlines are issues of choice and access to a businesslike organisation. The question of how to proceed to set up one's pension is answered with a telephone based service, the need for information answered with a helpline. The citizen whose attention is secured through issues of choice and access is presumed to be satisfied by a businesslike service and a route to information. The first two paragraphs in the body of these press releases elaborate further on these postulated sources of satisfaction. However, what is notable in each case is the rational nature of the expectation. People who are retiring can expect 'smooth' and 'efficient' 'active assistance' from the state. Those assessing their pensions options have a right to expect an option that is 'good value, secure and flexible'. In effect this citizen expects options, incentives and a businesslike service. It is very much the classical liberal citizen dressed up in consumerist clothes.

The Passive Citizen

Whereas publicity for the heroic citizen was about providing information, publicity for the passive citizen was about reassuring and encouraging people actively to participate in providing for their own welfare. This interest in encouraging participation pushes information provision into the background. Instead the press release publicises information in ways that reassure people about securing their own welfare themselves. The press release does this by generating space where the passive citizen can integrate with others into a larger society so that she feels safe and secure in approaching state systems for help support and information.

Accomplishing such a feat in a press release means using complex operations (see Table 5.2).

Table 5.2 Press release for Passive Citizens

Getting on the dog and bone to find out about pensions

Shadow the sheepdog is pictured leading the line for people who want to collar a decent pension.

The canine TV advert star barked out advice to those who want to know whether stakeholder pensions are right for them.

With just six weeks to go before stakeholder pensions become available, Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS) stakeholder helpline staff are now answering calls from people looking for help and information.

Shadow's guest spot on the helpline came as new research reveals four out of five people find the technical jargon of pensions confusing and nine out of ten want simple advice.

The DSS' current pension education marketing campaign involving talking sheepdogs encourages people to consider their pension options as early as possible. A set of eight booklets is available covering the whole range of options including stakeholder, personal, occupational and state pensions and written in clear and simple English (DSS, 2001d).

The press release in Table 5.2 is concerned once again with stakeholder pensions, but describes the actions of the canine star of a television advertising campaign aimed at getting people to act to secure pensions (for another interpretation of this press release see Mann, 2001: 148). But the people this campaign is aimed at are not receptive to information. Indeed they find the 'technical jargon of pensions confusing' (DSS, 2001d) and pensions themselves boring, making the press release writers work even harder:

> Too often people see pensions as a complex and boring subject that they do not want to think about. ...The DSS had to produce a campaign very different

> from traditional public service information - something that would keep them watching when they hear the word 'pension' (DSS, 2001a).

The sheepdog is recruited in response to this perceived apathy. In fact the above press release plays out the way that the sheepdog is supposed to "keep them [passive citizens] watching when they hear the word 'pension'" (DSS, 2001a). This is a citizen who is so easily turned off thinking about her welfare that it is at first necessary to convey messages to her by stealth. This press release does not publicise information, it publicises an image of people being brought together by a sheepdog and directed towards the Pensions Advisory Service and an assortment of booklets. Therefore this citizen is assumed to operate outside, or at the margins of, the public sphere. She needs to be drawn into the public sphere and made to feel safe and secure as part of the information gathering and options evaluating public.

In the case of the press release in Table 5.2, the initial emphasis is not on the available information but rather on 'Shadow the sheepdog' integrating the passive citizen into the public sphere. The sheepdog, a dog defined according to its function in farming sheep, is used as a metaphor for the state. The sheepdog embodies many of the qualities of the state. It is a friend, a protector, a herder 'leading the line' and though it has hunting instincts, these are subdued allowing to work in the best interest of sheepish citizens. Furthermore, naming the sheepdog Shadow familiarises it while the name describes the sheepdog state in the activity of shadowing. It is always there shadowing the sheep or the passive citizen. Metaphorically the state is familiar, reliable and always working to protect its citizens. But in this press release the image of the state as sheepdog is shifted so

that the sheepdog leads sheepish citizens towards taking on more of the burdens of responsibility for their own welfare themselves. Shadow 'is pictured leading the line' for people who 'collar' (i.e. both catch and burden themselves with a restrictive band) 'a decent pension'. This sheepdog 'barks out advice' and talks, but it is communicating not with people who want information, but who want to know the right answer. It barks at 'those who want to know whether stakeholder pensions are right for them' and in talking it 'encourages people to consider their pensions'. The passive sheepish citizen is one who needs to be told what the right thing to do is or needs to be encouraged into thinking about her welfare. Significantly though, however much the press release writers seek to imagine the state as a sheepdog, the citizen is still expected to approach state agencies for information, or to pick up such information from the public sphere. This passive citizen who needs to be encouraged to think is supposed to 'call' helplines for information or pick up booklets. The government extends the public sphere making it receptive to this passive citizen, but there is still no guarantee that this citizen will enter this sphere.

The Good Citizen

The heroic citizen was the rational adult of the liberal imaginary and the passive citizen was marginally involved in matters of public welfare. But between the rational hero and the socially malleable passive citizen, was a good citizen who shared traits with both of these. Like the heroic citizen, the good citizen was independent and rational, actively looking for information. Like the passive citizen, the good citizen acts in ways that are defined socially. What differentiates the good citizen is also the very feature that elides her with these others. She wants to know

how to be responsible like the heroic citizen, but not in the individualistically rational sense of the hero. Rather her understanding of being responsible is negatively defined as not being a burden on others. This places her right between the hero, who is positively responsible by rationally choosing among her options, and the passive sheep who is influenced by the acts of others and is loosely integrated into society as a public sphere. For example, the press release in Table 5.3 accompanies the one aimed at the passive citizen discussed above, but here it is aimed at the good citizen.

Table 5.3 Press release for Good Citizens

Pension Awareness Ad Blitz Begins
Man's best friend has taken the lead in a new Government campaign to get people to think about planning for their pension. Using Oscar-winning techniques that brought 'Babe' to life the £6.5 million marketing campaign aims to make people aware of the need to plan for their retirement and consider all the pension options available to them. Launching the campaign Alistair Darling, Social Security Secretary, said: "Obviously the basic state pension will remain the foundation of income in retirement. "But now people want to retire on the highest possible income and they can do that by saving through an occupational pension, personal pension or - from April – the stakeholder pension. Yet two out of five people in work today still have no provision except the state pension. "This campaign is about getting people to consider all the options for retirement." (DSS, 2001a).

The press release in Table 5.3 is presented more as a discussion of the meaning and implications of advertising campaigns than as a piece of publicity about pensions initiatives. It draws the reader in by seemingly impartially observing how the cinematic techniques developed for the film *Babe* are being used in the context

of pensions. This, of course, invites discussion of this development in opinion essays, suggesting pensions as at least a subtopic of discussion thereby gaining more publicity. But publicity for whom? Publicity for those influenced by public opinion as it is presented in the media. The press release goes on to offer its own interpretation of this development. The advertising campaign is firstly presented as a means of increasing awareness of the need to think about pensions and plan for retirement. The use of an advertising campaign is set inside a narrative about the continuities and changes in pensions systems. There is the continuity of a state retirement pension as a 'foundation', while there are changes in people's expectations in the consumer society. Significantly, the press release writers respond to this by providing a rule of thumb for the good citizen:

> The introduction of the Pension Credit from 2003 will reward those with modest savings and a small second pension with a cash top up. So the message from the government is whatever you can afford to put aside, it will always pay to save and the more you save and the earlier you start the better (DSS, 2001a).

Those who want to know how to be responsible in the changing world are told 'it will always pay to save'.

Perhaps more than the heroic citizen, the good citizen needs clear signals about how to be a responsible person. It is not enough to simply tell this citizen to save, she also needs to have her saving clearly rewarded:

> 'For the first time ever the Pension Credit will make sure savings will be rewarded,' said Mr Darling. 'There is a fundamental fault in the system we inherited. Saving should be rewarded, not punished. The Credit will reward the thrift of millions of people who have worked hard to save for their retirement.' (DSS, 2000d).

The good citizen needs to have her responsible behaviour reinforced and positively conditioned by rewards and incentives. But however much she is rational, the good citizen also shares some of the sheepish traits of the passive citizen. Hence an initiative like pensions statements is supposed to form good responsible citizens out of passive citizens:

> Jeff Rooker said: 'Once people see in black and white what they will have to live on I think they will realise the importance of saving for their old age and I hope it will prompt them to review the provision they have made for their retirement.' ... 'These statements will be one of the important factors in getting people to save by showing them how much pension they have built up and how much more they can get if they save.' ... 'Working people, who can afford it have a responsibility to save for their retirement. But the Government has a duty to help them.' (DSS, 2000b).

Good citizens, those who want to know how to be responsible, but responsible in the sense of not being a burden on others, can be made of passive citizens convinced of the need to take responsibility or people who are responsive to a changing world.

The Recalcitrant Citizen

As we have seen, the press release serves to circulate information into the public sphere where it becomes a text that continues to manage the information that people consume. Press releases differ according to how the information being supplied is expected to be met by target audiences. Hence, the hero is expected to seek the basic point, looking for developments and sources of information, the good citizen wants to know how to avoid being a burden on others, the passive citizen needed to be reassured while being drawn into the public sphere. However, a fourth kind of citizen was manifest in the press releases; an unruly recalcitrant

citizen who would play the odds to receive, or to increase their receipt of, welfare benefits. The role of the media in problematising the 'abuse' of benefits has been extensively remarked upon elsewhere (e.g. Dean, 2001b). What is interesting in this instance, however, is the way in which publicity issued in response to the recalcitrant citizen was aimed at restricting both her social space, and the administrative scope for her function. So contrary to the other citizens who received some positive support, the recalcitrant citizen received threats and penalties.

One important feature of the language used in connection with the recalcitrant citizen was its hostility. For example, benefits agencies battle with 'criminals who ..... hijack the identities of innocent Irish citizens to make false claims in the UK' (DSS, 2000a). But the recalcitrant citizen does not have to be a criminal at the margins of society, rather it could be a person who earns 'cash in hand whilst claiming, playing on the sympathy of friends to cadge free drinks' (DSS, 2001b). They are of a kind who 'blights the system and takes money away from the people who need it most.' (DSS, 2001c). Using this kind of language, the recalcitrant citizen is built into a spectre that needs to be dealt with forthwith. The state battles the culture of the recalcitrant citizen by altering her systemic and cultural context. The systemic context is characterised by greater control over the gateways to fraudulent behaviour:

> The Government is playing its part in tackling fraud: tightening the gateways to benefit, improving the training of fraud investigators, modernising the technology to root out the cheats as well as seeking new powers to toughen the penalties against persistent offenders and to gather the information necessary to catch them (DSS, 2001b).

The cultural context is altered through an advertising campaign aimed at altering the image of the fraudster:

> We produced a series of tough ads to demonstrate that targeting fraud is everyone's business; we have tested them thoroughly in the North West and now we are ready to take the campaign nationwide (DSS, 2001b).

This is a battle that the state claims to be winning:

> The progress we are seeing must and will continue. Combating fraud is one of the reasons social security spending is under control and will remain under control' (DSS, 2000a).

But the recalcitrant citizen is not just a kind of person, she is a welfare client, a lone parent, pensioner or disabled person (DSS, 18/01/01). Yet as a client she is denied a voice or any form of ontology, instead she is spoken about:

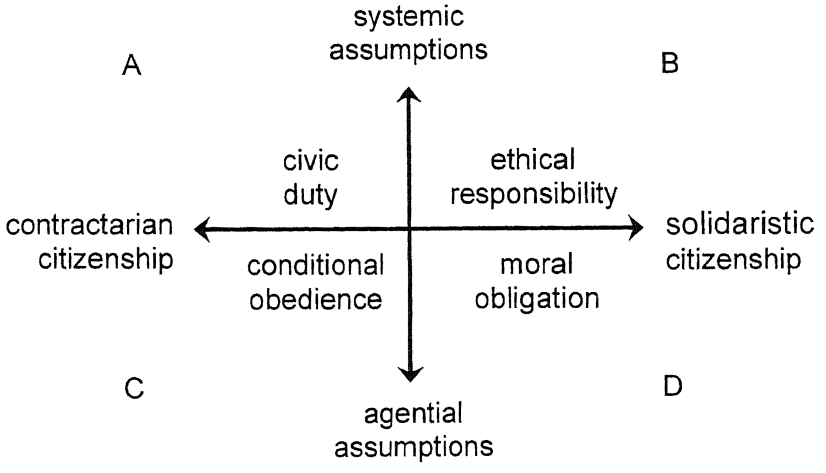
> People who work and claim benefits aren't loveable rogues, what they are doing is despicable. Benefit fraud costs every household in this country over £80 a year. People would be rightly angry if £80 was stolen from their wallets (DSS, 2001b).

In transforming the welfare fraudster into a spectre of greater magnitude than bureaucratic waste, the benefits agencies' relationship with its clients is discursively changed into one that is more conditional. Governing irresponsibilities legitimates making rights conditional as a way of insulating a system against a hostile environment. Consequently, obedience is tied more and more closely to the administration's ability to control outgoings.

Interpreting discourses of responsibility

As this reconstruction of the discourses used by New Labour's press release writers shows, each kind of citizen is responsible in different ways, drawing the government towards them differently. But the reconstruction cannot by itself make sense of this. One way of doing so is to draw upon a theoretically derived taxonomy of social discourses of responsibility provided by Dean (2002). This taxonomy provides a useful mechanism for understanding and bringing into relief, the discourses of responsibility used by New Labour.

Figure 5.1 Interpreting cultural discourses of responsibility



Source: Dean 2002: 200

Where responsibility is construed along contractual lines but using systemic ideas about the generalisability of being responsible, it takes the form of civic duty (quadrant A in Figure 5.1). A duty is firstly a private matter for the parties to a contract, each of whom expects the other to carry out her part of the bargain. But this relationship can also be generalised as the grounds for reasonably expecting

contract bearers to carry out their actions. So while civic duties are based on expectations, the reciprocal nature of these expectations means they can take a systematic form.

The contractarian view of responsibility can also take on a more particularistic form using agential assumptions (quadrant C of Figure 5.1). Considered along these lines, responsibility is manifest as conditional obedience. Within the contract, as we saw, responsibility is curtailed to the relations existing between parties to the contract. But the participants have an interest in ensuring that every party acknowledges and acts upon her responsibilities. Looked on from this point of view, responsibility comes to be about eliciting obedience as much as promoting responsibility. The discourse focuses, not on context transcending arguments, but on the means to ensure individuals behave responsibly.

Responsibility can also be conceived in a more collectivist and solidaristic light. The combination of solidaristic with systemic assumptions points in the direction of more ethical ways of thinking of responsibility. The solidaristic perspective starts by considering how people come together into relationships based on the force of their commitment to each other and their willingness to work on the meaning of this commitment. This perspective forms a discourse of ethical responsibility (quadrant B in Figure 5.1) as the issue turns on how coming together can be generalised, so that ideas of a solidaristic responsibility take on a more systemic form.

Where responsibility is considered from within a solidaristic perspective that emphasises how individual agency responds to social customs and cultural traditions, responsibility takes the form of moral obligations (quadrant D in Figure 5.1). From this point of view, the interest in protecting, sustaining or generating solidarity and a sense of community means shaping the individual's sense of agency so that the individual acts responsibly. Moral obligations are firstly based on appeals to good reasons, cultural tradition, collective loyalty, or to socially accepted norms. But more importantly, obligations gain their force from expectations based on their membership of a community.

Using this taxonomy of discourses of responsibility it is possible to analyse the links between the citizens projected in the press releases and to map the sort of discourse of responsibility used by New Labour.

Civic duty and the heroic citizen

New Labour's ideal is the heroic citizen, but she is not seen as a moral citizen. She is essentially a self-interested actor, actively seeking information, incentives, choices and a businesslike service so that she can decide on the best course of action for herself by herself. New Labour's press release writers use the repertoire of civic duty when dealing with this citizen. She is dealt with using both contractual and systemic assumptions. On the one hand she is understood as a rational adult who is seeking information, and on the other, the press releases publicise the information that this citizen is anticipated to be seeking. Effectively the heroic citizen is doing her duty by looking for information on the best value service

available to her, while the government responds by taking up a contract whereby it provides this information along with a range of businesslike services. This reciprocity draws the state and the heroic citizen into a relationship defined by a civic duty where each holds rights and duties in a contract that is rational and systemic.

Moral obligations and the passive citizen

If the citizen hero is left largely to herself to look after her own interests, the passive citizen is made to feel part of a bigger society. This citizen is difficult to communicate with, she gets bored easily and is mentally overtaxed by welfare issues. The press release writers deal with this citizen by setting out her moral obligations. She is gently informed as to what the right and responsible course of action is, and is assured that she can do the right thing. She should follow the common sense embodied by the sheepdog, accept that she is part of society and carry out the attendant obligations. The press release writers appear careful not to emphasise the morally conservative tendencies of this discourse. Rather, the press releases focus on integrating the passive citizen into the public sphere where she can make rational choices, framing moral obligation as the obligation to deal with ones own welfare oneself. Nevertheless, the passive citizen is shielded from the contractualistic and alienating tendencies of this rationality by making her feel safe getting information from the state. State services are presented as approachable, working in the best interests of this citizen, like Shadow the sheepdog.

The good citizen and a thin discourse of ethical responsibility

As we have seen, the good citizen shares some of the traits of the heroic and passive citizens. She shares the heroic citizen's desire to be responsible, and she too engages in activities of evaluating choices. But the systemic assumptions about the nature of responsibility that she uses draw her into thinking about wider trends in public opinion, and make her watchful of incentives and rewards. She wants to know she is doing the right thing about her own welfare, and that this is accepted as right by like-minded individuals and the state. In this way she shares the passive citizen's need to be part of a collective. This use of systemic assumptions and solidaristic conceptions of citizenship appears to make room for an ethical conception of responsibility. But the ethical is limited to the good as the duty to work and as consumer choice. Hence a particularly 'thin' (i.e. strictly formal) sense of ethical responsibility is entertained in the values of work and thriftiness, values that are prized in civil society and the economy.

Conditional obedience and the recalcitrant citizen

The unruly recalcitrant citizen takes up a significant proportion of the press releases since she justifies a host of welfare reforms, and her existence calls for a tighter, better managed, welfare bureaucracy. She is characterised as a criminal, stealing money from good citizens, so it can be inferred that she is primarily self-interested although she is never given a voice. But this self-interest means she operates outside of a contract: the contract is imposed on her by the state that wants her to obey the law. Against this citizen New Labour's press release writers deployed concepts of conditional obedience emphasising how the recalcitrant citizen exploits

the social contract to her own ends. She stole from both the needy and the good taxpaying citizen. Consequently, the message is conveyed that the benefits system needs to be reformed and the cultural tolerance afforded this citizen needs to dissipate. This citizen is to be made responsible, that is, made to obey the welfare contract.

New Labour's repertoires of responsibility

New Labour's press release writers, then, appear to take their conceptual resources from a number of quadrants in Dean's taxonomy of discourses of responsibility. Their discourse draws heavily on the repertoires of civic duty and moral obligation, making use of the language of conditional obedience to justify reform while using very formal, thus almost meaningless, ideas of ethical responsibility. Consequently, New Labour brings together a liberal discourse that idealises the heroic citizen with a morally conservative discourse emphasising moral obligations to the collective. In so far as it shows little regard for more ethical concepts of responsibility, this discourse also sidelines a democratic politics that puts collectively held reasons and values at its centre. This discourse firstly postulates membership as membership of civil society, but in terms of the theory underlying this construction of responsibility it draws on a discourse that is not concerned with morality.

The collective postulated in the press releases is consistently embodied as a public of information gathering and processing citizens. These are private people that are looking to make decisions about their welfare themselves, and so look for

knowledge that has been made publicly available to them. It is a public of private people that come together to form private contracts in civil society rather than to discuss a common issue as a public. So while New Labour seeks to integrate the passive citizen into a public using a discourse of moral obligation, the public it has in mind is one where membership is defined through contracts in civil society. Membership of society is reduced to membership in civil society and the economy rather than membership of a public of citizens or a national community. Hence the exclusion of a properly ethical repertoire of responsibility in the coupling of civic duty with moral obligation forms a powerful focus on membership in civil society.

Overall, then, New Labour use a discourse that draws together managerial with security concerns. The government is supposed to operate in a business like manner, simultaneously providing people with relevant knowledge and information, and battling fraud, so that it secures a space for people to make choices about how they manage their responsibilities in the market and civil society. Significantly, while the problem of poverty makes a number of appearances in the corpus of press releases, it makes little impact on the structure of these discourses. The salient problem is the sense of security that people feel of knowing they have made good or rational decisions, and the sense of trust they feel in making these decisions in the marketplace. This is very much the discourse of market collectivism as propounded by Schmitz (1998, Chapter 3 above). While New Labour recognise that many people, in particular the passive but also the good citizens, face challenges in deciding on their interests in the market and engaging with the public sphere where

information is shared about products that might secure welfare, nevertheless, New Labour promote such allegiances.

The Benefits Administrators' understandings of responsibility

Having analysed the discourses of responsibility deployed by New Labour in their press releases, I will now go on to analyse the discourses used by benefits administrators working under New Labour's welfare regime. These 'street level bureaucrats' are, even more so than the benefits recipient, condemned to adapt their activities in light of new hegemonies (Lipsky, 1980). Therefore it is important to understand the discourses of these informants in order to understand how these actors implement the government's thinking in everyday practice. The following is an analysis of responses to questions concerning responsibility made to such bureaucrats.

The underlying liberal subject

The benefits administrators shared a basic way of thinking about responsibility. They saw the responsible person as somebody who thought about how their actions might impact on others, and could adapt their behaviour in light of the needs and interests of these others.

Table 5.4 Benefits Administrators' liberal conception of the responsible subject

... in all their ways in which they interact with other people [the responsible person] is conscious of the effects that their actions have on other people and either avoid doing anything that's going to be to the disadvantage of somebody else, or weighs up and does things on balance in a way to minimise the amount of disadvantage caused to anybody else. [DWP 11] And: Its hard to say, but erm, being aware of your own actions, how they impact somebody else, and being willing to accept the outcome, what happens as a result of that... what you've chosen to do, so its making a conscious decision with the impact of how that's going to be, if not your future then somebody else's future. [DWP 10]

This projected subject is clear about what she wants and the action she plans to take, and is responsible insofar as she reflects critically on this action and how it might impact on others. This conception assumes the subject of the liberal imaginary, the person who is able to organise her life so that she simultaneously achieves her own aims and realises these objectives by choosing a course of action that respects the rights of others. This discourse emphasises the ability to act, the ability to make a rational decision about a course of action and the responsibility to choose a course of action that will make the least detrimental impact of the lives of others. It wholly neglects the way people are positioned by policies and norms so that they cannot make such rational choices.

By starting from this liberal conception of the subject, the benefits administrators could categorise people into those who do act responsibly and those who do not. Those who do are people like 'us':

> Well a person that actually makes the effort to have a reasonable education if they can. And make an effort to get a job and make an effort to stick with that job. I would like to think that that is the way that I have brought my sons up to be. I mean they've always worked they've never relied on the state. I consider a responsible person as someone who looks after themselves and their family who doesn't expect the state to provide, which a lot of people do. [DWP 4]

The binary 'us' versus 'them' is made around the distinction between people who work to realise their interests in a responsible manner, and those who 'expect the state to provide'. The following informants agree that making the effort to realise one's own interests in a responsible manner is what defines responsibility:

Table 5.5 Benefits Administrators' conception of the irresponsible other

I think that it is everyone's responsibility, within their own ability. Not everyone is capable of it though. You have to acknowledge that, erm. [DWP 9]
And:
If they have the means of looking after themselves then I think that the individual is responsible. I think a lot of people haven't got the means then that's where we should be stepping in, but we should only be caring for people that are not able to take an active role in supporting themselves. [DWP 6]
Finally:
I suppose I would say that someone is a responsible person if they have sufficient resources and I don't just mean financial. If they've sufficient resources to be quite self-sufficient and function on their own [pause]. And I would say that they would still be a responsible person if something happened to them and they had to... they no longer had sufficient financial recourses at their disposal, and they had to apply for social security. I would still see that as responsible because I would see that as why the system is there, if you see what I mean, for people who perhaps something dramatic happens in their lives. [DWP 5]

Within this liberal definition of responsibility, the Victorian categories of the able bodied and deserving poor re-emerge. Those who are not able bodied or are

genuinely deserving of state help are the people who are exempt from the expectation that they be responsible for their own welfare.

One exception to this liberal discourse was used by an informant who paid attention to the social and policy norms people adapt to. She recognised a range of reasons why people might find that they were unable to behave responsibly:

> The difficulty there is what you know and what you learn, to be responsible. Some people. I think that it is the way that you're brought up, whether you can be responsible or not, and how much money you've had. You just, you don't know how badly things can go wrong. Then you're not going to plan and everything, if for most of your childhood and most of your adult life things have gone hunky dory. It's difficult. I think people are advised to take insurance especially with the mortgages which we find with our, with our. You are told that you should take one out and that you can't get away without doing it, and then what you find is that people have got away without doing it and then they claim and there is a waiting period before they get help and then they get into such trouble because they have always been in work. ... [DWP 1]

Whereas the responsible person of the liberal imaginary was a person who could take enough command of the own life to work to realise her interests in such a way that she did not negatively impact on others, the person projected by this informant was one who made choices in light of their knowledge and experience. This informant recognised how taking any kind of command over personal decisions and resources was difficult. She recognised how people feel able to pursue interests and prioritise responsibilities in light of their personal history, the history of their family and in relation to policy norms. All of these combined to position people and their scope for responsible action. Hence, responsibility was not merely a matter for the subject alone, but was structured by her position in society.

Responsibilities towards clients

The benefits administrators' views on their own professional responsibilities and those of their 'customers' were explored by enjoining the informants to talk about the point at which their responsibilities as benefits administrator ended and the benefits claimants began. The informants responded to this question with descriptions of the responsibilities associated with the role of administrator and claimant:

Table 5.6 Benefits Administrators' professional responsibilities towards clients

There are rules and regulations for every benefit. It is their responsibility if you like, to ensure that we have the information in order to pay them their benefits, and I don't think they fully appreciate that. It's also their responsibility to provide us with the evidence that we require and not just at the initial point but as they go along. With this particular benefit, its medical certificates, it is their responsibility to go to the doctor and get a medical certificate. But there are a lot of people who are dependent who don't make it their responsibility and wait for a reminder from us to tell them to go to your doctor and get a medical certificate. [DWP 8] And: Their responsibility is to be as open with us as possible, I mean we're not expecting them to give us a life history but, in terms of when they complete forms, to be as open on those. To make sure they know what comes out of them. That's our biggest problem, is that people don't always fill out the applications, and they don't. And that's when they get themselves into all sorts of trouble. I mean, some people do it on purpose and others do it quite by accident. Erm, and obviously ours is to make sure that we're pointing them in the right direction in terms of you know, ensuring they're getting the right sort of benefits, and they're going in the right direction to obtain these benefits. [DWP 10]

The responsibility of claimants was to provide complete and accurate information while the administrators' responsibility was to provide appropriate information, help and guidance. The interesting point about these descriptions is that they cast the

claimant as a rational adult who should be aware of her various responsibilities with respect to the benefit they are claiming.

Balancing the responsibilities of the state and the individual

Issues of a normative kind were explored in the interviews with the benefits administrators by asking them to what extent they thought people should take responsibility for themselves in situations of illness, redundancy or retirement. The normative issues had to do with the sorts of practices instituted in society to help people deal with these contingencies. The informants took up a variety of positions on these practices.

There were those who focused on the nature of social and policy norms. On the one hand, there was a feeling that the availability of choice in the area of social policy was a good thing because it allowed people to take responsibility for themselves:

> Erm, I think they should be [responsible for their own welfare]. Like health insurance and this sort of thing, and private pensions. Yeah, I would agree with that. But I think you've also got to be given the opportunity to opt out of the other schemes as well. [DWP 6]

But this proved to be a minority view. One informant pointed out how:

> The actual cost of individual private companies, particularly with the need to make a profit and what have you, providing all this cover and service, and what have you for individuals is administratively far more inefficient, would you believe, than the Civil Service. Particularly with regard to pensions. ... And I think really if you're saying people should take more responsibility you're asking

them to really pay through the nose for the same level of cover, simply on a matter of principle, and that's silly. [DWP 11]

Moreover, these norms were seen as putting people into difficult situations:

I think there's too much expectation on the ordinary working man now. The ordinary working man hasn't got as much money as a professional person, and it's the professional person that's dictating these rules by this government. ... You see as you get older these insurance's that they want you to have get far far more expensive and you just can't afford them. I don't think that there's anyway that a working class person with an ordinary wage can take out medical insurance, loss of job, mortgage, erm, AVC's and still their pay their occupational pension. It is not possible. [DWP 9]

In fact, the majority of this small sample of informants felt that the policy climate was positioning people so that they had to adapt to norms that they found very difficult to accommodate in their lives. Moreover, there was an awareness of how choice served the interests of some people but not others. One informant formulated this shift towards fragmentation in acute terms:

There is insurance out there, well for specific things, like mortgage cover and stuff like that if you're out of work. But the broader principle of contributing to something that will protect you in those circumstances, or indeed to pay for your retirement, comes back to well can you afford to *make* those contributions, of course the other answer to that is, can you afford *not* to. That's a hard one. I don't know that. My personal opinion, speaking as somebody who hasn't done it I would say yes, it is, but right now it's not a choice, now the pension scheme is changing. That's the first time I've ever really had to think about it, whether the new scheme is going to be better for me or to stay with the old one I don't know. If you had somebody here who actually had taken out a private provision and you was talking to them about it, they would definitely say "oh yes, it's a great idea, it will guarantee you whatever income at the age of 65." There's another person out there who would say, "well I don't really care, what's the point. I could be dead tomorrow." [DWP 3]

The underlying concern was that making people responsible for their own lives encouraged the individualisation and 'diversity of fate' identified by Beck (1992) and Giddens (1994). These informants resisted this diversification to only a limited degree, as they recognised that allowing people to make decisions about their own lives themselves could enable them make decisions in keeping with their actual interests. The discourse offered in resistance to this trend was made, not on the grounds of principle, but on the basis of a desire to maintain a collective contract and a fate everybody could share:

> Well, that also I think is a tricky one because certainly from the point of view of the national insurance system, if someone's working, they are making contributions, therefore they should be, they should have an expectation to get something out even if its only a retirement pension, you know, forty years down the line. So, I mean, talking about things like people taking out their own, insurance schemes. I think it's great that stuff like that, if people want to provide themselves with more cover they can. What I wouldn't like to see is that being the only thing available. [DWP 5]

Summary of the Benefits Administrators' discourses

My analysis of these interviews is broadly in similar to Dean and Rodger's (2004) analysis. This analysis has shown how the benefits administrators make use of an individualistic conception of individual responsibility. It has been argued that this conception is liberal in the broadest sense, based on the idea of the subject as an upstanding member of the community. The benefits administrators also used a concept of responsibility related with the responsibilities incumbent on the benefits claimant in light of her role as a claimant. However, when attention was turned to the matter of responsibility in society, these informants took issue with the way policy norms put people into potentially difficult positions.

Conclusion

New Labour advances a discourse of responsibility that is tailored to the needs of different kinds of citizens. It is a discourse that encourages people to access publicly available information as private persons who secure private contracts in the civil society and the market. In this discourse, responsibility is about the bonds of the social contract supported by the weak informal solidarity generated in civil society and the economy, wherein each person secures their own personal interest. This is in contrast to the bonds of solidarity generated by the commonality of fate institutionalised in the social democratic welfare state. The benefits administrators understand responsibility in a manner that is in keeping with this way of situating people. Insofar as they draw on an individualistic concept of responsibility, they emphasise the way individuals can take responsibility for their own lives themselves. However, they are also aware of the problems that the institutionalisation of choice and the diversity of fate can pose for people. To this extent they open New Labour's way of organising policy norms to criticism. They draw attention to how this discourse burdens people with decisions that previous generations did not have to consider and how it may have the effect of further pluralising an already polyphonic range of fates.

Chapter 6: Constructing responsibility between norm and context

Introduction

In this Chapter I present the first part of the analysis of the interviews carried out as part of this research project. Whereas the previous chapter (Chapter 5) dealt with the hegemonic knowledge about responsibility being communicated to people through government discourse as represented by the press release and by the benefits agency workers, this chapter deals with the rational structures that people use to process norms about responsibility. Knowledge about responsibilities is constructed through various discourses in the public sphere including, but not limited to, hegemonic discourses. Among these discourses are those of the various religions, scientific and corporate discourses, the discourses of other politicians, political parties, the new social movements and so on. Nevertheless, the assumption here, drawn from Finch and Mason (1993) and Duncan and Edwards (1999) is that people deal with their responsibilities in connection with norms constructed within their family, their local community and whichever discourses appear relevant to themselves.

The theoretical framework that I take up from Habermas (1990, 1995 in Chapter 2, above) suggests that people process such norms in ways that connect with their own interests. In this Chapter, the relationship between these structures and social constructions of responsibility is explored by critically analysing the skills people use in interpreting the norms they feel are relevant to their responsibilities. Reflecting the Habermasian (1990, 1995) framework, I divide the informants into four main discourses, the egoistic discourse, the conformist discourse, the reformist discourse and the reflexive discourse. However, as we shall see, the informants do not fit straightforwardly into any of these discourses and a number of discourses operate at the intersection of different discourses.

The egoistical discourse

For those using the egoistical discourse, others are mere objects who can be influenced by one's own behaviour. Like everything else, the users of the egoistical discourse felt that others, and the norms used to organise social action, could be looked on in an objective manner. For instance, the following informant described how he looked on various situations to decide how to act in a responsible way:

> I know it may sound odd, but I try to behave like a gentleman. So where necessary, certainly I try to put ladies at ease, but without being patronising or condescending. Um so I do. And if I can help, I will do, is the other thing. So the other thing is: if I can help, I will do. I assisted at a road traffic accident - if I can help, I will do. It may be something as simple as dialling - making sure the ambulance is on the way. However, I have got first aid training and I wouldn't be afraid to use it (BC1).

In each case his decision on how to act was based on his observations of the situation and the existence of a relevant norm. He observed what he saw as the

reality that women can be uneasy around men and that people need help after a road traffic accident. In each case he also observed relevant norms – that men should behave like gentlemen and that people should help the victims of road traffic accidents. But he based his action on how acting in the relevant context might influence other people's perception of himself. To act responsibly was to act in accordance with the relevant norm because this would positively impact on their perception of the self. The examples he chose were examples where he, as actor, could be substituted by any other person and therefore everybody should act in accordance with the norm he considers relevant to the particular context. More importantly however, these are examples where he shows himself to be a 'gentleman' or 'hero' and therefore his behaviour positively influences other people's perception of him. This informant further elaborates this perspective as follows:

> Um first of all I would choose – that when I was doing nursing – do no harm. Don't do anything which would harm either yourself, or society at large. Um which means that you don't go round mugging old ladies, you don't go round beating up someone just because you can't handle your drink. Um it sometimes also means that um you sort of kind of have to take a step back and be a little bit tolerant to people. Um I also try not to be too judgmental. And example is – remember the Twin Towers, September 11th? One of my friends died in that. One of my friends died in that, and I've got to remember that it was people who – that it was people who committed that atrocity are guilty, not the Islamic Faith in general. I've got to remember that there are good Muslims, rather than all Muslims are people who killed my friend – it wasn't. And sometimes that's difficult, especially when you walk down certain parts of L. and there are actually sort of quarters of the people that killed my friend (BC1).

Here this informant clearly considers others as social objects. As objects, these others are capable of initiating and carrying out actions that might have harmful consequences. But the point for this informant was that these others should behave

responsibly because it is the right thing to do in the situation and they should not behave in harmful or intolerant and therefore in irresponsible ways simply because they know that they can act in such ways without effective reproach. This informant was calling on others to behave responsibly and, in effect, to develop a moral and responsible reputation for themselves. The egoistical discourse provided the basis for such a call because, for this informant, it meant showing oneself to be a moral and responsible person in the eyes of others.

The egoistical discourse took a slightly different form in the discourse used by another informant. In this case the informant generated a norm out an interest in self-preservation:

> Oh I like to keep in touch with them [family] all the time, yeah. And as for myself, I look after myself and keep myself to myself. Go out and enjoy myself - don't drink, which is good. I've been six years off that. Doesn't bother me now, thank God, which is good [...] and I knew it was getting to me, and I said "if I don't stop I'll be going down underneath" [...] Didn't go for help - just stopped [drinking] and that was it. It's my own benefit I'm doing it for. With the fags, I'm doing it not for anyone, I'm doing it for myself, which is true enough, you know. Yeah - enjoy life without it. People say to you, "you can't enjoy yourself without a drink and a smoke" - I think that's a load of cobblers (BC2).

Based on an assessment of the trajectory his life was on, this informant made the decision that he needed to stop drinking simply to continue to live. However, he did not identify any particular norm as relevant to the situation, a norm that, for example, dictated that he should not drink, drink excessively, look after his health and so on. Instead, he simply "stopped drinking." This was to act without recourse to a norm while turning the new state of being sober into a normal part of his existence. Acting in this way is to act egotistically because the change in behaviour

is brought about purely for the good of the self, as was pointed out by the informant: "It's my own benefit I'm doing it for." However, having acted without using norms to guide the change in his behaviour, and by basing this change on his own observation that he would soon die due to his alcoholism, this informant rhetorically responded to the idea that "you can't enjoy life without a drink and a smoke" as "a load of cobblers." In effect, this informant evaluates the kind of life he now leads as one that is as full and enjoyable as one that is lead by others.

The egoistical discourse could take another form based less on strategy and more on calculation. But the major exemplar of calculative reasoning that appeared in the interviews could in no way be described as a cynical calculation of personal interests. Rather, this informant tried to calculate how declaring his gay sexuality to his parents might affect his relationship with them:

> I've thought about it a lot over the years and I've spoken to a lot of people about it, whether I should come out or not. Um, spoken to my sisters about it and they said that, occasionally they said maybe I should tell them then other times "no, no don't tell them yet don't tell them yet put it off they don't need to know." Um and I worry that because I am very close to my mother I'm sure that if I told her there wouldn't be a problem at the end of the day, she'd be upset obviously initially and the thought of putting her through that upset I would find very difficult, and I don't know. It does bother me. I'm – I tend to sort of stick my head in the sand a little bit on these sort of things I put it in the back of my mind and I shouldn't really I suppose ... (MP10).

The concern here lies with how his parents may respond to this declaration and how this response might fundamentally reshape his relationship with them. He was worried about his position in the family, a position that was jeopardised by his gay sexuality. In this case then, the egoistical discourse was used because the

informant had no other tools available for considering how to preserve his good relations with his parents and how to attend to their needs at the same time. He tried to calculate the balance between upsetting the family order and implicitly adhereing to, and obeying, the norms his parents accepted and valued, norms that of course conflicted with the norms he adopted. For this informant it was easier, and arguably more morally justifiable, to leave the situation as it stood and deal with the problems of personal authenticity and parental acceptance internally, as the informant's sisters advised him to do.

While the egotistical discourse operated outside, but alongside, norms, this discourse could also be used in more rhetorical ways connected with personal desires that are nevertheless buried. In this context the egoistical discourse was used in conjunction with the conformist discourse where it was used to define the desires that were suppressed in light of roles and responsibilities:

> [Responsibility] to myself? I cant be ill, because I've got to let people down do you know what I mean? Because there is only one of me and there is nobody else that works here apart from [colleague's name] and there's only three part time workers so I can't be ill. I think it's a real pisser because sometimes I'd like to be ill. Um to myself? Yeah, that looking after myself (WA1).

Living in a world where norms negotiated around her working life governed her every move, this informant felt her inclination to be responsible to herself alone was organised out of her own hands. The discussion of being unable to be ill implies both the inability to take sick days and rest, to indulge her own desires or to take time off work when she is actually sick. The point here though, is that this informant feels such a duty to conform to the expectations of those at work and to carry out

her work role (in line with the conformist discourse below) that her inclination to take days off work and look after her own interests, appear as desires that she needs to suppress however much she wants to indulge them. The egoist then appears as a person to envy, one who indulges their desires where she cannot.

The conformist discourse

While the egoistical discourse looked on norms as an aspect of the situation, in the conformist discourse norms were accepted as a legitimate mechanisms for organising action. The users of the conformist discourse carried out her duty either in light of the legitimate expectations of her fellows, or the legitimacy of the norms expressing the community will and community interest. For instance, the following informant spoke of the role he accepted as the male head of a household:

> As I said earlier on, I see my main responsibility as providing for my family, obviously by having reasonably good health and working hard to make money. ... [talking about his responsibilities towards his children] It is basically more financially, the girls are at an age where they do largely help themselves, they have part-time jobs, and one of them is studying. We try to help them by providing groceries. My younger daughter is in Halls of Residence which is a little bit more difficult. My other daughter lives with my wife's sister, so she doesn't have to worry about finding accommodation. So my responsibility is to provide the groceries so they don't go hungry so to speak. (MP1)

This informant articulated the classic concept of role conformism. In line with this conformism he saw his "main responsibility as providing for [his] family" thus positioning his responsibilities in terms of the role he adopted in relation to his family members. His role was to be the provider and his responsibility is to fulfil this role because it was what he thought was expected of him and what his duty was. However, the responsibilities that accompany this role have changed as his

children have grown and what they can legitimately expect him to provide has altered. Speaking in his current situation, he found his responsibilities were to help with his daughters day-to-day university living expenses while his provision of this help was met with their adoption of certain responsibilities for themselves in the sense that they worked part-time. This informant situated this way of distributing roles and responsibilities between himself, his wife, and children, in terms of a wider family and work culture:

> Yes coming from a financial services background I obviously do believe that we should all try and provide the best for the future, something that I have tried to instil in my children's heads. They don't always take it on. But Dad always drummed it into myself, and my wife from her parents, so between my parents and myself and brothers and sisters, they have always been able to provide for themselves, so we have always looked to provide for ourselves for the future. By buying property and also investing in pensions and savings ... (MP1).

The idea that each individual should take responsibility for their own well-being by making financial provision for contingencies was an idea that had its foundations in the advice and guidance of his parents, and norms he internalised from working in financial services and was a norm he now tries to convey to his children. In effect, the distribution of roles and responsibilities in a particular manner within this family was related with, and justified in relation to, a set of norms that express the value of generating independent and financially secure people.

The sense in which conforming to roles and norms altered as people's situation and knowledge changed was well captured by the following informant. In the following, he described different aspects of the duties he felt he had with respect to his mother:

> Yes I think so, I've only got a mother, my father died ten years ago, but yeah I feel my mum is quite vulnerable, I think she is a bit sort of susceptible to people who want things out of her. I like to, because of my job I can advise her on lots of things. Benefits, because she is another one who doesn't realise what she can get. Because she is an old age pensioner and she doesn't know what she can get and I think she's helped me when I've been unemployed, I've not had a lot of money and now I can help her, because I'm working full time and she's retired (WA5).

At this point in time, this informant's role with regard to his mother was defined by her vulnerability and his knowledge. He could perform the role of advisor, a role he felt able to perform in light of his job role as a welfare rights advisor and he could manage her susceptibility towards losing out to fraudsters and the state. But while this relationship was no longer symmetrical, with the mother depending on the son, this informant justifies the adoption of this role because she helped him during a period of unemployment. This sense of symmetry and the repayment of a debt over time has been remarked upon by Finch and Mason (1993) as a way in which responsibilities are balanced. The point here, however, is that this balance was achieved, not by using an idea of symmetry to justify performing roles, but by performing these roles in a way that conformed to a norm of helping and supporting. The informant observed that when he needed help she provided that help. Now that she needed some support, and he was in a position to provide this support, he offered help in line with this role. This same concept, of providing help to your parents when you yourself are in a position to do so, was also articulated by the following informant:

> We love her that's why we care for her no we love her and she's a lovely mom if she wasn't she wouldn't get that amount of care no she yeah that comes into it

> as well because she was on her own bringing up four kids and she did over and above she could. Its not difficult to care for her because she's a nice mom and um you don't want to do it if you don't [laughs] (MP3).

The justification for adopting time consuming and onerous roles and responsibilities in respect of her ailing mother is based on the argument that she performed an equally onerous role in accepting the responsibility of raising four children as a lone parent.

Conforming to roles and norms frequently involved complex operations. The most complex arose when the roles and norms were derived from different discourses simultaneously. For example, the following informant performed the roles expected of him by the local community, his staff and clients. These separate roles called on him to respond in very different ways:

> ... we're a charitable organisation and we rely on public money to operate and um, I pay my taxes and everyone else who pays their taxes or whatever is contributing to the cost of running this service ... so my bosses, if you like, my employer is a group of people, a board of trustees which is formed from members of the local community who, um, if you like ensure the bureau is operating properly and is delivering services to those people who, you know, we were set up to basically help. Um so that's my, if you like, that's my wider responsibility. Inside that there are a lot, the picture becomes more complicated, because equally I manage and run this place. So I am also responsible for the care um, parochial um pastoral care rather of my staff, their well being their health and safety as-well. ... Um, as I said earlier, they're doing the job basically for the job satisfaction and you have to ensure really that there's, you can maximise, its my responsibility really to maximise that for them and taking danger and threat out of the scenario and having a pleasant working environment is really all, all part of that. And then, to muddy the waters even further, I'm then responsible for the actual quality of the work which goes on. Um, we, we're here to deliver a service to the client and bad advice is worse then no advice we have to be able to deliver a quality service to the people. We have to be able to give them accurate information and present them with all the options that are available to them ... (WA4)

The roles that this informant was expected to perform in response to the different duties that the organisation he managed had, contributed to a complex picture of roles and norms. Firstly, he had a duty to the local community to ensure the organisation was providing the service it promised in an effective and efficient way. This duty was overseen by the existence of a board of trustees who expected these roles to be performed and to whom this informant was accountable. The second duty he speaks of is to the organisation's staff. Since they worked voluntarily, they fulfilled roles and responsibilities in the expectation that they receive a certain satisfaction for their work. Finally, the informant introduced the theme of the work the organisation does and the service it provided to clients. These clients expected the organisation to work to a high standard of quality and it was his duty to secure this quality for the client.

Each of these roles casts the informant in a different light and in each case that he found he had a different role to perform in light of different norms. It was the right of citizens to expect the organisations that they fund to operate effectively and efficiently. With this norm in mind, this informant took up the role of a businesslike manager of a charitable organisation. It was the right of voluntary staff to work in a safe, clean and pleasant environment. These norms situated this informant less as a boss and more a 'pastoral' carer of staff. It was the right of clients to expect a quality service. The corresponding duty incumbent on this informant was take up the role of manager and ensure the delivery of a quality service. Hence, norms operated in the context of the community, staff and market, propelling conformity to relevant norms. This informant did not just respond by fulfilling the content of the

norm but also sought to comprehend the spirit of the norms and fulfil its expectations.

Conformity to norms was not necessarily seen as a good thing. It could just as easily be seen as mere heteronomy or inauthenticity. In such cases, the conformist discourse was placed under the critical gaze that accompanied either the reformist or reflexive discourses. The following informant emphasised the problem of allowing companies to be pushed by the norms in their industry and how such inauthenticity undermined confidence in the commitment of companies to Corporate Social Responsibility [CSR] programmes. In effect, he critically appraised conformist discourses using a reformist discourse:

> ... if you take, if you just wrote down five, twenty five FTSE companies with [CSR] programmes it may well be that you could identify two or three that you could say "I don't see the evidence here for anything more then this being a big PR exercise" you know. People just feeling they're in, they're a petrochemical their in the petrochemical industry they're the only ones not reporting, better start reporting. They're the only ones without a programme, better get a programme. I think that that's a minority rather then a majority. The majority of people as I say don't see it necessarily as being, like the old Joseph Rowntree, Cadbury um Nuffield um you know, Sam Whitbread, the kind of benign paternalism philanthropic you know, doing it because it's a moral obligation. I think most of those companies do it because there's a business case for doing it, and as I say there's also a business disbenefit in not doing it. It's that balance. I think the cynicism comes with that balance because it gets out, if people say "yes we're doing it because we think it's a good thing and also because there's a business benefit" that's wholly, that works for me. If they say "we're doing it because we cant afford not to" that's when you one starts to worry about motivation and the longevity of the programme, and um, that "can't afford not to" I think is a, is a, is a minority view... (MP9).

While conforming to norms could be based on a sense of commitment to norms and values, it could also be based on responses to observations of the

expectations held by others. This kind of conformity worried the above informant since it legitimated a cynical attitude towards Corporate Social Responsibility (for an overview of this concept, see Carroll, 1999). To be pushed by the norms of the industry into such activities was to take up a role that companies had no interest in sustaining. Thus, it was not enough to conform to roles and norms, as such conformity could always be motivated by the expectations of others and not by the commitments of the company. However, this informant felt it was possible to identify authentic and inauthentic discourses by questioning the reasons they provide for taking up a Corporate Social Responsibility programme. He also felt that inauthentic commitments could be identified in the way that companies handled the failures or obstacles that they encountered in dealing with communities and in the nature and longevity of their commitment to these communities. In effect, conformist discourses could be interrogated critically from the point of view of the following kind of reformist discourse.

The reformist discourse

Both the egoistical discourse and conformist discourse operated by looking on norms as integral to the situation. The egoistical discourse observed the norms and acted strategically or calculatedly in respect of them. The conformist discourse accepted the legitimacy of norms and undertook to act with respect to them. However, with the conformist discourse we see an alteration because this perspective allows the person to begin to take a more critical attitude towards norms. The reformist discourse is characterised by a sense of reflection on the personal or communal life. This reflection is focused on how norms structure the

person's life, on the one hand, and the kind of life that is actually in her interests on the other. The person using the reformist discourse looked on themselves and the norms organising her life from the point of view of her clarification of her interests, and the norms that would organise her life were she to pursue these interests. From this perspective, the reformer sought to alter her life in the direction of the life she chose to lead. Such a critical and reformist relation to self did not, in many cases, mean seeking to radically reconstruct one's own life project. For the following informants it meant critically appropriating and reflecting upon, and thereby also reforming, the norms they lived by and espoused in order to continue to be the person they chose to be:

> I think, I'd like to feel that they [informant's children] would turn to me first rather then turn to say a debt agency if they had problems or get into debt. I have a horror of debt, and I think that's partly my age so I'd like to think they they'd feel they could turn to me, if they had a problem they could tell me about it and I could help, you know. Or at least tell them where to get help, you know, that's what I mean. I don't know, that may be an age thing, or it may be bringing a lot of things together again (MP5).

And:

> My responsibilities would be, my main responsibility is that I have to look out for my children and my step daughter, I consider that highly on my list of, whenever they phone me up with a problem I always rush down and get involved – financial, a lot of the time it is emotional and we sit and talk. I really, what I really enjoy with them is that they talk to me a lot better than I talked to my parents, so if you've got a problem no matter what it is, they'll phone me up and say "Dad can I come and have a chat" or "I've got this, this is happening" and I like to go down there and just talk with them and let them come to some sort of answer, but just listen (MP2).

Both of the informants quoted above want to be good parents. However, being a good parent means, to them, critically reflecting on what being a parent involves, and through this reflection, identifying the norms that more accurately reflect what they think a parent acts like, and acting according to these norms. Substantively, it means being the kind of person that their children can "turn to", "talk" with, or who "listens." The former informant reflected on her abhorrence of debt and how she hoped her children, now in their early twenties, would come to her rather then "a debt agency" if they faced financial difficulties. Of course, in articulating this fear in terms of "a debt agency" she realised that she overstates the possible scenario. But the point was to consider the possibility, however unlikely, that her children might find themselves in real trouble if she did not make herself into the kind of parent who was approachable to them and willing to help them, particularly as they established themselves in a home and career. The latter informant describes, with some energy, how he looked after his children by involving himself in their lives. He contrasted this kind of parent that he embodies with his own parents to emphasise how he works to make himself into the kind of person that his children could talk with. Thus, both informants identified a norm with the kind of person they want to be as a parent, and worked to realise this person by acting in accordance with this norm. The norm did not simply define a role or embody the values of the community, but expressed a way of life that they wanted to be associated with. The central meaning of responsibility is, then, continuing to be this person that their children can turn to.

These informants reflected on how they had lived inauthentic lives before learning to reflect critically on the norms organising their lives. For instance, in the following the informant reflects on the kind of person she had been in the past:

> It has made life easier for me, sharing responsibilities. I think it comes with education as well. I think I had this feeling when I was younger that I had to do everything myself so a sort of superwoman complex, and now I realise I don't need to. In fact it can be insulting, you know, for people if ah, you know, your more or less saying you know "you cant cope with your life I'm going to do it for you" ah which is wrong, you know. So, you know, when I talk about support I don't talk about taking over, I like to think I don't take over any more (MP5).

The argument is that she uncritically accepted a wide range of roles and responsibilities when she was younger, which led her to try and 'do everything' herself. At the time of this interview, she had come to see this attitude as wrong and rather than take up roles and responsibilities that disempowered those around her, she instead tried to negotiate norms that are in the interests of each person. This is an ethical and reformist discourse precisely because it means working critically on the self and the norms she adopts to help realise the good life for herself, for her family and for her work colleagues.

Whereas these two informants represent cases where the ethical and reformist discourse had been arrived at through a process of personal struggle and turmoil, the following informants represent interesting cases insofar as the people interviewed were, at the time of the interview, undergoing such a trauma and beginning to adopt this reformist discourse. For example, the following informant conveys the gravity of the call of his alcoholic mother who had the right to depend on him and the importance of realising the good for himself:

Informant: Well personally without looking at the bigger picture, I've got a certain responsibility to my mother. Um, and that's the biggest responsibility that I've got as a person to look after her cause she's on her own, she lives on her own, so that's my biggest personal responsibility. And then I've got a responsibility to myself as-well to make sure that I don't end up in the gutter you know, I let things get on top of me so I've got to make sure that I'm always, I'm always focused on something better to do, something you know. I'll have a go have a go have a go just keep me going keep me moving up rather then slipping down.

Researcher: Yea, is that a danger is it?

Informant: Um, well, I wouldn't class it. That's a tricky one um well there [laughs] there is there's been a history of mental illness in my family and I'm not suggesting that I am anyway out and round the bend, but um my mum has some problems as well that she has to deal with. And, ah, well basically, both my parents were alcoholics and my mum still is basically, chronic alcoholic. So um, there is the potential for me to start threading on the slippery slope you know end up the way they were. But I am too focused for that. And um, I am quite well I am a hundred and fifty percent sure that I won't ever encounter that problem because I have seen it and I know what it's like (MP8)

On the one hand his social responsibilities, the call that awoke in him his self-understanding as a moral person, was to his mother. He acknowledged this call as at once qualified ("I've got a certain responsibility") and onerous ("that's my biggest personal responsibility"). His father and only sibling had both died, leaving his mother with elderly parents, her son (the informant) and her brother. Since her parents were too old to be of help there remained just the informant and his uncle (the informant's mother's brother). In the face of this moral call the informant struggled to establish an authentic sense of self, and appeared tormented in this struggle. His subjectivity appeared threatened and there was a desperate attempt to form a narrative where he did not "end up in the gutter" by ensuring that he was "always focused on something better to do." This suggests that he struggled to make a choice about himself and keep to this choice. The trouble for this informant

was how to make a responsible self-choice in the midst of his recalcitrant responsibilities; recalcitrant both because his mothers' difficult illness and because he needed to earn a living in the market.

This informant's response to these difficulties was to distinguish his desires by critically clarifying his interests:

> I could completely abscond from all of my responsibilities, you know I could go and jump on a plane tomorrow and go live with an Auntie in Greece or an Auntie in Adelaide and forget about it you know. But then you know, I would die with such a heavy conscience [laughs] you know. ... In a way I am I do feel somehow tethered to the UK to try and you know address a situation. So in a way yeah, they [his responsibilities] are thrust upon me but I mean I am an individual and I do have, I do have ah, I do have a right I suppose to go and do what I like and if I want to I could just go and forget about it all you know, I could do am. But I suppose in a way I do have other responsibilities thrust upon me, like work you know. If you don't work then you're going to end up on the dole and you know that is a responsibility, to work. It is a, it is a big responsibility and you know. I didn't ask to be brought into the world but I have to I have to earn a living you know (MP8).

The desire to abscond arose with the obstinate nature of his mother's alcoholism. Faced with a situation that seemed all but hopeless it was perfectly justifiable to conclude that there was nothing he could do but abandon further attempts to alter the situation. However, he recognised that this was his responsibility and he had to deal with it if he was to continue to live with himself and not be tormented by a "heavy conscience." Indeed, he saw his responsibility to his mother and his responsibility to work as having equal call on his efforts, that is, he accepted his own life as the basis of his individuality. The ethical and reformist structure of this discourse was based on these difficulties and in recognition of a number of other structural constraints (including the lack of work in the town where his mother lived,

the uninhabitable state of her home, the distance between his place of work and his mother's residence and his sense of estrangement from his childhood friends). Based on these clarifications, this informant felt he needed to make himself into the kind of person who could be there for his mother and, at the same time, develop a life for himself:

> *Informant*: ... I am close enough in London to be able to, I mean I went up last week and paid her a surprise visit and she wasn't expecting it you know. And caught her red handed, do you know what I mean. So, ah I am still capable of doing that being...
>
> *Researcher*: Why did you do that?
>
> *Informant*: Why? To let her know that I am on her case basically you know. Um I did it last year twice as-well. And ah and its not just me going and saying "hoo" you know. Its me going in and taking the situation by the scruff of the neck just saying "what the hell are you doing?" or words to that effect. Trying to do it lovingly, [laughs] and not to make her feel more neglected by me you know. Trying to make her feel comfortable with the fact that I'm um going to keep this, keep doing this, keep doing this until things start to change you know. There is not really much more I can do then that (MP8).

Having taken up the point of view of norms concerning the good for himself and for his mother, this informant works to establish these norms in their relationship. The norm is one where he continues to call on her to recognise and deal with her illness and to call on her to reform herself by asking her "what the hell are you doing?" By situating this attitude as a central characteristic of his life he reforms himself in the interests of the good life for his mother and, at the very least, the not misspent life for himself.

The reformist discourse was used in a more dramatic way by a female Asian informant. In pursuing her interests she found herself in direct violation of norms she was supposed to conform to:

> *Informant*: ...Stay at home. Be a housewife, that's it, that's your responsibilities. But, however, you know, however, forever you know. That's what they think that you should be doing. Even my kids. I mean they don't agree and now I've got a grandchild, they want me to stay at home and look after him not go out to work and let her go out to work and I said "no." So they won't help me out at home. A lot of conflict a lot of problems.
>
> *Researcher*: Yeah? How do you feel about that?
>
> *Informant*: Upset, [begins to cry] it's just one of those things isn't it, just living in the wrong time for me anyway, but it doesn't matter it'll come about for them, for my kids. It's all right for their wives but it's not right for me. Just the way you're brought up, I think isn't it. And it's the culture and the community because most Asian women that are born in Pakistan are staying at home they're not going out to work. So because I go out to work and drive the car and everything it's not the norm, its not acceptable. They don't like it, they think you know you're too independent, whereas in our culture women rely on men to do everything, and women don't do it themselves. Whereas, I've had to do it and I still do it and I want to continue and they, the kids, because I've got boys they all say "we work you don't need to work anymore why are you working we'll pay the mortgage." I don't know. A lot of conflict (MP7).

This informant had been forced, through circumstances, to accept responsibility for herself and her children when her husband left them eleven years previously. Since her children had grown up she wanted to continue to accept responsibility for herself:

> They're going to be independent they're going to go off and do whatever they're going to do and live wherever their going to live and I'll be stuck, I'll have nobody, so I need to do this (MP7).

The conflicts that arise here lie between the norms that this woman felt she was supposed to conform to as a member of the Asian community and the interests she had in securing a life for herself. She recognised that as a divorcee whose children were attending college, her interests lay with securing an income she could use to pay off her mortgage and to save for her retirement. The trouble with conforming to the role she was expected to perform was that she may end up living in poverty. It was quite possible that her children would pursue their own lives and she would be living alone with no savings or security. Her discourse is peppered with observations on how norm conformity represents so many forms of heteronomy and inauthenticity. She presents these norms as culturally specific conventions ("it's the culture and the community"), which, when looked upon as principles, are not equally applied ("it's alright for their wives but it's not right for me"). Against this she appeals to her own ethical self-understanding. She wants to continue to be an individual who is clear about her own interests and responsibilities ("I've had to do it [work], and I still do it, and I want to continue to do it") and push herself to be an authentic person and not to "be stuck" and "have nobody."

At the time of the interview, the only course of action she felt she could pursue was to move to another part of the country and leave her grown up children:

> No [her responsibilities are not a terrible burden], its what you've done, I think if you've done it for a long time, its automatic, it's like inbuilt, you know. I went away to Pakistan, I've met somebody else and I'm getting a divorce from my husband, right. And that time I was away, I mean I was ringing the kids, they didn't know where I was but, I was ringing to see if they were fine. And one of em had an accident with a car so I knew about that, and um, but my friend that I had gone to visit, he says to me "they're not looking for you why are you looking for them?" But its because, as a parent and a mother you would and eventually

> I'll be away from them anyway, you know. I think, we will go our separate ways yeah, because of this, they're not accepting that I'm going to get a divorce so I'm going to move on. All this is not acceptable to them so this family will split up, sad but, you know, they won't come round. It might take them ten years but, eventually they will come round, I mean, its just the way isn't it? But, children have to grow up, that's the way (MP7).

While she proceeded to reform her life in line with her own interests (remarrying, continuing to work) and these reforms conflicted with the role she was expected to perform. Thus, this informant felt that the only response she could make to intractable and unreasonable role expectations was to leave her children. Whether she would do this or not is beside the point, which is that her reformist discourse led her to clarify her own interests in direct conflict with the role she was supposed to perform as an Asian woman.

The reformist discourse involved self-clarifications and these clarifications required intensive labour on the part of the informant. For example, the following informant worked on distinctions between the good for herself and the good for people like herself. By generating these distinctions she could critically clarify the norms applicable in each case:

> Ah, one of the things that I have always felt passionate about, I don't know people might say its because of the condition I have, is actually fighting for and empowering maybe that's the wrong, we're using one of the PC terms here, empowering people with disabilities to actually stand up for themselves and not be afraid if you see what I mean. Because I myself as a person I've, first of all I see myself as a person I always have, but also in the other context, as I mentioned as a person with a disability, I know how hard it is to actually fight for your rights as an individual aside from the fact that you've actually got a secondary factor to begin with. So as that I, which I have done in the context of I've fought for students at this university who are themselves. So in fact this morning I was with a member, um a visiting lecturer who is I think [inaudible] got asked by the university disability officer would I actually come up and be willing

> to be interviewed about the opportunities for disabled students at FE colleges. That's, you know, not just in terms of education but also their rights as a student with a disability in you know the social, the educational, the whole sphere. So I think my own, in terms of my own responsibility, not only is it my responsibility to myself to fight for myself, but also I think coming from a disabled person's perspective we all have to fight for one another. Because at the end of the day if we don't nothing is going to get done about it, if you see what I mean. Because they, society cannot expect us to just sit behind closed doors because we won't do it (MP4).

This informant identified herself primarily as a person and secondarily as a person with a disability. As a person she was a student, a member of a family and somebody from an ethnic minority background. More pertinently, as a person with a disability she had to fight for her own rights in relation to the benefits system and the University she attended and she felt she should fight for the rights of other disabled people. Thus she clarified her responsibilities as a person with a disability in terms of realising the good for herself and people in similar positions. In this way, she did not clarify what the good life for her entails in terms of a goal or value, rather, this good life appeared to reside in the process of realising satisfactory understanding and recognition of her rights and the rights of disabled people in general.

Finally, the reformist discourse is concerned with clarifying the good for the self or community and with working to realise this good. However, this discourse begins to be transformed into a reflexive discourse as the reformer who advances the good for herself or her group comes into contact with the good as advanced by others. When this happens, the reformer finds she has to put forward additional arguments about why her cause deserves greater attention or resources than those of others. The example here comes in the form of advocacy. The situation for the advocate is

somewhat distinct from the person bearing a responsibility as a recalcitrant condition of their own life because the advocate is somewhat removed from this responsibility, which they nevertheless feel a responsibility to address. Additionally, the advocate seeks to speak on behalf of a person or a group, the members of which have some need that they are not in a position to demand themselves. The advocate, therefore, is in a position to draw together the orientation to the good of the people on behalf of whom she advocates and a reflexive conscience of norms:

> To myself? Well nowadays to provide for myself on a day-to-day basis, and I feel a responsibility towards any further seeking to the problem of dementia, because I see dementia as being a surge as, in 20, 30 years time as we are all living longer. In the old days my time would be up now, three score years and ten, but now I fully expect to be here in 10 years time, and the incidence of people living longer is very high and the percentage of people having dementia has remained the same. ... And I see other people having to lose their homes to pay for care in dementia, and I don't think, well certainly when my husband was ill, at a time when I was in and out of day care places, I decided, my family and I, we sat around the table, the two boys and I, and I said "well I'll have to give up my job." Because when he first became ill and I got a job, we still had responsibilities we still had a mortgage and things like that and so I got a job and went back to work, but then it came to the stage when he couldn't be left (MP12).

This informant presents dementia as an issue that needs to be resolved at the level of society. Having cared for her husband, she understands the issues involved. Thus, she finds herself in the position of advocate for those who suffer from, and those who care for sufferers of, dementia. It is her responsibility to clarify the interests and needs of sufferers and carers and to contribute to discourses aimed at finding policy solutions:

> I mean when [names husband] was ill, I just kept going, and I worried this and I worried that, and it nearly drove me mad because I thought it should be there

> automatically, the help, even if I had to pay for it. But nobody wanted to tell you about it. And I mean, the only time I have ever been really disappointed with myself, really disappointed, I was asked to go to [names University] to a seminar ... but I said something and one of the people there said, "oh but there is lots of help [for carers] out there and you only had to ask." I just went mad! They said you are not asking the right person, well how am I supposed to know who the right person is? You may be the right person, so you know, and if I can't find it what chance have people got who are not very articulate and pushy, like me. I feel for them, I was really angry and I got up and left the room. And I thought afterwards, "I shouldn't have done that" but it was how I felt at the time. Here's this person that thinks they know all about it, but not telling people. People pat you on the shoulder and say got to keep you fit and healthy cos you got a long haul ahead of you. Well that is not a lot of help to be truthful (MP12).

The disappointment she felt stems from her awareness that more needs to be done to help people suffering from dementia and their carers. The seminar represented a forum where this informant could put forward such arguments, arguments she was no doubt well capable of forming as a retired county councillor. 'Storming out' represents a failure to act effectively as an advocate. Moreover, the anger she describes was in response to support structures that she found difficult to access and to social norms that imply that she should be doing the caring work herself. For her, such conventions simply did not meet with the needs and interests of the sufferers or their carers. Patting people on the back for doing the right thing represented, for her, an illegitimate dependence on norms where family members were expected to carry out all of the caring work with little outside support. Therefore, it was her responsibility to clarify these shortcomings and to argue for the provision of greater resources for this constituency. This informant brought the reformist discourse into contact with the reflexive discourse and argued for the reorganisation of welfare provision so that the interests of people suffering from dementia and their carers could be adequately recognised and fairly treated.

The reflexive discourse

While the users of the reformist discourse took the perspective of an authentic person and looked on conformity to norms as a matter of inauthenticity, the users of the reflexive discourse took the perspective of an autonomous person and looked on this conformity as a matter of heteronomy. The distinction between these two perspectives is, indeed, a fine one. But whereas the person using a reformist discourse sought to reform her life in line with interests and concerns that she clarified as more adequately reflecting her own real interests, the person using a reflexive discourse seeks a principled moral point of view on social issues. Using a reflexive discourse means looking on conformity to norms as based on a dependency on such norms, whereas these norms need to be treated in a more abstractive and theoretical manner to decide whether they are worth abiding by as a matter of principle. This sense is well captured by this following informant:

> Because I think it's unfair that people should be at risk. I am so well off here. I know there's poverty, I gave a person a lift the other the day from an anti-poverty meeting in [names town] and she is from Kenya and she said how can you say there is poverty in the UK. And I said "oh crumbs. I know what you are saying and I agree with you that way." I said "it's a very different kind of poverty really when compared with others." But really I have so much freedom here. We have the water comes in and it's clear safe water but there are so many who are at risk because the water is not safe and when I saw the floods in Mozambique and people drinking from rusty tins, water that was so muddy it was appalling and I found that very disturbing. I think that people deserve certain things that are covered is it by the UN basic rights. They need food and drink and clothing and warmth and medical support and education and housing to have any kind of quality of life and as a Christian. I'm not preaching, there's a verse in John, 10:10 where Jesus said I have come that people may have life and have it to the full. So many people don't have much of a life. That's not right, that's not fair. It's not fair that people should be in pain or suffer and so if by giving, me giving what is a small amount for me if it can make a difference for others (MP11).

This informant contrasted his own reflexive approach to developing norms within his own life to deal with poverty with the discourse articulated by his Kenyan associate. In contrast to a discourse that challenged the legitimacy of discussing poverty as a social issue in a land characterised by wealth, he talked of his own relative wealth. The point here, though, is that he developed his argument through appeal to principles of justice, in specific, the principle that "people may have life and have it to the full." Using this principle he argued against the injustice that many people do not "have much of a life." Moreover, using this principle, he transformed the norms surrounding poverty into moral issues that could be theorised. The fact that Britain is a wealthy country that provides a stable political and social environment in which people can live their lives is no longer sufficient when such norms are exposed to the critical gaze of principles. But he was not satisfied with simply critiquing social norms. Rather he went on to discuss how he has reflexively reshaped his life in light of arguments made on the basis of principles:

> And it does [giving small amounts makes a difference to others]. So over the years we've sponsored children through education and I've had a tinge about that because I get teased by non-Christian friends "oh you something or other" they say. And I know that it does sound old-fashioned and what have you. But it's making a bit of a difference in some people's lives. I'd want them all to have good education and I've changed over at long last from Nescafe to Café Direct, I was convinced by a programme I saw on television. That was it. I wonder if I'll like the taste of it. Because a lot of them, teas I don't like the taste of, so I had mixed feelings about buying this coffee. I've thought "that's okay I can live with that." So I've changed over. I've made a tactful decision. It's the politics of Nescafe. And café direct there aren't the middle people around so the workers are treated better (MP11).

As norms become a matter of theory, life can be organised using norms that offer cogent arguments, rather than merely appealing to tradition. By changing the brand

of coffee he buys, this informant made a decision to live his life using norms based on arguments about the politics of the world capitalist system. Not only did he submit norms to the critical gaze of principles, but he also used this ability to critically appraise norms in order to weight up the norms he abides by when he went shopping and to decide in favour of foods that were more representative of the just life he wanted to live. Responsibility takes on a different meaning here. To be responsible is to live according to norms that can be justified as fair to everybody affected.

The final example of a reflexive discourse more radically draws the experiences of individualised persons into a reflexive moral framework:

> ... ah we get a lot situations coming up now for women approaching the age of sixty. Ah years ago, in the nineteen seventies, a lot of women were told they didn't need to worry about paying full national insurance themselves. They could pay what was called a married woman's stamp, a reduced rate of national insurance, and "don't worry about your pensions you can claim on your husband's pension." But a lot of the women didn't understand the implication of this. I mean it actually meant that they were not able to get a pension in their own rights. I saw someone just after finding out they've suddenly only got 17p a year, which is, they stopped paying full stamps and their husband wasn't, it was another 5, 10 years before he was retiring age. They were blamed for the error, and they have nothing, and once he was the age of 60 because they felt they had been misled of misinformed which they probably have. They haven't understood properly the implications of opting out of paying the full stamps. Um there's a question there about responsibility but also at the time there was huge responsibilities on the pensions department to make damn sure they understood what was happening to them. Um, yeah I mean, responsibility, different people react in different ways, there are people who are totally feckless and don't think about what their doing with their money they don't think about tomorrow. Other people try and be a bit more frugal. But then the person who is frugal they find they are actually being penalised because if they've saved up money, they suddenly find they've got too much capital to claim certain social security benefits but they're not in a position where they are particularly wealthy... (WA3).

This informant takes as his theme the relationship between the norms that are used to organise society and the interpretations that people base their decisions on. He draws on observations about the reality of people's lives, the ways in which people make decisions and the norms people are told they may conform to in order to expose the limitations, inadequacies and ruptures between societal norms and people's everyday lives. In effect, people frequently make decisions about their welfare that are based on misunderstandings and false interpretations of seemingly comprehensible norms. But he argues that while many people are indeed 'feckless', it can in reality be the people who are 'frugal' but misinformed or who are not able to do enough to secure their own welfare that lose out. By placing everyday life experiences alongside societal norms, this informant tends to emphasise the breakdowns and ruptures on the side of the individual, while placing some of the onus on the state administration to adequately communicate the structure of norms. This represents a reflexive discourse because it treats norms as a matter of theory rather than as an extant expression of collective will. Seen as theory, this informant can connect the universal with the particular; interrogating norms from the point of view of experiences. In so doing, he finds reason to criticise all sides; the government for not adequately helping the individual understand the decision she was making and then blaming her for her misunderstanding and leaving her at a loss; and the individual for not adequately investigating the implications of her decision. A policy norm, then, does not simply define roles and responsibilities. It also affects lives. Therefore, it goes beyond convention and becomes a matter of theory. To be responsible here is to understand and to deal with the ambivalent implications of norms.

Conclusion

In this Chapter we have seen how the participants in this research presented themselves as responsible using a number of discourses. They acted in responsible ways using various relationships with social norms. The pertinent questions are not whether people are being responsible, but how are they relating with norms expressing responsible action and how are they processing these norms in order to perform in moral and responsible ways?

Within the egoistical discourse both the situation and relevant norms were dealt with by taking using an objectifying attitude. Norms were situated as rules that everybody should follow because it was in the interests of each person, were not seen as relevant to the situation at all, or were looked on objectively and calculated in terms of the costs and benefits of likely outcomes. It should be noted that the use of this perspective was limited to personal decisions about how to lead one's own life in the context of the community, for example a personal struggle against alcoholism, or in relation to the family, while this perspective was rhetorically situated as about living according to the individual's own inclinations by those using norms more directly. In any case the egoist dealt with norms in accordance with her own individual interests and in a fashion that was uncritical of norms themselves. She was not in a position to question whether people should act in line with relevant norms. Rather she noted her own interests and, where appropriate, the relevance of particular norms and thought through the relationship between the two. Responsibility here means to think about personal interests first and then to act

using norms whose outcome was commensurate with the observable interests of others.

The conformist discourse drew on an uncritical attitude to norms but in a collectivist fashion. Those using this perspective acted on their responsibilities in accordance with certain norms. The norms in question were family norms, norms governing the relationship between dependent parent and adult children or those various norms positioning the individual as having various roles and responsibilities. What distinguished the conformist discourse was how people adapted their behaviour to meet with the requirements of relevant norms. The power of these norms arose with the expectations of real others, so that the conformist discourse provides an example of conventional moral conduct in the sense that people conformed to the behaviour expectations of those close to them. However, this was primarily a collectivist discourse because even as responsible behaviour was acted out in relation to a primary group, either family or work colleagues, norms were accepted by taking the perspective of the collective. The informants did not conform to norms merely because it was what was expected of them, even if this expectation structured their discourse in a conformist way. They conformed to norms because such norms expressed the right and responsible thing to do from a more systemic perspective.

The reformist discourse represents a discourse concerned with reforming either the individual or the group in light of a clarification of interests in relation to norms. The peculiarity of the reformist discourse is the sense in which it is concerned with

altering behaviour by critically moving beyond merely abiding by role and norm expectations, by reflecting on the interests of the person. Thus it takes back up the interests that were important in the context of the egoistical discourse and critically relates with the norms the person is expected to live by. A variety of uses of this discourse is reported here including discourses where the individual had already become critical of their unquestioned adoption of behaviours; discourses used by people signalling their struggle to clarify their own interests in relation to norms; discourses used by people who wanted to help others who are forced to abide by inappropriate norms. In each case, responsibility was situated using a discourse presenting a more authentic way of living, and which was about reforming the persons life in accordance with a clarification of the values that articulated the good life. This discourse critically appraises norms and behaviours in light of interests.

Finally, the reflexive discourse drew together a range of competing discourses in a way that both recognised conflicting interests and drew attention to these conflicts. It was also a specifically moral discourse, that is, it was burdened with a consciousness of the intractable social dilemmas posed by conflicting notions of the good. This discourse was used in a principled moral way, autonomously applying ideas of justice to social contexts in a way that brought conflict clearly into relief. The concept of responsibility operative in this discourse was one that sought norms which were in keeping with the interests of all concerned.

While nothing can be drawn from such a small sample regarding the frequency with which such discourses are used or regarding who is likely to carry which kind of

discourse, a significant point can be asserted. These informants did not derive constructions from hegemonic discourses. Nor did they directly accept social constructions. What they did was take an attitude to the responsibilities they were called on to accept and draw on norms in a way that seemed appropriate. Furthermore, the norms themselves were not simply society's norms. The content of a norm, and the rational structure of norms were of equal importance. Each of the informants accepted norms and a discourse surrounding these norms as they discussed how they dealt with their responsibilities. Therefore, while norms are important, it is the way that norms are linked with the reality of people's lives and how this linkage enables them accept their responsibility's that needs to be addressed in public and social policy.

Chapter 7: Society, responsibility and welfare

Introduction

The previous chapter established how people act on their responsibilities using constructions appropriate to the situation. In this chapter the analysis moves to the ways people relate action and discourse in more cultural and social contexts. The first part of this chapter deals with cultural constructions; with perceptions, of and perspectives on, the culture of responsibility. Thus the analysis presents popular social and action theories of responsibility. The second part is an analysis of the informants' perceptions of social integration through the institution of the welfare state. This is an analysis of popular theories that are normative in character.

Observations on culture and the responsibilities of others

The informant's reflections on responsibility in the general moral culture, was focused on how, and to what extent, the individual exercises her will in moral and responsible ways. As we have seen with Bauman (1993, 1995) and Fevre's (2000) work, there are strong social theoretical grounds showing that the cultural norms people use to guide their moral and responsible actions are threatened by capitalist cultural models that encourage a preoccupation with the self. Such models are strongly linked with market collectivism (Schmidtz, 1998) and communitarianism

(Etzioni, 1995). In this section this issue is explored through an analysis the informants responses to the question "do you think people take their responsibilities seriously enough." The analysis focuses on the informants' perceptions of, and constructions regarding, how people in general deal with their responsibilities and the kinds of norms organising these efforts.

A demoralisation thesis

The perspectives and constructions used by the informants can firstly be organised on the basis that shared norms have a significant structuring effect on how people deal with their responsibilities. In line with this, many informants felt that the welfare state had discouraged people from taking responsibility for their own lives. Indeed, one informant linked the changing nature of the state with the changing willingness to accept responsibility:

> Particularly I think some of the, what I would call younger middle aged group. I mean I think people your age [late twenties] actually do accept responsibility very well, and are being brought to do so more and more. But I think there is a generation above who feel that it'll all be all right on the night and if not then the state will probably be there (MP12).

While specific inferences cannot be drawn from this statement, the indication seems to be that those brought up in a society formed by the New Right (Levitas, 1986) are better able to accept their responsibilities. This idea, that the wider societal culture has a clear impact on individual agency, was used in a more radical way by other informants. In these discourses the welfare state and capitalism were seen to be increasingly undermining people's ability and willingness to accept responsibility:

> ...I think its very easy to think from the media that we all want a nanny state, and I think some people have been brought up where they feel that they have a right to, to, things to everything that they want to be provided. And I think that they, advertising am, body advertising body or the media really pushes that as-well. The latest being this, you know, the you know, if you've had an accident and its not your fault all this lot, its, its, its been like that in America for a while and it bothers me to see it going that way ... It just all seems a little bit sordid, you know. I had an accident at work and it led to a Pulmonary Embolism and everybody kept saying "Oh you've got to claim you've got to claim." It didn't happen on this premises but I was working, and I think "I can't" I couldn't do it. I couldn't claim, because I really didn't think it was their fault I tripped, you know. So, and I think you know there is this worry, that almost breaking your neck or falling down stairs is like winning the lottery, you know... (MP5).

The idea here is that the rise to domination of capitalism and state welfare has been accompanied by a rise in a calculative logic. This calculative logic is increasingly gaining hold of the cultural fabric and is undermining responsibility taking. Nevertheless, as the structure of the above story indicates, it is other people who use this logic and who seize upon certain caveats within the capitalist and state welfare systems in order to further their own desires. The informant chose not to sue her employer on the moral grounds that she felt she could not blame the University for her misfortune. But the perception is that other people do exercise this kind of thinking and believe it is perfectly acceptable not to accept responsibility for their own lives themselves. The following informant agrees, emphasising how this culture is transmitted:

> .....now if a girl becomes pregnant, either through lack of control of the feelings or when she has got a partner and they decide to raise a family, if the partner leaves then the responsibility towards the girl and her child, no longer falls on her parents or her relations. It falls upon the government and the local authority to provide that condition to her. And consequently you are getting a lot of these young children that are now the by-product of two generations that haven't had this senior parental assistance or control. Many of them don't know who their

> grandmother or grandfather is, many of them don't even know who their mother or partners' elders are. But what they do know is they don't go hungry because their parents are supported through government agencies. And this is where those children, get, I won't say thrown onto the scrap-heap as regards to love and care; but they get a lot more than the children who get love and care through a close knitted family who looks after them in many respects. The child who breaks the rules and is taken away on holiday, the low-income family that support their children and therefore that child doesn't go away on holiday. MP6

Thus those who reflect on how cultural and institutional frameworks impact on responsibility taking stress the transmission of ideas that undermine the willingness or ability of the individual to accept responsibility for their own determinations. This discourse places a large degree of store by the idea that people adapt to the norms of their society. It is quite distinct from the conformist discourse identified in the previous chapter and is more concerned with ideological and hegemonic discourse. In this regard it drew largely on the idea of the egotistical person, the person who adapts to social norms by objectifying them. However, unlike the egoistical discourse of the pervious chapter, this radical view identifies this person as operating without a sense of justice seeking only to realise her own personal desires and inclinations.

The thesis that people are becoming self-interested as an adaptation to the culture of the welfare state also surfaces in the discourses of two of the welfare advisors and benefits recipients. One rights advisor described how his organisation's clients appeared unable to take responsibility for their own lives:

> I think there is a tendency for people to leave it to other people to look after their responsibilities. I think that is a tendency with a lot of clients who come in here. They can't really think for themselves so they need someone to phone up on their behalf if they are in debt with the council, or the Inland Revenue. They

> can't actually do it for themselves. But if there is somebody sitting there with them then they'll sort it out. But a lot of them have got the tendency to let it go and leave it, and it gets worse. The bailiffs move in and we've got to try and sort that out for them. I don't think they take the responsibility correctly you know (WA5).

What emerged from this interview was that this advisor felt his clients were unable to accept responsibility for their own lives and that this lack of acceptance was linked with the services of the welfare state and voluntary sector since these organisations appeared willing and able to accept responsibility on behalf of their clients. Another informant felt that the market and the welfare state had created a group of people who calculatively conspire to abuse the welfare system to their own ends:

> But no I don't think people take their responsibilities too easily. I think social housing is too accessible - which sounds very contradictory for somebody who has worked in it for a long time. But I think that people know how the system works - there's a particular group of people who know how the system works and use the system. And I've seen all sorts of people use it to their own benefit. And I've seen other people with quite high moral values, when it's been suggested to them by other sources that they might like to access the system by using particular mechanisms, they won't do it, because they don't believe that it's the right thing to do (WA2).

These informants provided direct observations of how people adapted to the culture of the welfare state by becoming either unable to accept responsibility for their own lives or more strategic and egotistical in their relations with the state. From this, they drew the conclusion that there was a demoralisation of culture in certain sections of society.

This perspective was also shared by the benefits recipients. However, these informants articulated it as part of their everyday experience:

> Hmm do I think people take their responsibilities seriously enough? – No I don't. I think – I think it's very disheartening to think that you can walk down a street at night and that street is patrolled more by pimps and drug fags than it is by the police (BC1).

The demoralisation of society had, for this informant, become manifest on the level of the street which had become a menacing place. This sense that the world was losing its moral fabric was also identified in the way that the self was treated by others:

> Well that's how you're homeless isn't it? People don't want to know you. They'll know you while you have money in your pocket. When you have no money in your pocket they don't want to know you. Which is true isn't it? (BC2)

Not only did the street feel like a menacing place but the worth of everyday relationships were becoming measured in monetary terms. The self was not worth attending to when she had no money. Hence the erosion of a sense of moral responsibility for others had crept into everyday life.

Theses on the privatisation of moral responsibility

A less critical and moralistic thesis was offered by other informants. Like the demoralisation account, people were seen as adapting to the wider culture by focusing on their own interests. But this narrative took a different view of the nature of the culture that people were adapting to and the nature of self-interested

strategies. For example, one informant argued that European people are not interested in presenting themselves as moral and responsible role models:

> No - um no. Most people never – um you see, when I came into England [informant is from Nigeria] I discovered there are so many millions in this country. Europe has... I think it all started from the government, the people at the top. You know, as I was saying, that if (you are not sure), you say a good leader is somebody who you need to look to, that you can say, "This person is a role model." And if you're not a role model with your way of life, with your family, your background, then you're not supposed to be there. Because I tell you, so many people are shying away and running away from their responsibility because they don't even know it. And until you know it, you understand, you cannot defend it. And some people can defend it, but because there are so many wills to run away from it, you understand, nobody's (concentrating) on what they need to do and what they are meant to do. So they just lead their life of some kind, they lead some kind of civilised life, some kind of life that is not (possibly) the way they want it ... (BC4).

This sense that people are not concentrating on what the right thing to do is and making a radical presentation of themselves as a positive role model for others, but are instead focusing attention on the less important aspects of life was echoed by another informant:

> Um, I don't know. Some people are certainly quite blasé about what they should and shouldn't be doing you know um. And there are a lot of people that just kind of drift through life. And in a way I suppose I am going to contradict myself, but there's a lot of people that are very um, altruistic responsibilities, whereby they only care about themselves and work, and their little kinda group and their responsibilities within that. There is also the wider picture of responsibilities as well you know, um and a lot of people do neglect that and I suppose in a way I'm neglecting that as well, um ... (MP8).

This informant went on to describe these wider responsibilities as paying attention to relationships beyond the circle of immediate relationships and paying greater heed to friends. The point that these informants were making is that the concern

with private life and personal gratification eclipses the concern with making more public presentations of oneself as a moral and responsible person. Both informants agree that the culture promoting a concern with private life is based on how people focus their moral and responsible on the personal sphere. Thus, it is not that capitalism or the welfare state is to blame. Blame is instead placed on people's unwillingness to enter into more public spaces where people might perform as moral heroes and present themselves as responsible in a more publicly relevant way. The former respondent was quite clear about the nature of such moral self presentations, while the latter informant went to great pains to describe how this might look within his own life as a being there for a wide group of friends.

Theories of moral authenticity

A more personal perspective was used by informants who sought to draw attention to how people made decisions about their own responsibilities based on their individual interests. They described responsibility as something that is rooted in how the individual processed their world and negotiated their way through life:

> ... I think there are some people who don't take their responsibilities seriously enough. There are some people who have got the balance right, and there are some people who take it too seriously for their own good - and possibly for the good of some of the people round about them. In that if you present an image that taking responsibility is terribly onerous and it's a major problem, that (laughs) could very well put off people from taking responsibility and then going to the other extreme (WA6).

The point here is that the degree to which people accept responsibility is connected with how people perceive those who take on numerous responsible roles. On this account, the individual avoids accepting responsibilities, not because she is it

calculative or dangerous, but because she sees the effects on people's well-being of taking on too many responsibilities. This perspective shifts attention onto the politics of the everyday where people present themselves in terms of the responsibilities they shoulder and where the image of the responsible person is linked with stress and poor health, an image that might dissuade others from taking up some of the burden. While this still makes use of the idea that individual's want an easy life, it does not ascribe to the self a calculative outlook, but instead takes issue with those who adopt responsibilities and then dramatise the arduousness of the associated tasks. Such arduous tasks were articulated by a professional welfare advisor as follows:

> I mean we could, I could give you examples of people who don't and people who take you know, too much [responsibility]. A classic example is, are the pensioners ... they're living just above the poverty line, but they've got 3 or 4 thousand pounds in the bank but that money their saving for they're funerals. So you've got that level you know, where people are taking their responsibility even beyond the grave um, seriously. And then you've got the other end, aspect, you know, of the client who has come in because the child support agency are, are chasing him for maintenance for his child, and he doesn't see why he should be paying anything at all, um, because he doesn't see the child for example. So you've got somebody who, who is unwilling to accept any responsibility you know, for an individual they've created and, and in between those two extremes you've got the vast majority of the population [laughs] really (WA4).

These informants see accepting responsibility as connected with how the individual interprets the world and the responsibilities that they have towards themselves and towards others. Responsibility taking is, then, very much connected with what the person is willing to accept as their responsibility and to what degree she is able to resolve herself to the resulting burdens and consequences. While it is possible to

make judgements about the value of accepting responsibility, responsibility ultimately rests with the person and their resolve to accept or reject it.

Underscoring these arguments is a conception of the subject as a person who can accept responsibility and who can resolve herself to accept the consequences of the tasks associated with this responsibility. In effect, the person who decides that she does not want to bear the burden of certain responsibilities in view of the detrimental effects she sees that such responsibilities have on others has made that decision based on insight into consequences and on her own decision about the kind of person she wants to be or the personal well-being she wants to maintain. This is to use a conception of authenticity that is well captured by the following informant:

> That's, that's an individual thing, I think anyway. Because I, as a person who is individual take my responsibilities very seriously, yes. But then again I can't sit here and say well "[sighs] I don't know do you take" you know. I can't, I can't predetermine and sit here and judge you and say yeah, "I think Shane takes them very seriously" because you know that's an individual thing. Its, you know, I'm the kind of person who does who has and who will probably continue to, but you may not be if you see what I mean. So that to me that's an individual thing, in some ways you might say a personal question (MP4).

This represents a radical version of the authenticity focused theory. Ultimately, people process their own responsibilities themselves within their own minds and in their own lives and much of this processing is impenetrable to the observer. Within their lives people may interpret their actions as authentic and responsible, however it is difficult to judge this as an outside observer.

A perspective on the social ordering of responsibility

A further theory was identified in the transcripts. The thrust of this theory was that social structures that could facilitate responsible action were not in situ. For example, the following informant described various ways in which people were unable to accept responsibility for their own welfare themselves:

> ... a lot of people cant afford to [accept enough responsibility for their own welfare themselves] because of their family situation. They've got families they've got children they simply haven't got enough money coming in to set aside after meeting the housing costs. And if they have any children... so it is very difficult. But then other people do um, because they have no familiarity with the benefits systems, somebody's been made redundant they get a large redundancy package, 15 20 thousand pound redundancy package, and they spend the money obviously. Um, they pay off debts, they go abroad on a holiday, they pay for a daughter's wedding all sorts of things and then they come back to the benefits agency and attempt to claim social security benefit and the social security can refuse them if they think they have deliberately deprived themselves of capital in order to gain from the benefits system (WA3).

By separating how people enact their responsibility from policy norms, this informant draws attention to the ways in which people see themselves as behaving in a responsible manner, even if this action is constructed differently by the relevant welfare agencies. In this discourse, the social becomes a disordered place full of the competing claims of reason. One person's responsibility is another person's irresponsibility. Moreover, this informant draws attention to how people try to do the responsible thing but cannot because of family circumstances, or actually do the right thing by their family but are treated as irresponsible by the benefits agency. The point in either case is that the individual is unable to accept, or is unaware that she contravenes, norms concerning responsible behaviour.

This perspective introduced the idea that the adoption of responsibility was a phenomenon that was socially situated and structured:

> Um, I think everybody is responsible for themselves and you know if they are sane and with it, they do, and if they are not, you know, they are not. They've got a depression or different things, different factors affect they way they think and perhaps they don't. Like people that are alcoholics and that are on the streets and that, they are not really aware that they are any trouble to anyone else their just giving themselves pain (MP7).

This argument, that everybody takes responsibility for themselves unless they are otherwise impeded by certain weaknesses itself appears quite weak. It operates on the basis of the humanist argument outlined by Bauman (1993, 1995, Chapter 3 above) wherein people are innately able to be there for others. Taking a more rationalist point of view, the following informant argued that many people are impeded from taking their responsibilities by their own determinations, limitations, social structures, or a combination of each:

> But it's, I think generally people aren't so responsible. I think, generally people aren't equipped for life. They're not prepared. They don't learn how to make decisions. How best to make decisions. Whether it's over health, men are awful at putting things off to the last minute before going to a doctor. It's shopping, I know it's easy for me I've got a car so I can. I've got lots of choices, I can go to ALDI and this sort of thing you know ... I know people who are not mobile, as has always been the case, they miss out on these sorts of things. Equally the poorer people miss out and they don't have the storage space, whether it's in a freezer or a cupboard even. They don't have the spare cash when it says buy one get one free. Or buy two and get one free. Or whatever it is. They can't do that (MP11).

While this informant accepts that people are not "so responsible", the idea that this is because they are unwilling or unable to accept their responsibilities does not enter his mind. Instead he identifies a range of social issues that impede people

accepting their responsibility. By extension, people could come to take more responsibility for themselves if they did "learn how to make decisions." By refusing to accept that the other is innately dangerous this perspective held out the possibility of developing in everybody the ability to adopt responsibility for their own lives.

This is a quintessentially social discourse because here the informant refuses to emphasise responsibility as either a cultural or a personal issue. The fact that people are unable to adopt their responsibilities or cannot act on them in a meaningful way, is neither related to culture nor the individual. Instead this theory places greater responsibility on the rest of society to institute practices that help people deal with their responsibilities or that help them become capable of acting on them in a meaningful way.

Popular theories of responsibility and society

These discourses call attention to the sophisticated perspectives that people took on the general issue of responsibility in society. The demoralisation discourse is concerned with the way in which privately focused thinking is combined within individualistically oriented action contexts. On this account, both capitalism and the welfare state position people in a way that encourages them to adapt their behaviour to social and policy norms. On the one hand, these norms can promote an individualistic and egotistic thinking that encourages people to abuse these norms for their own personal gain. On the other, these norms relate with people in their private context and have the effect of inadvertently transmitting ideas that

promote an individualist logic. These issues combine to separate society into two; those who adapt to, and egocentrically capitalise on, these tendencies and those who do not. Demoralisation is the name given the process of egotistical adaptation.

While the demoralisation theory placed emphasis on a social theory that maintains that people act in response to social discourses, the privatisation discourse emphasised action theory. In this theory, it is through people's actions that social narratives are formed and the issue lies with how people are focusing their attentions in the private sphere. Thus the privatisation theory is concerned with both the private way in which people act on their responsibilities and how this privacy nevertheless has effects on collective social narratives.

Action theory also formed a significant component of the discourse by advocating on behalf of authenticity. This was very much an action theory because it both emphasised how people accept responsibilities in their own lives according to their own interests and also drew attention to the rationale that people use as they decide whether to accept certain responsibilities.

Finally, the theory of responsibility that drew attention to how society is inadequately organised to facilitate people accepting full responsibility for themselves, brought an action theory together with a social theory. On this account, people behave in an irresponsible manner either because they are unaware of the responsibilities they accrue in specific contexts or because they are unable to adequately deal with these responsibilities. However, this discourse did not argue

that people's lack of appreciation for their responsibilities was a matter for the individual alone. Rather it drew attention to how society needed to be organised to help and not stigmatise such people.

Social constructions of welfare responsibilities

In this section of the analysis, attention is drawn to issues that are normative in character. As we have seen informants, in their own lives, used discourses around responsibility that were appropriate to their personal situation. While they theorised responsibility in a variety of complex ways, they shared the underlying view that people are not inclined to be socially responsible. In this section, I explore the question of the connection between responsibility and the state welfare system is explored through the informants' views on dependency and responsibility.

The individualistic discourse

The individualistic discourse sought to combine the need to attend to the other with a sense of suspicion about the motivations of the other. Adherents to this discourse drew together a justification for the state taking responsibility for the welfare of others with suspicions of the morality of those accepting state welfare benefits. For example, the following informant distinguished between the welfare state as an institutional 'safety net' attending to the needs of clients and the institution as a 'system' vulnerable to abuse by unscrupulous individuals:

> Um [welfare dependency is justifiable] only when it's necessary, absolutely only when it's necessary. Because that's what it is there for, in my opinion anyway. It's a safety net really, or it should be a safety net ... and it should only be a safety net and it should not be a system that's abused for example by people

> who can be better off on the state rather then go out and work, you know. If they are provided accommodation by the council you know and given X amount of pounds every week, you know, that should only be an interim, you know, arrangement. And it, you know, it should be, you shouldn't have to be dependent on the state at all, you know. But some people do abuse it (MP8).

The individualistic discourse was supportive of a minimal welfare state, a state that attended to the basic needs of its citizens but was mindful of how it could be abused. While this led this informant to start specifying limits to the attention paid to the needs of claimants, this discourse could also identify groups of people who, it was felt, should be working:

> You know, guys for example – I'm not picking on men – but people who could be out there working but aren't because there are ways round not working. And a lot of them haven't got the education to be in even reasonably paid jobs. So the sort of jobs they're going to get are £4 or £5 an hour aren't they, delivering stock, clearing up ... But is that a reason not to work? Haven't people always done jobs that – you know, think about people going down the tin mines and the coalmines and awful Victorian factories and all that sort of thing, you know. Nobody's suggested anybody goes back to them and drops dead at 30 with some horrendous cancer or something, you know, but at the same time - I suppose that's where Working Family Tax Credit came from, you know, pushing up low paid jobs to decent (WA2).

This informant expected the person coming to the state for help to take up their part in the welfare bargain and emphasised how the role the claimant played had public implications, although it was carried out in private. Thus both of the above informants were concerned with how benefits claimants were not fulfilling their part of the bargain, that is, working or seeking work, and were neglecting their responsibilities for private reasons. The former informant identified these reasons as connected with disincentives to work and the desire to not work, while the latter informant identified the kind of work that benefits recipients were likely to attain as

poorly paid and unattractive. Both, nevertheless, felt that this was insufficient grounds to claim benefits rather than work. Thus, welfare dependence was deemed acceptable in limited cases:

> Yes, in some instance obviously. If there is an illness that you've got that prevents you from doing a days work or whatever, then yeah. I believe you should [depend on the state]. I've been on incapacity benefit and I've gone into those places and I've been on the dole for about six weeks, and I have to admit I found it a bit... I would have thought actually about sixty or seventy percent of the people there could have been working, and were scamming it, and they came in with the weirdest clothes and the weirdest haircuts they could come in with and they adopted this attitude, and they seemed to have these bad backs that would come and go whenever they got jobs, because I would sit and listen to them. But, I don't think you can take it away because of the few that ruin it, but perhaps more, stricter policy on checking those people out (MP2).

The individualistic discourse's suspicion of the motives of benefits claimants led adherents to seek greater policing of the benefits system. The suspicion raised in this discourse was focused on an attitude of mind that was perceived in others and never in the discourse carriers:

> ... um I think the state has to look after people to a certain degree, but I'm totally against the nanny state where people tend to think that "Oh don't worry about it, the state will look after me, they'll give me a house, they'll give me this and whatever." I keep coming back to the old thing, there has to be a safety net, but people should be encouraged to stand on their own two feet. I am a capitalist I believe in capitalism, I've discussed it for hours and hours and hours with [partner's name] because he is very much a socialist and we've bounced the argument back and forth and there's very much for socialism and, yeah I understand his perspective. But I think we wouldn't be where we are today if people didn't sort of have a little bit of perhaps selfishness where they want to be a bit selfish, but in the long run, by being selfish they are paying more into the system in taxes which go to help other people. Money going round helps everybody, but yeah, there has to be um there has to a safety net its very important, very important, but its more of a safety net, but I don't believe in people just sort of depending totally on the state (MP10).

Thus, the nanny state was also seen as undermining the entrepreneurial attitude associated with capitalism. In effect, the individualistic discourse took issue with the decommodification of the citizen because commodification was in the interests of the progress and contributed to the betterment of society and the economy.

Finally, the discourse used by one of the informants pointed to a sense of jealousy regarding benefits claimants. She too shared a sense of suspicion, but it was tinged with a sense of envy with the purportedly hassle free lives of the benefit recipient:

> If you have to be [dependent on the state], like people who are ill and people who have disabilities and things, then they have to be yeah, its okay. People who are well and have got to the stage where they've got enough money to get by and they don't need to work, then they shouldn't be on the, they shouldn't be on the benefit. But how can you get 'em off. If you've made everything so expensive, because if you pay and you've got all the bills, you worked and you've got all the bills, and you're unemployed you've still got the same bills but your managing from your dole money to pay those bills even if its at three pounds a week, you're getting by and you've got all the spare time. As we're working, we've got no money, we're paying instalments the same, but we've got no time either, so we're really worse off than the ones that are signing on. At least they've got their time to themselves, haven't they? (MP7)

For this informant the difficulty lay with commodification and the pressures to work. She wanted a less pressurised life and postulated that those on welfare were having their expenses paid but had more spare time.

In sum, the individualistic discourse accepts the need to attend to the needs of others, but is suspicious of the motivations and attitudes adopted by the other. It is a discourse that expresses a concern with the ease with which welfare claimants can benefit from claiming welfare and with how the welfare state promotes an

unscrupulous, calculative attitude to the detriment of the entrepreneurial attitudes of the capitalist.

The associative discourse

The associative discourse was concerned with responding to the needs of citizens. It featured integrationist and inclusivist language and talked about bringing people into the networks and associations that comprised society. This discourse was predicated on the view that while there were people abusing the system, these were in the minority. Rather, it was more important to help those on welfare:

> I believe, like, I think most sensible people believe there has to be a safety net. There are a ... there's a cohort of people who for whom these opportunities will never be able to be taken up. That has to be the case, whether they're disabled in some way whether they've got ah, a difficult history of disadvantage or whether they're actually just blighted by where they live and the family they live in. Um and I think that's a much smaller group of people then perhaps, its getting smaller isn't it, there's a smaller group of people than you imagine. I think there are there are routes back to re-engagement for a very large number of people. We fund a lot of programmes looking at that, getting, youngsters particularly, but also work with families, to get back into um self-sufficiency really. So I, I do, I do worry about, or I am concerned about the degree to which we are able as a society and as a... with government policy, the degree to which we are able to get sufficient numbers of people back into productive work, or productive training, or into a situation where they can actually pay for their own roof over their heads and feed themselves, put food on the table, and um live a, live a decent life (MP9).

The associative discourse focused on the possibility of integrating individuals into the networks and associations of society. In tune with this viewpoint, this informant focuses on how individuals can be integrated into society and how society, through the organs of the state and business, can help people become 'self-sufficient'. The idea that some people cannot be expected to help themselves, and so must be

granted unconditional help while others can be helped to help themselves, was echoed by the following informant:

> But that amount of money [the social security budget] is controlled to some degree. There is an element, I don't know of the exact figure, but I don't think there are that many people out there who are sponging on the state. I think that some of it is hype. There are people who are not willing to work, but not the numbers. I don't really totally agree with some of the numbers that they come up with. Some people are unemployed for very good reason, there are others who can get up off their backside and do a bit of work. I mean ... I don't think that they can say "well we should scrap it." I think they should look at the civil list and see the amount of money they are pumping in there, before they actually look at the people who are unemployed. That is where my argument would actually lie. If we are not prepared to cut the civil list then why should we cut the unemployment benefit for these people who, for whatever reason, are unable to find a job (MP1).

Thus, the associative discourse could take on a reformist discourse, identifying actors in the social order that commanded resources that, it could be argued, could be better spent helping welfare claimants. The associative perspective, then, adopts the point of view that people should be helped to integrate into society through work or training. It accepts that many people cannot be expected to integrate and therefore will need to depend on the state for help. However, it focuses on how the social order can be organised to entice or to encourage people to participate in social networks or associations organised around paid work. In this regard it considers how society can be organised to achieve this aim and presents ideas like the reallocation of resources from the 'civil list' or the co-ordination of government policy and private action.

The associative discourse was used by one of the benefits claimants to attach himself to the wider society and to talk about the needs of welfare dependents. For him, welfare was the responsibility of:

> ... the state. This is why I'm trying desperately to get back into work, so I can contribute more to the state, to provide those who are in a worse advantage, place than I am in. Um if you - if you are rock bottom - I'm obviously not because some of the stories I hear downstairs make me totally aware of that - um then it should be a case of we should help - we will help you help yourself. "So you may want to apply for a job - fine OK. We'll give you - it's up to you to apply for the job, but if you need help with telephones to actually ring for the job or if you need help with letters, CV's and writing implements, paper, stationery, that sort of thing, we'll help you" - very much like what they do downstairs. If you need - but it's things to help you help yourself (BC1).

The argument that society should help people help themselves was here couched within an argument that it was the duty of anybody who can work to work in order to contribute to this task of helping through enabling. The basic idea was that by contributing, the individual was helping the state and all of those voluntary and statutory bodies empower people and enable them to help themselves. However, it was nevertheless important to reproduce the kind of attitude whereby people took responsibility for themselves, a responsibility that on the associative account, it was possible to generate under the tutelage of the state:

> ... I think in terms of their [the New Labour government] concentrating on education, I really believe, you know, the state can have a positive role. Um, education and child care, preschool child care, education for our young people, very, very important issues, you know. If you can get that right you can create a generation of people that are capable of looking after themselves, um so you know, you can concentrate on those. And then of course, the other end of the scale is they take student grants away so people can't go to universities any more, you know, working class families. I, you know, this is a Labour government, I can't really tie the two. Why are they doing that? Um, I can't tie those two things together (WA4).

The argument here was that the New Labour government was facilitating children develop the skills and abilities to become autonomous responsible citizens, but was withdrawing help for people to complete this socialisation through a University education. This draws attention to the way in which people need to internalise knowledge and skills over the extended socialisation process characteristic of the human species and how it was important that a society help people develop the attitudes and skills for them to participate fully in these social networks. In effect, the associative discourse did not shy away from the onerous task of incorporating new generations into the associations and networks of society and could find fault with any regime that withdraws what it saw as the necessary support mechanisms.

To summarise, the associative discourse sought to respond to the needs of the less well off in society by working to integrate them into the networks of society. The routes to integration that were identified as important were paid employment and education. Moreover, the associative discourse focused on the networks and associations that make up society and considered the routes through which people were incorporated into these associations. In this regard, the associative discourse was supportive of the role it envisioned that the government could play as a facilitator of this incorporation.

The participative discourse

The participative discourse drew on a need to evaluate the context of the call for help and to respond appropriately. The participative discourse went beyond the

focus of the associative perspective on the problem of whether to respond and investigated the situation that the other was in and how this situation might be altered. Thus, for example, the following informant dealt with the question of welfare dependency by describing the situation of the elderly person's call for help and through these descriptions she conveyed ideas about how these situations might be altered:

> If you are old, and you have no other means, I think the state should have a means of supporting you. There should be a means of supporting you properly, rather than supporting everybody to a lower degree. As I say people with houses [elderly people] don't want to sell them because they want to leave them to their family, but the value is there for, which would last quite a long time in care [if this value was invested in care], although I know it is very expensive now. That is why I think there should be more opportunity for [elderly] people in private housing for [elderly people] not to have to rely necessarily on the local authority to provide them with old people's accommodation. But they should be able to put their own on a private basis with the same warden facility on board which would reduce some of the state money going into old people's flats – elderly person's dwellings you have to call them now. So, yeah I think it is all right for there to be something there that the state picks up, but I think people should be encouraged either by tax breaks, or by the facility being encouraged by the local authority, for these places to be available as a matter of course (MP12).

By describing the situation in which many elderly people find themselves and by describing how this situation can be dealt through an accommodation between the market and the state, this informant could lay out a course of action that adequately responded to the needs of the elderly. Thus the participative perspective could draw together descriptions of contexts with policy frameworks and consider how they might interact. For example, the following informant endorsed New Labour's approach to dependency by considering it in terms of a description of welfare

dependence that emphasised the willingness of the benefit claimant to become self-sufficient:

> I'm, I'm a believer, I'm not a get on your bike philosopher, but I do believe that am, I do believe in the Gordon Brown philosophy that more and more people should be encouraged to look after themselves and be shown the way to that. Um, I think welfare state, dependence on the welfare state is dangerous. I was out of work for a year and living on benefit and it was the most uncomfortable place to be really, I didn't want to be there and I suspect a lot of people don't. Um, so, I think policies should be built around giving people, giving people the chance to become self-sufficient again. And I think the tax regime, the different tax incentives that have been introduced in the kind of family credit area to try and encourage, discourage welfare dependency and encourage, even at low pay, encourage people back into, into work, is the right one. (MP9)

This informant's discourse was used as an example of the associative discourse above since he felt that people should be helped integrate into society. But here he made use of a discourse premised on the experience of dependency based on a description of it as 'uncomfortable', and coupled this discourse with the idea of the benefit recipient striving to become self-sufficient. By using the tools of this description and projection of the benefit recipient, this informant could evaluate how incentive schemes might provide an adequate response to the needs of benefits claimants, in particular for those benefits recipients who sought help to find their way out of state dependence. The point about this combination of a description with a projection of subjectivity is that it allowed the informant to evaluate the interaction of policy and context. In effect, by using a participative discourse, this informant could consider how the subject could find herself able to take "the chance to become self-sufficient" and not merely consider the programmes and values that formed the focus of the associative discourse and that were aimed at enticing this subject "back to re-engagement."

The following informant took a more radical perspective on how society helped generate welfare dependency:

> What I think the state should do is what I. One of the things that really, really irritated me and really upset me was um, back in the eighties the big miners strike and then there was, ah, there was, there was the one in the nineties ah when a lot of pits got closed. Now what you end up with is ... You end up with almost whole villages dependent on the state, and that the, that cannot be cheaper then employing people in all sorts of terms. In terms of the social, social good. I mean its all sociological implications there you know ... I used to be on support for I think about two months, and I hated it, I hated the fact that I had to do, you've got this big um admin built-up, sector built-up around policing it and, you, you're just getting charity ... you're just given it and I think you know, that surely it would have been better to run the mines than, there's all sorts of debates about whether their actually making a loss, but I think its better to employ people then to give them, to make them charity cases (MP5).

By taking up the perspective of the subject, this informant adopted the participative discourse and related the structure of the norms she was supposed to adopt to, with the kinds of positions this adoption placed her in. This informant used the participative discourse to challenge the properties of a society that not only allowed people become dependent on the welfare state, but also turned this dependency into an industry. Thus rather than consider how norms could be altered to be more in keeping with the interests of the subject, this informant considered the wider social discourses that prized economic liberalisation to such an extent that society was willing to "make them [coal miners] into charity cases."

The participative discourse used descriptions as tools with which to evaluate the connection between policy and context. In this way the participative discourse took a more public position than the individualist or associative discourses because it

looked at need as a call for help that arises from contexts in a more structural way. Thus the participative discourse had tools at its disposal with which to discuss issues and to participate, even merely as commentators, on the formation of moral calls as public concerns.

The deliberative discourse

The deliberative discourse described and evaluated the context of the moral call, not merely to develop ideas about how to respond, but also to examine the values underpinning action. This perspective was wrought with much agonising over the meaning and values society uses in taking responsibility for others:

> I struggle with the phrase dependent on the state because I believe that there's a togetherness in this and just as in a credit union the first thing that is needed is to form a common-bond. Or work out what's the common, what is it that binds us together. If we are together in a nation then I feel that's there's a responsibility for each other. Some will need an ambulance at some stage ... It's not a person's fault and I know its very much a British thing you know you punish the victim ... and that's very very sad and so people are made to feel doubly bad when they are needing benefit and I don't look on people as being just dependent on the state. They are receiving the help that they need to have. And it's not a brilliant lifestyle for crying out loud. The difference between the average income and state benefit is enormous and it's no luxury at all. (MP11)

Ultimately, on the deliberative discourse, the point of welfare is to help those who are in need. For this informant, this means avoiding using conceptions that blame or stigmatise the person in need of help and accepting that they do need this help and putting the help provided to them in perspective. The deliberator, then, carefully adopts constructions that highlight the reasons for, and value of, helping people. Put another way, the deliberator brings together the idea that society should help its needy with the particular case of the call for help, to support the validity of the call.

This form of argument, one that brings the universal and the particular together, is also used by the following informant. However, she uses her own life history as a case in point:

> I don't think any of us are going to be ever not be dependent on the state, or we are dependent, or as I see 'interdependent' if you see what I mean. Because ... we have to abide, depending on the context, we have to abide by certain laws and so on and so forth. So, whichever way we look at it we are going to be dependent. But the fact is, is that I would ideally like not to be so dependent, or for those within the welfare context, whether it's the powers above or you know the little people down there i.e. I don't know the little people the practitioner or whatever you want to call them. It's for them to realise that ah, at the end of the day there is more to it than, you know, there is more to an individual persons life then being solely dependent on, and being dictated by, the state. (MP4)

Users of the deliberative discourse could see her life history as an expression of the particular related to the universal. This informant talks about the interdependence of social life in order to present the state of dependency as normal. Within this, she reflects on her own position as dependent on the welfare state and concedes that she would "like not to be so dependent." Her argument is that she is a moral person willing to try to not be so dependent but she admits she does need help from the state welfare system. Thus, she calls on the welfare administration to recognise her as a person who is also dependent on the state, rather then as one who is categorised wholly in terms of dependence. In this way, her own life history becomes the principle tool she uses to relate the interdependent subject; the subject who is also dependent on the state, and the state that categorises dependency and dictates to the dependent.

Finally, a central feature of the deliberative discourse was how it engaged with principles and values, particularly those promulgated by the state. This perspective could identify values and their effect on contexts of action, for instance:

> 'Make sure you have jobs' [reflecting on own choice of words] maybe not the word "make sure" but create an economy where there is enough work for people without actually saying "Okay you can you can work for a minimum wage." In many ways, yes, that's okay but in, for other people the state wants Britain to be healthy and thriving in which to make sure that it creates jobs. I don't know how else to say it some people just got it. I don't see, I don't think this um, this legislation that children can work at sixteen I don't think that's right because they've missed out on Saturday jobs when they're fourteen so they haven't got that motivation when their sixteen. I think that's wrong and that's because of the legislation. (WA1)

Here this informant weighs up the promulgation of a value for work. However, she queries the promotion of this value without allowing children to be socialised into it. Thus she takes up the value for work and examines it in relation to how people come to adopt this value and to use it in the context of their own lives. For her, the value needs to be internalised by each new generation. Preventing children from working until they are sixteen curtails their ability to internalise this value and their willingness to work when they get older. In effect, she interrogates how society structures the transmission of the value for work and identifies a distinction between expecting people to work and failing to facilitate their development of a value for work.

The deliberative discourse was used by the welfare advisors as a means of examining the relationship between policy and real life context using welfare values. For example, the following informant again emphasised the

interdependence of social life to argue against a stigmatising concept of dependency and to argue for the value of providing welfare to the welfare dependent:

> Yes, yes I think there are some people for whom there isn't much of an option [but to depend on the welfare state]. And obviously (laughs) in the sector I work with, there are quite a number of people in that situation. But then equally those people may have a dependency but many of them are also giving as well. I had people come to this organisation who financially are dependent on the state who are doing things which they're giving back in kind. Um so they're dependent and they're - and they've got people who in a way are also dependent on them. And I see absolutely no problem with dependency. Equally, there are some people who need to be dependent on the state. I mean in a way I suppose you can say a child who for some reason or another loses both parents will become dependent on the state - lost a home, someone to care for them to make sure they've got their education. Absolutely, there are certain circumstances at certain times when that's OK. (laughs) This may sound stupid nowadays, but in my days of grants, I got a mixture of dependence. I mean the state paid my fees and my parents paid my keep (WA6).

By examining the concept of dependency, this informant stressed the complex nature of interdependency. To be dependent does not always mean that a dependent person is lazy or unwilling to help others, however, is a part of how people adopt responsibilities towards each other. In this light, being dependent on the state is just another form of responsibility taking, so dependency should be valued and understood in the wider terms of interdependency. Even so, the values currently promoted by the New Labour government could be understood as reasonable from within the deliberative discourse:

> ... there is a responsibility of the benefits system to assist people who are not able to assist themselves up to a point. But obviously the jobcentre marks the demarcation of with respect to people in order to claim benefits they've got to be actively seeking work to satisfy them otherwise the jobcentre will penalise you by cutting your benefit or stopping your benefit if they are not satisfied that

> you are looking for work. So there is a balance, in that respect, for them on that side of the jobcentre where they are making sure that people still adhere to their responsibilities. ... The um government is obviously recognising the size of the social security bill. Its getting higher and higher and they are expecting people to be responsible for themselves to get into work so the government needs to remove the gateways, goalposts and try to get people more into their attitudes. But um there is always going to be some, your always going to have some members of society that are not going to be able to work for reasons particularly social, either their age or health or disability... (WA3)

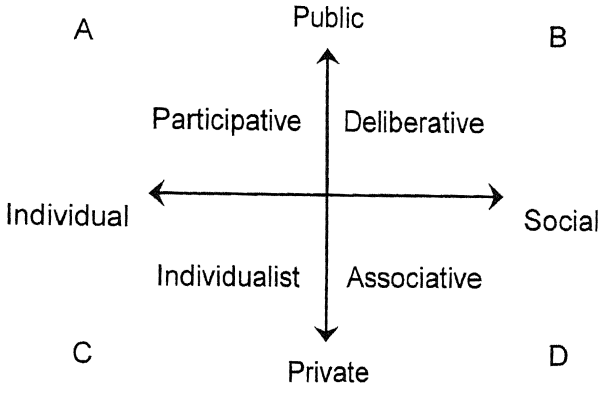
The welfare rights advisor describes the policy framework as balancing rights and responsibilities. He accepts the requirement that people take responsibility for themselves in light of the spiralling social security bill and understands the advancing liberal project of instilling certain work related values in people. Nevertheless, noting the limits of this project, he accepts that people should take responsibility for themselves.

The deliberative discourse engaged with the norms used to organise welfare. These norms were examined by dealing with the connection between the values promoted by norms and the reality of people's lives. Such connections were examined by using the individual's own life history as an example of how this relationship was constructed, either through observations on the lives of others, or by taking wider issues into consideration. Using such perspectives, the deliberative discourse could arrive at a number of different conclusions about the nature and justice of contemporary norms.

Interpretation of discourses on welfare and responsibility

The discourses on welfare and responsibility outlined above can be summarised using the following taxonomy:

Figure 7.1 Taxonomy of discourses on welfare and responsibility



The individualist discourse (quadrant C, above) accepts the need for a welfare state to attend to the needs of others, but is suspicious of these others. The other is seen as a private person who tends to make use of their position for their own ends and thus as an individual exploiting their freedoms as participants in the social contract. The associative discourse (quadrant D above) also perceives these others as private persons and is conscious of their capacity to exploit the welfare contract, but chooses to focus on the need to respond to the proponents of these calls by integrating them into society. By contrast, the participative and deliberative discourses (quadrant A and B respectively) are aware that the call of the other is a public concern that requires detailed attention to the particular context of the call for

help. The participative discourse places emphasis on this context, seeking ways of responding to the call by developing detailed descriptions of the situation of the call. By developing these descriptions, the bearer of the participative discourse is in a position to comment on policy decisions, while she focuses attention on how these frameworks interact with the particular and the individual. The deliberative discourse takes a more social, and indeed, personal, perspective because those using this discourse examine the ideas guiding policy. The deliberator was conscious of the particular situation and of the vulnerabilities of the other, but carefully deliberated the norms organising the welfare discourses that were used to respond to this call.

The normative discourses contrast with the concerns people aired about the trends that they identified about responsibility in society. However, this contrast is not logically incompatible. While the informants felt that people were taking responsibility for their own welfare in more private ways, their normative discourses can be understood as a response to this trend. The individualistic discourse was based on the feeling that people do in fact look after themselves and prioritise their own needs. The associative discourse sought ways of drawing people into civil society and the market to remedy this individualism. Users of the participative discourse presented the good for themselves and for people like them to the decision-makers as a means of securing extra resources and more appropriate norms. The deliberative discourse was concerned with the norms underscoring this trend, in some cases accepting the validity of these norms and in others pointing

out how extra or, more appropriate, norms were needed. Each discourse responds to the rising importance of an ethics of responsibility.

Conclusion

When taken together with the call for a more public conception of responsibility, these discourses on welfare and responsibility reveal a deficiency in conceptual tools used to deal with responsibility. The informants want a discourse that articulates how to deal with responsibility in a more public manner, a discourse that can overcome the difficulties of privatisation and demoralisation in such a way that it recognises the struggle involved in accepting responsibility and a discourse that shows how this is always a social and personal matter. In their discussions of welfare and responsibility, these informants made use of discourses that were suspicious of the other's motivations, they wanted the other to join with the wider society and so consider her outside of society, or they battled to have certain responsibilities recognised and the mode of adopting responsibility understood and not demonised.

Conclusion: Reconstructing responsibility?

Introduction

Throughout this study I have made use of a Habermasian constructivism (1984, 1987, 1996) to critically clarify the research findings. This constructivism is based on a distinction between the context structuring individual action, and the norms that the individual brings to bear on this context. Therefore, this constructivism draws a distinction between the action context and social norms, focusing on how norms and action interconnect. In their discourse of welfare responsibilities, New Labour constructs a discourse that is promotes models of action for the individual to follow as she acts to secure her responsibilities. That is, New Labour have produced a number of action models that they exhort people to use to accept their responsibilities. However, the models themselves are not critically clarified in relation to norms. Rather, these models are offered for the subject to follow. In effect, New Labour focuses on individual contexts of action without also connecting their constructions with wider norms that might offer justifications. Of course, justifications are provided by champions of New Labour's Third Way (Giddens, 1998, 2000, Blair, 1998, DSS, 1998), but as we have seen such moral justifications are not dealt with in the press releases that are produced by the government as a way of communicating with the public. On the other hand, as I have shown the

members of the public, welfare advisors, and welfare benefits recipients all discussed the way they accepted their responsibilities by relating their structural context with wider social norms. While the benefits administrators discussed the responsibilities of their clients in terms of the welfare contract, they nevertheless also connected individual contexts of action with a more normative account of society. The effect of this was to draw together the reality of action contexts with social norms that were used to critically think about how responsibility was accepted.

This disjuncture between New Labour's discourse and the discourses of the research informants derives, I argue, from New Labour's unwillingness to engage in discourse on social norms. The research informants were willing and able to think about the way they accepted their responsibilities in a critical way, and reflect on this acceptance in terms of social norms. By contrast, New Labour are characteristically unwilling to engage in the same kind of critical reflection, preferring to offer models of action that can be used to woo (Lister, 2001) people in the direction of responsibility-taking rather than critically reflect on the norms guiding the models of action they proffer. In the following, I will further reflect on this disjuncture. It has to be accepted that the models offered by New Labour are in keeping with research informants' observations on contemporary moral cultures. However, the way the informants made use of discourses that critically engage with norms is not acknowledged by New Labour's discourse. However, the research conducted here demonstrates how informants make use of more critical kinds of discourses. This lays a strong foundation for the claims made by commentators like

Fiona Williams (1999, 2001) who argue that alternative discourses offering norms with a more critical dimension can be used in the context of welfare. Moreover, I argue that New Labour are right to use discourses that set out people's responsibilities in relation to their individual interests, but these responsibilities need to be constructed critically in relation to social norms. This argument forms the theme of the following sections where I argue for a kind of discourse that opens a process of critically reflecting on norms that can work with New Labour's Third Way emphasis on the economy and civil society. In these sections I set out, and defend, a discourse I call 'correlative discourse', that is, a discourse in which ethics and morals are seen as correlative phenomenon and that brings to light how these aspects of situations correlate.

Discourses of Responsibility

Like any other discourse, responsibility is constructed in light of particular needs and interests. New Labour's discourse of responsibility constructs responsible people in relation to civil society and the market. The informants recruited for this study used a variety of discourses to construct their responsibilities in relation to their own personal or professional lives. More broadly, they discussed the responsibilities of the state in relation to their perception of how other people accept their responsibilities. In effect, they show how responsibility is construed in light of particular interests and in relation to relevant norms. By approaching responsibility in terms of discursive relationships with norms, a critical theoretical understanding of discourses of responsibility can emerge.

As already noted, New Labour constructs a discourse to people that situates people as agents responsible for their own welfare in civil society and the market. Four different kinds of agents were identified, the heroic, the passive, the good and the recalcitrant citizen. The argument that responsibility for welfare is being constructed in line with ethics and ideas of the good, conceived from the point of view of the individual, group, or community, was substantiated by the corpus of New Labour's press releases. I have shown how the ethical concepts used by New Labour are concepts that draw people together based on their shared perception of their need to deal with their responsibilities as individuals in civil society and the market. As such, New Labour seeks to promote this consciousness by providing the heroic citizen with the information she seeks to help her make decisions, providing the passive citizen with the confidence to enter the market, and providing the good citizen with the reassurance that, in working, she is doing the right thing. In each case the emphasis is placed on the ways the individual works to realise the good for herself by securing her own welfare responsibilities through civil society and the market. Of course, I acknowledge that these are constructed rhetorically in view of the recalcitrant citizen's self-interested manner of securing her own responsibilities. The effect of this combination is to promote the practice of accessing publicly available information as private persons looking to make private contracts in civil society. Responsibility as such comes to be about the bonds of the social contract supported by the weak informal solidarity generated in civil society and economy, rather than bonds of solidarity generated as members of a society or of the public sphere. But the problem with this is not simply one of membership, more

importantly this approach tends to reduce responsibility to the status of one social good among many, and empty of moral meaning.

The moral meaning of a discourse of responsibility would emerge from a stress on some form of solidarity amidst diversity. As feminists (Young, 1990, Fraser, 1997), critical theorists (Honneth, 1995) and postmodernists Leonard, 1997) have pointed out, such a solidarity would need to respect difference and the interdependence of members of society. My analysis of a corpus of New Labour's press releases has shown how the New Labour government neglect such a morality in favour of a focus on the particularity of an individualised life. This is in keeping with the New Labour project "[t]o help all individuals and families to realise their full potential and live a dignified life" (DSS, 1998: 80). In philosophical terms this means taking up a deontological ethics which is an ethics that underlies discourse ethics. Apel (1998: 193, 194) has admitted his discomfort in endorsing a deontological ethics, since this means accepting a moral discourse that does not guarantee happiness to everybody. But Apel (1998) endorses this kind of ethics because he feels it is the only realistic option in diverse societies. He argues that such an ethics needs to be complemented by some form of moral theory and he bases his on discourse which he develops through the concept of co-responsibility (Apel, 1987a, 1998, Kettner, 1996). The difficulty with New Labour's discourse is that it endorses deontology without also offering any kind of moral discourse offering the public models of agency rather than discourses that they can engage with. The problems that this causes are clearly visible to the interview informants. The discourse ethical corrective to the focus on individual and ethical interests is based on the use of a

reflective discourse as a way of opening up the moral and normative dimensions of social problems (Habermas, 1990).

The analysis of the welfare benefits administrators discourses brought to light a stress on a liberal conception of the citizen, a person who is rational and capable of identifying her own responsibilities and dealing with them. The administrators also drew on a discourse that respected difference and defended choice and the fragmentation of welfare in light of the radical differences they saw in people's lives. But they were not satisfied with this discourse and in response to this unease they also drew on discourses calling attention to how choice mitigated against the interests of poorer and more vulnerable people in society. Their discourse can therefore be read as a call for a fairer way of organising policy norms. In effect they are demanding a method that respected difference but serves the interests of fairness for everyone. Of course, these respondents were far from equivocal on this need, nor were they comfortable with taking together a discourse that respects difference and universality.

While the government constructs a discourse that offers models of individual agency to people, and the benefits administrators discuss the merits and demerits of the fragmentation of welfare and the introduction of choice and market based provision, the remaining informants discussed their responsibilities in relation to norms. Finch and Mason (1993) have shown how people accept their responsibilities in certain culturally structured ways, and Duncan and Edwards (1999) demonstrated that responsibilities are individually held and socially

constructed. Here, the nature of these individually held and socially constructed responsibilities was shown as structured through a relationship between the reality of people's lives and the kinds of rationalities they offered to justify and explain how they accepted their responsibilities in specific ways. Their rationalities that were constructed in relation to some wider social construction. In each of these discourses, action was related with norms that contained universalising tendencies, so that individual interests were related with moral concepts.

In dealing with these interviews and the rationalities they highlighted, four kinds of discourses were identified. Informants using the egoistical discourse observed norms and related these norms to her own interests. The egoist accepted responsibilities that furthered these interests and justified her acceptance by calling attention to whatever discourse seemed relevant. She was egotistical insofar as she accepted responsibilities that she felt everybody should equally accept because it was equally in each person's interests. Thus, even as this discourse was focused on personal interests, it was constructed in relation to a moral discourse. The conformist discourse was based on an acceptance of responsibilities because the individual felt that it was her duty to do so. She accepted responsibilities that were hers in light of her role and the legitimate expectations others had of her. Therefore, the interest users of this discourse had, in being there for others, was constructed in relation to a moral discourse about the will of the community. This will was seen as sufficiently legitimate that its norms could be conformed with. In the reformist discourse responsibilities were accepted in a different and more critical way. In using this discourse, the individual discussed her responsibilities in

light of the norms organising her activities and sought to change these norms so that they better reflected her real interests. This represented a more ethical discourse because it was concerned with clarifying the real interests or the good for the self or for people like the self, members of a group or community. But the reformist discourse connected with a moral discourse insofar as concepts of justice were used to make the argument for individual interests, and that others in society had interests that equally deserved recognition. Finally, in the reflexive discourse, conforming to norms was seen as dependence on norms, and acceptance of responsibilities was based on arguments that appeared legitimate insofar as they signalled a better way of organising action. But those using this discourse also recognised how the acceptance of responsibilities in light of arguments depended on the ability to make a rational choice that comes with education and insight. This was a more moral discourse because it engaged directly with issues of universality and related the reality of people's lives with principles of justice. Thus, in each case, responsibilities were accepted by the individual and in relation to a moral discourse. The informants accepted their responsibilities for their own personal reasons and equally, legitimised their mode of acceptance in light of moral discourses.

The importance of wider social discourses came to the fore as people were enjoined to talk about the nature of responsibility in society. Here the informants felt that it was not that people were less willing to accept responsibility themselves, but that there are various kinds of discourses in circulation that gave people permission to accept responsibility for their own lives only. To explain this they referred to other discourses that cast people as irresponsible when the reality was they did not have

the tools to accept the kinds of responsibilities expected of them. Variations on these concerns were identified with a number of discourses central to out understanding of modernity. The first of these was a demoralisation thesis (Bauman, 1993, Fevre, 2000), wherein people take up discourses where they accept no responsibility for themselves. Secondly, there was a privatisation thesis that took issue with the way people are not enjoined to present a moral and responsible image of themselves to others. Third was a theory defending the authentic discourses people use to identify their own interests and abilities and accept responsibilities accordingly. Finally, a social discourse was used that drew attention to the fact that people might be behaving irresponsibly because they do not have the skills or resources to accept responsibility in a the sense of a liberal citizen. By informally identifying these discourses, the informants drew attention on the one hand to the norms constructed in various discourses and took issue with these norms because they provided people with norms that could legitimate irresponsible or narrowly responsible action. Or, on the other hand, the informants drew attention to the way people did in fact accept their responsibilities in light of legitimate personal interests or were hindered from accepting their responsibilities in full by the structure of their lives.

Having identified various discourses that were operative in the way people accepted their responsibilities, they took up a more normative discourse where asked about welfare state policies. In this context, the informants discussed constructions of responsibility that they felt should be offered by the welfare state to ensure that people accepted their responsibilities. Included, was an individualist

discourse that anticipated a social construction that placed the will to help benefits recipients alongside a call on those in receipt of benefits to better themselves through paid work. Those using this discourse felt it was important to help people but they were also suspicious of the motives of benefits recipients. Therefore, on the individualist discourse, it was important to police individual recipients to ensure they observed their part in the welfare bargain. Alongside this was an associative discourse that sought modes of helping people in receipt of welfare by integrating them into society. This discourse focused on socialising people to accept the values and norms of the wider society and to become able to accept their responsibilities for their own welfare themselves. Therefore it set out the values of society in order to incorporate people into the associations that comprised civil society and the economy where people could accept their responsibilities. A participative discourse was used to build as full a description as possible of the life situation of those in need of state help in order to formulate the most appropriate responses. This was a discourse that critically related reality with norm to contribute towards the discursive shaping of norms that would better serve the reality of people's lives. I referred to this discourse as participative because it set out to critically comment on the norms that effected people's lives. Finally, there was a deliberative discourse that brought together the reality of peoples' lives and the values underpinning social and policy norms to demonstrate how these norms needed to be re-evaluated. This discourse did not simply engage in critically evaluating the suitability of a norm to the reality of people's lives, it was also used to engage the norms themselves to examine these norms both in terms of principles of justice and fairness, and also in terms of the contradictions obtaining between norms.

These discourses represent the constructions that the informants felt ought to be used in mainstream and ideological discourse. In effect, the informants felt that welfare discourses needed to place a greater emphasis on morality. The informants constructed discourses designed to emphasise the morality of responsibility by emphasising the responsibilities of claimants and their role in the welfare bargain. These included the values that welfare recipients were expected to internalise to become responsible for themselves and to show their adherence to the collective will; the moral responsibility of the person who, by defining her life in accordance with her own reflexive awareness of her personal will, wants to contribute to the critical clarification of other people's will; and the responsibility of society to critically develop norms that better reflect the interests of members of society and that are in keeping with principles of justice and fairness. In each of these ways, morality is brought to bear on individual interests. Moreover, by bringing such a morality to bear, the individual interest is altered. It is no longer something that is conceived as entirely private, but is understood as related with socially constructed norms that always already have universalising tendencies, and thus a moral element.

From poverty to security, morality to ethics

In his study of contemporary morality, Smart (1999) concludes by drawing Levinas (1988), Bauman (1993) and Lyotard (Lyotard and Thébaud, 1985) together to observe:

> There can be no moral life without the choices, responsibilities and risks which are an inescapable corollary of ambivalence. No moral life without the

> uncertainty of ambivalence, but equally no moral life without the prospect of what Levinas refers to as 'something which cannot be realised but which, ultimately, guides all moral action' (1988: 178), and Lyotard describes as a 'horizon' to regulate our perspectives and to guide us (Smart, 1999: 189).

He shows how morality presents us with ambivalence, inconsistency, and uncertainty because it charges us to reflect on universality, diversity, and plurality in the knowledge that there can be no ideal that is not also an illusion. Nevertheless, even in a world where orientations to the good receive greater weight than moral universal orientations, there remains the need for moral guides to organise action. Echoing these sentiments, Leonard (1997) concludes his work on "Postmodern Welfare" by taking together the good for the self and the group with the orientation towards justice for all, to elaborate on the possibilities of an emancipatory project for welfare. Leonard (1997) argues that these divergent interests can be drawn together into a politics that recognises how ethical discourses require moral discourses to secure funding and a new kind of solidarity might emerge:

> This would be an *organised* solidarity founded on a common interest in the development of policies which benefited all of the identities (class, gender, race, age, etc.) while retaining a commitment to diversity and forms of organisation which enabled that diversity to be continuously expressed (Leonard, 1997: 176, emphasis in original).

However, as Honneth (1995) points out, it is difficult to translate the rationale of collective moral solidarity into the language of personal or group interests and notions of the good because:

> The abstract guiding ideas of modern societies provide so little in the way of a universally valid system of reference with which to measure the social worth of particular traits and abilities that they must always be made concrete through

> supplemental cultural interpretations before they can be applied in the sphere of recognition (Honneth, 1995: 126).

Equally, writing on the politics of identity as articulated in sociology and social theory, Calhoun (1995) notes how the political values espoused by the politics of identity are those that are attractive to researchers. In effect, it is not enough to celebrate a politics of identity that focuses on the emancipatory ideals of certain social movements without also taking into account other trends towards exclusionary and enclave politics (see also Jordan, 1998). Therefore, as Apel (1987a, 1998) has already made clear, if there is to be an emancipatory potential to the concept of responsibility, this potential needs to be clearly understood in both moral and ethical terms.

Of course, many writers have emphasised the link between ethical and moral discourses. But the argument has been made most astutely by feminist writers who have carried out a sustained analysis of how arguments made for the needs and rights of women gain a public resonance when made in moral and universal terms (Lara, 1998, Fraser, 1997). Williams (1999) discusses the critique of the welfare state instigated by "those political energies in civil society which have centred upon forms of welfare activity or activism since the late 1960s" (1999: 668). For Williams (1999, 2000), these social movements have given expression to a new political vocabulary that could be taken over from civil society by the state. Each of these principles of recognition and respect (interdependence, care, intimacy, bodily integrity, identity, transnational welfare and voice) can intersect with redistribution "to provide a shared vocabulary with which to write our individual and collective

welfare scripts" (Williams, 2000: 350). In effect, discourses that articulate the interests of individuals and groups can be linked with moral discourses and impact beyond the interests of the proponents of a discourse alone. To Williams's (1999, 2000) list I want to add responsibility in terms of Apel's (1987, 1998) concept of co-responsibility because this clearly articulates the moral dimension of responsibility taking in a way that is linked with the interests of individuals and groups, but which retains a solidly moral dimension.

As noted earlier, within academic social policy, responsibility has been a concept frequently used, but infrequently researched. This is in spite of the way in which the meaning of responsibility has changed from a concept that had universal moral appeal within a solidaristic version of citizenship, to a concept that is tied to the individual's own responsibilities to secure their own welfare themselves in accordance with their own life course (Roche, 1992, Lund, 1999, Dwyer. 2000). It is precisely because life politics has emerged as a political issue (Beck, 1994, Giddens, 1998) that the way in which people forge discursive links between their own individual interests and the wider moral order is in need of systematic investigation. Based on this systematic understanding of discourses of responsibility, my argument in this concluding chapter is that an emancipatory project for welfare remains a real possibility. I position myself alongside all of those feminists, environmentalists and postmodernists and hold that the interests of the individual and the group can be realised through discourses that connect with issues of collective solidarity. But the concept of solidarity that I wish to defend is distinct from Leonard's (1999) "organised solidarity" in the sense that the distinctive

feature of the research informants discourse was the process of considering their responsibilities themselves and not merely in terms of the outcomes. It is for this reason that I position myself squarely within the tradition of Frankfurt School Critical theory with its focus on the normative dimension. In this tradition of social theory, people are understood as "being endowed with normative expectations vis-à-vis society" and therefore:

> ... every society requires justification from the perspective of its members to the extent that it has to fulfil a number of normative criteria that arise from deep-seated claims in the context of social interaction (Honneth, 2003: 129).

Throughout this study I have emphasised the importance of the social dimension of responsibility and shown how this is based on how the individual can accept her responsibilities in light of the values organising responsibilities in society. It is now necessary to relate this social dimension to my call for a correlative discourse of responsibility.

The need for a correlative discourse of responsibility

The informants, of course, accepted their responsibilities for a variety of reasons including self-interest and because their responsibilities formed part of the recalcitrant material of their lives. But they discussed this acceptance in relation to norms that could be justified in discourse. Each of the different kinds of discourses they used made room for different kinds of justifications and different kinds of reasons. Their interests were related with moral conceptions and concepts of justice, which they felt best suited their interests. The egoist drew on a symmetrical notion of justice wherein everybody gained comparably from the observance of

norms. The conformist made use of a moral discourse in which the norms of the community were accepted as legitimate. Here interests were merged with the interests of the community. The reformist discourse sought to realise what it saw as the good life for herself within the wider society since her version of the good life was not recognised in this society. Finally, the reflexive discourse brought principled ideas of justice to bear on societal norms and sought to advance the interests of justice in an unequal society. Each in her own way, then, drew interests together with a moral discourse, and went about considering norms in terms of this morality. It is in light of this that I will now focus on the relationship between ethics and morals in relation to discourses of responsibility.

To this extent, New Labour's Third Way mix of communitarian and market collectivist ideas about responsibility offers a discourse that is adequate. These discourses converge on the individual and force her to adapt her behaviour in light of her individually held perception of her welfare responsibilities. The market collectivist approach expects her to take a greater interest in her own responsibilities where she can take ownership of these in the market (Schmidtz, 1998). The communitarian approach complements market collectivism by encouraging the individual to accept her social responsibilities herself because this will help improve the society she lives in (Etzioni, 1995). Thus, the benefits of locating responsibility in the market and civil society draw attention to ethics and the advancement of the good for the self through direct ownership of welfare responsibilities in the market, and direct benefits in the community. The Third Way twist on these discourses, as articulated by Giddens (1998, 2000), is to provide a

framework for achieving the aims of market collectivism and communitarianism. The Third Way is a discourse that draws people's attention to their responsibilities, and seeks to make people capable of dealing with these responsibilities themselves (Driver and Martell, 1997, Prabhakar, 2002). What makes these discourses insufficient is that none of them offer the scope to engage in discourse about the norms themselves.

Connecting interests with a moral discourse is precisely what the informants did when they drew on social norms to justify the way they accepted their responsibilities. It is this gap that a discourse ethical approach to discourses of responsibility identifies, and that critical theory offers the tools of analysis and redress. By demonstrating how the individual makes use of social norms to discuss her responsibilities, the importance of discourse comes to the fore. This conceptual result contrasts with Bauman's (1993, 1995) work. While many informants actively dealt with their responsibilities to others, and made the effort 'to be there for the other' as Bauman (1993, 1995) theorises, this was of lesser importance to the informants than how they justified and rationalised responsibility. While these informants would endorse Bauman's (1993, 1995) perception of an unwillingness to be there for the other in the wider culture, this was not something they saw in themselves. Rather, the informants discussed how they were there for others in relation to wider social norms, and therefore without having to rely on their own individual moral will as Bauman (1993, 1995) also theorises.

Goodin's (1998) contribution has been to restate the arguments for a moral collectivism in a society where collectivism has been obliterated in favour of individualism. Some form of collectivism is necessary if society is to retain some kind of core and collective fate. However, to realise this collectivism even in the weak form defended by Goodin (1998), a discourse is needed that combines an appreciation of the ethical and the moral dimensions of responsibility. In view of the argument made by the benefits administrators, it seems that there is little point arguing that people would be better off pooling risks and resources in the state when the diversity of life styles and life chances means that a great many people feel they can better secure their welfare in the market. However, a politics that is focused on an ethics of individual responsibility is not immune to moral calls. All a focus on the good means is that concerns are narrowed to those that relate with the good for the self or the group. By taking the formal conception of morality used in discourse ethics (Habermas, 1990, 1993, 1996, Apel, 1998), conflicts and collisions of ethical constructs can be understood as moral issues and dealt with in a moral way. In principle, market collectivism and communitarianism can be combined with discourse ethics through a shared concern with ethics and the orientation towards the goods, while discourse ethics can add a formal conception of morality that opens up a moral and normative space.

Using discourse ethics in this way calls attention to the correlative nature of morals and ethics. It takes up the idea that the individual tries to realise the good for herself but highlights how this good has a moral dimension. While the elements of the correlative features of a discourse of responsibility have been identified in this work

in the various discourses research informants use in relation to their personal responsibilities and in their discourses on wider welfare responsibilities, the components of this discourse and how it might be structured as an ideology have yet to be explored. This concept of a correlative discourse is distinct from Fevre's (2000) call for a 'recombinant morality' because it assumes that people are appreciative of the nuances of moral, ethical and pragmatic reasons and that moral reasoning is seen as a very important form of reasoning (see also Finch and Mason (1993) on the importance of moral reputations). Further, the correlative discourse differs from the recombinant morality in that the correlative discourse is aimed at articulating an ideological form of knowledge that recognises the diversity of situations in which people find themselves and negotiate the good for themselves, and the social and moral dimension of this action.

The correlative discourse can tentatively be conceived along the lines of Apel's (1987, 1998) ethics of co-responsibility. Insofar as the ethics of co-responsibility is essentially an ethics that takes responsibility for the consequences and side-effects of norms (Apel, 1998: 204), then it specifies the conditions through which responsibility can be accepted. These conditions are based on a discourse, that is, a procedure for arriving at decisions about norms that engages all affected using arguments. By engaging people in such real empirical discourses the meaning of co-responsibility can be attained, that is:

> the best *possible agreements* concerning *real interests* and the *optional empirical orientation on the consequences and effects of following norms may be reached.* (Apel, 1998: 205. emphasis in original)

The correlative discourse would work to make explicit both the moral and ethical reasons for settling on a specific course of action. It would do this because it accepts that moral arguments are always in some way bound up with ethical arguments, and by looking at how these different kinds of reasons intersect and correlate without looking for any kind of correspondence or necessary connection. The correlative discourse would work to highlight the moral and ethical dimensions of arguments, to bring to light the way in which a moral reason is positioned in relation to the needs, interests and ideas of the good held by those affected by a decision, and how these different kinds of reasons are situated by norms. This correlative discourse would not seek to achieve this by reaching for any new vocabulary, but by in each case working to narrate agreements in such a way that the diverse interests needs and ideas of the good are drawn together and accommodate in a norm that also expresses the relevant moral norms. In this way the correlative discourse would make people aware of the reasons that their interests have been compromised in some way through appeal to the moral norm that appeared most appropriate given that others had interests and reasons of their own that needed to accommodate. In this way the correlative discourse would foster the values of tolerance, co-responsibility and citizenship.

However, further work is needed to develop this kind of discourse. In specific, it is necessary to look at the way in which responsibility is distributed and accepted in and through the discourses already in progress among the various publics operating in the welfare public sphere. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) have analysed the way in which the anti-nuclear lobby developed constructions relating

to nuclear fuels that became taken for granted way people think about nuclear energy. They did this by identifying the 'critical moments' when an issue comes to prominence in discourse, the kinds of constructions that the various actors promote and the discursive strategies they employ to have their constructions gain power (Gamson and Modigliani, 1987, Snow and Benford, 1992 Johnston, 1995). In a similar way, Eder (1996) and Strydom (2002) have paid close attention to the individuals and organisations who become involved in discourses and the processes of 'frame competition' (Eder, 1996, Snow and Benford, 1992) through which nature (Eder, 1996) and risk (Strydom, 2002) have been socially constructed. A research project that takes up this kind of methodology in the context of discourses on welfare and responsibility would be in best placed to analyse the way norms that distribute responsibility in various ways are arrived at. While such a project could analyse the forms of knowledge that are developed and communicated more widely in the public sphere, the objective of such a research project would be to look at how the various actors came to a discourse with interests and needs that they somehow comprised on in favour of the wider social interest. By identifying norms that express a discursive co-responsibility for action and consequences, such a project could both highlight the value of co-responsible resolutions and could closely analyse the processes through which responsibility for welfare is constructed in contemporary discourse. By highlighting the value of co-responsible decisions, such a project could contribute to discourses that value the moral as well as ethical dimension of responsibility taking, and thereby help to construct an ideology that is more suited to the discourses used by the informants informing this research than the ideology that is currently employed by New Labour.

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APPENDIX 1: Interview instruments

Topic guide used for interviews with benefits recipients, members of the public and welfare benefits advisors.

Preamble

You've probably noticed politicians these days always seem to be talking about peoples rights or responsibilities and the governments of both parties have been changing the basis of our rights. They've been trying to make people more responsible for their own lives and less dependent on the state. I'm just wondering what you make of your rights and responsibilities. What I want to talk to you about are your own responsibilities; your work responsibilities, your responsibilities to your friends, family society whatever, and what you think you have a right to expect from other people or the state.

Could you tell me a little bit about yourself

Age, occupation, family, social Activities/ social or family network, ethnicity, education

What would you say are your responsibilities?

Emotional responsibilities

Childcare, elderly, disability, neighbourhood, family/ partner/ children

Financial responsibilities

Pensions, provide for dependents

What would you say are your most important responsibilities?

Family, work?

What would you say are your least important responsibilities?

Do you share these responsibilities with other people?

Family, friends, colleagues, neighbours

How do you feel about these responsibilities?

Do you think that you have too many responsibilities/ that the burden of responsibilities are not evenly shared? Is this fair?

Generally speaking, do you think that people take their responsibilities seriously enough?

Do you find that your responsibilities are thrust upon you, or do you willingly take them on?

Do you worry about your responsibilities?

Do you think that other people or the state should do more to alleviate your worries?

Should the state protect you from unreasonable responsibilities or demands? Does this mean that it is alright to be dependent on the state?

Generally speaking, what do you think the state should be responsible for?
Regulating welfare? Provide welfare? Ensure a good welfare system? Health, education, housing, social security, pensions. Opportunities for employment? Conditions for prosperity?

How much responsibility should the state take for people?

What do you think your rights as a citizen are?
Social care, health, pensions, work, unemployment, legal aid, education, housing,

To what extent should people be made to pay for things like health education social care?

To what extent should the state pay for these?

Some people have been saying that the governments of the two parties have been changing peoples social rights, and giving them too many responsibilities. Do you think that the government is right to do this?

Topic guide used in interviews with benefits administrators.

NOTE: This topic guide was developed specifically for the project reported in Dean and Rodgers (2004), and the interviews were carried out by the Research Assistant on this project, Ruth Rodgers. Details of this are provided in Chapter 4 above.

PREAMBLE:

Thank you for agreeing to talk to me. As you know, we are interested in finding out about how benefits administrators/**social care professionals** feel about the issues of dependency, responsibility and rights - and the relationship between these things. We're keen to hear your particular perspective as a welfare administrator/professional. We're not concerned with highly abstract ideas, but the practical everyday meaning of things. Also, I'd just like to emphasise that everything you tell me will be treated in confidence: we are independent researchers and not connected to the department. You will never be identified as having taken part in the research and, although - with your agreement - I would like to tape-record our conversation, nobody outside our research team will ever hear this. By the way, would you like to have the tape back when we've finished, or shall we just destroy it? Oh and of course you don't have to answer any thing you don't want to and we can stop whenever you want to. *[switch on tape and microphone]*

1) **Could you begin by telling me something about your professional background and present role. Not your whole life history but enough to introduce yourself and outline what your job entails.** *[NOTE: allow participant free rein to describe themselves. Do not prompt to elicit exhaustive information, only as necessary to sustain a few minutes' conversation.]* **Thanks for that. I'll need to confirm a few basic details with you before we finish, but for now, that's great.**

2) **Now, you may remember that in the letter/leaflet that was first sent to you, we set out a number of broad questions. The first was 'When is it acceptable**

for people to be dependent on the welfare state?' Could we talk about that a bit.

Key prompts (as appropriate):

- What do you mean by dependency? Do you have an image - an idea in your head - of what a dependent person is?
- Do you expect some day to be dependent? ... Is there any sense in which you would say that you're dependent *now* on other people (e.g. on your employer, (your clients, or your family)?
- Have you ever felt dependent as an adult?
- Would you say your clients are dependent? ... Are there different kinds of dependency?
- Is there a difference between being dependent on an employer/relative or spouse and being dependent on the state for benefits/care?
- When do you think it is acceptable to be dependent?
- Turning the question on its head, how would you describe an 'independent' person? Do you consider yourself to be 'independent'?

3) **The next main theme or question, if you remember, is 'To what extent should people be responsible for their own welfare?'**

Key prompts (as appropriate):

- What do you understand by the idea of responsibility? Do you have an image - an idea in your head - of what a responsible person is?
- Would you say that you are a responsible person? .... Are you responsible when you look after yourself or when you look after other people?
- What about your responsibilities towards your clients? Where would you say your responsibility ends, and your clients begins?
- What would you say are the responsibilities of your clients? ... Are there different kinds of responsibility?
- Obviously the present government places a lot of emphasis on the idea that it is people's responsibility to work.

- How far do you think we can take that? *(for example, should people take jobs for which they're overqualified or in which they will be underpaid in order to be considered responsible?)*
- Can you be responsible *without* working?
- When should people be allowed *not* to work?

- To what extent should people be responsible for themselves in case they fall sick, or are made redundant, or when they retire?
- Again - turning the question on its head, what do you understand by irresponsibility? How would you describe an irresponsible person?
- When people are irresponsible, what should society/the state do? Should such people be helped any way, or left to fend for themselves?

4) **The third of the themes we wanted to ask about related to the question - 'Should people's rights as human beings include the right to such things as state benefits, pensions and social care? Obviously, this is a more involved sort of question, so can I unpack it a bit:**

(a) **First of all, do you suppose that people have human rights - just by virtue of being human?** *(Don't worry. This isn't some sort of general knowledge test, we're just interested to know whether all the recent information about the Human Rights Act made any sense to people).*

Prompts:

- One view is that the only rights we have are the rights we're given by law - by the statutes passed by Parliament. Or are there rights we should have whether or not the law has granted them to us?
- Is it possible to define the rights that every human being has?

(b) **So in what circumstances do people have the *right* to be dependent on other human beings?**

Prompts:

- One view is that people have rights only if they meet certain responsibilities?

- Should dependent people and responsible people have the same rights or different rights?

(c) **One persons rights give rise to another persons responsibility. To what extent do you feel responsible for the rights of people who are dependent?**

Prompts:

- Would you say you are comfortable – or even *pleased* - that tax payers' money (and your time) is spent:

  (Do you feel this personally, or because of the job that you do?)

  (How strongly do you feel this?)

  - paying benefits to people who are unemployed?
  - paying benefits to people who are disabled?
  - paying pensions to people who have retired?
  - providing social care for people who are disabled?
  - providing social care for people who are elderly?
  - paying benefits/providing support for informal carers?
- Now, this is probably a difficult question, but are all these things the right of the people who receive them?
- Are they the responsibility of the people who pay for/provide them?
- Would you be comfortable or pleased to receive these things yourself? Why?
- I know this is an even more difficult question, but let me try it anyway: which do you suppose is the bigger responsibility - working or caring?

5) **I want to move on now from asking what you think about dependency, responsibility and rights as broad underlying principles, and ask what you think about the meaning all this might have for the future of the welfare state. Can I show you this card?** *[Present Flash Card I.]* **This is a standard question that is asked each year as part of the British Social Attitude Survey. However, can you tell me what you think your answer would be and, more importantly, why?**

6) **Here's another card.** ***[Present Flash Card II.]*** **This has got four statements on it. Can you read them all, before telling me which you agree or disagree with and, in particular, which you agree with the most.**

7) **Following from that, can we talk just for a moment about the so called 'welfare state' - by which I mean not just the benefits system and social care, but education, housing, and the NHS.**

- What do you think is going to become of the welfare state?
  - Is it going to carry on much as it has for the last 50 years?
  - Is it going to disappear?
  - Is it going to change radically?
- If the welfare state were to disappear or be cut right back, how would you feel about that:
  - For yourself?
  - For your family/children?
  - For other people?

8) **Okay that's great. One last thing, can I just check over your personal details.** *[Produce Checklist.]* **You'll see that this is completely anonymous, but we do need to be able to see the differences between people with different circumstances/ backgrounds.** *[Complete checklist with participant.]*

Many thanks for your help. As a matter of interest, is there anything else you'd like to tell me? Anything you think I should have asked or anything that's just occurred to you while we've been talking?
[Switch off tape and microphone. Say thank you again and goodbye]

FLASH CARD I

With which of the following statements do you most agree?

A	B	C	D
We should pay *less* in taxes and spend *less* on services like health, education, social benefits and services	We should keep taxes and spending on these services at the same level as now	We should pay *more* in taxes and spend *more* on services like health, education, social benefits and services	Don't know

FLASH CARD II

Please read the following statements and, for each of them, say whether you:

A	B	C	D	E
Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree

1. People can usually avoid poverty if they are talented or hard working, and if they seize the opportunities that are made available to them.

2. It is unacceptable that anyone should be poor and society should aim to prevent people from falling into poverty.

3. Some people will always be poorer than others, but society should support people who are poor by helping them as far as possible to support themselves.

4. Keeping out of poverty is mainly a matter of good luck, looking after yourself and your family, and keeping out of trouble

APPENDIX 2: Corpus of Press Releases

http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/press releases/2000/oct/09-10-00-1.asp

9th October 2000

UK and Ireland Agree Partnership to Tackle Transnational Benefit Fraud

The United Kingdom and Ireland today agreed to closer working arrangements to tackle the problems of transnational benefit fraud through increased information sharing and closer co-operation.

In a move to forge a closer working partnership between the two countries, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Alistair Darling, Secretary of State for Social Security, and Dermot Ahern, Ireland's Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs.

Welcoming the formal agreement, Mr Darling said: "The signing of this Memorandum of Understanding shows our Governments' commitment to catching the cheats who exploit and cheat our social security systems.

"The criminals who think they can get away with claiming in both countries, or hijack the identities of innocent Irish citizens to make false claims in the UK should take note: Government has a zero tolerance approach to fraud, benefit cheats will be brought to justice."

Officials from Ireland, Great Britain and Northern Ireland will be working in partnership to agree joint initiatives to combat fraud and to encourage the free flow of information on benefit fraudsters.

Notes for editors

1. The Memorandum of Understanding between the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland concerning co-operation and mutual assistance in the administration of social security programmes was signed at the Queen Elizabeth Conference Centre in London on Monday 9 October 2000, during the visit to London of Irish Minister Dermot Ahern to attend the OECD Conference on "Best Practices in Tackling Poverty and Social Exclusion".
2. The Memorandum affirms both Governments' commitment to implementing the Resolution of the Council of the European Union of 22 April 1999 on a Code of Conduct for improving co-operation between authorities of the Member States concerning the combating of transnational social security benefit and contribution fraud and undeclared work. A Management Committee of officials from Great Britain, Northern Ireland and Ireland will meet regularly to decide on a programme of work.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/oct/26-10-00-1.asp

26th October 2000

BFI Report: Westminster City Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by Westminster City Council was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.
Inspectors found a number of good practices and initiatives such as the Council's work with the Department of the Environment & Region's Rough Sleepers Unit and work undertaken to improve liaison arrangements between the Benefit Service and the Housing Department.

The BFI reports that the Council has a strong client side team to manage its contracted out benefit administration and counter fraud work. This team includes determination officers who undertake rigorous checks. However, the complex management framework and associated organisational arrangements has led to inefficiencies and delays in processes. The report notes that significant work will be required by the Council before it can give an assurance that the right amount of benefit goes to the right person in every case.

Inspectors identified other areas requiring improvement including the levels of verification being applied to claims that did not meet the minimum standards of the Verification Framework. The Council's benefit claim form requires enhancement so as to reduce the number of requests made to claimants for further information. Also formal liaison arrangements should be improved with private sector landlords.

Inspectors report the Council's strong counter fraud stance is supported by elected members. Performance in fraud investigations would be improved if the Council set targets for investigations and monitored outcomes to address concerns over delays in clearing investigation cases.

There is potential for the Council to make greater use of statutory powers, such as Inspectors powers, the recovery of overpayments from private landlords and to register debts with the court.

The BFI makes a number of recommendations to address weaknesses and help the council to improve administration and counter fraud activity for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.
Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Paul Goggins MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
3. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils. This Councils declared total benefit expenditure for 1998/99 was £105m.
4. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.dss.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/oct/26-10-00-2.asp

26th October 2000

BFI Report: Bristol City Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by Bristol City Council was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors report that the Council keeps the public informed about access to benefits, and has a well designed claim form. The report comments positively on the way the Council implemented the Verification Framework and the structured training and development programme that is provided for staff. In addition the Council has had some success in prosecuting benefit fraudsters.

However, Inspectors report serious deficiencies in the administration of benefits and efforts to counter benefit fraud. Concern is raised about weaknesses in the assessment, control and payment of benefit. Management checking was found to be inadequate with no effective assurance that claims are determined correctly from the outset.

The report notes the Council had no specific policy for the recovery of benefit overpayments and poor management in the classification of overpayments and recovery of debts.

Management information was also found to be poor with no effective means of measuring and monitoring performance at a corporate level. The Council could not provide BFI with details of debts recovered because of its inability to reconcile information between different accounting systems. This led Inspectors to question the integrity of the data being used to claim DSS subsidy.

The BFI's report includes recommendations to help the Council further improve its administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Paul Goggins, MP.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/oct/23-10-00-1.asp

23rd October 2000

More Financial Help for Families and Children

From today children in more than 1.6 million of Britain's poorest families will benefit from increases in the child allowance for Income Related Benefits (IRBs). The allowance is raised by £4.35 from £26.60 per week to £30.95 per week.

The estimated cost of the increase is about £300m from now until the end of March 2001 and about £700m for 2001/2002.

The increase of child allowance for IRBs will benefit an estimated 3 million children. Secretary of State for Social Security, Alistair Darling said:

"Today's increase clearly demonstrates our continued determination and commitment to eradicate child poverty.

"By directing help to where it is needed most we are carrying out our promise to tackle poverty and social exclusion head on. Today's increase gives extra support to over 1.6 million families in the greatest need to help them provide a better standard of living for their children - it is further evidence of our pledge to deliver opportunity for all.

"Coupled with the equivalent increases in the Working Families' Tax Credit and Disabled Person' Tax Credit we will continue to make work pay for those who can and provide support for those who cannot."

The new increase applies to the child personal allowances in Income Support, Jobseekers Allowance (Income based), Housing benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

Notes for editors

1. The increase was announced in the Budget on 21st March 2000.
2. It comes into force today. The increase will be made automatically to families in receipt of an IRB which includes the relevant child allowance. The increased rate will be paid from the first full benefit week that starts on or after Monday 23rd October 2000.
3. The increase applies to the rate of child allowance in the IRBs paid up to the September after the child's sixteenth birthday.
4. This increase builds on improvements in previous budgets. The allowance for children under 11 was increased by £2.50 per week in November 1998 and by £4.70 per week in October 1999. From April 2000 the rate for children aged under 11 was brought up to the amount of the rate for children 11 - 16.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/oct/16-10-00-1.asp

16th October 2000

Rooker Says Pension Statements Will Get More People To Save

Jeff Rooker, Social Security Minister, today presented a Kiss FM employee with their first combined pensions statement.

Emap, one of the pilot partners currently working with the DSS on combined pension statements, issued them to over 2,000 employees including staff from Kiss FM and Smash Hits.

The statement sets out an individual's estimated income in retirement by giving an estimate of both state and private pension provision.

Jeff Rooker said: "Once people see in black and white what they will have to live on I think they will realise the importance of saving for their old age and I hope it will prompt them to review the provision they have made for their retirement.

"These statements will be one of the important factors in getting people to save by showing them how much pension they have built up and how much more they can get if they save.

"Working people, who can afford it have a responsibility to save for their retirement. But the Government has a duty to help them. This is why from April 2001 we will introduce stakeholder pensions that will offer a low cost,

flexible and secure pension option. We will also introduce the Pension Credit in 2003 which will reward people who have saved for the first time."

The Government hopes that up to 15 million working people will be receiving combined annual pension statements by 2005.

Ralph Turner, Emap's Group Benefits Manager, said: "Our staff deserve to know about their future pension entitlements. This will allow them to make informed choices about their future and make proper provision for their old age. We are really pleased to be co-operating with the Government with this very important pilot.

In addition to Emap the DSS is also working in partnership with a number of companies on pilot schemes for the delivery of annual combined pensions statements including NPI, Sainsburys, AXA/Sunlife and Prudential.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/oct/05-10-00-1.asp

5th October 2000

BFI Report: Nottingham City Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorateís BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by Nottingham City Council was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors found the Council's staff committed to battling against arrears of work and striving to overcome long term problems associated with a shortfall in staff resources and deficiencies in management and control.

In the area of benefit processing there was some effective work but several areas of deficiency. There was a need for the Council to introduce a structured regime of checking so as to gain necessary management assurance about security, accuracy and quality. Remedial action was required to ensure better control over benefit claims so that changes in claimants circumstances could be anticipated and overpayments avoided. Also for more active management involvement and for security concerns and audit recommendations to be addressed promptly.

Despite a steer from the Council's elected Members in 1997 that effective action should be pursued against fraudsters, counter fraud work was found to be particularly weak. To address this the BFI recommended a thorough review of all counter fraud operations.

Inspectors acknowledge in their report that the Council had already undertaken some remedial action during the time they were working on site. The Council has provided the BFI with a list of actions it has taken or plans to take in response to the inspection.

The BFI makes a number of recommendations to address weaknesses and help the council to improve its administration and counter fraud activity for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Notes for editors

The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social Security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.

Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.

This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils. This Councilís declared total benefit expenditure for 1999/2000 was £98.6m.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/oct/05-10-00-2.asp

5th October 2000

BFI Report: Burnley Borough Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorateís (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by Burnley Borough Council was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

BFI reports that at the time of its inspection the Council provided a poor service to claimants particularly in the time taken to process many claims. Plans had been prepared by the Council for clearing arrears of work, but Inspectors pointed to a need for these plans to be implemented as a matter or urgency.

Weaknesses were found in the way the Verification Framework had been applied and a failure to ensure all

appropriate references had been made to the Rent Officer.

Inspectors report that the work of the counter fraud section was not managed effectively. There was a need for the Council to use its fraud database to analyse risk categories and for offenders to be prosecuted where appropriate.

The report notes that little action had been taken by the Council to address potential problems associated with private landlord cases which make up a high proportion of the claims caseload and represent one of the highest risk areas. A need was identified for the Council to introduce effective liaison arrangements with its local landlords and for relevant information to be collected so that risks can be assessed.

The BFI makes a number of recommendations to address weaknesses and help the council to improve its administration and counter fraud activity for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/press releases/2000/oct/03-10-00-1.asp

3rd October 2000

Darling Announces More Financial Help for Carers

£191 million extra financial help for carers was announced today by Alistair Darling, Secretary of State for Social Security. The package is the result of the review of financial support for carers.

The details are:

- £2 per week rise in the carer premium paid with Income related benefits such as Income Support;
- extension of claims to Invalid Care Allowance (ICA) to carers aged 65 years and over (at present claims can only be made up to the age of 65);
- increase in the ICA earnings threshold from £50 to the level of the National Insurance Lower Earnings Limit (LEL), currently £67. This means that carers will be able to earn £67 per week, after deduction of certain expenses, before it affects their benefit. This limit will in future rise in line with the LEL;
- ICA will continue for up to eight weeks after the death of the person being cared for.

Commenting, Alistair Darling said.

"Community care depends on the selfless work and dedication of carers.
"The new measures I have announced today mean that over the next three years over 300,000 carers could benefit financially.

"For the first time carers over the age of 65 will be able to claim the Invalid Care Allowance. Those carers without a retirement pension and some on a low rate will be entitled to it, and those on a low income will receive the carer premium."

Notes for editors

1. The package means that:
   - over 200,000 people will benefit from the £2 increase per week Carer Premium;
   - around 50,000 will benefit from extending claims to over 65s.
   - carers will be able to earn £67 a week after allowable expenses without their ICA being withdrawn. All carers who are able to combine working and caring could benefit by this measure.
   - Up to 10,000 people could benefit from allowing ICA to continue for eight weeks after the disabled person has died.
2. The present weekly rate is £40.40 Additions: dependent adult £24.15 eldest child £ 9.85 children £11.35
3. Around 387,000 people receive the benefit at a cost of £854million annually.
4. Carers who receive the benefit will be credited into the Government's State Second Pension.
5. Invalid Care Allowance overlaps with benefits such as the Retirement Pension and Bereavement Benefit . However opening up claims to carers over the age of 65 will give those on income related benefits such as Income Support access to the Carer Premium for the first time.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/30-11-00-1.asp

30th November 2000

Appointment of a new chairman of the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority (OPRA)

The Right Honourable Alistair Darling, Secretary of State for Social Security, today announced the appointment of Harriet Maunsell OBE as the new Chairman of the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority (Opra) from 1 April 2001. Mrs Maunsell succeeds Mr John Hayes CBE who retires on 31 March 2001.

The Chairman of Opra leads the organisation by playing a key role in enforcing compliance with occupational pensions legislation and helping to ensure that the interests of all members of occupational schemes are safeguarded.

In answer to a Parliamentary Question from Dr George Turner (North West Norfolk) Mr Darling said:

"I am pleased to announce that following the recommendation of an advisory panel established to select suitable candidates I have appointed Harriet Maunsell OBE to serve as Chairman of the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority (Opra) for a period of five years from 1 April 2001. Mrs Maunsell has been a member of Opra since 1997 and was for five years Deputy Chair of the Occupational Pensions Board."

Notes for editors

1. Opra is an independent statutory body established under the Pensions Act 1995 and is responsible for regulating occupational pension schemes. Operations started on 6 April 1997. Opra's primary role is to protect members' interests where people who run occupational pension schemes do not meet their legal obligations under the Pensions Act. It has the power to investigate schemes considered to be at risk, can prohibit or disqualify trustees and impose fines on wrongdoers. Opra also has responsibility for maintaining a register of pension schemes.
2. The appointment is from 1 April 2001 to 31 March 2006. Section 1(2) of the Pensions Act 1995 requires the Secretary of State to appoint a chairman of the Authority. The post is salaried and is part-time at three days a week. In addition to the Chairman, there are currently nine other Board members. All are part-time, attending about two days a month. They are entitled to claim a daily allowance.
3. Harriet Maunsell, 57, is a lawyer who, after an early career with Courtalds Ltd, spent 20 years with Lovells, a leading international law firm. She retired in 1997 having been a partner for 17 years. Since 1987 Mrs Maunsell has successively been a member of the Occupational Pensions Board and Opra; serving as Deputy Chair of the OPB for five years (including three months as interim Chair). She is a former member of the Occupational Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS) and a co-founder and first chairman of the Association of Pensions Lawyers. Mrs Maunsell has not carried out any political activity in the last five years and does not hold any other public appointments.
4. The appointment has been made in accordance with the principles of the Commissioner of Public Appointments' Code of Practice for Public Appointments. The post was advertised and an executive search was carried out by consultants. An advisory panel - comprising the two senior officials of the Department of Social Security, Opra's Chairman and an independent member - interviewed candidates and made recommendations to the Secretary of State.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/30-11-00-3.asp

30th November 2000

DSS Research Report 126 - 'First effects of ONE - Part A: Survey of clients, and Part B: DSS Research Report 127 - 'Qualitative research with clients' and 'Why not ONE: views of non-participants

The ONE service was launched in four pilot areas in the UK in June 1999, and in a further 8 areas in November 1999. New benefit claimants of working age in these areas access the benefit system though ONE and meet with a personal adviser to identify and remove barriers to work. ONE involves closer working across a range of welfare providers with the aim of delivering an personal and streamlined service to clients and helping clients consider the possibilities of work and training. Since April 2000 participation in a personal adviser meeting has been a condition of receipt of benefit for new clients. Clients will also be required to meet with their personal adviser at specified trigger points when changes in their circumstances mean that a work-focused meeting may be of help. The service will be piloted until March 2002.

The first evaluation reports published today, explore the experience of clients between June 1999 and March 2000, when participation was voluntary for non-JSA clients (findings relate to those who chose to take part). The reports are based on a survey of jobseekers, lone parents and sick or disabled clients beginning a claim

for benefit in the ONE pilot and control areas, and depth interviews with both clients who chose to take part in ONE and those declined.

The main findings are:

- Most clients expressed positive views about the idea of integrated help with work and benefits offered by the ONE service. In particular clients were positive about claiming benefits in one location, and having a personal adviser with whom they could maintain regular contact. Most participants agreed that they had been treated well by staff, and had had their individual needs taken into account (over 80% of participating lone parents and sick or disabled clients, and 74% of jobseekers agreed they had been treated as an individual).
- ONE has changed many participants attitudes to work by providing a tailored service. For some this has been achieved by talking about work as a longer term goal and signposting options that could help them towards the labour market. Advice from personal advisers has improved clients' self confidence in finding work and helped them to improve both the quantity and quality of jobsearch.
- Participants had discussed a range of work-related issues with staff such as jobsearch, training and educational opportunities and in-work benefits. They were also more likely to have received help with other benefits. The 'better-off calculation'[1] had been influential in encouraging lone parents to consider work.
- It is too early to determine the effectiveness of ONE in moving people into work. When differences in client characteristics were taken into account, lone parents in the pilot areas were more likely to be in work 4-5 months after beginning their claim than those in control areas, although there was no difference at this early stage for sick and disabled clients or jobseekers.
- Thirty one per cent of lone parents and 21% of sick or disabled clients beginning a claim for benefit said that they attended a meeting with a personal adviser (attendance was a condition of claiming benefit for jobseekers, but voluntary during this phase for non-JSA clients). Some of the reasons people did not participate in ONE were a belief that seeking work was not relevant to the client in the long term, and a perception that the timing of the intervention was inappropriate for them at the present time. Some clients did not participate because they experienced process problems such as failing to receive a letter inviting them to have a personal adviser interview.
- Not all clients recalled the explanation of ONE or an invitation to attend a personal adviser meeting when they began their claim. There was a lack of understanding about the concept and the process of ONE among non-participants. In particular some clients did not understand that a work-focused meeting had a wider purpose than getting people immediate entry (or re-entry) into employment. Some clients voiced concern about the requirement to participate, and some expressed a fear that those who were incapable would be forced into jobs.
- Lone parent participants who attended a personal adviser meeting were more likely to have a child over 3, be literate and numerate, be in good health, and have a driving license than non-participants, and less likely to be black or from an ethnic minority group. Sick or disabled participants were more likely to be aged under 25, to live with a partner with no children, have no qualifications, and have no job or business to return to after illness, and less likely to be black or from an ethnic minority group or to report mental illness or disability at the time of interview.

Notes for editors

1. 'First effects of ONE - Part A: Survey of clients and Part B: Qualitative research with clients' and 'Why not ONE: views of non-participants' are published on 30th November in the Department of Social Security's Research Report Series (reports 126 ISBN 1 84123 281 5 and 127 ISBN 1 84123 282 3). Reports are available from CDS (0113 399 4040) priced £38.50 and £25.00 respectively. Free report summaries are available from the DSS Social Research Branch (0207 962 8558).
2. The survey of clients was conducted by the Office of National Statistics, BMRB International and the Policy Studies Institute. The qualitative research with participants was carried out by Ecotec Consulting Limited. The research with non-participants was carried out BMRB International.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/29-11-00-1.asp

29th November 2000

Alastair Darling Announces a Fair and Just Scheme for Inherited SERPS

Alistair Darling, Social Security Secretary, today announced the Government's proposals for a "fair and just" scheme to put right the scandal of Inherited SERPS.

Under the new scheme everyone over state pension age on 5 October 2002 will be exempt from the change introduced by the last Government to halve the SERPS entitlement available to bereaved spouses.

In addition the new rules will give time to those within ten years of state pension age to prepare for the changes.

Mr Darling said: "Millions of people were given wrong, misleading or incomplete information about changes to SERPS introduced by the last Government in 1986.

"This problem should have been sorted out 14 years ago. What happened in the years after 1986 was a series of colossal blunders which were inexcusable and caused untold distress to millions of people.

"In March I announced that we have already deferred the change in the inheritance rule by 2 years until October 2002. No one will be affected by the policy change before that date.

The new proposals mean:

- All men and women over state pension age on 5 October 2002 will be exempt from the changes. They will be able to pass on 100% of their SERPS entitlement, as now.
- The new rules will only apply to men and women who are now ten years or more away from state pension age.
- For men and women, who are within 10 years of their state retirement age, the changes will be phased in.

Mr Darling said when he had deferred the introduction of the change in the inheritance rule he had promised to consult widely on a protected rights scheme. This was designed to provide redress to people who were given wrong or incomplete information.

"Over the past few months I have become increasingly convinced that such a scheme would not work in the way we intended and therefore not provide a fair and just solution to the problems.

"We could not be sure it would reach all those who had been misinformed particularly the old and vulnerable. It would also be difficult to safeguard such a scheme against fraud and abuse.

"The proposals I am setting out today are designed to give adequate notice of the changes to SERPS rules and provide transitional arrangements for people approaching retirement age and provide proper redress for millions of people already over retirement age.

"We have had to deal with a series of colossal blunders committed under the previous administration.

"I have already made arrangements to make sure this kind of thing can never happen again by tightening up procedures and bringing policy and operational responsibility for pensions together into a single organisation."

The Secretary of State added that the very small number of people who have evidence that they were clearly misinformed by the Department and who are not fully covered by the above proposals will have access to the usual departmental procedures for dealing with maladministration.

Notes for editors

1. The DSS will write this week to all those people who have contacted the Department already to set out the position.
2. The table below illustrates how the Inherited SERPS scheme will be phased in for people reaching state pension age between 2002 and 2010.

% SERPS passing to surviving spouse	Date when contributor reaches state pension age
100%	5.10.2002 or earlier
90%	6.10.2002 - 5.10.2004
80%	6.10.2004 - 5.10.2006
70%	6.10.2006 - 5.10.2008
60%	6.10.2008 - 5.10.2010
50%	6.10.2010 or later

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/29-11-00-2.asp

29th November 2000

Fall in Fraud and Error Shows Tide Turning against Benefit Cheats - Darling

The first substantial fall in fraud and error shows the tide is turning against benefit cheats, Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling said today.

Mr Darling welcomed the latest figures from independent statisticians showing a 6.5 per cent reduction in fraud and error as evidence of progress in combating fraud.

"We inherited a system where tackling fraud and error was not taken seriously, in which fraud was not recorded before 1995.

"This Government has taken a zero tolerance stand against fraud and error, tightening the benefit regime to make sure the right money is paid to the right people," he said.
"We are well on target to meet our commitment to reducing fraud and error by 10 per cent by March 2002."

Mr Darling added: "The progress we are seeing must and will continue. Combating fraud is one of the

reasons social security spending is under control and will remain under control.

"We are committed to reducing fraud and error by 25 per cent by March 2004 and by 50 per cent by March 2006. That can only happen if we intensify our vigilance against fraudsters.

"A major award from Spending Review 2000 has given the DSS the necessary money to make a significant investment in the most up-to-date IT. With modern computer equipment and the extra staff we are putting into the front line we will bear down on fraud and error wherever it occurs.

"I also want fraudsters to know that we intend to toughen the penalties against persistent offenders as well as increase the powers available to investigators.

The reduction in fraud and error in Income Support and Jobseekers' Allowance benefit payments is revealed in the latest annual review by the Department of Social Security's Analytical Services Division.

The report demonstrates that fraud and error fell from 9 per cent to 8.4 per cent of benefit paid between April 1999 to March 2000 - saving around £60 million.

Notes for editors

1. We have halved the number of cases where IS/JSA claims are paid out without sufficient evidence. In 1997, 2 out of 5 IS/JSA claims were paid without enough evidence. Since then the gateway to Income Support and JobSeekers' Allowance has been strengthened. Claimants must now produce more evidence before IS/JSA is paid.
2. Cautions for fraud trebled in the year in the 12 months to February this year and the DSS prosecuted more than 20,000 cases in 1999-2000 - a rise of 45 per cent on the previous year.
3. In the Fraud Act 1997 powers were introduced under Sections 20 and 21 to prevent fraudulent claimants using the Royal Mail's post redirection arrangements to submit benefit claims from false addresses.
4. We are introducing nationwide a successful pilot scheme for the issue of National Insurance numbers. The scheme involves using detailed databanks to permit sophisticated investigation of claims.
5. We have established a new unit to improve intelligence to combat fraud. The National Fraud Intelligence Unit combines the expertise of organised fraud investigations with that of other agencies nationwide, including the police and local authorities.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/29-11-00-3.asp

29th November 2000

Fraud and Error in Claims for Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance from October 1998 to September 1999 and from April 1999 to March 2000

Public Service Agreement Progress on Fraud and Error

For the period April 1999 to March 2000, the estimated fraud and error overpayment on IS and JSA was £1.32 billion annually, or 8.4% of the benefit paid. This represents a statistically significant reduction since the baseline.

The Department of Social Security (DSS) has PSA targets to reduce fraud and error by 10% by March 2002, 25 per cent by March 2004 and by 50 per cent by March 2006. The baseline from which progress is measured is the level over the 12-months from October 1997 to September 1998. This baseline is 9.0% and was published in a Government Statistical Service (GSS) report in October 1999. The 10% target reduction therefore translates to an 8.1% level of fraud and error by March 2002.

The Public Service Agreement target measure is the estimated percentage of benefit overpaid due to fraud and error, including official error, in Income Support and Jobseekers Allowance. Public Service Agreement figures are constructed from a combination of surveys.

Uncertanties in the Estimates

Results derived from the analysis of a sample of IS and JSA claims, rather than of all IS and JSA claims, are subject to statistical uncertainties. These uncertainties have been quantified and are presented in the results as 95% confidence limits. These define the range within which we can be 95% certain that the true value lies.

Further sources of uncertainty have not been quantified. Fraud is by its nature a covert activity, and it is possible that some frauds and errors on sample cases will not have been uncovered. In addition, there are instances where fraud was suspected but was not admitted and could not be proven.

Fraud and Error in Claims for Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance from October 1998 to September 1999 and from April 1999 to March 2000.
Issued by Department of Social Security
Analytical Services Division
Contact: James Lind 0113 232 420
Notes for editors

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/27-11-00-1.asp

27th November 2000

Claim Your Pension over the Phone: New Tele-Claim service for Pensioners

People who are about to retire can now claim their State Pension by telephone rather than by filling in a form Alistair Darling, Social Security Secretary, announced today.

Mr Darling said: "This new service will give people about to retire active assistance when they claim. It will provide a smooth, efficient and accessible service. This is part of my aim to modernise the services that the DSS offers.

"By using the new tele-claim service they can give their details over the phone - it is an easy, quick and safe way to claim your pension.

"The DSS has already modernised the way it offers services to pensioners. In addition to this new tele-claim service, the MIG electronic claim form has already ensured that thousands of pensioners have received extra money quickly and with the minimum of fuss. Tele-claim services are the way ahead."

This service is what customers want - a survey from the pilot that operated in London showed that 97% of people who used the service gave it 8 out of 10 or better.

Mr Darling said: "I can also announce that we are working towards cutting down the 38-page MIG claim form so that it is easier for pensioners who do not want to use the electronic version of this claim form to get the money they are entitled too".

People approaching retirement are automatically contacted four months before they retire. Instead of having to use a claim form (BR1), there will be three options:

- Ring the National Tele-Claim Service and give their details over the phone,
- Ring the National Tele-Claim service and request the claim form; or
- Complete a tear-off slip to receive a form in the post.

The service helps pensioners by:

- Reducing the need to keep going back to customers for more information, speeding up the rate at which claims are cleared.
- Enabling the collection of accurate and complete information first time. We have to go back to customers for more information in fewer than 2% of cases, compared with 40% previously.
- Reducing the need for customers to supply evidence of birth, marriage or divorce that the Department has previously seen and verified for other purposes.

"We recognise that pensioners are a distinct group of people with their own needs. So we are currently in the process of setting up a new pensions organisation for Summer 2001," continued Mr Darling. "It will provide a new and radically better service for today's pensioners so that for the first time they will be able to obtain all social security services from a single accessible point."

Notes for editors

1. From July 1997 to July 2000 a pilot service ran in the Greater London Area.
2. The service is available from 7am to 7pm Monday to Friday on 0845 300 1084. Only people who have received their retirement pack should ring as it does not deal with general inquiries about pensions. For general enquiries ring the Pensions Information Line on 0845 731 3233.
3. The service is available for textphone users on 0845 300 2086.
4. The MIG electronic claim line is 0800 0281111.
5. A picture of Alistair Darling talking to customers who have used the service is available on the full UK and Ireland Newswire Circuit from Two Ten Communications (020 7490 8111).

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/21-11-00-3.asp

21st November 2000

Statutory Maternity Pay Rule Change for Women Affected By Commissioner's Decision

Hugh Bayley, Social Security Minister, today announced a rule change to restore Statutory Maternity Pay entitlement (SMP) for the future to women who would have lost out as a result of a Commissioner's decision earlier this year.

The change means that women, who have satisfied the SMP employment and earnings tests but who subsequently are dismissed or whose employment is ended without their consent before they have started their maternity leave, will once again be entitled to SMP.

Mr Bayley said: "We want pregnant women to get maternity pay when they stop work. These rules protect the health of the mother and her child.

"A recent Commissioner's decision meant that some pregnant women who left their job, for reasons that had nothing to do with their pregnancy, could not get maternity pay.

"The Government has acted quickly by laying these regulations to close that loophole."

The new rules came into force on 17 November 2000 and apply to women expecting babies on or after 4 March 2001, if they are dismissed or their employment is ended without their consent on or after 19 November 2000.

Notes for editors

1. Statutory Maternity Pay is paid by employers for up to 18 weeks to pregnant employees who have been employed by them continuously for 26 weeks into the qualifying week (the 15th week before the week the baby is expected) and who earn on average at least £67 a week. They must also cease work wholly or partly because of their pregnancy. A woman gets 90% of her average earnings for the first 6 weeks and £60.20 a week for the next 12 weeks.
2. The requirement to stop work was always thought simply to mean that a woman could not work for her employer and at the same time receive SMP from him. The Commissioner's decision said that the requirement in fact meant that a woman would not be able to get SMP if she had left work for a reason totally unconnected with her pregnancy.
3. Women who stop work because of their pregnancy (even partly because of their pregnancy) were not affected by the Commissioner's decision and continued to get SMP. The new regulations "The Statutory Maternity Pay (General) (Modification and Amendment) Regulations 2000" mean that women who are dismissed or whose employment is ended without their consent, for example, because of redundancy, will once again be able to get SMP from their employer.
4. It is not possible for the regulations to restore SMP entitlement to the very few women who might resign their job voluntarily for reasons totally unconnected with their pregnancy. We expect that the number of women who give up their job late in pregnancy for reasons which are nothing to do with their pregnancy will be very small. They may qualify for Maternity Allowance instead. MA is the state benefit paid to pregnant women who fail to qualify for SMP. It is paid for 18 weeks at the same rate as flat rate SMP.
5. Employers are reimbursed for 92% of the SMP they pay out. Smaller employers (those whose gross National Insurance liability in the previous tax year was £20,000 a year or less) recover 105%.
6. Stephen Byers, the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, is undertaking a review of maternity pay and parental leave entitled "Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice". He is consulting extensively with parents, employers and Trade Unions and will publish a green paper towards the end of 2000.
7. Both women and employers may obtain more information from their local Inland Revenue National Insurance Contributions Office. Employers may phone the Employers' Helpline on 08457 143143.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/14-11-00-2.asp

14th November 2000

Photocall to Mark First £200 Winter Fuel Payment

The first £200 Winter Fuel Payment cheque will be presented to north London pensioners George and Louise Hepburn by Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling.
Around 11.5 million people will receive the Winter Fuel Payment in the coming weeks.

The photocall is on:
Tuesday 14 November 2000
At: **9am**

In:
Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS
Please ring Lisa Mackenzie on 020 7238 0752 if you intend to send a photographer or camera crew along.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/14-11-00-1.asp

14th November 2000

Alistair Darling Hands Out the First £200 Winter Fuel Payment

Winter Fuel Payments will start arriving on people's doormats from today, Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling announced.

Mr Darling presented George and Louise Hepburn, a pensioner couple from north London, with a £200 cheque.

Mr and Mrs Hepburn are two of 11.5 million people who will receive their Winter Fuel Payment in the coming weeks.

Mr Darling said:

"Pensioners should not have to worry about keeping their homes warm over the winter months. And this money will go a long way towards helping 11 million pensioners keep warm this winter."

A Winter Fuel Payments helpline is open from 8.30am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday: **08459 15 15 15**.

Notes for editors

1. Payments will be made to all eligible households in England, Scotland and Wales.
2. For the first 2 winters of the scheme (1997/98 and 1998/99) eligible households received £20 whilst the poorest pensioners, those receiving Income Support, received £50. Winter Fuel Payments were increased to £100 for eligible households for winter 1999/2000. A further increase was announced in the Budget to £150 for the coming winter and this amount was later increased to £200 in the Pre Budget Report in November 2000.
3. For winter 1999/2000 around 10 million pensioners in over 7.5 million households benefited from Winter Fuel Payments.
4. On 16 December 1999 following an European Court of Justice ruling, Alistair Darling announced that the Winter Fuel Payment would be equalised so that most men and women who are aged 60 and over during the qualifying week would be eligible for a payment. Under this new criteria people would also be eligible for backdated payments from the start of the scheme.
5. The eligibility criterion is that during the specified week the household has an occupant ordinarily resident in Great Britain or Northern Ireland aged 60 or over. The need to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit, which existed prior to 16 December 1999, has been removed.
6. Exclusions from the scheme include people who during the qualifying week were living permanently in residential care and receiving Income Support; receiving free in-patient hospital treatment for over 52 weeks; detained in custody and sentenced; and people subject to immigration control.
7. The qualifying weeks since the introduction of the scheme have been:

1997/98 - week ending 11 January 1998
1998/99 - week ending 15 November 1998
1999/00 - week ending 26 September 1999
2000/01 - week ending 24 September 2000

8. Under the new scheme, and incorporating the rise to £200 as announced in last week's Pre Budget Report, this coming winter expenditure will increase to £1.8 billion annually. For past winters, the cost of making backdated payments is estimated to be up to £150 million.
9. As a result of the extension of the scheme up to an additional 1.5 million people will be eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment this year, and up to 1.9 million people will be eligible for backdated payments. All claims for backdated payments returned for processing by 3 November 2000 will be paid before Christmas 2000.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/13-11-00-1.asp

13th November 2000

New Measures to Help Disabled People Back to Work - Hodge and Bayley

Minister for Disabled People, Margaret Hodge, and Social Security Minister, Hugh Bayley, today announced that a national network of Job Brokers is being set up to offer people on Incapacity Benefits the support, guidance, and preparation they need to find paid work and move off benefit dependence.

The Job Brokers will be unique. This New Deal will be delivered largely by the voluntary and private sectors and will match employers to potential employees currently on Incapacity Benefits. A prospectus outlining what we want Job Brokers to achieve is launched today.

Mrs Hodge said:

"Disabled people are seven times as likely as non-disabled people to be out of work and claiming benefits. People in receipt of Incapacity Benefits are the largest group of economically inactive people in Britain - one million would like to work and 400,000 could work now given the right support.

"We're taking action to help disabled people achieve that aim. Through the extension of the New Deal for Disabled People, a network of Job Brokers will offer people on Incapacity Benefits the guidance and support they need to find paid work. It will also offer help and advice to employers in meeting the needs of disabled employees."

"We've piloted a range of approaches across the country to find out what works best. We've worked with both the private and voluntary sectors to create new opportunities for disabled people, such as:

- The Eastern Valleys pilot in Wales has helped over 750 long-term sick and disabled people back to work. This included a man who had been on Incapacity Benefit for five years after a spinal injury - the pilot helped him to gain a PSV driver licence and get a job with his local bus company.

- Centrica, a private sector gas company, took on around fifty disabled people in their call centre as part of an innovative pilot scheme.
- Pilot schemes in Bristol and Bath have helped disabled people start up their own businesses - these range from toy production to kitchen fitting and art dealership.

"Job Brokers will build on that experience by helping to match employers to potential employees. It's going to have a dramatic impact on the lives of thousands of disabled people."

Hugh Bayley said:

"The support of employers is critical to the success of this New Deal. We have well-motivated disabled people who want to work and well-motivated employers who want to hire them; now we want job brokers to bring them together. The Prospectus we have launched today is inviting private, voluntary and public sector organisations to consider bidding to become job brokers and help us match the abilities and potential of disabled people to employers.

"Job Brokers will work closely with employers to help disabled people prepare to move into, or back into work. Job Brokers will need to understand the local labour market and be aware of the needs of disabled people. They will match jobs available with the skills needed to fill them, and help develop skills for those who do not already have them. Job Brokers will work with people with a disability or long term illness entitled to incapacity benefits."

The prospectus paves the way for an invitation to tender for organisations that are interested in delivering the extension of the New Deal for Disabled People. The Invitation to Tender document will be available on 27 November 2000.

Notes for editors

1. Education and Employment Secretary David Blunkett pledged to build on the success of the New Deal by offering Government help to people on long term illness or disability. This pledge was announced as part of a keynote speech at the Policy Studies Institute seminar on Wednesday 11 October (see PN 434/00).
2. In March 2000 the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced that the Government intended to extend the New Deal for Disabled People. This will form a part of the Government's programme to introduce comprehensive civil rights. The programme has included the Disability Discrimination Act, the creation of the Disability Rights Commission, the introduction of the Disabled Person's Tax Credit and, in England, the introduction of Joint Investment Plans for Welfare to Work.
3. New Deal for Disabled People is being jointly developed by the Department of Social Security, the Department for Education and Employment and the Employment Service. To date it has involved the following measures:
   - twenty four Innovative Schemes to test new ways of helping disabled people who want to work;
   - Personal Adviser Service pilots in twelve locations to help disabled people overcome particular barriers to work.
4. The New Deal for Disabled People will be extended on a national basis, with services for disabled clients beginning from July 2001. It will start to introduce for the first time:
   - A voluntary gateway to engage those flowing onto incapacity benefits;
   - Client choice in selecting a job broker;
   - Encouragement for innovation on the part of job brokers; and
   - A focus on outcomes that achieve lasting paid employment for long-term sick and disabled people.
5. The prospectus launched today outlines the key elements of the extension of New Deal for Disabled People and paves the way for an Invitation to Tender for organisations which are interested in delivering this New Deal. The Invitation to Tender will be available on 27 November 2000. Copies will be available on The New Deal for Disabled People website via a link from http://www.disability.gov.uk or from:

Jobseekers Disability Services 6
3rd Floor, Rockingham House
West Street
Sheffield S1 4ER

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/10-11-00-1.asp

10th November 2000

Cash Help for Cancer Sufferers in Coventry

People with cancer in Coventry may be missing out on extra financial help, which could make a big difference to their lives. They will, however, have the opportunity to check out their entitlement to benefits and other cash help by speaking to experts at 2 day **Advice and Information Event** being organized by **Coventry Benefits Agency. The event will be held at the Radiotherapy and Oncology Centre at Walsgrave Hospital on Tuesday 14 November and Wednesday 15 November between 9.30 and 4.00pm.**

Last year 's event saw over 100 people receiving advice and information. It is expected that this years two day mega-event will reach an even wider audience. Staff from the Coventry Benefits Agency office at Cofa Court

and from the Midlands Disability Benefits Centre will be on hand over the two days to give advice and information and carry out benefit check-ups for patients, carers , friends and relatives.

The event will raise awareness of disability benefits, including Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance.

Geraldine Fisher, Information Officer for Coventry Benefits Agency says "This is the second year in which we have been invited to run this advice and information event for cancer sufferers at Walsgrave Hospital. This event has been organised to give people the opportunity to talk to friendly benefits advisors who will carry out personal benefit calculations."

For further details contact:-
Pat Sever, Benefits Agency Press Offices on 0121 626 2991 or 0374 402 051 (Mobile).

Notes for editors
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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/09-11-00-2.asp

9th November 2000

Radical Pension Reform: The Government is doing more to reward saving for retirement

- Weekly income for single pensioners of not less than £100 and £154 for couples from 2003.
- 5.5 million pensioners better off from the Pension Credit alone and 3 million better off from tax changes.
- Two thirds of pensioners who will gain are women.

More than half of all pensioner households will benefit from the introduction of the Pension Credit, Alistair Darling announced today.

"For the first time ever the Pension Credit will make sure savings will be rewarded," said Mr Darling. "There is a fundamental fault in the system we inherited. Saving should be rewarded, not punished. The Credit will reward the thrift of millions of people who have worked hard to save for their retirement.

"The Credit builds on the long term reforms the Government has already made. Our aim is to end pensioner poverty and ensure that all pensioners share in the rising prosperity of the nation. We are building a coherent and sustainable strategy for pensioners."

Mr Darling continued: "A pensioner with £20 of occupational pension on top of their state pension can find themselves just a pound or two better off than someone who saved nothing. That's unfair, unjust and it's going to stop.

"That's why we are introducing the Credit - so for the first time in the history of the welfare state saving will be rewarded. When it starts from 2003 the Credit will reward all those with weekly incomes up to £135 for single pensioner, or £200 for couples. That means 5.5 million pensioners - half of all pensioner households in this country - will be better off as a result of the Credit."

The Credit will guarantee a minimum income, which by 2003 will be at least £100, or £154 for couples. On top of that for every pound saved, pensioners will receive an additional cash credit. This means extra cash of between £1 and £23 a week on top of the Basic State Pension depending on the amount of savings and other income.

"The changes we are making will be of particular advantage to women," Mr Darling said. "On average, women have smaller occupational pensions and live longer than men. So they'll be much better off under the Credit; in fact two thirds of those who will benefit from the Credit are women.

"We are also scrapping capital limits completely. And we're no longer assuming that pensioners can get a ludicrous 20% return on their savings".

All tax paying pensioners tell us about their incomes once a year. The poorest pensioners have to tell the benefit system about changes every week. "I propose to get rid of the weekly means test," Alistair Darling said. "Instead the Credit will be based on an income assessment that is more like the tax system.

"When you retire, a calculation has to be made about your state pension. At the same time we will work out how much a pensioner is entitled to under MIG and the Credit. After that, any adjustments only need to be made when circumstances change significantly.

"The message is clear - save whatever you can afford to put by. It will now always pay to save."

And, although most pensioners pay no tax at all, for those who do, in 2003 the Government will raise the pensioners' tax allowances by £240 over an above inflation. On current forecasts, that means the 3 million pensioners who pay tax will be £1 a week, in real terms, better off because of these tax changes.

The Pension Credit will be introduced from 2003. To ensure that pensioners get a fair deal until then the Chancellor announced transitional arrangements yesterday.

The Retirement Pension for a single pensioner will rise by £5 for a single pensioner in 2001 and by £3 the year after. For couples, the figures are £8 and then £4.80.

Mr Darling continued: "The Government will be spending £8.5 billion more on pensioners over the lifetime of this Parliament, that's over £5 billion more than they'd have got from an earnings link. In fact from next year, the poorest third of pensioners will get five times more than they would have done under the earnings link."

Notes for editors

1. The Consultation will end on 28 February 2001. All comments should be sent to The Pension Credit Consultation Team, DSS, 5th Floor, The Adelphi, 1-11 John Adam Street, London, WC2N 6HT or pension-credit-team@ms41.dss.gsi.gov.uk
2. How will pensioners gain from the Pension Credit? The tables below show how much credit you will receive for every pound above the Basic State Pension.
3. The Consultation Document is on the DSS website at http://www.dss.gov.uk/publications/dss/2000/pencred/ or from Welfare Reform (Pension), Freepost (HA4441), Hayes, UB3 1BR, telephone: 020 8867 3201, fax: 020 8867 3264.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/03-11-00-1.asp

3rd November 2000

Want Information on Stakeholder Pensions? Ring a New Helpline

People who want more information on stakeholder pensions can now ring a new helpline for impartial information, Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced today.

Launching the helpline Mr Rooker said: "Stakeholder pensions will, for the first time, offer millions of people a good value, secure and flexible second pension.

"Stakeholder pensions will be available from April 2001 and very soon people are likely to be receiving information from companies providing stakeholder pensions.

"This helpline will provide impartial information for people who want to know more about stakeholder pensions before deciding on their pension choices."

The helpline will be run by OPAS - the Pensions Advisory Service - and funded by the DSS and the Financial Services Authority. The stakeholder pensions telephone helpline is 0845 601 2923. Calls are charged at local rates. The line is open between 8.30am-6.30pm, Monday to Friday.

Trained staff will talk to callers so they have a better understanding of what stakeholder pensions will involve. Callers might ask about:

- How stakeholder schemes must operate and the rights of members;
- What their employer may be required to do; and
- The relationship between a stakeholder pension and existing pension arrangements.

"People who can save for their future have a responsibility to do so" Mr Rooker continued. "If you want to enjoy your retirement you need to plan for your future as early as possible. This helpline will help you understand more about what is on offer."
Malcolm McLean, Chief Executive of OPAS said: "Our staff are ready and able to help people find out about stakeholder pensions. The service will aim to help people understand what is on offer in a clear, easy to understand way."

The line will not provide specific financial advice, and will not market stakeholder pensions or schemes.

Notes for editors
Questions from employers about stakeholder pensions should be directed to the Inland Revenue Employers' helpline on 0845 7143 143.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/02-11-00-1.asp

2nd November 2000

BFI Report: London Borough of Tower Hamlets

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by the London Borough of Tower Hamlets was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

This was the BFI's second inspection of the Council and followed publication of its first report in July 1999. This inspection referred back to the BFI's earlier work, measured progress made since 1999 and considered the Council's current performance.

Inspectors report that the Council had responded positively to the BFI's first inspection report and recommendations. Performance in benefit

administration is now monitored more rigorously and the Council is working closely with the Benefits Agency. Despite deciding not to adopt the Verification Framework Inspectors report positively on the Council's efforts to ensure only those who are eligible to benefit, receive it. The Council is now in a strong position to implement the Verification Framework should it choose to do so.

The report makes particular mention of the way benefits staff and those dealing with homeless people work together. This is acknowledged to be a difficult area for which the Council's efforts are commended.

Counter fraud staff are active in investigating fraud and levying sanctions on fraudsters. Other measures provided by legislation have been adopted including administrative penalties and the use of the Council's own legal department to prosecute fraudsters.

The BFI identify potential for further progress to improve the security of benefit administration by increasing the number of home visits to claimants and targeting counter fraud activity against claimants who fail to declare income or change of address.

The BFI's report includes recommendations to help the Council further improve its administration and counter fraud activity for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
3. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils. This Council's declared total benefit expenditure for 1999/2000 was £123m.
4. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.dss.gov.uk.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/nov/02-11-00-2.asp

2nd November 2000

BFI Report: City Of Edinburgh Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by the City of Edinburgh Council was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors originally visited the Council in May and June 1997 as part of a series of trial inspections but their findings were not published. This inspection referred back to the BFI's earlier work, measured progress made since 1997 and considered the Council's current performance.

The BFI reports on a lack of progress made by the Council on the main issues identified in their original visit. The reports main conclusion is that the Council is not as effective in tackling fraud and error as it should be. In particular it has no strategic approach to combating fraud and error and there are serious weaknesses in internal security.

A failure to clear claims speedily enough had resulted in backlogs of work and concerns are noted about the standards of verification being applied to claims.

The approach of the Fraud Unit is mainly reactive with little concerted effort directed towards proactive work. There was scope for the Council to make better use of management information and the poor quality of counter fraud casework had brought about premature closure of investigations. There had also been a widespread failure to prove fraudulent intent.

The report acknowledges improvements made by the Council in the physical merger of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit administration which addressed a number of the BFI's earlier concerns. There had been general improvement in the interface arrangements with the Benefits Agency. The Council had also taken forward initiatives in the purchase of a fraud information system, piloted the National Benefit Fraud Hotline and seconded a number of staff to the Benefits Agency to promote joint work on prosecutions.

The BFI concluded that for the Council to demonstrate clearly its commitment to efficient administration of benefits, and particularly tackling fraud and error, it will need to develop a coherent strategy, which would translate into clear objectives and performance targets. This approach would also require the endorsement of the Council's senior officers and elected Members.

The BFI makes a number of recommendations to address weaknesses and help the council to improve its administration and counter fraud activity for Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Jim Cunningham MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/press releases/2000/dec/21-12-00-1.asp

21st December 2000

New Arrangements Announced to Protect the Pensions of People who have lived in Australia

Jeff Rooker, Social Security Minister, today set out the arrangements he is putting in place to protect the pensions of people with periods of residence in Australia on their return to live in the UK.

Answering a PQ from Mrs Liz Blackman (Erewash) he said:

"I am pleased to announce we are putting arrangements in place to protect the pension position of those people who have periods of residence in Australia, on their return to live permanently in the UK. We are protecting such periods of residence up to and including 5 April 2001 for the purposes of basic state pension and bereavement benefits.

"We shall, in advance of Primary Legislation, top up the pensions of people with periods of residence in Australia before 6 April 2001 with an extra statutory payment if they have less than the full rate of basic pension. We will do this when they claim their pension in the normal way."

Notes for editors

1. For more information people can ring 0191 218 7777.
2. The Australian Government has given notice to end the Social Security Agreement from 1 March 2001.
3. Under the terms of the Agreement, when someone returns to live permanently in the UK, periods of residence in Australia can be treated as periods for which National Insurance contributions have been paid. The termination of this Agreement would mean that those relying on its terms could have received lower rates of basic state pension.
4. Extra statutory payments will be made to people with periods of residence in Australia before 6 April 2001 if they have less than the full rate basic pension. These will be paid with their pension when they claim their pension; a separate claim is not necessary. There is no extra cost to public funds as payments would have been made if the Agreement with Australia had continued..

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/19-12-00-1.asp

19th December 2000

BFI Report Leeds City Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by Leeds City Council was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors report that the council's processing of new claims quickly, contributed significantly to the good quality of service provided to claimants. The BFI found effective use was being made of management information to manage the workload of new claims.

The council has implemented the Verification Framework, but the BFI found weaknesses in claims verification and consider that the council could strike a better balance between clearing claims quickly and verification checks.

The report notes that, despite the council's commitment to tackling fraud, inspectors found significant weaknesses in the standards of its fraud investigations. The BFI makes recommendations of the council to improve the quality of its investigation work and to develop a corporate counter fraud policy and strategy with measurable targets.

The BFI's report includes recommendations to help the Council further improve its administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister, Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a parliamentary question from Bob Blizzard MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
3. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
4. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.dss.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/19-12-00-2.asp

19th December 2000

BFI Report London Borough Of Newham

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by London Borough of Newham was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors found that Newham had some good working practices including their customer enquiry service and secure benefit payment processes.

The council contracted out benefits administration in 1999 with a stated aim to improve services and reduce costs. The BFI found this aim had not been achieved and the council was keenly aware of deficiencies in its benefit operations. The report notes that a programme of improvement being undertaken by the council and the contractor was having some success in clearing backlogs of work, dealing with delays and addressing inefficiencies. Deficiencies were found in the council's benefits claim form and in IT security.

The BFI's report notes the council had not had a counter fraud manager for nearly two years. This factor together with an ineffective prosecution policy had compromised the success of Newham's counter fraud work. Newham's fraud investigations were found to be poor. A corporate anti-fraud and corruption statement and prosecution policy was ineffective and there had been no prosecutions. The council had recognised the need to overhaul and promote its counter fraud work. The report notes the appointment of a new counter fraud manager, a policy on whistle blowing and an investigators, code of conduct. In addition an action plan had been developed to tackle other weaknesses.

The BFI's report includes recommendations to help the Council further improve its administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Bob Blizzard MP.

Notes for editors

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/19-12-00-3.asp

19th December 2000

BFI Report London Borough Of Waltham Forest

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by London Borough of Waltham Forest was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors found the council had clear aims to provide a high quality benefits service but that these aims were not always being met. Benefits administration was contracted out in 1999 and since then backlogs of work had developed on a number of occasions. This had affected the level of service being provided to claimants. In addition the BFI reports the council was failing to meet the requirement to process claims within 14 days and there had been frequent breaks in paying benefit.

The report notes the council had some good counter fraud practices in place, including comprehensive guidance on fraud investigation work. However, many investigations were failing to properly establish fraud and therefore weekly benefit savings were being incorrectly claimed. The council had a prosecution policy but this only existed in draft form and no use was being made of administrative penalties.

The BFI reports positively on the council "one stop shop" service to claimants, the effectiveness of its benefit claim form and its comprehensive complaint's procedure. In addition, Inspectors found the council provided a good service to existing claimants by ensuring they were invited to make a further claim at the right time.

The BFI's report includes recommendations to help the Council further improve its administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Bob Blizzard MP.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/19-12-00-4.asp

19th December 2000

Social Security Fraud Bill

The Social Security Fraud Bill published today will introduce new powers to investigate, punish and deter benefit fraud.

Obtaining and sharing information

Clauses 1 and **2** build on current legislation in the Social Security Administration Act 1992.

Clause 1 will provide for authorised officers in DSS and local authorities to require information from specified private and public sector organisations. Enquiries will be made only where there are reasonable grounds to do so; eg. where it is suspected that a person is committing benefit fraud. The organisations from whom information will be required include banks; building societies; credit reference agencies; private sector fraud prevention associations; providers of credit (such as credit card companies); insurance companies; utility companies; telecoms companies; and educational establishments (including the Student Loans Company Ltd and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service). The measures will also provide for specifically authorised DSS officers to require information in bulk from utilities companies about the quantity of services supplied to residential properties. It will only provide for information about addresses to be obtained. It does not provide for information to be obtained about named persons. The DSS intends to match this information against benefit records - for example, when a person claims benefit from an address yet consumes no

electricity or water there, it would arouse suspicion that he did not in fact live there.

Clause 2 will provide for specifically authorised officers in DSS to obtain information by having on-line access to databases where facilities already exist. For example, credit reference agencies allow on-line access to their databases. Local authority officers will also have this facility, but only with the Secretary of State's consent.

Clause 3 will give the Secretary of State and local authorities the power to pay certain information providers if the Secretary of State considers it reasonable to do so. The DSS does not normally pay for information where it is obtained under statute. For example, existing powers to obtain information from employers about employees allow DSS and local authorities to obtain information from the private sector without payment. However, payment to certain information providers where they are able to demonstrate a greater claim for payment may be considered. These include:

- Credit reference agencies whose core business is to sell information.
- Telecommunications companies, which perform unique data processing services, and
- Utilities where they will be asked to provide information in bulk, where new software may be needed.

Clause 4 contains measures to back up better and more routine exchange of social security information with other countries. The power will be to supply information to other countries where a mutual agreement was in place, and only where the other countries concerned have adequate safeguards against improper use of that information.

Clause 5 is designed to replace the current requirement that the Secretary of State (or the Northern Ireland Department) specifies the nature, manner and form of benefit administration and benefit policy information to be supplied by local authorities, through regulations, with a less administratively cumbersome requirement to do so by use of directions. It will give the powers needed to make sure that local authorities provide the information necessary to ensure efficient and secure running of the Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit schemes.

Loss of benefit provisions

Clauses 6 to **12** will provide powers to withdraw or reduce certain benefits for 13 weeks from those convicted twice for benefit fraud. An underlying entitlement to benefit will remain to ensure that the link between benefit and other welfare provisions such as free prescriptions and school meals is maintained. This will help to ensure that the proposal did not adversely affect the dependants of the fraudster.

The measures will be underpinned by a fallback scheme to pay a reduced level of benefit to prevent hardship. Excluded from the list of sanctionable benefits will be:

- Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance (because they are paid for a third party).
- Retirement Pension and Graduated Retirement Pension (where fraud by pensioners is virtually non-existent).
- Statutory Sick Pay (SSP) and Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) (because they are a form of pay).
- Maternity Allowance (MA) (to ensure equity with SMP cases).
- Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance (because they provide for exceptional living costs).

The decision to withdraw benefit will carry the right of appeal to a tribunal on a question of fact and law. There will be a three-year linking rule between the date of initial conviction and the date of the next offence, even though the date of the second conviction may be some time later. Where the offences link, the person will be subject to a benefit sanction within a period of three years beginning from the date of the second conviction.

Penalties as an alternative to prosecution

Clause 13 introduces powers that will facilitate closer working between DSS and local authorities in the operation of the administrative penalty system. At present, where a benefit offence results in overpayments of Housing Benefit and/or Council Tax Benefit and another benefit, and both the DSS and the local authority decide to offer an administrative penalty, each handles the process separately. This means two interviews and two sets of papers for the claimant. The aim is both to make the system easier for those persons who may be subject to more than one penalty, and to streamline administrative procedures.

Clause 14 introduces a new discretionary power, which will provide for the payment of a financial penalty of between £1,000 and £5,000, as an alternative to prosecution, in circumstances where the Secretary of State or local authority has sufficient evidence to institute proceedings against an employer for an offence relating to benefit fraud. The intended effect is to punish employers who operate in the "informal economy" and to discourage others from doing so.

Offences

Clause 15 will tighten and clarify the powers in the 1992 Administration Act, so that an offence occurs when a change of circumstances affecting entitlement to benefit arises and, providing it is not a change from

which there is an exemption specified in regulations from the obligation to notify, there is a knowing or dishonest failure to report that change.

Clause 16 will correct an omission from the Social Security Administration (Fraud) Act 1997: that legislation amended section 116 (2) of the Social Security Administration Act 1992 (SSAA 1992) to enable prosecution for dishonest representation in England and Wales without time limitation. However, the same was not achieved for Scotland. This measure will correct the omission by disapplying the time limitations specified in the SSAA 1992 respect of proceedings in Scotland.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/12-12-00-1.asp

12th December 2000

£80 Million Boost For North West Carers

£80 million of extra Government help will be provided for carers in the North West Social Security Minister Hugh Bayley announced today.

Speaking at the Carers' Voices Conference in Liverpool, Mr Bayley praised the tireless work of carers:

"Carers are so important. When the Prime Minister launched our carers' strategy last year he promised we would review carers' benefits, and today I can announce that an extra £80 million will be paid to carers in the North West over the next three years, helping around 50,000 people.

"We are increasing benefits for the poorest carers on Income Support, giving more help to carers who do some paid work, and allowing pensioners to claim carers' benefits for the first time, which will help pensioners on the minimum income guarantee."

The North West shares in the estimated £500m national cash injection for older carers, poorer carers and those in part-time employment. The package includes:

- From April 2001, increasing the carer premium in income related benefits by £10 on top of the normal uprating - the weekly premium will rise from £14.15 to £24.40, an increase of over 70% for over 200,000 carers nationally;
- From April 2001, increasing the ICA earnings threshold from £50 to the level of the National Insurance Lower Earnings Limit (LEL). This means that carers will be able to earn £72 per week, after deduction of certain expenses, before it affects their benefit. This limit will in future rise in line with the LEL and;

subject to legislation:

- Extending of claims to Invalid Care Allowance (ICA) to carers aged 65 years and over (at present claims can only be made up to the age of 65) and;
- Entitlement to ICA will continue for up to eight weeks after the death of the person being cared for.

Notes for editors

1. Around 390,000 people receive these benefits at a cost of £854 million annually.
2. Around 50,000 people receive these benefits in the North West at a cost of £80 million annually.
3. Invalid Care Allowance overlaps with benefits such as the Retirement Pension and Bereavement Benefit. However opening up claims to carers over the age of 65 will give those on income related benefits such as Income Support access to the Carer Premium for the first time.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/11-12-00-1.asp

11th December 2000

Darling Acts to Clear Delays in Housing Benefit Service

An action team is to be sent out to work with struggling local councils to clear delays in paying Housing Benefit (HB) - Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling announced today.

The team will draw on experts from top performing councils, the DSS and management specialists to give support to authorities which have built up backlogs in paying out the benefit.

It is part of a wide-ranging package of radical measures announced by Mr Darling designed to:

- bring swift improvement in struggling councils
- raise standards across the board
- streamline HB making it easier for councils to administer and simpler for people to claim
- lay the foundations for long-term fundamental reform of HB

The Secretary of State announced that councils are to be given a three-year £24 million settlement to help them plan ahead.

Mr Darling said: "Councils are receiving the first increase in core funding since 1993 but the extra cash will be linked to a stringent contract to ensure high standards of performance.

"There are 409 individual councils administering Housing Benefit. Some do their job well - others are

failing miserably to provide the service that the public expects.
"Today I am publishing the results of a further series of inquiries by the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate which demonstrates the stark contrast in quality of service that different councils currently provide. There is no excuse for such difference in standards of performance.

"The poor performers have to become as good as the best and they have to do so quickly.

"In April we set out options for reforming Housing Benefit in the Green Paper "Decent Homes for All". The overwhelming response was a demand for action to sort out the mess in administration - more than 70 per cent of respondents wanted immediate action to tackle delays and backlogs," Mr Darling said.

"Any delay in paying benefits creates an unacceptable burden of worry for people - many old and vulnerable.

"Delays also damage the ability of Housing Benefit to get people back to work - they lack confidence in a system and worry that their rent will not get sorted out quickly if they have to make a new claim."

Mr Darling is also proposing:

- the development of a new process for claiming the benefit to cut out multiple form-filling;
- changes to rules to ease the problems faced by young people in getting accommodation and to encourage landlords to rent to young adults;
- simplifying the rules including making it easier to claim HB when starting work, speeding up payments if a job ends after a short period and simpler reviews for pensioners.

As part of the drive to ease the burden on local authorities the DSS is also discussing with representatives of Registered Social Landlords - such as Housing Associations - proposals they have volunteered for assisting with elements of HB administration.

Mr Darling's package is on top of action to tackle fraud and drive down error - including more generous financial rewards to local authorities who act to prevent fraud entering the system and a fraud hotline that is to be piloted with 10 local councils from January.

He said: "Housing Benefit helps over 4 million people keep a roof over their heads. Our priority is to put it on a sounder footing and to eradicate complexity from the system. These changes will create the right conditions for longer-term reform."

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/11-12-00-2.asp

11th December 2000

BFI Report: Borough Of Greenwich

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by the London Borough of Greenwich was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

The BFI reports that the council is one of the best performing authorities BFI have inspected so far. Inspectors commended the high standard of verification of claims, including effectively applying the Verification Framework, rigorously applying statutory checks on National Insurance Numbers and regularly completing management checks on determinations.

In addition, inspectors find the council makes positive efforts to ensure claims information is correct by liaising with landlords and visiting claimants.

The report notes the council's effective monitoring mechanisms which include performance indicators and Internal Audit assurance to elected Members.

BFI found officials and elected members are committed to countering fraud and had fostered a counter fraud culture within the council. Inspectors considered the council could build on this by setting a clear target for reducing fraud and error, and increasing the use of counter fraud sanctions. In addition counter fraud activity could be better co-ordinated against claimants, who fail to declare that they no longer live in council property or their income.

The BFI's report includes recommendations to help the Council further improve its administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Baroness Hollis announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Baroness David.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local

authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
3. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
4. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.dss.gov.uk.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/11-12-00-3.asp

11th December 2000

BFI Report: Borough Of Lewisham

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by the London Borough of Lewisham was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors found Lewisham provides a high quality customer service. In particular the council's public enquiry service, which includes a video conferencing system, which allows members of the public to see and talk to council officers is the best the BFI has so far seen.

The BFI commends the council for its introduction all recent government initiatives designed to secure benefits administration, in particular the council's implementation of the verification framework in October 1998. The report notes this was achieved without the backlogs and frustrations reported by other London Boroughs. Inspectors also found the council's verification work to be very thorough.

The report provides some very positive findings about the councils counter fraud performance. In addition where fraud is detected the council actively pursues prosecutions or administrative penalties.

The BFI's report includes recommendations to help the Council further improve its administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Baroness Hollis announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Baroness David.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
3. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
4. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.dss.gov.uk.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/11-12-00-4.asp

11th December 2000

BFI Report: London Borough Of Islington

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by the London Borough of Islington was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security. The Council contracted out its benefits service in October 1998.

The reports main conclusion is that partly due to failings in the contract, but mainly due to the Council's inability to manage and enforce it, claimants in Islington are receiving an extremely poor benefits service.Inspectors found long delays in claims being processed and report there would be considerable difficulties for anyone wanting to make an enquiry on the progress of their claim. The BFI found counter fraud work had been in decline due to under resourcing and lack of managerial control, and offered minimal deterrence to fraudsters.

The report also notes the high number of complaints to the Council and the Local Government Ombudsman which had been sustained over a period of 2 years.

The report contains a number of fundamental recommendations reflecting the gap between the poor quality service provided and that which claimants can

reasonably expect. Inspectors also commented that it will require a great deal of commitment from the council to achieve full implementation of their recommendations.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Baroness Hollis announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Baroness David.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
3. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
4. BFI undertook their inspection of the London Borough of Islington during June 2000.
5. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.dss.gov.uk.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/11-12-00-5.asp

11th December 2000

BFI Report: London Borough Of Ealing

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by the London Borough of Ealing was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

The Council has contracted out its benefit administration and customer service activity to an external supplier, but retained counter fraud work in house.

The BFI reports that during their inspection in March 2000, the council had backlogs of work in many areas which had led to a deterioration in claims processing and customer service. The report notes that the council and the contractor were working together to resolve problems in service delivery and were committed to clearing the backlogs.

Inspectors report the council had an effective checking regime that provides a high level of assurance that benefit determinations are correct. Weaknesses were identified in the council's post opening procedures, claim form, and referrals of housing association claims to the Rent Officer.

The Council's verification of evidence for new claims was found to be fairly robust, but renewal claims verification was weak by comparison.

The report concludes that the council has an above average counter fraud operation with a committed and motivated Housing Benefit investigation team. However the effectiveness of its counter fraud efforts were reduced because of delays in administration work and poor management of overpayment recovery. Inspectors also considered the council could make better use of the full range of debt recovery methods which are available.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Baroness Hollis announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Baroness David.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/press releases/2000/dec/04-12-00-1.asp

4th December 2000

Winter Fuel Payments will be paid by Christmas

All automatic Winter Fuel Payments will be paid by Christmas. This is confirmed in the final phase of a national advertising campaign starting today.

The half page ads reassure people that they will receive automatic payments before Christmas if they were 60 or over during the week 18-24 September 2000*.

The ads explain that payments are being made on a rolling programme and that people need not worry if they have not yet received their payment. Over eight million payments are being made over the next few weeks in the run up to Christmas.

Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling said: "This year, the Government has doubled the Winter Fuel Payment to £200 to help pensioners meet the cost of heating during the cold winter months.

"Eight and a half million cheques have already been received or will arrive before Christmas so that pensioners need not fear turning up their heating to keep warm this winter."

Other features of the campaign include:

- Advertising over two weeks between 4 December and 17 December.
- Insertion in five national titles:- the Sun, the Mirror, the Daily Mail, the Express and the Daily Telegraph.
- A minimum of one insertion in five Sunday papers:-the Sunday People, the Sunday Express, the Mail on Sunday and the Sunday Telegraph.
- Regional advertising in Northern Ireland in the Sunday Post, the Belfast Telegraph, the Irish News and the Belfast and Ulster Newsletter. In Scotland ads will appear in the Daily Record, the Herald and the Edinburgh Evening News. In Wales a full page bilingual ad will appear in the Wales on Sunday, the South Wales Echo, the Western Mail, the South Wales Evening Post and the Post-Cardiff.

***Automatic payments are made to people who are 60 or over during the qualifying week and who received a payment last year and their benefit circumstances have not changed, or were getting a social security benefit (not Housing Benefit, Council Tax Benefit or Child Support). Otherwise claims for this winter's payment need to be made.**

Notes for editors

1. Payments will be made to all eligible households in England, Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland.
2. For the first 2 winters of the scheme (1997/98 and 1998/99) eligible households received £20 whilst the poorest pensioners, those receiving Income Support, received £50. Winter Fuel Payments were increased to £100 for eligible households for winter 1999/2000. A further increase was announced in the Budget to £150 for the coming winter and this amount was later increased to £200 in the Pre Budget Report in November 2000.
3. For winter 1999/2000 around 10 million pensioners in over 7.5 million households benefited from Winter Fuel Payments.
4. On 16 December 1999 following an European Court of Justice ruling, Alistair Darling announced that the Winter Fuel Payment would be equalised so that most men and women who are aged 60 and over during the qualifying week would be eligible for a payment. Under this new criteria people would also be eligible for backdated payments from the start of the scheme.
5. The eligibility criterion is that during the specified week the household has an occupant ordinarily resident in Great Britain or Northern Ireland aged 60 or over. The need to be in receipt of a qualifying benefit, which existed prior to 16 December 1999, has been removed.
6. Exclusions from the scheme include people who during the qualifying week were living permanently in residential care and receiving Income Support; receiving free in-patient hospital treatment for over 52 weeks; detained in custody and sentenced; and people subject to immigration control.
7. The qualifying weeks since the introduction of the scheme have been:
   1997/98 - week ending 11 January 1998
   1998/99 - week ending 15 November 1998
   1999/00 - week ending 26 September 1999
   2000/01 - week ending 24 September 2000
8. Under the new scheme, and incorporating the rise to £200 as announced in the Pre Budget Report, this coming winter expenditure will increase to £1.8 billion annually. For past winters, the cost of making backdated payments is estimated to be up to £150 million.
9. As a result of the extension of the scheme up to an additional 1.5 million people will be eligible for a Winter Fuel Payment this year, and up to 1.9 million people will be eligible for backdated payments. All claims for backdated payments returned for processing by 3 November 2000 will be paid before Christmas 2000.

Winter Fuel Payments Helpline: 08459 15 15 15

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2000/dec/01-12-00-1.asp

1st December 2000

Pension Sharing Measures Implemented

From today couples getting divorced will be able to apply to the courts to share their pension rights between them.

Alistair Darling, Social Security Secretary, said: "For the first time ever divorcing couples will have the option of sharing pensions in deciding how best to deal with their matrimonial assets during a divorce. It will particularly help women who are getting divorced after many years of marriage to be secure in the knowledge that they will not have to start saving for their retirement from scratch."

Pension sharing will:

provide an option to help achieve a fair

- division of pension assets on divorce;
- increase flexibility and choice for divorcing couples;
- give greater scope for divorcing couples to achieve a "clean break" on divorce;
- provide the opportunity for a better and more secure retirement income for those receiving a share of pension rights.

Mr Darling continued: "The introduction of pension sharing was a Manifesto commitment and we are now delivering on our promise.

"Marriages break down for a variety of reasons. Our aim is to ensure that marital assets can be divided fairly when a couple divorce. Pension sharing will give divorcing couples certainty and clarity because the person receiving a share of pension rights acquires an asset in their own right."

Notes for editors

1. Pension sharing will apply only to those divorce proceedings which begin on or after 1 December 2000. Pension sharing does not apply to divorce or nullity proceedings that commenced before 1 December.
2. Pension sharing will for the first time give divorcing couples with pension rights the option of sharing these rights as part of the matrimonial settlement. Pension sharing will cover rights held under the State Earning Related Pension Scheme (SERPS) and the Stakeholder Pension, or the State Second Pension, when these are introduced, as well as those held in occupational and personal pensions.
3. Pension sharing will be available alongside existing methods of dealing with pension rights on divorce: offsetting and earmarking. Earmarking has had significant limitations because title to the pension rights remains with the spouse in whose name the rights accrued. Unlike earmarking pension sharing allows a "clean break" following divorce. This means for example that a former spouse who benefits from a pension share will keep her share of pension rights regardless of any subsequent changes in her former husband's circumstances.
4. To assist the Department in taking forward the work on pension sharing a Consultation Panel was set up in 1997. This included representatives of the Joint Working Group on Occupational Pension Schemes, as well as the Pensions Management Institute, members of the legal profession, Fairshares and the Diplomatic Spouses Association. On June 1998 the Government published its proposals in "Pension sharing on divorce: reforming pensions for a fairer future" along with draft legislation. The draft legislation was subject to detailed pre-legislative scrutiny including an examination by the Social Security Select Committee. The "open" legislative process broke new ground and has been warmly welcomed.
5. Pension Sharing legislation was included in the Welfare Reform and Pensions Act 1999 which received Royal Assent on 11 November 1999. The main Regulations were laid on 19 April 2000 following a consultation exercise.
6. Pension sharing will be available in England & Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/jan/30-01-01-1.asp

30th January 2001

BFI Report: Borough Of Wandsworth

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by the London Borough of Wandsworth was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

BFI Inspectors found a number of good practices and initiatives and considered Wandsworth council had strong management and staff with high levels of experience and knowledge. The report notes this was significant to the improvements made by the council by bringing the Revenues and Benefits Service back in-house during November 1998.

The council was found to be achieving commendable levels of verification and had implemented the Verification Framework. Inspectors report that some improvements would be needed to fully meet its

required standards and thereby strengthen the council's assurance that the right amount of benefit goes to the right person.

The BFI noted that others councils could learn from Wandsworth's innovative use of an Intranet that supports staff with guidance and procedures.

The BFI reports that Wandsworth has a strong corporate commitment to countering benefit fraud and had successfully prosecuted fraudsters and applied sanctions. Inspectors considered that the council needed to improve arrangements for the management of overpayment recovery. BFI understands that improvements are underway.

The BFI's report includes recommendations to help the Council further improve its administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Chris Pond, MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
3. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
4. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.dss.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/jan/30-01-01-2.asp

30th January 2001

Cutting Bureaucracy Down To Size To Deliver Better Government For Older People

Alistair Darling is cutting down to size the bulky 40-page form which pensioners fill in to claim extra money.

The Minimum Income Guarantee form will be slashed down to just 10 pages, he told the Better Government for Older People conference in London today.

Mr Darling said: "We want to make it as easy as possible for pensioners to claim every penny they are entitled to - to take the strain out of making a claim.

"The existing claim form is unnecessarily long and too complicated. There is no reason why it should be so and I have told my department to cut it down to size. I only want to include the questions we really need to ask," he added.

The draft new MIG form will go out for consultation with relevant organisations so it is ready for use later this year.

Mr Darling, Chair of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Older People, Cabinet Office Minister Ian McCartney and DETR Minister Hilary Armstrong attended the BGOP conference to give the Government response to the programme's report.

Mr Darling said: "Just because something has been done the same way for years doesn't mean it is right or it can't be changed. The Government will work together in partnership with others, nationally and locally, to cut through red tape to make life easier for older people."

The Social Security Secretary also announced several important joined-up Government strategies that will put serving older people better first, including:

- A new housing strategy which will help older people get affordable housing that meets their needs.
- Helping transport operators and local authorities to improve transport for older people thanks to an audit of older people's transport needs published today.
- Pilots for a new one-stop-shop for information on social care, health, housing and social security benefits called Care Direct.

Mr McCartney said: "The Better Government for Older People programme has been at the cutting edge of innovation to provide better services for older people at a local level. Older people's commitment to the Programme provides a sharp contrast with the stereotypical and negative way they are sometimes portrayed.

"We will continue to work to put older people at the

centre of government activity, ensuring that they play a full and active role," Mr McCartney added.

Ms Armstrong said: "Our housing strategy for older people will help older people live independently and enjoy a better quality of life. Older people want a joined-up approach to meeting their needs for housing, care and security and this is what we must offer."

Health Minister John Hutton said of Care Direct: "This is a significant step forward in helping people to get the information they need to make informed decisions and choices about their care.

Notes for editors

1. Better Government for Older People (BGOP) was launched in June 1998, as part of the Government's modernising government initiative. Its aim is to improve public services for older people by better meeting their needs, listening to their views and encouraging and recognising their contribution.
2. BGOP comprises a partnership between central and local government, the voluntary sector and academics and includes Age Concern, the Local Government Association, Help The Aged and Carnegie Third Age Programme.
3. BGOP set up 28 pilots across the UK, testing integrated inter-agency strategies. The pilots are: Bolton, Borders, Bury, Coventry, Devon, Hackney, Hammersmith and Fulham, Harrow, Hartlepool, Kensington and Chelsea, Lambeth, Middlesbrough, Newcastle upon Tyne, North Down, North Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Rhondda Cynon Taff, Sheffield, Solihul, South Lanarkshire, Stirling, Warwick, Watford, Waverley, Wolverhampton, Ynys Mon, York.
4. The Minimum Income Guarantee is worth at least £78.45 for single pensioners and £121.95 for couples. The DSS last year set up a special help-line for pensioners who want to get their MIG form filled in electronically rather than fill in the 40-page form themselves.
5. "Building on partnership: The Government response to the recommendations of the Better Government for Older People Programme" is published by the DSS for the Inter-Ministerial Group for Older People. Copies are available free from The Welfare Reform Orderline (OP), Freepost (HA4441), Hayes UB3 1BR or by phoning 020 8867 3201 (textphone: 020 8867 3217. Lines are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, please quote OP2.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/jan/29-01-01-2.asp

29th January 2001

Evaluation of Earnings Top Up

Seven reports are published today by the Department for Social Security. Six present final results from the Evaluation of Earnings Top Up (ETU), the seventh provides a synthesis and summary of findings.

ETU was an in-work benefit available to low paid workers without children. It was piloted from October 1996 to October 1999 in eight areas across Britain. This large scale evaluation, spanning five years, was undertaken by researchers from the Policy Studies Institute, the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick and the Centre for Research in Social Policy at the University of Loughborough.

The evidence from the evaluation suggested that ETU helped secure in work some people who had previously experienced poor labour market attachment, helped reduce the numbers entering unemployment and increased the numbers leaving unemployment. ETU met need and went some way to reducing hardship for those who received it. The percentage of eligible workers taking it up was however low, in part reflected by low awareness.

Key findings from the evaluation are:

ETU performance and take-up

- ETU was well administered, and for those who received it, ETU met a need and went some way to reducing hardship.
- Although the target of 20,000 claims set for ETU was exceeded in the first year, the take-up rate among eligible workers was low: just 18 per cent in 1997, rising to 23 per cent in 1999. The take-up rate for Scheme B (paid at a higher rate) was much higher than for Scheme A: 30 per cent compared with 14 per cent. Eligibility under Scheme A was confined to a small band of the lowest incomes.
- Five underlying causes of low take-up were identified:
  - **Geographical density** - eligible workers were too sparsely scattered to support informal information networks which prompt them to claim.
  - **Social isolation** - many of those eligible were too isolated from the social networks that would prompt claiming a new in-work benefit.
  - **Critical mass** - geographical scatter and social isolation meant that the density of eligible people in most places was well below the critical mass needed to form an active customer base for a new in-work benefit.
  - **Skills transfer** - claiming ETU was both need-driven, and associated independently with prior

experience of claiming income-tested benefits, especially Housing Benefit and Family Credit.

- **Publicity** - too few unemployed people and low-paid workers were aware of ETU. Publicity was limited to non-electronic media and stopped altogether after only six months.

Impact on Employment

- ETU secured in work a group who had had poor work histories throughout the 1990s. These ETU workers showed signs of maintaining this improvement, with rates of labour market participation on a par with existing workers.
- ETU caused small decreases in the rate of inflow to unemployment and, in addition, small increases to the rate of departure from unemployment. These effects were larger for younger and older single workers looking for unskilled work.
- There is some slight evidence of a substitution effect - some of the gains for unskilled workers may have been at the expense of better-paid low skilled workers.
- Workers who went onto ETU directly from Job Seekers' Allowance remained on ETU for longer (with more renewals) than other claimants, and may have been protected from subsequent unemployment.

Longer-term unemployed

- Barriers to work, such as having little human capital and poor health, were considerable among the longer-term unemployed people in these areas. These problems intensified for those who failed to find work over the three years of the pilot.
- There was no evidence that ETU helped longer-term unemployed people overcome these barriers and move into work faster.

Job retention

- There was no evidence overall that ETU significantly improved workers chances of staying in work, either by working in an ETU area or by directly claiming ETU. However, recipients said they found ETU helpful in getting and keeping jobs, especially the self-employed.
- Although workers in ETU areas aged over 40 years remained in work longer, on average, compared with those in control areas, this was not statistically attributable to ETU.
- Most of the expenditure on ETU was on people who would have done/taken the jobs they did, working the same hours for the same wages regardless of ETU.

Recruitment

- There was no overall impact of ETU on employers' recruitment or retention. Knowledge of ETU among employers was patchy, and most did not feel equipped to advise employees about the benefit.
- There was some evidence that ETU was encouraging recruitment to shorter hours (16-29 per week) among semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

Wage effects

- The evidence on employers' wage setting behaviour was mixed. Employers themselves said that ETU played no part in the wages they set. However, entry wages for new low-paid recruits in Scheme B areas grew more slowly than elsewhere.
- The end of the pilot did not sustain interim findings that workers in ETU areas were being paid less and the unemployed expected less. There was some evidence (based on small numbers) that older longer-term unemployed people in ETU areas who took up work did so at lower entry wages.
- ETU had no adverse effects on the levels of wages received by FC recipients in the pilot areas.

Notes for editors

1. ETU was an in-work benefit available to low paid workers without children. It was piloted from October 1996 to October 1999 in eight areas across Britain. Two versions of ETU were piloted, Scheme A and Scheme B. Each provided typically £20-30 to single people and £35-45 to couples but differed in their range of qualifying incomes. Schemes A and B were each piloted in a large urban area, a large town, a seaside town and a rural area. Four corresponding areas were selected as Control areas.
2. The evaluation began prior to implementation, with baseline data collection, and continued throughout the duration of the pilot. The evaluation included:
   - surveys with employers, low paid workers in work and medium term unemployed people;
   - analysis of administrative data and local labour market information; and
   - qualitative interviews with ETU recipients, unsuccessful applicants, employers, self-employed and BA/ES staff.
3. The evaluation was conducted by researchers at the Policy Studies Institute (PSI), the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) at Loughborough University and the Institute for Employment Research (IER) at the University of Warwick.
4. Interim findings from the evaluation were published in May 2000, DSS Research Reports No. 112 and 113.
5. Seven reports from the Earning Top Up Evaluation are published on 29 January:

- Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Synthesis Report (Marsh, A., 2001, Department of Social Security Research Report No. 135).
- Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Effects on Unemployed People (Smith, A., Dorsett, R. and McKnight, A., 2001, Department of Social Security Research Report No. 131).
- Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Employers' Reactions (Lissenburgh, S., Hasluck, C and Green A., 2001, Department of Social Security Research Report No. 132).
- Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Qualitative Evidence (Heaver, C., Roberts, S., Stafford, B. and Vincent, J. 2001, Department of Social Security In-house Research Report No. 133).
- Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Effects on Low Paid Workers (Marsh, A., Stephenson, A., Dorsett, R and Elias, P., 2001, Department of Social Security Research Report No. 134)
- Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Staff Views (Vincent J., Heaver, C., Roberts, S. and Stafford, B., 2001, Department of Social Security In-house Research Report No. 74)
- Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Local Labour Market Conditions (Green A E., 2001, Department of Social Security In-house Research Report No. 75)

6. The reports are available from Corporate Document Services, Leeds. Copies of the report summaries are available from the DSS Social Research Branch

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/jan/25-01-01-1.asp

25th January 2001

Research Backs Move To Transform Services For Older People

Older people want a modern and joined-up benefit service that fully meets their needs, says a report published today.

The research found that older people want:

- New, local joined up services including health, social services and voluntary groups.
- To be on first name terms with a single, friendly and knowledgeable contact who acts on their behalf during a claim.
- Different ways of providing help to different people - using roadshows, telephone advice lines, home visits or new IT.

Pensions Minister Jeff Rooker welcomed the research, which supports work already underway to transform the way the DSS serves older people.

Mr Rooker said: "This research has given the Government a clear message that older people expect a quality service from all public sector organisations. DSS is making radical changes to the way it operates to ensure that people's needs are put first.

"That is why we have already announced we will set up a separate organisation dedicated to dealing with pensions and meeting pensioners' interests. A one size fits all approach to the benefits service is no longer in tune with what people want."

The independent research published by the DSS today explores public reactions to the Benefits Agency's Better Government for Older People (BGOP) programme.

Eight prototypes were set up to test new ways for the benefit agency to work with providers from local and central government and the voluntary sector at a local level.

Notes for editors

1. DSS Research Report (No.136) 'Modernising Service Delivery: The Better Government for Older People Prototypes' is published today. It assesses new methods of service delivery for pensioners, combining BA services with local providers.
2. The Better Government for Older People (BGOP) programme was established by the Cabinet Office, along with partners from central and local government and the voluntary and private sectors. It aims to improve public services for people aged over 50 and 28 pilots were set up across the UK.
3. The independent research was carried out among staff, customers and stakeholders to assess attitudes to the BA BGOP prototype services including information surgeries, home visits, roadshows, telephone advice lines and new information technology services. A combination of depth interviews and focus groups were used.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/jan/29-01-01-2.asp

29th January 2001

Evaluation of Earnings Top Up

Seven reports are published today by the Department for Social Security. Six present final results from the Evaluation of Earnings Top Up (ETU), the seventh provides a synthesis and summary of findings.

ETU was an in-work benefit available to low paid workers without children. It was piloted from October 1996 to October 1999 in eight areas across Britain. This

large scale evaluation, spanning five years, was undertaken by researchers from the Policy Studies Institute, the Institute for Employment Research at the University of Warwick and the Centre for Research in Social Policy at the University of Loughborough.

The evidence from the evaluation suggested that ETU helped secure in work some people who had previously experienced poor labour market attachment, helped reduce the numbers entering unemployment and increased the numbers leaving unemployment. ETU met need and went some way to reducing hardship for those who received it. The percentage of eligible workers taking it up was however low, in part reflected by low awareness.

Key findings from the evaluation are:

ETU performance and take-up

- ETU was well administered, and for those who received it, ETU met a need and went some way to reducing hardship.
- Although the target of 20,000 claims set for ETU was exceeded in the first year, the take-up rate among eligible workers was low: just 18 per cent in 1997, rising to 23 per cent in 1999. The take-up rate for Scheme B (paid at a higher rate) was much higher than for Scheme A: 30 per cent compared with 14 per cent. Eligibility under Scheme A was confined to a small band of the lowest incomes.
- Five underlying causes of low take-up were identified:
  - **Geographical density** - eligible workers were too sparsely scattered to support informal information networks which prompt them to claim.
  - **Social isolation** - many of those eligible were too isolated from the social networks that would prompt claiming a new in-work benefit.
  - **Critical mass** - geographical scatter and social isolation meant that the density of eligible people in most places was well below the critical mass needed to form an active customer base for a new in-work benefit.
  - **Skills transfer** - claiming ETU was both need-driven, and associated independently with prior experience of claiming income-tested benefits, especially Housing Benefit and Family Credit.
  - **Publicity** - too few unemployed people and low-paid workers were aware of ETU. Publicity was limited to non-electronic media and stopped altogether after only six months.

Impact on Employment

- ETU secured in work a group who had had poor work histories throughout the 1990s. These ETU workers showed signs of maintaining this improvement, with rates of labour market participation on a par with existing workers.
- ETU caused small decreases in the rate of inflow to unemployment and, in addition, small increases to the rate of departure from unemployment. These effects were larger for younger and older single workers looking for unskilled work.
- There is some slight evidence of a substitution effect - some of the gains for unskilled workers may have been at the expense of better-paid low skilled workers.
- Workers who went onto ETU directly from Job Seekers' Allowance remained on ETU for longer (with more renewals) than other claimants, and may have been protected from subsequent unemployment.

Longer-term unemployed

- Barriers to work, such as having little human capital and poor health, were considerable among the longer-term unemployed people in these areas. These problems intensified for those who failed to find work over the three years of the pilot.
- There was no evidence that ETU helped longer-term unemployed people overcome these barriers and move into work faster.

Job retention

- There was no evidence overall that ETU significantly improved workers chances of staying in work, either by working in an ETU area or by directly claiming ETU. However, recipients said they found ETU helpful in getting and keeping jobs, especially the self-employed.
- Although workers in ETU areas aged over 40 years remained in work longer, on average, compared with those in control areas, this was not statistically attributable to ETU.
- Most of the expenditure on ETU was on people who would have done/taken the jobs they did, working the same hours for the same wages regardless of ETU.

Recruitment

- There was no overall impact of ETU on employers' recruitment or retention. Knowledge of ETU among employers was patchy, and most did not feel equipped to advise employees about the benefit.
- There was some evidence that ETU was encouraging recruitment to shorter hours (16-29 per week) among semi-skilled and unskilled workers.

Wage effects

- The evidence on employers' wage setting behaviour was mixed. Employers themselves said

that ETU played no part in the wages they set. However, entry wages for new low-paid recruits in Scheme B areas grew more slowly than elsewhere.

- The end of the pilot did not sustain interim findings that workers in ETU areas were being paid less and the unemployed expected less. There was some evidence (based on small numbers) that older longer-term unemployed people in ETU areas who took up work did so at lower entry wages.
- ETU had no adverse effects on the levels of wages received by FC recipients in the pilot areas.

Notes for editors

1. ETU was an in-work benefit available to low paid workers without children. It was piloted from October 1996 to October 1999 in eight areas across Britain. Two versions of ETU were piloted, Scheme A and Scheme B. Each provided typically £20-30 to single people and £35-45 to couples but differed in their range of qualifying incomes. Schemes A and B were each piloted in a large urban area, a large town, a seaside town and a rural area. Four corresponding areas were selected as Control areas.
2. The evaluation began prior to implementation, with baseline data collection, and continued throughout the duration of the pilot. The evaluation included:
    - surveys with employers, low paid workers in work and medium term unemployed people;
    - analysis of administrative data and local labour market information; and
    - qualitative interviews with ETU recipients, unsuccessful applicants, employers, self-employed and BA/ES staff.
6. The evaluation was conducted by researchers at the Policy Studies Institute (PSI), the Centre for Research in Social Policy (CRSP) at Loughborough University and the Institute for Employment Research (IER) at the University of Warwick.
7. Interim findings from the evaluation were published in May 2000, DSS Research Reports No. 112 and 113.
8. Seven reports from the Earning Top Up Evaluation are published on 29 January:
    - Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Synthesis Report (Marsh, A., 2001, Department of Social Security Research Report No. 135).
    - Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Effects on Unemployed People (Smith, A., Dorsett, R. and McKnight, A., 2001, Department of Social Security Research Report No. 131).
    - Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Employers' Reactions (Lissenburgh, S., Hasluck, C and Green A., 2001, Department of Social Security Research Report No. 132).
    - Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Qualitative Evidence (Heaver, C., Roberts, S., Stafford, B. and Vincent, J. 2001, Department of Social Security In-house Research Report No. 133).
    - Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Effects on Low Paid Workers (Marsh, A., Stephenson, A., Dorsett, R and Elias, P., 2001, Department of Social Security Research Report No. 134)
    - Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Staff Views (Vincent J., Heaver, C., Roberts, S. and Stafford, B., 2001, Department of Social Security In-house Research Report No. 74)
    - Earnings Top-up Evaluation: Local Labour Market Conditions (Green A E., 2001, Department of Social Security In-house Research Report No. 75)
7. The reports are available from Corporate Document Services, Leeds. Copies of the report summaries are available from the DSS Social Research Branch

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/jan/23-01-01-1.asp

23rd January 2001

Rooker introduces changes to stakeholder pension regulations

Minor amendments to the stakeholder pension scheme regulations were laid in Parliament today by Pensions Minister Jeff Rooker after requests by pension providers.

Stakeholder pension schemes will be available to the public from 6th April 2001, providing a new pension option for millions of people on moderate earnings who cannot join an occupational pension scheme.

Announcing the amendments, Mr Rooker said: "The government promised to introduce stakeholder pensions within this Parliament and we are firmly on track for their successful implementation in April 2001. The new schemes will make a real difference to the lives of millions of tomorrow's pensioners.

"We consulted extensively on the details of the stakeholder pension regulations before they were laid and we have continued to listen to the views of those involved in setting up schemes.

"We set out last year the areas where we propose to make some changes to the regulations. These amendments begin to implement the changes and, in particular, we have brought in two changes that concern the registration of schemes. The changes will

allow schemes that want to take advantage of the revised rules to register with Opra as soon as the regulations come into force on 14 February 2001. The further changes we plan to make to the regulations will be brought in shortly.

"The main changes in these amending regulations are:

- to permit contract-based stakeholder schemes to apply the same membership restrictions as are presently permitted for trust-based schemes;
- to allow the authorised corporate director of an open-ended investment company to act as a stakeholder scheme manager (provided they have the appropriate authorisation from the Financial Services Authority).

Notes for editors

1. The regulations SI 2000/104 are available on the internet at: www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk. Printed copies are available from the Stationery Office.
2. The regulations amend the Stakeholder Pension Scheme Regulations 2000 (SI 2000/1403), which were laid before Parliament on 25th May 2000.
3. The main proposed changes to the regulations were announced in a letter from DSS officials to the Association of British Insurers and to the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds, on 2nd November 2000. The regulations laid today make two main changes which directly affect the registration of stakeholder pension schemes, to allow schemes to register under the new rules as soon as possible. A further set of changes to the regulations will be laid shortly.
4. The main changes in these regulations are:
   - to permit contract-based stakeholder pension schemes (those run by an authorised scheme manager) to restrict membership by reference to:
   - employment with a particular employer, or in a particular trade or profession;

     or
   - membership of a particular organisation;

     to permit the authorised corporate director of an open-ended investment company to act as a stakeholder scheme manager.
5. The change to the regulations on membership restrictions permit contract-based schemes to adopt the same restrictions as trust-based schemes. No stakeholder pension schemes can restrict their membership on the basis of financial status or level of contributions.
6. Stakeholder pension schemes have been able to register with the Occupational Pensions Regulatory Authority since 2nd October 2000. As at 23 January 2001, 26 schemes have already registered.
7. The main further changes to the regulations (as announced in the letter of 2nd November) are:
   - to replace the requirement to disclose the monetary amount of charges taken from each scheme member with a requirement to disclose the percentage rate of charges (with the intention of reintroducing the requirement to show money charges in three years' time);
   - to allow schemes to set different statement years for different members of the scheme (for the purposes of issuing annual statements to members);
   - to only require schemes to accept contributions in the form of cheques, standing orders and direct debit/credit (giving them the option of declining contributions in other forms);
   - to clarify the treatment of dealing costs in collective investment schemes;
   - possible changes to ensure members of trust-based schemes receive the same pre-sale information and have the same cancellation rights as members of contract-based schemes;
   - to modify the provisions governing the appointment and role of the reporting accountant in schemes.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/jan/11-01-01-1.asp

11th January 2001

Pension Awareness Ad Blitz Begins

Man's best friend has taken the lead in a new Government campaign to get people to think about planning for their pension.

Using Oscar-winning techniques that brought 'Babe' to life the £6.5 million marketing campaign aims to make people aware of the need to plan for their retirement and consider all the pension options available to them.

Launching the campaign Alistair Darling, Social Security Secretary, said: "Obviously the basic state pension will remain the foundation of income in retirement.

"But now people want to retire on the highest possible income and they can do that by saving through an occupational pension, personal pension or - from April - the stakeholder pension. Yet two out of five people in

work today still have no provision except the state pension.

"This campaign is about getting people to consider all the options for retirement."

"The introduction of the Pension Credit from 2003 will reward those with modest savings and a small second pension with a cash top up. So the message from the government is whatever you can afford to put aside, it will always pay to save and the more you save and the earlier you start the better."

Too often people see pensions as a complex and boring subject that they do not want to think about.

The DSS had to produce a campaign very different from traditional public service information - something that would keep them watching when they hear the word 'pension'.

"These adverts are humorous and clever and the use of real-life working dogs talking should grab people's attention and get them thinking about the options to save for their retirement," said Mr Darling.

The campaign, which includes TV, press and cinema advertising, is designed to appeal to a wide audience - from twenty-somethings who think they can put off planning for a pension to those closer to retirement who want to know how much pension they have built up and how they can boost it.

Mr Darling said: "Since 1997 the pensions landscape has changed dramatically.

"Eighteen million people will gain from our reform of the state earnings related pension (Serps) and stakeholder pensions will provide a good value, secure and flexible second pension for millions of moderate and high earners who do not have access to an occupational scheme.

"Yet two out of five people in work today still have no provision except the state pension. Now there are more options to encourage them to save and to start saving early and this campaign will set out the choices.

The ad campaign is accompanied by a series of leaflets - including an introductory booklet and seven other guides that cover specific pension issues in more detail, including women and pensions and stakeholder pensions.

Although the campaign aims to raise general awareness, it will also carry some specific messages, including the fact that women's state pension age is changing between 2010 and 2020 when it will be equalised at the age of sixty five.

Mr Darling said a DSS survey published today highlighted the need for a pensions campaign.

"Almost half of the working age respondents said that they had no more than a 'patchy' knowledge of pensions.

"This research also shows that 41% of the stakeholder target group said they were very or fairly likely to take out a stakeholder pension and 14% said they needed more information. This campaign and a stakeholder helpline will help provide the information they need."

To order copies of the guide call DSS Pensions on **0845 7 31 32 33**. Textphone users can call **0845 604 0210**. You can also visit the website at www.pensionguide.gov.uk. People who want to find out more about stakeholder pensions can ring a helpline (8.30-6.30 Mon-Fri) for impartial information on **0845 601 2923**.

Notes for editors

1. The campaign will run from January to March and will include television, cinema, consumer magazines and national press advertisements.
2. Stakeholder pensions will be available from April 2001. Stakeholder pensions schemes are aimed particularly at moderate earners - between about £10,000 and £20,000 a year - who cannot join an occupational scheme. But they will be open to others as well.
3. "Pensions 2000: Public Attitudes to Pensions and Planning for Retirement" which presents findings from a survey examining attitudes towards pensions amongst 1700 adults in Britain was published today in the DSS Research Report series.
4. Stills from the advert are available on the internet at www.pensionguide.gov.uk/

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/jan/09-01-01-1.asp

9th January 2001

15 million extra for 6,000 severely disabled children

An extra 15 million per year will be available to three and four year olds who are severely disabled, Social Security Minister Hugh Bayley detailed today.

Expanding on his answer to a parliamentary question, Mr Bayley said:

"Children's early years are crucial for their opportunities later in life, but all too many youngsters with severe disabilities suffer from some form of social exclusion. This has to end.

"Therefore, from April this year we are dropping the age of entitlement for the £38.65 per week higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) from five to three years of age.

"This will provide an extra 15 million a year to help around 6,000 severely disabled youngsters who cannot walk, or have severely limited walking ability.

"Almost all of the under fives who are likely to be immediately eligible for the extra money are receiving the care component of DLA from this Department. From today we are writing to their families to encourage them to apply for the new £38.65 weekly entitlement.

"This cash boost will enable some of their families to buy a car on favourable terms from the Motability scheme.

"Access to reliable transportation can be a real lifeline for severely disabled children in those all important early years giving them easier access to education, social activities and will vastly improve their quality of life and that of their carers.

"By the age of three, most children are able to walk. We are helping those youngsters who by that age cannot walk because of their severe disability, or have very limited walking ability.

"This change will help to reduce the disadvantage or lack of opportunity that many severely disabled children face."

Notes for editors

1. The new rules come into force on 9 April 2001 benefiting around 6,000 children.
2. Entitlement to the higher rate mobility component of DLA depends primarily on inability, or virtual inability to walk.
3. Receiving the higher rate mobility component can give access to the Motability scheme.
4. Motability is a charitable organisation incorporated by Royal Charter. It was established in 1977 and was set up as a partnership between Government, charitable and private sectors to help disabled people obtain vehicles on favourable terms by using their Disability Living Allowance Higher Rate Mobility Component or War Pensioners Mobility Supplement.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/jan/11-01-01-3.asp

11th January 2001

Publication of DSS Research Report No. 130
Pensions 2000: public attitudes to Pensions and Planning for retirement

A new report, published today by the DSS, examines public attitudes to planning for retirement and pensions, including stakeholder pensions.

The report is based on analyses of interviews with almost 1700 adults aged 16 and over in Britain, who were surveyed using the National Statistics Omnibus Survey in March 2000.

The main findings are:

Pensions knowledge and attitudes to pensions and retirement

Seven in ten working age respondents said they had given at least some thought to their income in retirement. Almost half had no more than a 'patchy' knowledge of pensions. Those who reported giving most thought to their retirement were more likely to report a good knowledge of pensions.

Public opinion was divided on who should be mainly responsible for ensuring that people have enough to live on in retirement: 42 per cent thought it should be the government, 50 per cent the individual/their family. Very few thought that it should be employers (four per cent). Those most likely to think that the individual should be responsible were also those in a better position to provide for themselves

Pension provision

52 per cent of employees belonged to an occupational scheme and 19 per cent had a current personal pension. Overall, 29 per cent of employees had no current non-state provision - 40 per cent of these were women working part time.

59 per cent of self-employed people interviewed currently had a personal pension.
Those most likely to have some form of non-state provision were men, working full time, middle aged and on higher incomes.

Stakeholder pensions

The stakeholder target group made up just under half (44 per cent) of all those in employment who had no non-state pension provision. Most of the target group was concentrated in the lower half of the stakeholder income range.

Around a quarter of working age adults had heard of stakeholder pensions, mainly those with better pensions knowledge. 29 per cent of the 'target group' were aware of stakeholder pensions. This figure can be seen as a baseline figure for awareness, a year before they become available to the public.

41 per cent of the stakeholder 'target group' said that they were very/fairly likely to take out a stakeholder pension; 14 per cent said that they needed more information.

Confidence in pensions

People with occupational or personal pensions were broadly confident that their pension arrangements would pay the pensions and benefits that they expected on retirement, although people with occupational pensions were more confident in this respect than those with personal pensions.

Just under half of working age respondents were confident that they would get some form of pension from the state when they retired - those approaching retirement were most confident in this respect.

Notes for editors

1. *Pensions 2000: Public Attitudes to Pensions and Planning for Retirement* is published on 10 January in the Department of Social Security's Research Series (Report No. 130 ISBN 1 84123 295 5). The report is available from Corporate Document Services, price £33.00). Free summaries are available from Jim Hughes at the DSS Social Research Branch (020 7962 8562).
2. The author of the report is Victoria Mayhew, of the Department of Social Security Social Research Branch.
3. The report is based on analyses of a module of questions placed on the March 2000 National Statistics (formerly the Office for National Statistics) Omnibus Survey, which interviewed around 1700 members of the general public aged 16 and over in Great Britain. The report examines pension provision and attitudes towards pensions and saving for retirement one year before the launch of stakeholder pensions.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/press releases/2001/jan/04-01-01-1.asp

4th January 2001

Two years of achievement with NDLP

Over 74,000 lone parents have moved into work thanks to the New Deal for Lone Parents, Alistair Darling revealed today.

And 21,504 have gone into education or training since the start of the programme.

Paying tribute to all the lone parents who have made a fresh start with NDLP, Social Security Secretary Mr Darling said:

"The NDLP is giving options and choices to women and men who without it would be left without any help. These figures show that the NDLP is working.

"Lone parents everywhere have begun to realise their full potential thanks to this Government's commitment to helping lone parents to help themselves, improving not only their own prospects but also those of their children.

"NDLP is changing people's lives. And NDLP is just one of a host of Government initiatives helping lone parents - the Working Families' Tax Credit, the Lone Parent's Benefit Run On and the National Childcare Strategy are all key policies that are knocking down the barriers to work.

"This Government pledged to help lone parents - we have delivered on our promises. Mums and dads from all over Britain are now reaping the rewards."

The Social Security Secretary was speaking as the first full two-year's results for NDLP were published.

Employment and Equal Opportunities Minister Margaret Hodge also congratulated lone parents on their achievements:

"I am delighted that so many lone parents have chosen a brighter future with NDLP - I congratulate every lone parent who is now in work as a result of taking the plunge and talking to one of the national network of specially trained personal advisers.

"NDLP is a success - it doesn't take me to say that - each and every individual story of achievement speaks for itself. And NDLP is not just about those lone parents who have already moved into work - NDLP is there to make sure that lone parents thinking about making the change can get the help with jobsearch, training opportunities and childcare that they need. Almost 90% of lone parents who come along for an initial interview join the programme - a ringing endorsement.

"Lone parents have everything to gain from NDLP. Many lone parents will be surprised by the help and support on offer, and joining NDLP could well be the first step towards making 2001 a year to remember."

Notes for editors

1. NDLP is a voluntary programme open to all lone parents on Income Support. A national network of

around 800 Personal Advisers offer comprehensive help and advice on jobsearch, training, childcare, benefits, and financial support. NDLP began nationally in October 1998.
2. NDLP is a joint DSS/DfEE policy. It is carried out by the Employment Service with the support of the Benefits Agency.
3. In addition to the 68,560 lone parents who have moved into work since October 1998, a further 6,271 lone parents were helped into work during the earlier phases of the programme prior to national roll out.
4. In addition to the 18,560 lone parents who have moved into education or training since October 1998, a further 2,944 entered education or training in the earlier phases prior to roll out.
5. Full details of the results of NDLP are available in a Government Statistical Service press release 'New Deal for Lone Parents: Statistics'. A copy of this press release has been placed in the House of Commons library. Press copies are available from DfEE Press Office on 020 7925 5392.
6. Joining NDLP is simple. Lone parents can contact their local Jobcentre or call the NDLP information line free on 0800 868 868.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/feb/22-02-01-1.asp

22nd February 2001

Getting on the dog and bone to find out about pensions

Shadow the sheepdog is pictured leading the line for people who want to collar a decent pension.

The canine TV advert star barked out advice to those who want to know whether stakeholder pensions are right for them.

With just six weeks to go before stakeholder pensions become available, Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS) stakeholder helpline staff are now answering calls from people looking for help and information.

Shadow's guest spot on the helpline came as new research reveals four out of five people find the technical jargon of pensions confusing and nine out of ten want simple advice.

The DSS' current pension education marketing campaign involving talking sheepdogs encourages people to consider their pension options as early as possible. A set of eight booklets is available covering the whole range of options including stakeholder, personal, occupational and state pensions and written in clear and simple English.

The recent research commissioned by the DSS shows 19 per cent of people who don't have a pension scheme have not done so because they haven't thought about it or got around to it.

But over half of those without a pension plan to take one out. And two thirds plan to take some action, whether getting further advice or a pension, within the next year.

The survey suggests that the pensions education message appears to be getting across. An impressive 97 per cent of people believe it is better to start paying into a pension sooner rather than later. And 93 per cent believe it is important to get impartial advice.

Notes for editors

1. Stakeholder pensions, offering the choice of flexible, transparent and low-cost pensions to about five million people who did not have it before. The framework for stakeholder has been set by the DSS but the first products from different pension providers will be available from April 6.
2. Copies of a photograph of Shadow on the stakeholder helpline will be available electronically for media who request it.
3. The stakeholder helpline, offering independent advice on stakeholders to the public, is run by Pensions Advisory Service (OPAS). You can call the number 0845 601 2923 Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 6.30pm.
4. The COI research was commissioned by DSS and carried out by independent researcher RSGB, the findings based on 622 interviews with working adults between 25 November and 10 December 2000.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/feb/16-02-01-1.asp

16th February 2001

DSS Pledges To Continue Battle Against Benefit Fraud

Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling today welcomed a report by the National Audit Office that acknowledges the work being done to tackle benefit fraud.

"These findings show we are on track to meeting our targets to reduce fraud and error in Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance by at least 10 per cent by March 2002, 25 per cent before March 2004, rising to 50 per cent by March 2006," Mr Darling said.

"But we know that this is only the start and we still have major steps to take. I accept that not everything is perfect. This is a long-term battle."

The NAO highlights the estimated £50 million saved thanks to our tough approach in tackling fraudsters and the reduction of administrative errors. The total loss in Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance has fallen from an estimated £1.37 billion in 1998/1999 to an estimated £1.32 billion in 1999/2000.

Mr Darling added: "We are committed to year on year progress. That means making sure those on the front-line are better trained and equipped to do the job we ask of them. This involves tightening the gateways and modernising our technology. A massive task that will not be achieved overnight.

"The message is clear - there is zero-tolerance for benefit fraud. The work currently being developed at the national Fraud Intelligence Unit will combine with highly trained specialist investigators to track down and stop benefit cheats."

The Fraud Bill currently being considered by Parliament sets the scene for the DSS to obtain powers to tackle persistent benefit fraudsters by withdrawing benefits.

Powers for gathering information from banks, building societies and credit reference agencies where there is reason to believe benefit fraud exists, included in the Fraud Bill, will further ensure that the challenging targets on fraud and error are met.

Notes for editors

1. The reports by the Comptroller and Auditor General on the accounts produced by the DSS -- Appropriation Accounts 1999-2000 - Class XII Vote 1: Social Security Expenditure and Administration and Department of Social Security Consolidated Resource Account for 1999-2000 -- are available from the NAO's website www.nao.gov.uk. Hard copies are available from the Stationery Office on **0845 702 3474**.
2. DSS has halved the number of cases where IS/JSA claims are paid out without sufficient evidence. In 1997, two out of five IS/JSA claims were paid without enough evidence. Since then the gateway to Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance has been strengthened. Claimants must now produce more accurate and relevant evidence before IS/JSA is paid.
3. DSS prosecuted or sanctioned more than 22,000 people in 1999-2000 - a rise of 60 per cent on the previous year.
4. In the Fraud Act 1997 powers were introduced under Sections 20 and 21 to prevent fraudulent claimants using the Royal Mail's post redirection arrangements to submit benefit claims from false addresses.
5. Nationwide, DSS is introducing a successful pilot scheme for the issue of National Insurance numbers. The scheme involves using detailed databanks to permit sophisticated investigation of claims.
6. From 2003, we will be substantially cutting administration costs by paying more benefits directly in to bank accounts. Not only is this approach cheaper it will also save over £100 million a year resulting from order book and giro fraud.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/feb/15-02-01-1.asp

15th February 2001

Local Authorities Sign Up for Housing Benefit Support: £2.1m Funding to Train 900 New Fraud Investigators

The first wave of local authorities (LAs) to sign up for the expert assistance of the new Housing Benefit Help Team were announced by Alistair Darling, Secretary of State for Social Security today.

Mr Darling confirmed that Bristol, East Ayrshire, Hull and Lambeth are the first authorities to have the new expert team working with them to help their efforts to improve HB administration.

Mr Darling also announced an extra £2.1m for training up to 900 new local authority fraud investigators:

"We are determined to drive up the standard of housing benefit administration across the country.

"The extra money for training fraud inspectors will provide another valuable weapon in the fight against housing benefit fraud which blights the system and takes money away from the people who need it most."

"Our priority is a fast, secure and efficient system for delivering housing benefit. The Help Team, funded by the DSS, will be working in partnership with councils and local authority associations to make that happen.

"Bristol, East Ayrshire, Hull and Lambeth are the first authorities to use the expertise of the team.
"We expect this to be the first wave of partnerships throughout the country that will help improve housing benefit delivery and help to clear backlogs. It will also establish and share vital best practice procedures, and

help to signpost indicators for improvements to the system as a whole.

The Help Team is made up of housing benefit experts from other top-performing councils, a secondee from the DSS, and the Improvement Development Agency (IDeA). The team will be co-ordinated by management consultants.

Hull will be the first council to work with the team, followed by Lambeth, Bristol and East Ayrshire. The team started preparatory work this week and will be in Hull later this month.

The team will form a close partnership with the LA and support them in developing an improvement plan, reviewing plans already in existence, as well as helping to determine an implementation strategy and set tangible measures of success.

Cllr Paul Bettison, chair of the LGA's housing executive added:

"The LGA is very pleased to be involved in the establishment of the joint local-central government Housing benefit Team.

"Local and central government can be a highly effective and positive way of tackling some of the difficulties experienced by certain local authorities. Local government is committed to this agenda and I am delighted that a number of councils have already invited the new team in to work with them.

"This is the first partnership working with local government as outlined in the response to the housing green paper. I hope we can build on this joint working as we implement wider changes t improve and simplify the housing benefit system."

This team is part of the government's strategy for improving the delivery of HB and driving fraud and error out of the system. Other measures include:

- the development of a new simplified form for claiming the benefit
- remote access terminals (RATS) for nearly all LAs which cut out the bureaucracy of nearly 10 million pieces of paper
- changes to the single room rent to help young people find suitable accommodation and help encourage landlords to rent to young people
- more generous financial rewards for local authorities who prevent fraud from entering the system
- a fraud hotline piloted with 10 LAs from January 2001

Notes for editors

1. The Expert Team consists of HB experts from Redbridge and Leeds councils, the DSS, IdeA, Cap Gemini and Ernst & Young. The teams will be with each LA for about a month at the most intensive phases (analysis and support). There will be more work to do after this period and future support will be provided by the team for each LA.
2. The Help Team will work with the LAs on a rolling basis and with more than one LA at one time, but at certain times there will be dedicated one on one support.
3. A total of £2m has been committed for this initiative by the Department for the next twelve months.
4. All LA Chief Executives will be written to in the next week with information on how the can get involved with either utilising the team or providing staff from their own LA to work on the team.
5. £2.1m will be made available to train 900 Housing benefit fraud investigators from local authorities. The training is under the Professionalism in Security (PINS) project.
6. The PINS project progresses the government's aim of developing a highly skilled anti-fraud profession as set out in the policy document "A new contract for Welfare: Safeguarding Social Security"...

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/feb/14-02-01-1.asp

14th February 2001

TV Campaign Against Benefits Cheats Goes Nationwide

A hard-hitting TV advertising campaign 'Targeting Fraud' is to go nationwide, Alistair Darling announced today.

The Social Security Secretary said: "This Government is determined to use every means available in its drive to beat benefit cheats. TV advertising will form a vital part of that campaign.

"We have already seen a 6.5 per cent reduction in fraud and error in Income Support and Jobseeker's Allowance. In cash terms that's a saving of around £60 million but we must continue to bear down on cheating wherever it occurs.

"I said in May that the Government was committed to a national advertising campaign targeting fraud.

"We produced a series of tough ads to demonstrate that targeting fraud is everyone's business; we have tested them thoroughly in the North West and now we are ready to take the campaign nationwide."

Mr Darling said that the TV advertising campaign piloted in the North West had achieved a positive effect on public attitudes to benefit fraud.

"We know from the experience of the 'don't drink and drive' campaign that shifting public attitudes takes time. This anti-fraud campaign has to be part of a long-term public information programme that will help the Government meet its target of reducing fraud and error in Income Support and JobSeeker's Allowance by 50 per cent by 2006."

The campaign will consist of three 40-second TV commercials portraying typical examples of benefit fraud such as a dole cheat earning cash in hand whilst claiming, playing on the sympathy of friends to cadge free drinks.

"The Government is playing its part in tackling fraud: tightening the gateways to benefit, improving the training of fraud investigators, modernising the technology to root out the cheats as well as seeking new powers to toughen the penalties against persistent offenders and to gather the information necessary to catch them.

"But the public has a part to play too - and these ads show that benefit cheats are stealing money from us all," said the Social Security Secretary.

"People who work and claim benefits aren't loveable rogues, what they are doing is despicable. Benefit fraud costs every household in this country over £80 a year. People would be rightly angry if £80 was stolen from their wallets."

"Stealing from the benefits system is no different. People who think turning a blind eye to benefit fraud is OK need to think again."

The public can report suspicions of fraud anonymously to the National Benefit Fraud Hotline on **0800 854440**.

Notes for editors

1. Fraud in the benefits system is estimated to cost at least £2 billion a year.
2. Details of the campaign can be found on the campaign website at www.targetingfraud.gov.uk.
3. The National Benefit Fraud Hotline was introduced in 1996.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/press releases/2001/feb/01-02-01-1.asp

1st February 2001

£10,000 Ex-Gratia Payments Sent Out To Prisoners Of War And Other Captives Of The Japanese

From today, over 14,000 payments of £10,000 will be issued to former prisoners of the Japanese or their surviving spouses in recognition of the unique circumstances of their captivity during the Second World War.

Social Security Minister Hugh Bayley said: "More than 14,000 Far Eastern prisoners or their surviving spouses will be receiving their £10,000 payments from today.

"The War Pensions Agency staff have done a brilliant job contacting them and processing their claims in just two months.

"An effective partnership approach has helped action these payments, with WPA enlisting the help and advice of key ex-service organisations and charities. The Royal British Legion, Far Eastern Prisoners of War Association, the Japanese Labour Camp Survivors Association and the Association for British Civilian Internees Far East Region have used their combined expertise to help us process the claims."

The General Secretary of the Royal British Legion, Ian Townsend, said: "The War Pensions Agency has done a wonderful job in processing so many claims so quickly for the first batch of payments of the Government ex-gratia payment. It is really good to hear how the WPA staff have become so involved in understanding the FEPOW story."

The War Pensions Agency has worked in conjunction with the MoD, Cabinet Office, Foreign Commonwealth Office and the Treasury, to share information and expertise to make these payments.

Notes for editors

1. Those who are entitled to receive the payment are the following British groups held prisoner by the Japanese:
   - Former members of HM Armed Forces who were made prisoners of war.
   - Former members of the Merchant Navy who were captured and imprisoned.
   - British civilians who were interned.
   - Certain other former military personnel in the colonial forces, Indian Army, and Burmese armed forces, who received compensation in the 1950s under UK auspices, by virtue of their inclusion on the UK lists of former prisoners of war submitted to the International Red Cross at the time, will also be eligible.
   - Where a person who would have been entitled to this payment has died their surviving spouse will be entitled to receive it.
2. The new ex-gratia payment scheme arises from a review which the Prime Minister initiated following a meeting with the Secretary General of the Royal British Legion to discuss the subject on 10th April 2000.
3. The unique nature of the Far Eastern Prisoners' captivity was recognised in the 1950s when they became eligible for modest compensation paid

from Japanese assets under the provision of the 1951 San Francisco Treaty of Peace with Japan.

4. There is no final date for making a claim. The War Pensions Agency, based in Blackpool, is responsible for administering the ex-gratia payment scheme and will continue to deal with any claims for as long as they continue to be received.
5. The Agency may be able to arrange interviews with some of the Far Eastern Prisoners of War who have made claims for the ex-gratia payment. For further information, please contact the Agency Press Officers, details below.
6. The Agency has introduced new arrangements to deal with the payments and has published a leaflet explaining how the scheme works, including details of how to claim. The leaflet and claim form, are available at the WPA website on www.dss.gov.uk/wpa/index.htm. Alternatively, claim forms and information can be obtained by telephoning the Agency's free telephone Helpline. Contact telephone numbers are as follows:

Free telephone number for UK callers is: 0800 169 22 77
Telephone number for overseas caller is: 0044 1253 866043
Fax number for overseas callers is: 0044 1253 2014

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/30-03-01-1.asp

30th March 2001

Countdown to stakeholder pensions: Get Information on Stakeholder Pensions before 6 April

In less than one week's time stakeholder pensions will be available to consumers Alistair Darling reminded people today.

"From 6 April stakeholder pensions will go on sale. For the first time, millions of people will have access to a good value, secure and flexible second pension.

"Very soon people all over the country will be considering stakeholder pensions as part of their pension planning.

"People who want to know more about stakeholder pensions before deciding on their pension choices can get simple, impartial information by ordering our leaflet, visiting our website or ringing a helpline."

You can order copies of 'Stakeholder Pensions: Your Guide' by ringing 0845 7 31 32 33. Or have a look at the website: www.pensionguide.gov.uk.

Impartial advice on stakeholder pensions is also available at the OPAS helpline on 0845 601 2923.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/30-03-01-2.asp

30th March 2001

Darling Says Change Will Bring Better Service

Wide-ranging reforms to the Department of Social Security mean a better service to the public and more money available for the government's priorities - families and pensioners, Alistair Darling said today.

Big changes in the way the Department is run has meant more staff and resources for the front line, delivering the right money to the right people as quickly as possible. The reforms are highlighted in the DSS Departmental Report published today.

Mr Darling said: "The past year has been an important transition period for the DSS as we move from getting the right policies in place to focusing on how those policies are delivered on the ground.

"Social security spending is now under control for the first time in three decades as a result of lower unemployment and the government's efforts to help people into work as well as our sustained campaign to bring down fraud and error.

"This year and next we are saving £4 billion on the costs of unemployment-related benefits compared with 1997. That means we can spend more where it is needed: tackling child and pensioner poverty and providing more help for people with severe disabilities and their carers."

"We've begun to turn the corner in the fight against fraud and error. New figures published last year revealed for the first time a significant fall in the amount of fraud and error in Jobseeker's Allowance and Income Support.

"That 6.5 per cent reduction puts us on target to meet our commitment to cutting fraud by half in five years' time."

Mr Darling added: "We have already freed up money by cutting over 2,500 jobs at the centre of the DSS and switching those resources to support front-line delivery.

"And we've delivered a number of early improvements to services including:

- the introduction of a national tele-claims service for the Retirement Pension
- improving the letters the Department sends to customers
- and cutting down the size of the Minimum Income Guarantee claim form from 40 pages to just 10 pages of clear, easy to understand questions.

"Later this year we plan to launch the new working age agency bringing together the Employment Service and those parts of the Benefits Agency dealing with people of working age. This will mark a further step forward in creating a culture in which more opportunities and choices are matched by a greater responsibility on the part of individuals to help themselves. And this year we will also launch a dedicated new service for pensioners.

"As we prepare for the new organisations, we are already taking important steps to modernise delivery and improve our customer service. We're investing in modernising the department's outdated computer systems. Staff and customers will start to see the benefits later this year.

"All these - and other changes - are helping to ensure the right people get the right money as quickly as possible.

"We've made progress over the last year. As we look to the year ahead, we will continue the process of changing the DSS - change for the purpose of improving services for our customers."

Notes for editors
Copies of the Departmental report are available from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0788 or on the DSS website at www.dwp.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/press releases/2001/mar/27-03-01-1.asp

27th March 2001

Countdown to Stakeholder Pensions Begins

Alistair Darling will tomorrow meet pension industry leaders to discuss the launch of stakeholder pensions.

With just over a week to go before stakeholder pensions 'go live' Alistair Darling, Social Security Secretary said: "Stakeholder pensions will provide new and better options for middle and high earners. There are now over 30 pension providers in the field and the new low cost stakeholder pensions will go on sale in just 10 days time.

"Stakeholder pensions will change the face of how people save for their future. Because they are flexible and value for money they are a good deal for lots of consumers who do not have other pension options available to them.

The breakfast meeting with pension providers is the first in a series of meetings Mr Darling will hold directly with the industry.

"I am looking forward to talking with people who are actively involved in stakeholder pensions" he said. "The Government will continue to work with the industry to make sure that everyone who can save has the opportunity to do so".

Notes for editors
1. Stakeholder pensions go live on 6 April 2001. They will be provided by financial services companies, such as insurance companies, banks, investment companies and building societies.
2. The register of stakeholder pensions is available at www.stakeholder.opra.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/23-03-01-1.asp

23rd March 2001

BFI Report: London Borough of Hackney

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by London Borough of Hackney is published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

The BFI report that the standard of service provided to benefit claimants over the past three years has been very poor. At the time of their inspection, inspectors found significant backlogs of outstanding work which had led to substantial delays in dealing with new and renewal claims. The council had outsourced its benefits services in 1997 but failed to invest sufficient resources in the client side management. The contract with the supplier did not contain adequate provision for dealing with problems and there had been a failure to arrest declining performance.

Inspectors found that a poorly designed claim form and very poor performance in processing was having an effect on other parts of the council's benefits service which has led to a sharp increase in the numbers of complaints to the Local Government Ombudsman. The report notes some measures were introduced to improve customer service. However inspectors considered the effectiveness of these measures was seriously undermined by long waiting times and many telephone enquiries not being answered.

Inspectors found that the council had failed to comply with the requirement to notify claimants of their benefit entitlement and subsequent changes. There were major concerns about the council's performance for preventing and recovering overpayments. Every aspect of this area of work was found to be poor and the level of debt owed to the council had grown to £17.8m by 1999/2000.

The report notes the introduction of a strong management structure in the council's counter fraud unit and a number of good practices. But inspectors considered that limited resources were resulting in poor quality fraud investigations and a failure to make full and proper use of all investigative practices and powers.

During their inspection, the BFI noted that considerable effort was being made to address some of the significant weak areas of performance.

The BFI's report makes recommendations to help the council address weaknesses and to improve the administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Paul Goggins MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. The process for inspection at London Borough of Hackney included an initial fact finding stage, an on-site visit and report generation and clearance. The inspection period was **February 2000** to **September 2000**. The on-site phase took place in **June 2000** and **July 2000**.
3. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
4. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
5. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/23-03-01-2.asp

23rd March 2001

BFI Report: Glasgow City Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by Glasgow City Council is published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors found a number of weaknesses and poor standards of performance across all areas of benefit administration and counter fraud work. The BFI reports the council had serious delays with appeals and review boards, inconsistent and ineffective work practices in gathering claims evidence and in making referrals to the Rent Officer.

The report notes the council's lack of effective performance targets, inadequate management information, weaknesses in checks and controls and the poor management and recovery of benefit overpayments. Inspectors expressed serious concerns about the council's ability to manage and deliver a secure benefits service.

The council has a detailed counter fraud and corruption policy and inspectors consider it undertakes some good counter fraud work. However, the quality of its investigations needs to be improved.

The report notes that the need for major improvements has been recognised and the council was committed to a programme of change that will involve overhauling its structures and processes. Inspectors particularly commend the council for undertaking a ground-breaking data matching initiative in an attempt to flush out internal fraud and for their participation in a number of new DSS initiatives.

Chris Bull, director of the BFI, said: "BFI recognises the size of the task and that the necessary changes will be difficult. However, I am very encouraged by the council's commitment to tackling the issues this inspection has identified. If Glasgow's plans are carried out there will be a significant improvement to the quality and security of benefit services."

The BFI's report makes recommendations to help the council address weaknesses and to improve the administration and counter fraud activity of Housing

Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Paul Goggins MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. The process for inspection at Glasgow City Council included an initial fact finding stage, an on site visit and report generation and clearance. The inspection period was from **March 2000** to **October 2000**. The onsite visit phase of the inspection took place in **July 2000** and **August 2000**.
3. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
4. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
5. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/23-03-01-3.asp

23rd March 2001

BFI Report: Sheffield City Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by Sheffield City Council is published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors found a number of weaknesses and poor standards of performance in the administration of its benefit service, leading to backlogs of work and lengthy delays in processing benefit claims.

In contracting out its benefit administration and counter fraud work the council has yet to realise the expected improvements in service delivery.

Inspectors report that although there is some good counter fraud work, it is not focused and management controls are largely ineffective and provide little assurance. Inspectors found investigation work to be of poor quality and insufficient to tackle the estimated level of fraud in the council's area.

The council has recognised that improvements are required and is developing an action plan to address the issues raised by the inspection. Some remedial action had already taken place by the time the inspection finished.

Chris Bull, director of the BFI, said: "BFI recognises the size of the task facing the council and is encouraged by its commitment to tackling these issues. The council has responded positively to our inspection, and its plans if carried through, will significantly improve the quality and security of benefit services."

The report also notes that although the council has a detailed counter fraud and corruption policy, it needs to improve the quality of its investigations.

The BFI's report makes recommendations to help the council address weaknesses and to improve the administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Paul Goggins MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. The process for inspection at Sheffield City Council included an initial fact finding stage, an on site visit and report generation and clearance. The inspection period was from **March 2000** to **September 2000**. The onsite visit phase of the inspection took place in **June 2000** and **July 2000**.
3. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
4. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
5. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/22-03-01-1.asp

22nd March 2001

New Work Rules For People On Incapacity Benefits

New, fairer and more flexible work rules to help people receiving incapacity benefits to get back into work were announced today.

The aim is to help those who want to try small amounts of work while on incapacity benefits without the fear of losing their benefit entitlement.

The changes will replace the current therapeutic work rule from April 2002. The new rules will allow claimants to work for a year for up to 16 hours a week with earnings up to £60.50 (April 2001 rate).

The new rules provide a stepping stone to full time work for people receiving Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support based on incapacity.

In addition, benefit recipients will be allowed to earn up to £20 a week for as long as they remain on the benefit. This will help those who wish to work on a limited basis in order to have social contact.

In answer to a Parliamentary Question from Anne Begg MP (Aberdeen South), Hugh Bayley, Social Security Minister said:

"From April 2002, we propose to introduce new rules for people who receive Incapacity Benefit, Severe Disablement Allowance and Income Support based on incapacity who want to undertake some form of paid work which may ease their way back into full-time employment. We are aware of concerns that the current therapeutic work rules may be of limited use where it is difficult to demonstrate that a particular job would be beneficial to a person's medical condition. The current rules also do not help someone who wants to work on a limited basis in order to have social contact if they do not satisfy the therapeutic requirement. This is why we have reviewed the current position and are introducing some improvements.

"Under the proposed changes, the therapeutic work rules will cease to exist. Instead we intend to introduce rules which will allow any person receiving incapacity benefits to:

a. work for less than 16 hours a week and up to £60.50 for up to six months; with a six month extension for those working with a Personal Adviser, Job Broker or Disability Employment Adviser;
b. work for maximum earnings of £20 a week with no time limit and no hours limit.

"Claimants who undertake sheltered work or are undergoing a hospital treatment programme which includes work, will, as now, be able to earn up to £60.50 a week (April 2001 rates) with no limit on the number of hours they work.

"We believe that these rules are much fairer than those that currently exist. Because we are opening up the rules to anyone on incapacity benefits we are giving more people the opportunity of trying paid work. This, together with our other measures to help people find suitable work, will enable people to move off benefits and into work. Also, by allowing all claimants to do some paid work without time limit, we will be encouraging those who are otherwise excluded to take part in activities which will help them feel part of, and play a more active role in, their local community. Additionally, of course, there are the rules which we already have in place to allow claimants to try full-time work or training and return to benefit at the same rate if they have to give up that work or training.

"These changes do not affect the position whereby people receiving Incapacity Benefit or Severe Disablement Allowance may do unpaid voluntary work for an unlimited period."

Notes for editors

1. Present therapeutic work rules allow benefit to continue if the claimant undertakes work on the advice of their doctor and:-
   i. it is confirmed that the work, which must be done for less than 16 hours a week on average, will help to improve, or prevent or delay deterioration in, the condition which causes the person's incapacity for work; or
   ii. it is part of a treatment programme done under medical supervision while the claimant is an in-patient or regularly attending as an outpatient of a hospital or similar institution; or
   iii. it is done while the claimant is attending an institution which provides sheltered work for people with disabilities.

   In all cases earnings, after the deduction of allowable expenses, must not exceed £59.50 a week (£60.50 from April 2001).

   Applications to do the work under categories a. and b. above will be subject as now to the requirement that the nature of the activity undertaken should not call the person's incapacity into question.
2. It is estimated that around 1-2% of Incapacity Benefit (IB) claimants do therapeutic work.
   - 907,597 claims were made in 1999/2000
   - The caseload in August 2000 was 2.3 million
   - Expenditure: £7 billion
   - Short- term lower rate (first 28 weeks) £50.90 (£52.60 April 2001)

- Short-term higher rate (up to 52 weeks) £60.20 (£62.20 April 2001)
- Long-term rate (over 52 weeks) £67.50 (£69.75 April 2001 rate)

IB at long term rate is paid after 196 days of sickness to special rules cases (terminally ill and highest rate care component DLA). People whose capacity to work is restricted by illness or disability can be entitled to:

- Incapacity Benefit if they have the right NI contributions record;
- If not, they might be entitled to Income Support paid on grounds of incapacity; Income Support can also be paid in addition to Incapacity Benefit depending on income level and,
- Those who do not qualify for Income Support can still get the credits on grounds of incapacity,
- Housing Benefit and Council Tax benefit can also be paid in addition to Incapacity Benefit and/or is depending on income level

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/20-03-01-1.asp

20th March 2001

BFI Report: Newcastle City Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by Newcastle City Council is published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors originally visited the council in August 1997 as part of a series of trial inspections but their findings were not published. This inspection referred back to the BFI's earlier work, measured progress since 1997 and considered the council's current performance.

Inspectors report that the Council has responded positively to the BFI's first inspection report and recommendations. In particular the BFI was pleased to note there were no backlogs at the time of their on-site inspection, despite the high volume of work, large caseload and transient population.

The report identifies noticeable improvements in the council's benefit administration. In particular, its verification, claim form and liaison with the Benefits Agency, Rent Service, private sector landlords and Housing Associations.

Inspectors also note that substantial progress has been made in counter fraud work. The council now undertakes its own prosecutions and introduced a computerised fraud management system.

The report acknowledges a significant improvement has been the development of a joint protocol between Internal Audit and District Audit, which ensures both teams are working together to ensure maximum audit coverage and effectiveness.

The BFI's report makes recommendations to help the council address weaknesses and to improve the administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Jim Cousins, MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. The process for inspection at Newcastle City Council included an initial fact finding stage, an on-site visit and report generation and clearance. The on-site visit phase of the inspection took place in **March 2000 and April 2000.**
3. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
4. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
5. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.dss.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/20-03-01-2.asp

20th March 2001

BFI Report: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council is published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors report that the Council has responded very positively to the BFI's first inspection report and has

been particularly active in taking steps to tackle fraud and error.

This is the BFI's second inspection of the Council and followed publication of its first report in August 1999. This inspection referred back to the BFI's earlier work and measures progress made since 1999.

BFI reports that the council has implemented most of its recommendations and that this has led to improvements in its overall benefit administration and counter fraud performance. Centralisation of its benefit processing has helped the council reduce backlogs and improve clearance times.

Inspectors note the council had approved a prosecution policy and together with training for its fraud officers this has led to the council conducting a large number of successful prosecutions. Inspectors found the council had the best performing fraud section of the 30 highest spending local authorities the BFI had inspected to date.

The report concludes the council has achieved a lot in a short space of time and that this is commendable. However, there is still room for further improvement and in particular improving verification of claims.

The BFI's report makes recommendations to help the council address weaknesses and to improve the administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Adrian Bailey, MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. The process for inspection at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council included an initial fact finding stage, an on-site visit and report generation and clearance. The inspection period was from **March 2000 to October 2000**. The on-site visit phase of the inspection took place in **July 2000 and August 2000**.
3. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
4. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
5. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.dss.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/15-03-01-1.asp

15th March 2001

Rooker Makes Changes to Stakeholder Pensions Regulations

Regulations were laid today amending the Stakeholder Pension Schemes Regulations.

The Pensions Minister Jeff Rooker, commented:

"The Government made a commitment to work with the pensions industry to ensure that stakeholder pensions offer a realistic and effective second pension option. To demonstrate this commitment the Government has today laid amending regulations to make changes of a practical and technical nature. The changes make the stakeholder regulations more effective, and include provisions which take account of the views of the pensions industry, including organisations setting up stakeholder pension schemes.

"Stakeholder pension schemes can now finalise their preparations for the launch of stakeholder pensions on 6 April 2001.

"Some of the changes in these amending regulations are that:

- schemes will be able to stagger the issue of annual benefit statements over the year, rather than having to issue them all at once;
- schemes will only have to accept contributions made by cheque, standing order, direct credit and direct debit, and will be able to decline contributions in other forms;
- instead of telling members each year of the cash amount of their charges, schemes will be required to state the percentage amount of the charge (but in three years we will reintroduce the requirement to show the monetary amount of charges);
- to clarify the treatment of dealing costs incurred in relation to investment in collective investment schemes;
- to modify the provisions governing the appointment and role of the reporting accountant in schemes."

Notes for editors

1. The full title of the regulations is The Stakeholder Pension Schemes (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations 2001 [S.I. 2001/934]

2. The regulations are available on the internet at www.legislation.hmso.gov.uk. Printed copies are available from the Stationery Office.
3. The regulations amend The Stakeholder Pension Schemes Regulations 2000 [S.I. 2000 / 1403] ("the main regulations"). The main regulations were also amended by The Stakeholder Pension Schemes (Amendment) Regulations 2001 [S.I. 2001 / 104].
4. The proposed main changes in the regulations were announced in a letter from DSS officials to the Association of British Insurers and to the Association of Unit Trusts and Investment Funds, on 2 November 2000.
5. The main changes in these regulations are:

- to only require schemes to accept contributions in the form of cheques, standing orders, direct debit and direct credit (giving them the option of declining contributions in other forms);
- to amend the definition of "contract of insurance" so that it covers all relevant classes of contract, and to make it more watertight;
- to require that scheme manager (and any fund manager) must take advice about the merits (or otherwise) of retaining investments (in addition to obtaining advice prior to making the investments);
- to modify the provisions governing the appointment and role of the reporting accountant in schemes; and to make changes to the content of the scheme's annual declaration, and to the statement by the reporting accountant confirming the annual declaration;
- to clarify that the existing law on suspension and forfeiture of pension rights applies to stakeholder pensions and overrides limits in the stakeholder regulations on reductions in members' rights;
- to clarify the treatment of dealing costs incurred in relation to investment in collective investment schemes;
- to provide for an additional ground on which an occupational stakeholder scheme may refuse contributions;
- to allow schemes to issue annual statements over the year rather than issuing them all at once;
- to require that the annual statement shows the percentage charge on the member's fund rather than the actual amount of the charge;
- to revise and clarify the exemptions regarding employers providing access to stakeholder schemes;
- to provide that an employee who is excluded from being an active member of the employer's occupational pension scheme because he ceased to be a deferred or active member of it, will not be classed as a relevant employee for stakeholder access requirements;
- to change and clarify provisions governing payroll deductions and the information to be provided to employees about payroll deductions.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/08-03-01-1.asp

8th March 2001

BFI Report: Metropolitan Borough Of Wirral

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by the Metropolitan Borough of Wirral was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

The BFI reports that the council provides a customer-orientated benefits service. However, this is being hampered by weaknesses in their administration and counter fraud activity.

Inspectors found the standards of verification for new and renewal claims was very poor and the council had considerable backlogs of work. This had significantly reduced the responsiveness of the benefits service and the level of assurance the council could give to the accuracy and validity of its benefit payments.

The report notes that counter fraud activity had been neglected. Due to a lack of resources, investigation work was of poor quality and insufficient to tackle the estimated level of fraud in the council's area. However, inspectors note that the council recently approved the recruitment of additional investigation officers. Additionally the control and management of overpayment recovery was found to be poor, leading to a low recovery rate.

BFI notes that despite having a number of well-written strategic and policy documents, not all of these had been put into practice. Inspectors recommend the council reviews its internal audit coverage of administration and counter fraud activities as they were found to be insufficient to give an assurance of the integrity of the benefits system.

The BFI's report makes recommendations to help the council address weaknesses and to improve the administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be

identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from David Taylor MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
3. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
4. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/08-03-01-2.asp

8th March 2001

BFI Report: City Of Bradford Metropolitan District Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit administration and counter fraud activity by City of Bradford Metropolitan District Council was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors were particularly pleased with the number of high quality customer service initiatives, including joint working with the BA and other organisations and the sharing of good practices with other local authorities.

The BFI reports that the council was struggling to cope with backlogs of assessment work, and inspectors consider it is important that it not only clears arrears, but prevents them from recurring. The council was introducing measures to resolve the backlogs, but these measures need to be consolidated into one overall plan.

Inspectors consider that the council needs to improve its administration of benefit appeals. In particular by ensuring backlogs are reduced, statutory timescales are met and management checking is improved.

BFI found good Counter fraud work, including commendable risk analysis of local fraud. Investigations were well conducted in an ordered and methodical way. The council has a sound prosecution policy and has successfully issued administrative penalties. However, BFI concluded the council needs to increase the use of its inspectors' powers.

The Council has already acknowledged many of the issues raised in this report. It has taken immediate action to deal with some of them and has addressed others in a long-term plan. This is an encouraging response.

BFI's report makes recommendations to help the council address weaknesses and to improve the administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from David Taylor MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/06-03-01-1.asp

6th March 2001

BFI Report: Liverpool City Council

The Benefit Fraud Inspectorate's (BFI) report of its inspection of Housing and Council Tax Benefit

administration and counter fraud activity by Liverpool City Council was published today by the Secretary of State for Social Security.

Inspectors found a number of weaknesses and poor standards of performance in the administration of the benefit service, leading to substantial backlogs of work and lengthy delays in processing benefit claims.

In addition the council's lack of effective performance targets, inadequate management information, weaknesses in checks and controls and poor management and recovery of benefit overpayments led to serious concerns about its ability to manage and deliver a secure benefits service.

The council has recognised that major improvements are required in the way it delivers its benefits service and has stated it is committed to a significant change programme that will involve overhauling its systems, structures and processes.

Chris Bull, Director of the BFI commented that "BFI recognises the size of the task facing the council and is very encouraged by its commitment to tackling these issues. The council has responded very positively to our inspection, and its plans if carried through, will significantly improve the quality and security of benefit services. "The report also notes that although the council undertakes some good counter fraud work, it is not focused so significant effort is being wasted.

The BFI's report makes recommendations to help the council address weaknesses and to improve the administration and counter fraud activity of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit.

BFI inspects agencies and local authorities and is working to raise standards and spread good practice. Through its recommendations improvements can be identified to safeguard current systems and inform design for the future.

Social Security Minister Jeff Rooker announced the publication of the report in response to a Parliamentary Question from Paul Goggins MP.

Notes for editors

1. The BFI is an independent unit within the Department of Social security set up to inspect social security benefits administration and counter-fraud activity within DSS agencies and local authorities, to report to the Secretary of State for Social Security, and to promote good practice.
2. The process for inspection at Liverpool included an initial fact finding stage, an on site visit and report generation. The onsite visit was concluded in July 2000.
3. Each inspection report is considered by the Secretary of State who decides whether any further action is appropriate. The Secretary of State has powers to issue directions to a local authority to secure acceptable/minimum standards in performance.
4. This inspection is part of a programme to inspect the 30 highest benefit spending councils.
5. Media copies of the report can be obtained from the DSS Press Office on 020 7238 0866. A copy of the report can be found on the internet at: www.bfi.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/06-03-01-2.asp

6th March 2001

Good News for North West Pensioners

More pensioners than ever will be entitled to extra money thanks to new benefit rules coming into force next month.

The changes mean pensioner couples with less than £12,000 in savings and an income below £140 a week could get extra cash help under the Minimum Income Guarantee.

Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling said: "Thanks to our campaign to urge pensioners to claim what is their right there are already over 18,000 extra pensioners in the North West who are benefiting from MIG by on average £20 a week.

"From April many more pensioners will be entitled to extra money every week. To those pensioners I say 'get claiming now, you don't have to wait until April'.

"In order to make it easy for pensioners to claim MIG there is an electronic claim line -just ring 0800 028 11 11 and give your details over the phone - it can take about half an hour.

"The electronic claim form is a quick, friendly way to claim but for those who prefer to use a real form we are producing a new simplified 10-page form - that will be ready to use from October."

From April MIG for a single pensioner will rise to £92.15 and for a couple to £140.55.

And there is more good news. Many pensioners in the North West do not know what help is on offer so the DSS has published a new guide launched by Liz Dawn of Coronation Street.

Mr Darling said: "This first ever "Pensioners' Guide" brings together in one place national and regional

information on benefits and services for pensioners including advice on health, keeping warm and security against crime.

"We have worked closely with Age Concern, Help the Aged and the Local Government Association to bring together useful information and vital telephone numbers in a clear, practical and easy-to-read guide. Many pensioners will wonder how they got by without it in the past."

Notes for editors

1. From April 2001 the rules for Minimum Income Guarantee will change:
   - People aged 60 and over can now have up to £6,000 of savings - up from £3,000 - and they will not be taken into account in assessing their MIG claim.
   - People aged 60 and over with savings of between £6,000 and £12,000 may still be eligible for some MIG - the amount will depend on their savings.
2. From April the full weekly rate of MIG will increase to £92.15 (for single people aged 60 or over) and £140.15 (for couples aged 60 and over).
3. Pensioners can see if they are eligible by visiting this link: http://www.dss.gov.uk/mig/002.htm
4. The MIG electronic claim line is 0800 028 11 11. Texphone number is 0800 028 35 93.
5. Over 235,000 pensioners currently receive MIG in the North West (Nov 2000).

Pensioner's Guide

2. The Guide produced with help from Age Concern, Help and Aged and the Local Government Association is available by phoning 0845 6 065 065. It is also available on www.info4pensioners.gov.uk

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/05-03-01-1.asp

5th March 2001

"It's A Deal": New Deal For Lone Parents - Advertising Campaign Begins

A new £2.5 million advertising campaign promoting the New Deal for Lone Parents programme starts today. NDLP offers help to lone parents in making their choice about starting work.

The TV and Press Advertising Campaign, created by Publicis, focuses on how NDLP can provide advice on:

- Registered Childcare availability
- Back to Work benefits that tide over job starters until pay day
- Training allowances

Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling said: "The New Deal is providing the practical help and support needed by lone parents who want to do the best for themselves and their families. Almost 200,000 lone parents have joined so far, more than 81,000 have found work and more than 22,500 have gone into training.

"The New Deal for Lone Parents has been a real success. It has transformed the lives of thousands of parents. We need to build on it and this campaign shows the opportunities available to help thousands more into work."

The advertising campaign uses television and national and regional press.

It highlights the advantages lone parents can gain by returning to the workplace - renewed self-confidence, independence and an improved life style for themselves and their children.

The TV campaign dramatises these benefits showing a lone parent who, during her lunch hour, uses newly learnt skills to secretly create a surprise 50th birthday card for a colleague called Jim, superimposing his head on a Chippendales body. With help from the NDLP programme, we can see how she has recovered her sense of self-worth, finding new friends and learning new skills along the way.

The Press campaign comprises a series of four adverts each dealing with a potential barrier that the NDLP can remove. In each, the lone parent sets up the conditions in which they would be able to go back to work to which an NDLP Personal Adviser responds with the line "It's a deal".

The campaign is due to last until 31 March 2001.

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http://www.dwp.gov.uk/mediacentre/dss/pressreleases/2001/mar/02-03-01-1.asp

2nd March 2001

Pensioners Needing Help? New Guide Is Right Up Your Street

Coronation Street star Liz Dawn today joined Alistair Darling to launch a new booklet right up the street of pensioners who need a guide to benefits and services they need.

For the first time "The Pensioners' Guide" brings together in one place key national and local information and could be worth hundreds of pounds to pensioners.

Liz Dawn, Coronation Street's Vera Duckworth, said: "This new guide is really useful for pensioners, giving them a lot of vital information at their fingertips.

"It is just the kind of booklet that would come in very handy at Rita's Kabin for pensioners who need advice on government services. It's written in such clear language that even our Jack would understand it."

Social Security Secretary Alistair Darling said: "This is the type of handy guide that pensioners can keep at home and look at when they need to.

"It signposts where people need to go to get further information and advice on pensions, health, keeping warm, social services and security against crime," he added.

The Pensioners' Guide provides a useful checklist of services and benefits so pensioners can ensure they are not missing out. They can tell at a glance whether the service is likely to be available for them and whom they should contact to find out more. Pensioners welcomed the idea of a guide, with feedback from market testing suggesting it will fill an information gap and break down barriers to benefits and services.

Among the help available covered is:

- The Minimum Income Guarantee - more pensioners than ever will be eligible for it from April when it will be worth £92.15 for a single pensioner.
- Help with heating including grants to help heat the home worth up to £2,000 in England, £2,700 in Wales and the Warm Deal in Scotland.
- Help with home security improvements such as new door locks, window locks and a smoke detector.
- Help with health costs and how to get support from social services.

Notes for editors

1. There is a guide that refers to England and Wales (also available in Welsh) and a separate guide for Scotland.
2. Copies of the guides will be available from venues including benefit offices, Citizens Advice Bureaus and libraries. Or a copy can be requested by phoning 0845 6 065 065 (textphone 0845 6 064 064). Copies of the guides are also available at www.info4pensioners.gov.uk
3. Copies of a picture of Liz Dawn and Alistair Darling launching the guide are available to be sent to the media electronically.

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http://www.gnn.gov.uk/environment/detail.asp?ReleaseID=38711&NewsAreaID=2&NavigatedFromDepartment=False

Tuesday 13 March 2001 00:00

BYERS - NEW INDICATORS SHOW BENEFITS MUST BE EXTENDED

P/2001/150

13 March 2001 BYERS - NEW INDICATORS SHOW THAT THE BENEFITS OF ECONOMIC STABILITY MUST BE EXTENDED TO EVERY REGION AND COMMUNITY

Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers today released new regional economic figures showing general improvements in areas including earnings and exports, but continued differences in overall regional economic performance, underlining the importance of an active regional industrial policy.

Prepared using Office of National Statistics and other Government Department"s figures, the March 2001 edition of Regional Competitiveness Indicators covers 14 different economic indicators, and maps the economic performance of the English regions, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The indicators range from manufacturing productivity and research and development spending to levels of earnings, exports, investment and output by foreign owned companies, and numbers of VAT registrations (taken as a measure of business start-ups) and business survival rates.

Some of the indicators reveal that:

- gross domestic product - provisional figures show that in 1999 GDP per head in every region was above £10,000 per head for the first time, however there is still a large gap between the best and worst performing regions.
- earnings - average earnings for full-time employees have increased in all regions. The four regions with the highest increase since 1999 were Merseyside (up 9.6%), the North East (9.3%), Wales (up 9.1%) and Northern Ireland (up 9.6%).
- manufacturing investment by foreign-owned companies - between 1994 and 1997 Scotland, the West Midlands, the North East, Wales, and Merseyside had the highest proportion of their region"s manufacturing investment made by foreign-owned companies, and Yorkshire and Humberside the lowest.
- manufacturing research and development - latest available figures show that between 1996 and 1997 spending fell in the North East, North West, Yorkshire and Humberside, the East Midlands,

London, and the South East, with only the East of England, the South West, and Merseyside showing an increase.

Two of the best performing areas of the economy - the South East, and East of England - were those with the highest levels of investment in research and development, whilst Yorkshire and Humberside and the North East were both below half the UK average. Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers said that whilst the UK overall was benefiting from hard-won economic stability, the figures showed the importance of an active regional industrial strategy to allow every region to prosper.

"These figures show that there is much to be proud of in the economic performance of different parts of the UK, but they also show that we need to improve in a number of key areas - and close the gap between best and worst performing regions.

"There are now more people in work in every region than there were in Spring1997, every region has experienced a growth in average earnings, and the number of companies exporting both inside and outside the EU has grown in almost every part of the UK.

"These Indicators show that different parts of the UK have different strengths and weaknesses, and they underline the need for policies which will improve the number of new business start-ups and survival rates, boost investment in research and development and productivity rates, particularly in our economically weaker areas.

"We have achieved stable economic growth for the UK as a whole, but there are still unacceptably wide gaps in the performance of different regions. We need to widen the winners circle still further and ensure that economic prosperity brings real benefits, and increasing prosperity, in every part of the country."

"Our next steps must be to put in place the measures that will allow all regions to fulfil their full potential. "A key goal for Government must be to ensure that the benefits of economic stability and the resulting rise in prosperity are extended to every region and community."

NOTES TO EDITORS:

1. Measures to assist regions recently announced by the Department of Trade and Industry/Department for Education and Employment include:
2. the foundation of University Innovation Centres to create hubs for growth in the regions. The first five will involve companies like BAE and Proctor and Gamble in the North East and Hewlett Packard in Bristol;
3. two new technology institutions in each region to produce a step change in the capacity of the regions to grow new dynamic businesses and hi-tech employment;
4. a new £75 million incubator fund to support business start-ups and growing businesses;
5. a new early growth fund to make available up to #50,000 for business start-ups and small and medium enterprises; and,
6. special support to manufacturing industry through a new Manufacturing Advisory Service. 2. Media copies of Regional Competitiveness Indicators (March 2001) are available from the DTI Press Office. They can also be accessed via the DTI website at http://www.dti.gov.uk/sd/rci.

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http://www.gnn.gov.uk/environment/detail.asp?ReleaseID=25530&NewsAreaID=2&NavigatedFromDepartment=False

Wednesday 7 March 2001 00:00

BOOST FOR WORKING PARENTS - MATERNITY UP TO DATE

P/2001/133
7 March 2001 BUDGET BOOST FOR WORKING PARENTS, BRINGING MATERNITY PROVISION UP TO DATE
Working parents with a new baby will see real change in their family lives after today"s Budget announcement of reforms worth £1/2 billion a year, Trade and Industry Secretary Stephen Byers said today.

The changes, part of the Government"s response to the Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice Review undertaken by Stephen Byers, will mean up to £1,200 a year extra for all 360,000 mothers getting maternity pay, and will guarantee most working mothers an income of £200 a week for up to six months after the birth.

It gives women a real chance to stay at home in the crucial first months of their child"s life, without losing touch with the labour market. Together with the Children"s Tax Credit, which the Chancellor also announced in the Budget, including an increased credit in the year of a child"s birth, the package will mean up to £2,200 extra for families with new babies.

In the Budget, the Chancellor announced:
- an increase in the flat rate of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) and Maternity Allowance from its present £60.20 a week to £75 a week from April 2002 and £100 from April 2003. Women will receive 90 per cent of their previous earnings if that is less than the flat rate; - an extension of the

period of maternity pay at this enhanced rate from 18 weeks to 26 weeks from April 2003;
- the right to two weeks of paid paternity leave for working fathers from 2003, paid at the same flat rate as SMP;
- from 2003, paid adoption leave when a child is first placed with a family, to allow one of the adoptive parents to take paid leave for the same period and at the same flat rate as SMP;
- allowing more small businesses to claim extra compensation for administering maternity pay, by doubling the threshold for Small Employer Relief to £40,000 from April 2002. Around 60 per cent of all firms paying SMP each year will be able to reclaim their costs in full, plus compensation; and
- a further increase in the Sure Start Maternity Grant from £300 to £500 in April 2002, for 215,000 low-income families a year.

Stephen Byers said: "Today"s Budget is excellent news for all families. "In the last year, my Department led the most comprehensive review of work and parents ever undertaken by a Government in Britain.

"It was clear that urgent change was needed. "Working patterns have changed dramatically over the last 25 years with more women and mothers in work than ever before. However, support for working parents has failed to keep up with these changes. The result is that everyday parents are struggling under the demands of trying to hold down a job and coping with bringing up young children.

"As standards of living improve, quality of life becomes an issue for us all. It is increasingly important, whether you"re an employee or an employer. Finding new solutions to help working parents balance work and life is part of that. The Green Paper that I published in December contained nearly fifty proposals to provide real support to working parents. The consultation on those proposals closed today and I am delighted to say that there has been strong support from both employers and parents for increasing maternity pay and leave, providing paid paternity leave and giving parents who adopt paid leave. As a result we are today announcing the measures which concern tax and benefits.

"Today"s Budget also benefits business as thousands will now qualify for more support for administering maternity pay. "The changes announced in the Budget today will have a real impact on millions of people"s lives benefiting business, parents and above all children."

David Irwin, Chief Executive of the Small Business Service said: "Small businesses face a disproportionate burden in the costs of administering SMP. I am delighted to see that the Government has recognised this and will be doubling the threshold below which employers can get back from the state all the money they pay out in SMP and a percentage on top in compensation. This will make a real difference to many small firms."

In addition to these reforms the Chancellor announced further support for working parents through the new Children"s Tax Credit (CTC): - the value of the CTC will be increased from the previously announced £8.50 a week to £10 a week from its introduction in April 2001, making it worth up to £520 a year for around 5 million taxpaying families; - to recognise the additional costs of a new child in the first year, from April 2002 the CTC will be increased by a further £10 a week for families in the year of a child"s birth.

Around 500,000 taxpaying families a year will see their tax bills reduced by up to £1,040 in the first year, £20 a week. The Government will give details of its plans on the remaining policy options in the Green Paper shortly.

Notes to Editors

1. The Green Paper, Work and Parents: Competitiveness and Choice was published on 7 December 2000 following a review announced by the Chancellor in the March 2000 Budget. It looked at the competitiveness case for change and put forward nearly 50 options. Alongside it the Government published a free summary of the options that has been made widely available.
2. Stephen Byers has chaired a Ministerial Group to help co-ordinate the work of the review. Other members are: Baroness Jay, Andrew Smith, Lord Falconer, Tessa Jowell, Margaret Hodge, Baroness Hollis, Alan Johnson and David Irwin.
3. The Budget measures to improve maternity pay complement the reforms to the Working Families" Tax Credit (WFTC) announced in Budget 2000 and starting this April, which will give extra support to low-income families after the birth of a new child. They will allow families to make a new WFTC claim as soon as a new child is born and will enable mothers to qualify for WFTC while on maternity leave (entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay or Maternity Allowance).
4. In the Budget, the Chancellor also announced measures to give working parents extra help with childcare costs: - the childcare tax credit within WFTC is currently worth 70 per cent of eligible childcare costs up to £100 a week for a family with one child and £150 for a family with two or more children. To provide further help with childcare costs, the limits will be increased to £135 a week for childcare costs for one child and to £200 a week for two or more children from June 2001.
5. Feedback from the Work and Parents Green Paper Consultation is attached. Press enquiries on the Children"s Tax Credit and Working Families" Tax

Credit to the Treasury Press Office.
Headline Feedback from the Work and Parents Green Paper Consultation
Maternity leave

- Parents resoundingly support improvements to maternity leave.
- Almost all parents (97%) included at least one improvement to maternity entitlements as their top priority.
- Expectant and recent new mothers consistently put increasing the flat rate of SMP and extending the period of paid maternity leave as their highest priorities.
- Employers support increasing the flat rate of SMP, if full reimbursement plus the compensation is given to more SMEs. Paid paternity leave
- Parents and employers recognise that more fathers want to provide more support to their partner around the time of a baby"s birth
- Two weeks paid paternity leave has consistently remained within the top 3 priorities throughout the Green Paper consultation.
- The vast majority of fathers responding included paternity leave within their top priorities.
- Employers are content with such a right as long as it is funded by the State and is no more than a two week period. Small employers in particular have said that colleagues are willing to provide cover in these circumstances. Employers will have plenty of notice to plan how to cover the absence. Paid Adoption leave
- Employers and parents gave universal support to allowing one parent to take adoption leave for the same period and paid at the same flat rate as SMP.
- 1 in 5 employers cited adoption leave as a priority.
- Employers accept that as adoption is a considerable undertaking, time is necessary if good relationships are to develop. Extra help for employers
- Many small and medium employers say that raising the threshold for Small Employer Relief will help with cashflow issues ENDS