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most vulnerable young people to escape the impact of recession. It used up to £1billion in 2009-2010 to support more than 100,000 young people into new jobs paying at least national minimum wage (Haymann, 2009).

WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVE?

The Coalition Government in its rush to cut public expenditure has failed to distinguish between cuts that can save money and cuts which will result in public expenditure increases in the future. Some public expenditure must be seen as cost-effective investment. On NEET, cuts in youth support are likely to increase the £12 billion life-time cost of NEET very significantly. Scrapping the EMA will increase the numbers NEET as well as causing short term hardship for poor families who cannot afford post-16 education. Ceasing to invest in the Future Jobs fund will push up youth unemployment and the cost that brings through benefits.

DISABLED PEOPLE

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Disabled people have largely been protected from major welfare retractions during periods of fiscal crisis. This stance has recently changed dramatically. Key targets for policy reform are those disabled people claiming Employment Support Allowance (ESA), formerly Incapacity Benefit (IB). More differentiated approaches have already been introduced to establish those disabled people too sick/disabled to work, those that should move rapidly into work or mainstream jobseekers allowance and a review group who will face continual Work Capability Assessment; it is assumed many will be moved off ESA where work capability is in evidence. Those ESA recipients deemed closest to the labour market and allocated to the Work Related Activity Group will have their claim limited to one year. The key benefits that make work possible for those on low incomes are also being reappraised. Housing benefit will be capped at a modest level. This will likely impact negatively on those disabled people in high housing cost areas. Any tightening of eligibility for new housing benefit claimants will impact disproportionately on disabled people contemplating entry to lower paid work. The Coalition Government is to introduce a universal credit that aims to incentivise greater access to work and hours build-up. The exact impact of the universal credit on the 5 million claimants is very hard to gauge in the absence of detailed proposals. The benefit withdrawal rate is all important here with initial details suggesting a benefits withdrawal of 65/100 as opposed to the current 75/100. However as has been noted by IPPR (2010) job creation and support is not receiving the same degree of attention as welfare reform.

WORK PROGRAMME

Of note, the Government is planning to scrap the current complex array of work programmes for disabled people - for example New Deal, Work Step, and Work Preparation. It intends to introduce a single Work Programme for all out of work benefit claimants. Although the detail is limited, it appears some disabled people closer to the labour market will be supported via this single gateway of support. For disabled people with more obvious support needs a Work Choice programme is being introduced to provide intensive support. The details provided on intensive support suggest CV writing, brokerage and closer working with employers will form the main support activities. In truth, these forms of support were available under previous schemes, whilst the more hands-on approach to employers seems at odds with the proposed

review of disability discrimination legislation which may be viewed as reducing the power of ADL (Anti-Discrimination Legislation) in the disability field. No figures are available for the savings from an additional entry of large numbers of disabled people into paid work (although benefit savings will be evident where someone enters work, there will be additional costs where extra hours are worked and withdrawal rates are made to benefit the claimant).

The key assertion that benefits are more attractive than paid work because of disincentives in the benefits system is borne out by some evidence (OECD, 2003). However this report also failed to find one key programme or approach across OECD countries that substantially improved disabled people's path to paid work. The Government does however plan to increase tax allowances for low income earners from April 2011 which may benefit some disabled people. Also helpful may be the reforming of Access to Work, a key workplace support fund to allow funding before a job is secured so that a disabled person can enter employment with support in place. The exact role of employer's financial contribution, a current feature of the scheme, is unclear at this point. Local labour market conditions are closely linked to rates of 'out of work' disability benefit recipients; research (Beatty and Fothergill, 2003) points to the absence of job opportunities, benefit traps and also cycles of worklessness all being important. Harsher welfare regimes in the absence of greater employment opportunities may simply lead to movement on to less generous benefits, an important policy consideration where genuine extra costs are no longer met. Evidence from the mainstream jobseekers allowance population of churning, repeat entry and exit to the jobs market suggests that sustained employment for some disabled people leaving ESA may be limited.

FUNDING COMMITMENTS

For those with the highest levels of social support needs the news that around £2 billion is being made available to support adult social care by 2014/15 is welcomed. The Disabled Facilities Grant, a means tested fund supporting accessible homes, is being increased from £169 million in 2010/11 to £185 million in 2014/15. These commitments are welcomed by some disability organizations, but the timetable, in taking the commitments to 2014/15, has prompted concerns that actual uplifts in 2011/12 will not be anything approaching this sum. This news comes in the wake of major reviews on the funding in this area - the Wanless Review (2006) and the Sutherland Review (2008). An ageing population, personalization and user led organizations (ULOs) of course are all premised on further budgetary investment. Arguably however, these extra monies, if they materialize, will do little to ameliorate already severely strained budgets for adult social support. Many ULOs and Centres for Integrated/Inclusive Living (CILs) are under threat and many local authorities are now restricting their funding to the top category of eligibility. It seems reasonable to assume that, given wider local authority budget cuts and the reliance for up to half the new monies coming from health budgets, adult social care funding is likely to be extremely limited in the next 2 years. The figure of circa 500,000 fewer jobs in the public sector is unlikely to leave social care funding unscathed. New developments sit alongside withdrawn services - the Independent Living Fund (ILF), a fund providing funding for the most complex needs, will no longer be taking new applicants as the scheme is gradually withdrawn.

The Coalition aims to end the Child Trust Fund for disabled children and will likely redirect funding to direct payments for children and carers to provide greater respite care and hospice provision, with an extra £10 million per annum from 2011. Whilst welcome, these are essentially funded relief to prevent physical deterioration; the funding makes no connection to positive empowering life choices. The loss of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), housing benefit and ESA for some working age disabled people will likely perpetuate the link between having a disabled adult in a household and child poverty where suitable paid work is not available. The Government's statements on education are arguably the most worrying aspect of their proposed reforms. With little evidence to back up their assertions, the Coalition Government has stated: 'We will improve diagnostic assessment for schoolchildren, prevent the unnecessary closure of special schools and remove the bias towards inclusion' (Cabinet Office,

2010: 29). What is meant by removing the bias towards inclusion' is entirely unclear - how inclusion, a key plank of child policy for 13 years, can now be viewed as a bad thing begs major questions on the underlying philosophical changes in some parts of the Coalition.

JAM TOMORROW

Overall the emergency budget of May 2010 and CSR outcomes in November present some positive developments for disabled people. However the pledge of increased spending by 2014/15 seems to offer 'jam tomorrow' for many disabled adults. The ability to fund these uplifts seems heavily dependent upon reduced benefit payments given the wider fiscal squeeze on spending to 2015. This is a major gamble with the public finances. The ability to encourage more disabled people into paid work whilst respecting their human rights to good treatment and not being forced to take poverty level benefits is a very real one. Critics have tended to view the rhetoric of the ending of the tragic waste of disabled worklessness as simply a smokescreen to save money and redefine the disability category regardless of the altered economic position of those moved out of the more generous disability benefits. The proposed cuts in health and social care risk reversing hard won debates around personalised and enabling packages in the form of direct payments and personal budgets.

A critical longer-term perspective on disability policy might question some of the arguably populist strands of Coalition thinking and provide an alternative policy agenda. Firstly, the evidence firmly points to the need to link work programmes to greater economic opportunities. The discussion of unfilled vacancies for which disabled people might apply ignores the geographical mismatch of opportunity and geographical location of disabled people. The Coalition's suggestion of encouraging greater mobility to match person and opportunity ignores the cost of relocation, something likely to be made worse by the capping of housing benefit in high cost areas. Informal care networks would also likely suffer in forced relocations with an increased necessity to access funded formal care. It is hoped that the revised Work Programme and Work Choice programme will provide the sustained and tailored support that proved successful in say the intensive Workstep programme for disabled people. However both programmes only plan to support those able to work 16 plus hours, and do not incentivise hours build-up below that figure. The mooting of a more 'realistic' operation of disability discrimination legislation can be read as an attempt to water down its legislative 'burden'. The available evidence suggests a *more* demanding operation of the legislation is required to support the reciprocal relationship between disabled jobseeker and welcoming employer.

Of all the proposed reforms adult social care may prove to be the most contested policy area. The raised expectations of personalisation, alongside an ageing population demands significant investments into the second decade of the 21st century to support user-led innovations. The review of all DLA and ESA claimants will be a very expensive process, and on current evidence, reviews will lead to many successful appeals. For many, DLA makes the difference between significant poverty and managing some additional disability-related costs. The loss of DLA may simply see more people applying for tax and pension credits. The loss of the DLA higher rate mobility component may cause disproportionate hardship where the Motability scheme is being used to fund a car from DLA. Mid-award withdrawal of DLA would threaten the functioning of arguably the most successful disability mobility scheme globally, one which sees 6 per cent of new car sales in the UK funded via DLA and Motability. The economic multipliers of disabled people often tend to get lost in evaluations based on the 'burden' of disability costs. A more effective and affordable approach is to undertake a six yearly review for all higher rate claimants based on independent medical evidence and aligned to DLA awards. The abrupt volte-face on educational inclusion goes against a burgeoning evidence base on the cultural and economic value of mainstreamed education. Evidence-based policy has been the mantra of the last 15 years. The sidelining of the considerable evidence on what works in disability policy may simply store up problems for the future.