



Social Mobility  
Commission

# STRATEGY 2019

2 October 2019

# Foreword



My fellow Commissioners and I come from the worlds of social action, youth-work, education and business.

As you will see in our strategy we have decided to re-focus the approach of the Commission in three main ways. The first is a focus on delivery through partnerships and relationships with others. The quality and rigour of the Commission's analysis remains second to none but we know that pure research is meaningless unless we can translate insight into either implementation by government or action on the ground. We are also well aware that there are organisations around the country who are best suited to making that happen. That's why we are beginning to work with a group of Ambassador organisations who are great at moving forward our shared vision in practical ways. They can also help to keep us focused on the people across the country for whom we want to deliver positive outcomes.

The second area of difference is a physical step away from London. This group of Commissioners were born and still live across the length and breadth of the country and over the next two to three years the Commission will be out visiting cold spots and opportunity areas. We will use these visits to enhance our research findings so we can amplify the work of organisations delivering real change on the ground.

Finally, influencing government policy is still critical to how we will measure our success but social mobility and greater equality will not be achieved through government actions alone. Our approach will be to translate our academic research into something understandable to young people and the wider public. We will also be working much more closely with employers.

This group of Commissioners is passionate, skilled and determined, and together with our growing group of partners we feel confident we can make a difference.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Martina".

Dame Martina Milburn

# The Commission

The Social Mobility Commission is an independent statutory body. In line with the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 it is a continuation of the body previously referred to as the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, originally established by the Child Poverty Act 2010.

We have a statutory responsibility to

- Promote social mobility in England
- Provide, on request, advice to a Minister of the Crown about how to improve social mobility in England
- Set out our views, in an annual report, on the progress made towards improving social mobility in the United Kingdom, which is then laid before Parliament.

## Our Commissioners

Dame Martina Milburn (Chair) - Group Chief Executive, Prince's Trust

Alastair da Costa - Chair, Capital City College Group

Farrah Storr - Editor-in-chief, Elle

Harvey Matthewson - Aviation Activity Officer, Aerobility

Jessica Oghenegweke – Broadcaster and Digital Coordinator, The Roundhouse

Jody Walker - Senior Vice President, TJX Europe

Liz Williams - Group Director of Digital Society, BT

Pippa Dunn - Founder, Broody

Saeed Atcha - Founder and Chief Executive, Youth Leads

Sam Friedman - Associate Professor in Sociology, London School of Economics

Sammy Wright - Vice Principal, Southmoor Academy

Sandra Wallace - Joint Managing Director Europe, DLA Piper

Steven Cooper - Chief Executive Officer, C.Hoare & Co

# Our Vision

The Commission wants to see a United Kingdom where circumstances of birth do not determine outcomes in life.

Our ultimate role is to improve social mobility and equality by persuading the Government, educators and employers to act on our recommendations for policy and practice.

Child poverty has increased significantly over the last seven years and all the indications suggest that social mobility is likely to get worse unless urgent action is taken. We will continue to monitor progress at all life stages including child development, school, further education, in work training and employment.

As well as driving the conversation on social mobility, the Commission will be a campaigner on tackling inequality while galvanising others to work with us.

In a more socially mobile society, everyone should have a choice, be aware of that choice and be able to exercise it. From birth people should have equal opportunities whether at home, school, further education (FE) college, university or in training.

Everyone should be recruited on merit no matter which school or university they attended. The old boys' network must no longer be a passport to success. Employers and universities should be more aware of people's background and those from disadvantaged backgrounds should not be held back because they don't fit in.

There should also be help for the helpers. Childcare workers should be paid a decent wage to help children from low income families develop and learn. School teachers and FE lecturers should be rewarded enough to be recruited and retained.

But we need to look wider than education and the workplace. Poor transport facilities can stop students choosing a university, an FE college or a job. Housing is increasingly becoming a barrier to success. So many people are priced out of working in cities or in London because the rents and house prices are unaffordable. Wealthy parents often move to a different local authority to get their child into a better school. Admissions should not be dictated by affluence.

Life expectancy, already lower in the poorest areas, is now falling in many places. More must be done to understand the impact social background has on physical and mental health.

We will explore inherited wealth, the tax and welfare system and social housing to see how these issues impact on social mobility. Our distinct and independent voice must be heard across a wide range of government departments.

In the end we will be judged on what we have done to make our society more mobile and equal.

# Mission, values and strategic objectives

## Mission

We promote and monitor social mobility. We bring together key people, organisations and research to offer solutions to improve social mobility.

## Values

**Ambitious:** Shifting the picture requires drive, determination and big-picture thinking

**Impact-driven:** Our focus is on making tangible change

**Diverse, equal and inclusive:** We are open to ideas, suggestions and thoughts. We treat people with respect, dignity and fairness regardless of their background and/or identity

**Collaborative:** We work in partnership with other organisations, groups and individuals and people with similar or complementary ambitions and goals

## Strategic Objectives

**Improve and expand influencing activities:** We will meet regularly with senior decision-makers to land our messages for policy and practice. We will speak to new audiences to develop awareness more widely among young people and the public more generally.

**Lead on social mobility policy:** We will produce high-quality research, in collaboration with leaders and experts, which will advance and inform the debate.

**Drive action on social mobility in England:** We want to see institutions consider social mobility holistically in their approaches to strategy, policy and delivery. We will support the work of our Ambassador organisations and others working to address issues of social mobility.

# Core themes

## 1. Increased and strengthened strategic partnerships

### Actions we will take:

The Commission will use our convening power to hold policy workshops and other events that gather the sector together on key issues. We will work to build stronger ties through regular meetings with key departmental leaders, such as Permanent Secretaries and Ministers. We will collaborate with the APPG on Social Mobility to join up efforts in Parliament.



**Strategic result:** Continue to form deeper and richer relationships with government, think tanks and other key influencers in the policy space to enable greater influencing capabilities.

## 2. Improved visibility

### Actions we will take:

The Commission will publish quarterly reports to Number 10 outlining our activities and priorities as well as the blocks to achieving our vision. We will launch campaigns on key issues and recommendations we have made to improve social mobility. We will open dialogue with new audiences and stakeholders to champion best practice outside of government. We will use our research publications to monitor progress, shine a light on less recognised issues, and support best practice.



**Strategic result:** Improve awareness of social mobility policy, as well as branding and awareness of the organisation as a centre for policy development and best practice.

### 3. Superior analysis

#### Actions we will take:

Each year we will deliver research that fills evidence gaps and helps progress the social mobility policy area. We will publish a report that monitors social mobility and holds government to account for delivery. We will also set out a long-term vision for achieving a more socially mobile society that is underpinned by high-quality analysis and methodologically sound interim measures. We will continue to analyse key stages of the life cycle as they relate to social mobility as well as highlight place-based aspects of social mobility.



**Strategic result:** Expand systems that enable high-quality research and analysis that supports all functions in the Commission's policy and influencing activities.

### 4. Organisational inclusivity

#### Actions we will take:

The Commission will leverage its diverse backgrounds and experiences to target change in the most effective way. It will draw upon its varied geographic, cultural, gender, racial, age, and professional experiences to monitor, influence, and progress social mobility.



**Strategic result:** Sustain a healthy, sustainable, and inclusive organisation that leverages the diverse experiences of its team to continuously improve strategy, analysis, and policy development.

# Commissioner portfolios

The social mobility challenge is vast. Each Commissioner therefore has a specialism which allows us to broaden and deepen our work across an extensive range of areas which relate to social mobility. It also enables us to extend our geographical reach across the country. The Commissioners are supported by a small secretariat team.

Commissioner	Portfolio
Martina Milburn	Chair
Alastair Da Costa	Adult Skills and Further Education
Farrah Storr	Culture, Arts and Media
Harvey Matthewson	Disability and Health
Jessica Oghenegweke	Early Years and Families
Jody Walker	Employment, Progression and Housing
Liz Williams	Digital and the Future of Work
Pippa Dunn	Enterprise and Small Business
Saeed Atcha	Young People and Vulnerable Groups
Sam Friedman	Data, Insight and Downward Mobility
Sammy Wright	Schools and Higher Education
Sandra Wallace	Transport and Regional Engagement
Steven Cooper	Apprenticeships, Labour Market and the Economy