



Social Mobility &  
Child Poverty  
Commission

# Annual Report 2014 Call for Evidence

May 2014

**Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission**  
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## Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission (“the Commission”) monitors the progress of government and others in improving social mobility and reducing child poverty in the United Kingdom.

The Commission is an advisory non-departmental public body of the Cabinet Office, the Department for Education and the Department for Work and Pensions.

The Commission is made up of 10 Commissioners and supported by a small civil service secretariat. Its chair is the Rt. Hon. Alan Milburn and its Deputy Chair is the Rt. Hon. Baroness Gillian Shephard.

The functions of the Commission include:

- Monitoring the progress of government and others in improving social mobility and reducing child poverty.
- Providing published advice to UK Government Ministers on request on matters relating to social mobility and child poverty.
- Challenging employers, the professions and universities (among others) to play their part in improving social mobility.

## Introduction

The Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission is seeking short contributions to inform its second State of the Nation Annual Report<sup>1</sup> in October 2014.

The Commission would like input to help it assess the progress being made by government and by wider society in improving social mobility and reducing child poverty from a range of people and organisations, including: parents and young people, employers, think tanks and charities, the professions, schools, universities, local government and frontline service providers.

The responses will help the Commission assess the progress that is being made in order to effectively hold the government and others to account. They will also help the Commission make recommendations about what action government and wider society should take to allow more progress to be made.

Responses can be submitted using this form [Call for Evidence](#) (MS Word Document, 45.8KB) until **Friday 11 July 2014**.

Reflecting our very broad scope, we have asked wide and challenging questions across a number of domains and are happy for respondents to focus on sub sections rather than seek to answer them all. In the interests of avoiding creating unnecessary burdens on organisations, we welcome combined responses, or being referred to literature or data we should read or be aware of.

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<sup>1</sup> Our first Annual Report can be accessed here:

[https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/292231/State\\_of\\_the\\_Nation\\_2013.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/292231/State_of_the_Nation_2013.pdf)

## Overall assessment

What progress has been made in the last year in reducing child poverty and improving social mobility?

We are particularly interested in evidence on:

- What's happening to the number of poor children and their living standards (including break-downs by age, ethnicity, disability and changes in poverty like duration and severity and employment status), and how this is affecting life chances (attainment, opportunity)?
- What's happening to the drivers of low living standards and life chances (including labour market factors like worklessness, low pay, insecurity and home factors like parenting and skills and health)?
- Prospects for improved living standards for: a.) households in the middle of income distribution; b.) households near the bottom of the income distribution; and, c.) younger adults (those aged 16-24 years)?
- The depth, breadth and inclusivity of recovery, including regional differences?
- Impacts of welfare reform on employment, opportunity and income, including the safety net?

## Next steps

As the Commission has previously argued, the UK is not on course to end child poverty in 2020, and prospects for social mobility are mixed. Ahead of an election next year, we are interested in your thoughts on how future governments should respond to this, including on:

- What should the priorities be for making progress given the UK is not on track to hit the child poverty targets?
- What would a new settlement on work, wages, benefits, costs and skills to address child poverty and improve social mobility look like?
- Have we got the policy framework right for disadvantaged and 'squeezed middle' children? If not, what three steps could a future government take? We are especially interested in primary and further education.
- What more could be done to address social mobility-inhibiting inequalities in wealth and income? What is missing from the current social mobility policy agenda that could improve the prospects of average income children, not just lower income ones, progressing?

## Sector-specific questions

### *Early years and schools*

Early years providers and schools have a crucial role to play in improving the life chances of children from less advantaged backgrounds. We are particularly interested in evidence on:

- What is happening on the ground to early years provision given financial and other pressures?
- How positive factors like falling worklessness and the pupil premium net out against rising child poverty and other spending reductions in how disadvantaged and squeezed middle children are doing at school?
- What is happening to children's access to (and school performance on) 'beyond exams' factors like extra-curricular activity, work experience and careers advice?
- The comparative performance of the English, Scottish and Welsh schools system for disadvantaged children?
- The performance of further education in serving disadvantaged young people?
- What more could be done to raise staffing and teaching quality in early years' providers and schools serving disadvantaged children?
- What would a better school-level marker of deprivation look like?

### *Higher education*

Widening participation in higher education, including at the most selective universities, is critical to social mobility. We are interested in evidence about:

- What progress is being made in access to the most selective universities? What further steps should universities and the Government take to widen participation?
- Progress on: coordinated outreach; shifting spending to attainment raising and away from bursaries and fee waivers; use of contextual admissions and foundation programmes; and, access to postgraduate study.
- Question-marks have been raised about the sustainability of the current university funding settlement. What would a socially mobile-friendly future settlement look like?
- How much of an issue are declining numbers of part-time students an issue for social mobility? What can the Government and universities do to address this decline?

## *Contribution of employers*

Government cannot tackle poverty and improve social mobility alone and the whole of society will need to play its part. The role of employers is particularly important. We are interested in evidence on:

- Sectors that we have not previously considered in relation to social mobility – for example science and engineering and consulting – what are they doing on engagement with schools, payment of internships, non-graduate routes, reform of selection procedures and monitoring and evaluation?
- Across all sectors, five key tests of performance on social mobility:
  1. Who is and isn't measuring social background, and up to date data on the social profile of the intake and those in the top jobs?
  2. What steps professions and firms have taken to reform selection procedures (e.g., looking beyond small groups of universities; removing or reducing UCAS point requirements)?
  3. What steps professions and employers have taken to build non-graduate routes, what proportion of entry recruitment these make up, and the social profile of entrants?
  4. What steps professions and employers have taken to extend schools engagement and work experience outside London and the South East and into areas like the North East?
  5. What professions and firms are and aren't paying internships?
- For lower paying sectors like retail, hospitality and care, evidence on within-sector differences in pay, progression opportunities and job security (e.g. zero hours contracts).
- What are employers doing on building progression routes, and what more can be done to encourage and incentivise employers to build progression routes?

## *The nations*

Scotland and Wales face distinctive challenges in tackling poverty and improving social mobility and the Scottish and Welsh Governments have a crucial role to play in achieving these goals:

- What are the distinctive challenges of Scotland and Wales in tackling poverty and improving social mobility?
- What progress have the Scottish and Welsh Governments made over the past year?
- What more can be done to tackle poverty among workless households and those who live in rural areas?
- How effectively are the Welsh and Scottish Government's addressing socio-economic gaps in educational attainment?

## *The local perspective*

Much decision-making affecting child poverty and social mobility occurs locally. We are interested in evidence on:

- Pressures on local government in relation to provision for children and young people (for example, childcare, early intervention services, youth services, housing) and innovative responses.
- How are local areas are responding to youth unemployment?
- What are the impact of welfare reform locally?
- What more could be devolved to cities and local areas?



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