



# Conservative Conference 2023 fringe digest



## Contents

Introduction .....	4
An Animal-Free Future? .....	4
Can building more sustainable homes turn NIMBYs to YIMBYs? .....	6
How Can the Conservatives Win the Trust of Teachers and Transform the School Experience? .....	8
Advancing UK interests and values through trade .....	10
Levelling Up Healthcare: Exploring the challenges of access to healthcare services. ....	13
In conversation with Grant Shapps.....	16
Conservative Conference 2023 Fringe: Health and Care Forum: The Health and Care Interview .....	18
Why Can't Britain Build.....	21
"Critical" conditions: investigating the state of school and college buildings.....	23
Could AI and innovation save the NHS? .....	26
Make it Local: empowering councils with freedoms and flexibility to deliver public services.....	28
In conversation with Tom Tugendhat MP .....	30
Regenerative agriculture: can farmers go green without going into the red?.....	32
Online Safety: What should Ofcom's guidance about the safety of women and girls online say? .....	36
Rebuilding Growth: How unlocking housing supply can boost the .....	39
Open banking: the catalyst for a UK digital economy.....	41
Delivering growth in high-potential sectors: Do world-class skills hold the key? .....	43
Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: CEN Councillor Networking Breakfast.....	46
Scientific Synergy: Unlocking the UK's potential to become a scientific industrial powerhouse.....	48
The aviation conversation with Mark Harper .....	50
Will the housing crisis determine the next election? .....	51
Creating communities: planning public spaces to build in beauty and safety .....	55
Breaking down barriers to apprenticeships.....	58
How to make 'Maths to 18' a reality .....	61
Levelling-up through skills and apprenticeships.....	63
Tutoring for the Future: What can a Long-term Tutoring Policy Offer to Improve Outcomes and Close the Disadvantage gap?.....	65
Embedding work experience in the curriculum: a driver for skills and growth.....	67
Practical Solutions to the Housing Crisis.....	69
Cost of Living Crisis - Working together to overcome financial barriers to homelessness.....	71

Green industrial revolution: is the UK winning or losing? .....	73
How does health drive prosperity?.....	75
Connecting the Dots: How the climate is shaping humanitarian emergencies .....	77
Royal United Services Institute - What Next for Defence Policy?.....	79
In Conversation with Andrew Mitchell .....	82
What is the future of government outsourcing? .....	84
Why invest in us? Putting children and young people at the heart of the next government .....	86
Beyond the School Gates: Overcoming the barriers children face to fully access education .....	88
Powering Potential: The role of schools and teachers in tackling inequality .....	91
NHS crisis – How can we improve Britain’s health service? .....	94
Tackling intergenerational unfairness: how can we make the housing market work for all.....	96
Can the next Government afford the NHS.....	97
Skills Britannia: Developing workforce capabilities to drive social mobility.....	99
Delivering the skills Britain needs – the role of modern universities .....	102
The Power of Football: Helping football clubs to continue delivering for northern communities.....	104
How can science and innovation support an ambitious plan for economic growth? .....	106
Breaking barriers: How can we unlock the UK’s housing potential and deliver sustainable homes? .....	108
Does England’s education system have the workforce it needs? .....	110
Playing by the Rules: The Governance of English Football .....	112
Maths for Growth: Why Maths Excellence is the key to British prosperity.....	114
Is a Diagnostics Revolution the Key to Improving the NHS? Policy Exchange .....	117
The UK as a Science and Technology Superpower – how can we stay ahead of the global crowd and help deliver growth, security and net zero for Britain?.....	119
Zoning in on Growth: Driving prosperity through place-based strategies. ....	120
A vision for health: delivering for people with long term conditions.....	122
Building on the Budget: Can the Government deliver on its plans for childcare reform? .....	124
Turbo charging the next generation: How enrichment & education can spearhead tomorrow’s workforce .....	127
Hire, train, retain: future proofing the NHS workforce .....	128
What should be in Conservative manifesto for schools and teachers?.....	130
About Dods Political Intelligence .....	135



## Introduction

Every year Dods Political Intelligence consultants cover the Conservative Party Conference fringe events to ensure you don't miss any of the action outside the main hall. This year the panel discussions in rooms around the Manchester conference centre focused on a broad range of policy concerns, from housing to healthcare and economic growth, while "in conversation with" events featured cabinet ministers including Defence Secretary Grant Shapps and Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office Minister of State Andrew Mitchell. Our consultants provided timely, accurate and actionable summaries of scores of fringe events each day of the conference. This Conservative Conference 2023 fringe digest pulls together all our write-ups in one place.

Dean Sabri – Head of UK Political Intelligence @Dean\_Sabri

## An Animal-Free Future?

Hosts: Countryside Alliance

Date and Time: 3 October, 10:30am

Panel

- Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP - Food, Farming and Fisheries, Minister of State;
- Fay Jones MP - Brecon and Radnorshire, Member of Parliament;
- Minette Batters - NFU, President;
- Tim Bonner – Chief Executive of the Countryside Alliance;

Overview

Animal rights and vegan activists have been stepping up attacks on livestock farming in a wider effort to end all functional use of animals by humans. How viable is their prescription for an animal-free future? How should the countryside respond?

Opening Remarks and Discussion

Mark Spencer began by stating that farmers create a beautiful environment, and therefore should not be in opposition to Government. He furthered that the British public are logical and rational, therefore if they were taken on the journey of food production they would recognise and support British farmers who are producing high quality food. Spencer proclaimed that he is an animal rights activist and the same is true for every farmer; farmers must care passionately about animals in order to care for them so diligently. Spencer, alongside all of the panellists, was highly critical of Jacob Rees-Mogg's comments in favour of Australian beef, affirming that supporting UK farmers is better for both the planet and consumers.

Tim Bonner stated that public attitudes to farming and animal issues have changed considerably in the last decade. The Countryside Alliance were deeply frustrated by the Animal Welfare (Sentience) Act, in response Bonner argued for the rural proofing of policies or in other words local policies being checked by local people. Bonner was clear in the distinction between animal welfare and animal rights, arguing the panel are unified in support of the former. He was frustrated by the active discussion on the licensing of nearly every activity involving animals, voicing the concerns of the racing industry and raising the question of how to change peoples' attitudes.

Fay Jones began emphasising the importance of the rural economy, stating that livestock sustains the local economy within her constituency. She reasoned that farmers are there to steward the natural environment, rearing animals and sending them on their way to become fantastic products. She reiterated Bonner's concerns about sports licensing, stating this is a real issue in Wales. Jones argued that the Government must fight harder for the benefits of a protein rich diet and stated there are no grounds for a plant-based diet to be deemed better for one's health or the environment. She concluded that if you are going to eat meat, eat good quality meat and praised the success in Wales delaying licensing legislation for a year.

Minette Batters argued the stakes are getting higher to get rural voices heard. Whilst a flexitarian diet is on the rise, Batters reasoned that meat and dairy are still a big part of peoples' diets. She pledged that farmers will produce what the public want and argued that this issue needs political leadership to ensure these discussions do not become internalised. Batters noted that attitudes have changed a lot, citing disruption at the Grand National and the Derby. She reasoned that horseracing is under threat because of a lack of understanding, but proposed community engagement as an important mechanism to resolve this. Batters was also critical of the Animal Sentience legislation under Boris Johnson, arguing that the enormous consequences for PR alone were hugely damaging.

#### Q&A

Jones expressed concern at the current situation in Wales, where farms are being sold to big companies. The challenge for her is to make people aware of the situation and to create an environment where people in rural communities want to stay and feel they have opportunities.

Jones advocated for the defence of poultry farmers, speaking about the quantity of regulations they must meet. Following on from this, Jones promoted two solutions to the present situation: educating people and being positive, she argued for the importance of standing up for good products. At present, the farmers in her constituency feel attacked because they are lumped in with farmers globally who are criticised for their practises.

Jones concluded that it is important for the Conservatives to make the argument for why they are the party for rural areas. They need to have a vision and something positive to sell. She stated she was encouraged by the centrality of rural communities to the Net Zero announcement.

Spencer responded to discussions of a meat tax arguing that this would be a mistake. He stated his faith in his constituents and their ability to make good and informed decisions about their diets. He advocated for the importance of the horticultural sector, which requires continued help and support. Spencer was clear that the value of food production to the economy should never be underestimated. His closing remarks argued that the base level of understanding of farming in the Conservative Party simply is much stronger.

# Can building more sustainable homes turn NIMBYs to YIMBYs?

Hosts: Conservative Environment Network

Date and Time: 3 October, 2pm

## Panel

- Trudy Harrison MP - Minister for Natural Environment and Land Use
- Bim Afolami MP - Hitchin and Harpenden, Member of Parliament
- Rob Broughton - Thakeham Homes, CEO
- Nicholas Boys Smith - Create Streets, Director
- Jordan Lee - Conservative Environment Network, Nature Programme Manager
- Jane MacBean - Buckinghamshire Council, Councillor

## Overview

From protecting green spaces to the more complex issue of nutrient neutrality, house building is often said to be in conflict with our environmental aspirations. But are these two conservative goals really in conflict? Could building beautifully and sustainably quell concerns and turn the tide on our low house building numbers?

## Opening Remarks and Discussion

Trudy Harrison, Minister for Natural Environment and Land Use set out her belief in the importance of biodiversity and climate change resilience, which she hoped to improve alongside building more homes. For Harrison, the environmental improvement plan was incredibly important for achieving these aims. The plan provided ten goals, as well as legal and moral targets. She praised biodiversity net gain as an effective measure, and stated there are forty-eight local authorities in England who will be tasked with creating local natural environment strategies. She also spoke in favour of 'blue and green in fifteen', whereby everyone in the UK will be able to access a green space within fifteen minutes.

In her discussion of nutrient neutrality, she spoke of the need for Government to find an alternative usage for fertiliser run off and the pollution created by human impact and the water industry; 'making the most of methane needs to be part of the solution'. Regarding the decarbonisation of the transport network, Harrison felt the Government are doing well with rail electrification, but still need to find a viable alternative to diesel.

Nicholas Boys Smith, Create Streets, Director talked about the role of property design in dictating how people behave within them. For instance, he spoke of insulation and form-factor, whereby a semi-detached home or buildings above six storeys tend to be less energy efficiency. He stated materials, longevity and resistance were key priorities because demolition has a massive carbon footprint, his ambition is to build homes that last hundreds of years. Boys Smith described the concept of 'gentle density', which refers to creating spaces where it is easier for people to behave more environmentally friendly, i.e. good bus networks and cycle lanes.

Jane MacBean, Buckinghamshire Council, Councillor urged that young people need somewhere to live, thousands more homes are necessary. She spoke about her work in Chesham, where the

Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities are currently operating a pilot to create a development plan. On obtaining community consent, for MacBean the key is strong communication. She spoke in favour of a dedicated team for a full consultation planning process and stated the importance of every area being treated as an individual case. She urged for the simplification of the planning process and the need to embolden local communities to get involved in this.

Rob Broughton, Thakeham Homes, CEO argued there was a different option for developers, there was a much more sustainable way of doing things. Broughton shared in the belief of the importance of engaging with people, trying to understand what they want and then delivering this. He would like to work with communities to address existing problems and he noted decreasing carbon-based transport as a particular priority. For Broughton, the need for housing and infrastructure must be reconciled with environmental concerns and the means to successfully achieve this ambition is to change practises and plan in advance.

#### Q&A

Harrison spoke in favour of national local nature recovery strategies, arguing these provide a bespoke solution for each area. She supports active travel initiatives, which she regards an important measure for reducing national obesity. Harrison wants to make walking and cycling possible for every primary school. She also spoke of the need to monitor biodiversity net gain to gain a clear understanding of which measures are working; she is confident biodiversity net gain will work. On biodiversity net gain, she explained the first ten percent is designated for larger companies, so that small and medium sized enterprises can learn from the practises developed.

Regarding the lack of SME developers, Bim Afolami MP, Hitchin and Harpenden, argued much of this issue related to the size of sites offered and therefore greater diversity in the size and type of site available is necessary. Afolami stated that exhibiting good practise and building high quality developments are the best way to stop people opposing housing. He related this to the principles of the free market, stating high quality buildings incentivise further high-quality development.

On green skills, Afolami said that every sector in the economy had a skills shortage, and some sectors were hard to decarbonise. He urged for innovation to bring the cost of building high-quality green housing down.

# How Can the Conservatives Win the Trust of Teachers and Transform the School Experience?

Hosts: Education Development Trust

Date and Time: 2 October, 1pm

Panel

- Baroness Diana Barran - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Education
- Rushi Millns - Heathfield School, Education/Child Care
- John Cope - Elmbridge Borough, Councillor for Overview
- Dr Richard Churches - Global Head of Research at Education Development Trust

Overview

Our school system is admired around the world. But COVID has created a learning crisis and the impact of the economic squeeze on schools has been profound. Keeping teachers and school leaders in the profession will be critical to meeting the challenges ahead. This fringe will explore how the Conservatives can support the teacher experience and ensure excellent educational outcomes.

Opening Remarks and Discussion

Diana Barran, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Education would like to challenge the notion that Governments don't have the trust of teachers. She questioned whether it was necessary to transform the school experience, or rather did the Government need to build upon it through working about the best parts and amplifying those. Barran hoped that there weren't doubts of the Government's commitments to standards in terms of the curriculum, pupil attainment and the quality of teacher training. She equally hoped there was an appreciation of the Government commitment to the skills agenda; they wanted skills qualifications as well as academic, and T Levels were very important to this. She was concerned that teachers didn't believe the Government were committed to reducing their workload and the stresses under which they operated, to which she responded that there was no doubt in the Department for Education of the incredible work teachers do.

In terms of transforming the education experience, Barran stated there was always room to do something radically new and better. For her, the important part of this was to deliver something at scale that would transform children and staff lives. She was concerned by the huge gaps in attainment between the bottom and top quartile schools, and that this was linked to disadvantage. She urged for the need to look at schools in the same areas and to determine what allows some to achieve more than others. She also spoke highly of the Lifelong Learning Act, which allowed everyone over eighteen to complete short modular courses to the equivalent of four years higher education.

John Cope, Elmbridge Borough, Councillor for Overview argued that whilst the Conservatives had unnecessarily found themselves in an adversarial relationship with teachers, which the party should be careful of, the Labour party had done the opposite and overpromised. Cope urged that the Conservatives had to maintain the sense that education transformed society. The Conservatives had a tendency to defend and say that they had made things better, but Cope argued progress must be



made; the disadvantage gap had got smaller, but not closed, the system was better, but not perfect. Regarding policy, he believed that it was important to be as evidence based as possible, citing the example of Nick Gibb advocating for phonics on the curriculum and now the UK is the third best country in the world for literacy.

On the Maths to Eighteen policy, Cope stated he was in favour of this, but that it hadn't been communicated correctly. He argued the UK was an outlier in asking people to specialise very early, whilst in actuality it was good to maintain a broad education so as not to close doors too early. Cope also cited adult education as an area where the UK is an outlier.

Rushni Millns, Heathfield School, Education/Child Care argued that the assumption that teachers didn't trust Conservatives had come from the media and the unions, who were looking to undermined Conservative policy. She advocated for the 'pupil premium' policy, which was targeted funding for the most underprivileged students; she found in her experience that plugging the gap really makes a difference for pupil attainment and building a safe and supportive environment. To support teachers, Millns argued for strong behavioural policies, because this creates a supportive environment and safeguards teachers. She questioned why the teaching profession was not better respected or paid; teachers were highly skilled and had postgraduate qualifications, this was another area where the UK was an outlier to the rest of the world. New educational initiatives could really add to the workload of teachers, and so it is important that when these are being developed, politicians and civil servants closely consider the specific requirements alongside previous measures that have gone well. She was in favour of civil servants spending time in classrooms to see what it really is like.

Richard Churches praised the work of Michael Gove within the coalition for closing the educational attainment gap. He argued that teachers want to reduce their workload in terms of unnecessary work that doesn't improve pupil outcomes. Churches questioned whether there was sufficient support for teachers, citing a figure of roughly 50% of teachers who were demoted an Ofsted category after inspection no longer being in the same post a few years later, in other words it is a very high-pressure environment. He did qualify this statement, arguing some teachers did improve through the identification of weaknesses. Churches argued that small steps are necessary, as opposed to radical change, for example altering approaches to homework that don't integrate with lessons. He concluded advocating for building upon the successes of the last ten years and ensuring the continuity of them.

#### Q&A

On Ofsted, Barran argued that headteachers should be running inspections, so as to change the dynamic of inspections for teachers.

The pledged guidance on transgender pupils for teachers was still yet to be released. Barran stated that it was 'nearly there', but with such a sensitive issue it was important to put forward practical and sensible solutions.

Barran's view on behaviour in schools was that children cannot learn in a chaotic environment, it was very important they feel safe and able to learn.



# Advancing UK interests and values through trade

Chatham House and London Chamber of Commerce & Industry (LCCI)

15:30, Wednesday 3rd October 2023

Panellists:

- Creon Butler, Director, Global Economy and Finance Programme, Chatham House;
- Julia Onslow-Cole, Chair, LCCI;
- Jonathan Brenton, Director of Public Affairs, Pernod Ricard;
- Evie Aspinall, Director, British Foreign Policy Group;

Overview

The panel discussed how trade could advance the UK's values and interests and broadly agreed that there was substantial scope for this. There was clearly a moral case for improving the rights of women and others through trade considerations, but the case was also made that this would boost growth and revenues and work better for British businesses. Questions were asked on how trade could undermine British interests, democracy and EU competition.

Opening Remarks

Evie Aspinall, Director, British Foreign Policy Group, said that the primary values the UK currently wanted to promote were the rule of law, development of women and girls, development in the global south and climate change.

She argued that the China issue showed the importance of developing an alternative offer to developing countries from a development perspective and also to remember that the UK cannot compete with China's economic scale.

She said India showed growing divisions between developed and underdeveloped countries on climate change. Particularly tensions regarding who should pay for it.

She concluded that international aid was increasingly controversial domestically, international trade could be a much more palatable way to promote development without spending taxpayer money.

Julia Onslow-Cole, Chair, LCCI, spoke on LCCI's priorities in this space, particularly in the case of the advancement and inclusion of women in international trade.

She shared an anecdote on how the Government had improved working conditions for women in Bangladesh via trade negotiations and said this was a strong example of how trade could be leveraged.

Onslow-Cole spoke on SMEs, which she said were particularly struggling with taking advantage of trade agreements. She said more help should be given as they didn't have the capacity to deal with sustainability and international trade where it was overcomplicated.

Jonathan Brenton, Director of Public Affairs, Pernod Ricard, said all businesses contributed to Britain's soft and hard power by paying taxes and exporting products and employing people.

WTO

Aspinall said the WTO was “pretty much non-functioning at this current time, and if Trump gets in, it will be completely non-functioning”.

The UK had a strong record of regulation and convening power which meant that it could play a leading role in restoring the power and respect of the WTO.

Brenton said Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala’s, the Head of WTO, appointment showed that the cause of women in trade was very much advancing. He argued that business really needed to make the case for the WTO but that it would be very difficult to reform it.

#### CPTPP

Aspinall said CPTPP won’t replace the EU and there was some false hope that the group would be able to boost the UK’s growth to the same extent. However, she admitted membership was a strategic asset and part of the UK’s tilt to the Indo-pacific.

Brenton disagreed and said it was a good way to build relations with Indo-Pacific nations and that, given the region was the fastest growing in the world, it would only ever be a good thing for the UK economy. He did concede that membership would probably not match the EU in terms of growth.

#### Q & A

##### Undermining Interest

An audience member asked about the possibility that trading relationships might undermine the UK’s foreign policy interests. They raised the examples of China or India.

Aspinall said the key was to share information and to cooperate with the allies. She was concerned that currently each Western nation appeared to have an individual China policy which risked exacerbating reliance.

Onslow-Cole said there was a marked difference between Europe and the US. The US was moving much faster in decoupling from China and setting up supply chains in Malaysia or Vietnam. She said European business were still actively setting up in China.

Brenton said it was not for business to determine national interests. Therefore, on China he argued for a balanced approach but was happy to defer to Government on security issues.

He noted that the UK had very long supply chains and didn’t have a domestic system which could produce electronic components, this meant the UK was particularly vulnerable.

##### Democracy

An audience member asked if it was possible for UK trade policy to accept a role as an instrument to support democratic governance in the world.

Aspinall thought that it was very important and said it was vital to be consistent across the board because it was easy to make an exception and “set the bar too low, then you can’t move it back up”.

Brenton observed the Government’s current threshold for setting new regulations or taking action appeared to be when there was a security threat, rather than other measures like rule of law or democracy.

##### Other Avenues



An audience member asked if there were better ways to leverage British power to build interests and if trade could be considered neocolonial.

Onslow-Cole said it was an exaggeration to say the policy would be “we won’t trade with you because you don’t share our values”. Onslow said there was often a lack of transparency on how trade impacted women and the LCCI’s aims were more about increasing accountability and information sharing than binary judgements.

#### EU Competition

An audience member asked how the UK could compete with the scale on offer from the EU economy.

Aspinall said the challenge the UK had was trying to be a leader in everything. Instead “we should pick our battles” and lean into comparative advantages like financial services in London, research and technology as well as UK cultural exports.

# Levelling Up Healthcare: Exploring the challenges of access to healthcare services.

Roche & UCB

08:30 2nd October 2023

Panellists:

- Baroness Morgan (Chair), Chief Executive, Breast Cancer Now;
- Dr Ben Spencer MP, PPS to Conservative Party Chairman;
- Professor Camilla Hawthorne MBE, Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners;
- Craig Jones, CEO, Royal Osteoporosis Society & Trustee, Royal College of Anaesthetists;
- Rachel Power, Chief Executive, Patient's Association;

Overview

The session explored a variety of health care related issues, including: health inequalities, role of GPs, reducing waiting lists and illness.

Health inequalities

Rachel Power, Chief Executive, Patient's Association, said that the levelling up agenda was hugely important. She referred back to the Marmot report, released in 2020, which she said talked about the growth of the health gap between deprived and wealthy areas. She said that place mattered and deprivation in the North-East Life expectancy differentiated to the South by as much as five years.

Power said there needed to be the acknowledgement that health inequalities affected patient outcomes hugely. Location, she said, could affect the care they receive and therefore the outcomes.

Power said that one of the positives was the fact data could be shared across and between Integrated care systems.

Professor Camilla Hawthorne MBE, Chair of the Royal College of General Practitioners, noted another Marmot report on the effect of covid amongst the most disadvantaged. She said the report really shone a light on the inequalities in society and that those in poorer communities die at higher rates than those in wealthier communities.

Hawthorne said that really showed that a lot of this was down to the poor housing and jobs (or non jobs) that people had.

Craig Jones, CEO, Royal Osteoporosis Society & Trustee, Royal College of Anaesthetists, said we were not closing the gaps in access to healthcare, in terms of muscular-skeletal (MSK) conditions.

Jones reflected on osteoporosis and how it affected patients. He said there were great treatments that could offer a 90 percent success rate, but injustice was written through this part of the health sector.

Role of GPs

Hawthorne said GPs were the closest people to the communities they served. She added that they still did lots of house calls and got to see how people lived and what happened to them over a period of time.

Hawthorne said they could identify the most vulnerable groups of patients and target them specifically with certain provisions. This depended, she said, on the headspace they had to be able to do that. She said that capacity was nowhere near what demand was asking for in general practice.

That said, Hawthorne contended, there were a lot of GPs involved in fantastic outreach work in their communities. She highlighted "deep-end" practices, all over the UK, where groups of GPs were working in deprived areas and sharing good practice where they had been helping deprived people in their communities.

Hawthorne concluded by telling the meeting that, in deprived areas, GPs had 14 percent more patients per full time equivalent but 7 percent less funding and there was something dramatically wrong with the way they fund General Practice in the UK.

Dr Ben Spencer MP, PPS to Conservative Party Chairman said people felt it was a lot more difficult to access their GP and primary care services at the moment. Meanwhile, he said, GPs say they have never worked more in their lives. He questioned this disconnect.

Spencer broke it down to two components. He highlighted a radical shift in terms of peoples' accessibility to healthcare, which he termed "the Amazon Prime consumption of healthcare in the UK". He said this was a model of instant consumer demand for a system. He said that the dirty secret of the NHS was the way that consumption was regulated and restricted in being told to wait or queue for a referral.

Spencer said people now wanted action immediately and was creating a huge disconnect between what people were asking for "now" and then receiving it at a later date. He said the NHS was not built to cope with the instant demand that was now expected of it.

On the flip-side, Spencer said, there was an issue where people were getting "too little", where people were struggling to get through the phone system and therefore did not know if they were going to get access to a GP. These people often could not access their GP online.

Spencer said these were often the people who needed to see their GP the most and were from the most disadvantaged backgrounds.

#### Muscular-Skeletal Conditions

On osteoporosis, Jones said the gold treatment was a fracture liaison service and his organisation was asking the government to give everybody access to this. He said they could catch people after their first fracture and they could make sure everyone had access to the medication.

Jones said only half of trusts in England had this and this was down to a lack of priority which went back a long, long time for MSK conditions, which he said often did not end up on training guidance.

#### Cutting waiting lists

Jones said that without dealing with osteoporosis and other MSK conditions the Government would not be able to cut waiting lists. He said that 2m hospital bed days were lost to hip fractures and this could be cut if every trust had a fracture liaison service.



Jones said there was hope because the major conditions strategy picked it out as a theme for action and said it was a sign that this was going to be taken seriously, instead of being one of those things people have to put up with as they get older.

#### Cancer

Baroness Morgan (Chair), Chief Executive, Breast Cancer Now, called for a new cancer strategy to pick up the inter-relationship around the country to improve outcomes for all cancers and all conditions.



## In conversation with Grant Shapps

BAE Systems, Total Politics

17:30, Wednesday 3rd October

Panellists:

- Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Defence;
- Tama Cohen, Sky News;

Ukraine – Long haul

Tama Cohen, Sky News, first asked if the UK was ready for a long-term commitment in Ukraine and asked what victory looked like with an emphasis on Crimea.

Grant Shapps, Secretary of State for Defence said that Ukraine was at top the of his priorities as Defence Secretary and that he had a personal commitment to Ukraine.

He said that Zelensky recognised that the UK was one of its strongest allies and had had been amongst the first to help.

He said the UK's commitment would go on as long as was needed and there was no time limit. On victory, he said the Ukrainians had to decide what victory looked like, it was not right for any others to pressure them.

He said, "if the United Kingdom was invaded, it wouldn't be for other countries so say, look, just let Wales go and keep the rest of it".

Military Aid

Cohen asked if there was a need to increase the aid to Ukraine and provide more tanks and other capabilities.

Shapps said that there was strong international coalition, including the Ramstein group. It was important that the UK coordinated with its allies, it was not for the UK to empty its stockpiles and send every tank in the stockpile.

New phase of the war

Shapps said many countries had given their surplus now and there was a growing need for production and replenishment before countries could give more.

He thanked BAE for setting up a factory in Ukraine and leading the way in this space.

Defence spending

Cohen said the previous Defence Secretary, Ben Wallace, had said the armed forces had been hollowed out and that recent increases in defence spending would be used for replenishment from the donations which had been made to Ukraine, rather than increasing the UK's capabilities. She asked if there were serious questions about priorities looming on the horizon.

Shapps said that the amount of money being spent was not nearly as important as how it was being spent. Avoiding inefficiencies was paramount to achieving all the UK's defence goals.



He said the long-term ambition should still be for the Government to spend 3 percent on defence spending. That said, he was happy with moving towards hitting 2.5 percent.

Cohen asked if Shapps had talked to the head of the army about how the UK's army was too small, and the tanks outdated.

Shapps said he had. He did not intend to go back on the integrated review refresh and pledged to follow it.

On the size of the army, he said there was a problem with public perception on its size. He said the UK often fell into the trap of allegorical thinking and preparing for the last war rather than the next. He argued that UK defence sector needed to get involved in space, cyber and other non-traditional domains.

He said there was a recapitalisation process underway and for the first time in decades a lot of money was being spent on modernising the forces.

China

Cohen asked if Shapps would visit China and what he would talk about with his opposite number if so.

Shapps backed the Integrated Review's conclusions on China as a challenge. He said what was important was protecting the rules based international order so that every country was treated the same. He used the example of international waters where he said no one country should be able to close them off to other countries.

Shapps argued against decoupling from China and said it was impossible to "wish away" China. He concluded that he would visit China, but he had no plans to right now.

Saudi Arabia

Cohen noted that Saudi Crown Prince, Mohammed Bin Salman was due to visit London. This was the first visit since the killing of Jamal Khashoggi. Cohen asked if the UK had to be friends with Saudi Arabia.

Shapps said the UK had to engage with the world as it was rather than as it wished it to be. It was important to be realistic about other societies whilst encouraging other countries to take a more liberal approach to society.

He added that there were tremendous changes going on in Saudi Arabia to their society and Saudi Arabia was very much moving in the right direction due to the political leadership.

Finally, Shapps said the best way to encourage Saudi Arabia to carry on in that process of reform and advancement was to continue to engage with them as an ally.

# Conservative Conference 2023 Fringe: Health and Care Forum: The Health and Care Interview

Roche & UCB

18:00, 1st October 2023

Panellists:

- Adam Payne, Political Editor, PoliticsHome;
- Rachel Wolf, Founding Partner, Public First;

Overview

The interview focused on the challenges currently facing the NHS and what the Conservative Party should be looking to include in its manifesto ahead of the next election.

Aging population

Rachel Wolf, Founding Partner, Public First, said that politicians were alive to the challenge of an aging population. However, she suggested that the current political debate did not reflect this issue.

Right now, she said, the country was in an environment of slow growth off the back of a major health crisis and people thought they were taxed enough, and, in fact, there was even less appetite for more taxes amongst the young than the older.

Wolf told the meeting that, amongst the public, there was no understanding from the public that there was an aging society.

She gave an example that, during the pandemic, the public thought it was good that older people were moving out of the labour market, believing that this would provide space for younger people. She said this was a huge misunderstanding because there was an aging population and there were not the young people to move into those roles.

Wolf noted that most people, when you asked them, thought that health spending had been radically cut, although there had, in fact, been more investment. She said it was therefore not a good political sell to advocate for more taxes on working people, just to be spent on older people. She told the meeting that those taxes would just ensure the system could stand still. She called for a restructuring of the service, but the Tories had a scar left from previous NHS restructuring.

Policy alternatives

Wolf said she did not think it was plausible that, over the next few decades, the Government could deal with the aging population without more expenditure, and that probably meant more tax rises.

However, she added that there was a risk in the health debate that it always came down to expenditure. She contended that there should be more of a concern about efficiency in the health services. She suggested that, to keep the public on side, there needed to be a conversation about how to get more from the current spend on the service.

Prevention

Wolf said that prevention was not the first thing people thought of in terms of the NHS. She said the first thing they asked about health services was "can I get a GP?" and "How long will it take for an ambulance to come?". She said this was why so many resources were pumped into hospitals.

She said that when you looked at the UK internationally, it was a very hospital-centric health system. She noted that countries that intervened earlier on in the chain tend to do better.

Wolf reflected that the challenge with prevention was that nobody was suggesting investment without reducing funding elsewhere, so, she said, it returned the debate back to the same funding problems as earlier.

She also said that prevention interventions all tended to be part of a big blob encompassing so many policy areas, so when it came to manifestos the Treasury saw it as too big and told policymakers to "go away".

She accepted that the Conservative Party tended to steer away from these sorts of interventions, even though there have been some bans on things in recent years. The public, she said, also tended to see these things as a personal responsibility.

#### Workforce

Wolf told the meeting that Parties tended to promise lots of frontline staff in manifestos. She said the challenge with that was that there were a lot more people in hospitals and primary care than there were a few years ago but there was not an increased capital expenditure. She said there was not enough equipment and not enough beds. She reasoned that there were more people receiving care but they were not able to improve care because they were not equipped to do so.

She said that the NHS was not a good environment to work in and said that the NHS as an employer "sucks".

Wolf said that policymakers needed to recognise that when they made a decision to increase the numbers, they made those decisions at the expense of increasing the pay for those staff that they already had. She said that, it was not all about pay, but it did matter an awful lot.

She said that retention was very important, but it would be a mistake to make another frontline staff pledge ahead of the next election.

On pay, she said this was another challenge of questioning where to get the funding from. She said it was obvious to say "yes pay people more money" but where would that money come from, noting that it was very difficult to raise taxes at the moment.

Wolf told the meeting that pay had to be competitive against the private sector and called for more localised collective pay bargaining similar to that in Scandinavia.

#### Immigration

On the skilled working visa scheme, she said that the only way to increase the domestic workforce numbers was to pay people more. There was a trade-off here, she said, between paying low wages and relying on foreign workers. She said this was particularly important in the social care sector, which had traditionally relied on overseas workers.

#### Strikes

On public opinion of strikes, Wolf said that the public would probably accept that one of the main reasons for waiting lists going up was the fact that so many health workers were going on strike.



She said that, however, the public did have sympathy for those workers going on strike, more so for nurses than doctors.

Next election

Looking ahead to the next election, Wolf said that the handling of the NHS by consecutive Conservative governments will prove to be a "huge obstacle" for the Party. She accepted that the NHS was one of the core things the public voted on.

The challenge, though, she said, is that it's not clear that either Party wants the NHS to be the main battle ground for the next election as neither Party had loads to say on the NHS.



## Why Can't Britain Build

The Spectator in association with ARUP

17:00, Tuesday 3rd October

Panellists:

- Kate Andrews, Economics Editor at The Spectator (chair);
- Huw Merriman, Minister for Rail and HS2;
- Andy Street, Mayor of West Midlands;
- Lee Rowley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Government and Building Safety;
- Kate Willard, Chair of Thames Estuary Growth Board;
- Madeline Grant, The Telegraph, Columnist;

Opening remarks

Huw Merriman Minister for Rail and HS2, said there were several reasons why Britain could not build; politicians often pre-announced projects that were not properly set out and planned, and then everyone else in the industry took the blame for it. Merriman added that the UK's democratic process took too much time, when hybrid Bill committees were put together to get big transport projects through, it had to be taken through the house of Commons and Lords which was a key factor. Lastly, he said he would like to unleash the private sector to do more and take risks without being told how to build and share the proceeds of projects that were brought within budget.

Lee Rowley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Local Government and Building Safety, said Britain could build, using offshore wind as an example as the UK held some of the largest offshore wind farms in the world. However, Rowley admitted that the UK needed to do more of it because we had more people in the country who need to get around and it needs to be delivered better. He added that decision making needed to be sped up and he was trying to do this in the DHLUC department so that planning processes were completed within 2 and a half years rather than 4.

Kate Willard, Chair of Thames Estuary Growth Board, said the problem was rarely cash and used the hydrogen transport infrastructure as an example to demonstrate this. She said the issue for investors in this was not cash but that they could not quantify demand. She added that the Government needed to do tangible things and one size did not fit all, stakeholders had to listen and understand what the problem was before acting and take a pragmatic approach.

Andy Street Mayor of Manchester said the Conservatives had built over two and a half times more homes than the previous Labour administration showing that they can build. The West Midlands were achieving their home building targets which were all affordable, the local authorities across the West Midlands were all pro-growth which had been key to achieving this.

Discussion

Kate Andrews asked Madeline Grant, the Telegraph, Columnist, if people under 35 would agree that Britain can build. Madeline Grant said they would disagree despite the numbers looking high on paper, there are serious issues for young people because the levels of net migration were taking up a good portion of homes being built.



Kate Andrews said in the year 2009/10 this country built 120,000 homes a year, in the last fiscal year this number increased to 170,000 which was not an impressive increase and may explain why people cannot get on the housing ladder. Andy Street said if you look at the average numbers over the whole period, they were much stronger.

Kate Andrews asked Andy Street if it worried him that in the last fiscal year, only 50,000 more homes were built than Labour's last fiscal year in power. Andy Street said he was not complacently saying these figures but rather he was dispelling the narrative in the media that the Conservatives are failing at an historical level to build homes. He admitted where progress had not been made was in social homes.

Kate Andrews asked Andy Street about Jeremy Hunt's comments regarding HS2 which were that "it is hard to justify anything high speed that costs 10x more than what it would in France." Andy Street said no one was denying the high cost of HS2, however, it did not mean that we admitted defeat and gave up. He said the very best of the private sector should be brought in to understand why we got into this difficulty and solve the problem.

## “Critical” conditions: investigating the state of school and college buildings

EPI / Capita Plc

14:30, 3 October 2023

Panellists:

- Baroness Barran, Minister for the School System and Student Finance
- Jon Andrews, Head of Analysis, EPI (chair)
- Alistair Murray, CEO, Capita Public Service
- Paul Whiteman, General Secretary, NAHT
- Muyiwa Oki, President, Royal Institute of British Architects

Overview

There was discussion from the panellists regarding the issue of RAAC in school buildings but also the wider issues in education infrastructure.

Opening statements

Alistair Murray, CEO of Capita Public Service, said that they were the strategic supplier of the public sector. He said that RAAC was not a new issue, and that there was a lack of professionalism and consistency management across the school system. This was a business problem, as there was systematic application of the processes.

He said that schools felt that they had less money, and he heard that because of the funding situation and urgency of problems, they were too busy reacting to urgent issues, not the preventative ones.

He said they had to be tactical and get surveys done. There was an industrial project management issue which was organised by the schools in fragmented ways. He said there were tactical and strategic ways forward. On the tactical side, one of the big offerings they were putting forward was funding and aggregate business cases across schools. For the strategic problems, they needed information, sensors, and smart buildings, to ensure smart energy management systems. They needed holistic solutions.

Paul Whiteman, General Secretary of NAHT, said the immediate response to the RAAC crisis was pretty good. There was still some difficulty getting hold of temporary buildings, but it had not been bad. Criticism began when they thought about how long the successive governments had known about this. He said the solution fell to the Government in power at the time, rather than the mistakes of the past. He said successive governments had been prepared to take decisions that allowed buildings to decay because of wider spending issues but asked what that meant for the ambition for children and young people.

He said the current Government had a lack of ambition for education if they were only funding 50 schools but 440 needed to be funded a year to be refurbished. He said this was not helped by some

clumsy comments by the Secretary of State Gillian Keegan– calling temporary classrooms an adventure.

He said they needed a proper debate about the value of education, and it started with the buildings education was undertaken in. They needed a longer term, properly funded plan to create inspiring buildings for young people.

Muyiwa Oki, President of the Royal Institute of British Architects, said they had been commenting on the quality of school buildings for over a decade. Children were struggling to learn and teachers teach in the decaying school infrastructure – it was having an adverse effect on health and education. Government needed to get better at collecting data and create a strategy.

He said the issues with RAAC had brought sustainability and safety back on the agenda. HMT was not providing funding for schools to match the amount that schools need. He commended the work on the immediate response to the RAAC issue, but said they needed a long term view now.

Barroness Barran, Minister for the School System and Student Finance, said safety was their number one concern when it came to children in schools and they were aware of the RAAC issue since 2018. At that point, together with the LGA, they published a warning notice to all those in charge of schools.

She said they were increasingly concerned as there had been other incidents in previous years, and at the beginning of last year, so they needed to find out whether the guidance was being followed. They sent a questionnaire asking bodies whether they knew about RAAC and what they were doing to mitigate risks. She then said over the summer that there were three incidents.

She said that RAAC comes down as one plank but some planks collapsing was not graded as critical. 85 percent of schools had full time face to face teaching, but the complex ones were really complex.

She said of course a long term plan was needed. £19bn of investment in capital and the education estate was announced in the 2021 spending review. She said they were trying to look at all of the data held on different aspects of the condition of the school estate. They needed to be efficient in understanding the range of issues so that future funding programs prioritised the things that were needed and offered the best value for money.

#### Critical stage

The Chair asked how we had got to this critical stage.

Whiteman said that successive administrations had chosen not to prioritise the estate. £19bn sounded a lot but was only funding 50 schools a year. This was also a wider debate than just RAAC – asbestos had just been left, there was damp, classrooms were too hot or cold, and they had issues with ventilation. He questioned how long they needed to prioritise the worst offenders before getting onto the others.

Baroness Barran said there was a real issue with cuts to funding and funding that needed to be found, and that there were specific issue with the school rebuilding program, that had been started by the previous Labour government, in terms of value for money and school design. Around half of those projects were cancelled.

She said it was clear that the condition was the number one criterion for receiving funding, and had edged constructively towards a system where they were going to responsible bodies to find the schools they were most worried about. She said that temporary accommodation was not the message they wanted to send out, but they were properly insulated and well heated now. Clearly,



they needed a longer term plan but this year, when previously they only announced 50 successful schools in the rebuilding program, now it was over 200, so providing a longer term visibility on when the school would be rebuilt.

Public sector buildings

The Chair asked if this was an issue more generally with all public sector buildings and if the Department of Education had just taken the hit.

Oki said the reason why this was a problem was because RAAC had a shelf-life. If other aspects of the building had a different shelf life, then it was difficult to fix the RAAC alone. He said that core materials needed to be designed for the longest, and outer materials designed to be repurposed. He said they needed to ensure that when they were thinking about the buildings they were using, that they were designing it for the life that it needed, and putting procurement into the system if they knew that it would need longer than the shelf-life.

Q & A

A member of the audience asked if we were meeting the challenge now when making new buildings.

Oki said there was some way to go when redesigning schools and educating buildings. They needed good design so they looked like good acoustics, cross ventilation, and thermal comfort – they were doing it on new schools, but they needed to look at existing building infrastructure and how they could meet the new targets as well. More needed to be done to get the buildings up to standard.

The Chair asked if there was anything that schools could learn from other sectors.

Murray said it was a wider problem, not just in education.

In response to a question on timings for those on the school rebuilding program, Baroness Barran said the focus on RAAC was not bumping schools down the rebuilding program. Schools were getting delayed for other reasons, but the RAAC schools would not bump school rebuilding program schools, because the quality for the interim solution that those schools had was satisfactory.



## Could AI and innovation save the NHS?

The Spectator and ABPI

12:30, Tuesday 3 October 2023

Panellists:

- Isabel Hardman (Chair), The Spectator,
- Stephen Barclay, Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care

Overview

Stephen Barclay, Secretary of State, Department of Health and Social Care, started by telling the meeting that his department had a budget of £190bn and that Artificial Intelligence (AI) should play its part in how the Department could spend that money more efficiently. He added that the Department should look at how it could spend that money for effectively, around how to get early care to patients and ensure better outcomes.

He said AI could be deployed in terms of the workforce, in helping to ensure that clinicians were able to spend less of their time on administrative tasks and in fact had more time to see patients. He said the technology could be used to support NHS staff to complete some of those tasks more effectively. He told the meeting that it was about "enabling not replacing".

On the clinical side, he noted that the service was rolling out AI to stroke units which would help to save hours diagnosing a stroke and help to ensure that two-thirds of patients could recover.

Barclay told the meeting that the NHS was good at developing new technologies but was less good at adopting them. Therefore, he said he had set up a new tech accelerator fund that would help to ensure more NHS Trusts across the country were supported to adopt and roll-out new technologies. He told the meeting that he had cleared out the entirety of the ninth floor of his department to make space for the tech accelerator project.

Barclay gave the example of the ways in which AI was helping in imaging technologies, reflecting on the work to speed up prostate screening and the ways in which AI could help to ramp that up.

Barclay reflected on the amount of time and money used up in back-office functions and explained to the meeting how AI could be deployed to free that up and ensure it is used more efficiently.

On the prevention agenda, Barclay told the meeting that using AI in the homes of frail and elderly people could provide better outcomes by providing more care in people's homes. He highlighted technologies around falls and supporting people to recover in their own homes rather than going into hospital and potentially never leaving.

Hardman asked about Barclay's previous positions in the Treasury and whether this helped when it came to spending rounds and asking for more money.

Barclay agreed that his understanding of the possible in terms of negotiating with the Treasury could be advantageous. On pay and numbers of staff, he said these were obviously important factors but also pointed to the long-term workforce plan, which he said looked into how the Government could give people more vocational training and the tools to progress, supporting them into higher wage employment and the progression that they had been keen for.



On AI and technologies that had helped the NHS to run more efficiently, Barclay highlighted electronic bed management systems. These, he said, could notify cleaners and nurses to beds which were no longer occupied instead of nurses having to go and find which bed was free.

Barclay also highlighted the ways in which technology and AI were building greater resilience at a system level. He said that where sites were feeling particular strains at certain times, they could "talk" to each other and see where resources could be managed at a system-wide level rather than managing these strains on a singular basis.

He said that AI would allow the government to pick up the patterns in the data and roll out new models of care where they have been proved to work.

# Make it Local: empowering councils with freedoms and flexibility to deliver public services

Hosts: Local Government Association

Date and Time: 2 October, 10:30am

## Panel

- Chair: Abi Brown - Stoke-on-Trent City, Councillor
- Lee Rowley - Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities,
- Thomas Pope - Institute for Government, Economist
- Colin Noble - Councillor, Chair of the LGA Conservatives Manifesto Working Group and former Leader of Suffolk County Council
- David Simmonds - MP for Ruislip, Northwood and Pinner

## Overview

Our LGA debate will explore the importance of local leadership and empowering communities to shape the places they live in. We will test the idea that levelling-up should mean a radical reset of the relationship between central and local government that leads to real change for people's lives. The process of levelling-up should in our view be tackled from the bottom up, led by local councils who are best placed to bring together partners to handle the challenges facing their communities.

## Opening Remarks and Discussion

Lee Rowley, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State in the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, began by advocating for the importance of local government in setting the agenda. He argued that under Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Secretary, Michael Gove, the Department have made great strides in this direction, providing more power and responsibility for local government. He praised Gove and Jacob Young for setting out a clear pathway, with more devolution to come and a clear plan as to what councils would do with this power. Regarding councils who had gotten into difficulty, such as Birmingham, the Government were currently deciding what to do to revive the council.

Thomas Pope, Institute for Government, Economist focused on the importance of devolution and the need to simplify funding for local government. He argued that politicians and civil servants both required more convincing of the importance of devolution, and conversely local government needs to prepare for how they would approach the devolution of further powers. The capacity of local government had been eroded due to a lack of funding, which meant local authorities could not sustain a number of roles deemed 'non essential'. Pope proposed that one solution would be a more flexible funding system, where there was fixed funding for statutory areas alongside lots of competitive pots. He argued that a successful devolution model did not mean applying powers and methods uniformly because it was important to have accountability to local people. Pope concluded that the Government need to provide a clear strategy on levelling up and where local government fit within this.

David Simmonds, MP for Ruislip, questioned what Westminster wanted from local government. He stated that the UK was astonishingly centralised, where local governments had far less power than their counterparts across the rest of the world. Questions about local issues should be raised internally as well as in Whitehall. For Simmonds, devolution was not something that could be covered in a single year, rather people needed to see that the people they elected would have a positive affect on local government. Simmonds criticised the extraordinarily slow planning system in the UK, and questioned whether there should be a growth or planning lead in every council to ensure local growth was delivered efficiently. A long term constitutional settlement was necessary to enable local government to perform effectively.

Colin Noble, Councillor, Chair of the LGA Conservatives Manifesto Working Group and former Leader of Suffolk County Council, spoke about the recently compiled LGA Conservative Group Manifesto. This manifesto set out some of their key principles, which he hoped would allow local governments to build upon their relationship with Westminster. He argued communities would be interested in these proposals, having reflected that Westminster can sometimes feel far removed from peoples' lives. Noble stated these proposals should be easy to implement because they were not asking for money, rather some of the key requests he outlined were, removing the cap on council tax, a longer-term settlement on roads, and a royal commission on leisure centre regeneration.

#### Q&A

When questioned on what the Government was delivering outside of big cities, Rowley responded that such questions must be posed to Jacob Young and Michael Gove. He stated the Government had made big steps in devolution, with the formation of new offices and more responsibilities and opportunities for local councils. He assured there was always going to be a broad conversation about where to go and how to structure. Although, in times of dispute and other challenges, Rowley stated it remained the responsibility of local government to intervene.

On the responsibilities of the Planning Inspectorate and local authorities on deciding housing numbers, Rowley stated that it was the councils that had big conversations and made progress, who ultimately build houses in the right places.

When asked about the role of local districts and boroughs under devolution, Rowley responded that the Government certainly wanted all tiers of government in levelling up. Just yesterday [1 October] new funds for borough and district councils were announced. Rowley concluded by affirming that the Government wants all parts of government to work in partnership in a way that works.



## In conversation with Tom Tugendhat MP

Hosts: ConservativeHome

Date and Time: 3 October, 4:15pm

Panel

- Thomas Georg John Tugendhat - Minister of State (Minister for Security)
- Henry Hill - ConservativeHome, Journalist

Overview

In our complex geopolitical landscape, the UK faces a range of security challenges - from terrorism to cyber attacks to economic crime. Join ConservativeHome for an in-depth interview with Tom Tugendhat on his work in these areas, and his insights on current affairs both domestic and international. Plus put your questions to the Minister.

Opening Remarks and Discussion

Tom Tugendhat began by discussing the Government's approach to China. He explained that many countries threatened the UK, but China was distinct because it was trying to 'win the game'. In other words, China was trying to rewrite the rules and unpick the system that has kept the UK safe for many years. Tugendhat explained that this was a big threat for the UK because they wrote the rules which underpinned the whole economy. He further said, that the way China was influencing trade and economic ambition was a direct challenge to countries like the UK, whose economies are based on international trade.

Following from this, Tugendhat distinguished that what China was trying to do was global, whilst what Iran was trying to do was regional. He stated that Iran was trying to secure its own advantage through regional hegemony, which was doing huge damage. Iran had tried to attack Jewish and Israeli targets within the UK, which he expressed was of course terrible, but explained that this was regional whilst China was trying to change the whole world.

For Tugendhat, the challenge with the Iranian Government was that they were using criminal groups, many with unconnected roots. Such mercenary activity hadn't been seen in the UK in many years and was very threatening.

On the role of the state, Tugendhat stated his priority was competition, specifically the competition of ideas. He spoke in support of the ability to have competing ideas and to coalesce around the views that succeed. Although, in reality the state must adapt to circumstances.

He concluded speaking on the security for the Queen's funeral. This was an enormous security challenge, which embodied what security was about; creating the environment for people to live safely and freely.

Q&A

Tugendhat expressed mixed views on the ODA, stating that whilst the fundamental thing that helped countries succeed was trade, it was important to give alternatives. He stated the Government was doing a good job extending trade globally, and praised opportunities for work with countries, such as

Kenya, where there were big opportunities for development. He furthered that the UK was a cash rich country and therefore capital should be deployed to get people into industries.

On Kurdistan, Tugendhat assured that the partnership with Kurdistan was very important for keeping people safe. At present, he stated, people were being smuggled illegally into the UK and young people were going to fight in Syria.

He praised the work of the Charity Commission in ensuring organisations promoted causes in line with British values and gave equal praise to the work of Robert Jenrick and Suella Braverman tackling illegal migration. In addition, he lauded Ukraine for standing strong against a totalitarian dictatorship, which evoked memories for him of Churchill.

Regarding Afghanistan, he urged against pretending the situation is anything other than a hateful dictatorship. Whilst with Iraq, he stated much more needed to be done off the back of the agreement of understanding, but he was pleased that so many people had transformed their lives. Tugendhat had particular praise for the work the Government was currently doing with India, namely the Legal Services Agreement and the Trade Services Agreement.

On the Al-Hawl refugee camp, Tugendhat stated he had mixed views. For those who haven't chosen to be there, i.e. children, he is working on bringing them home. However, for those who chose to join a death cult, he cannot verify how much they regret it and must prioritise the security of the British state.

He stated that British nationals overseas should be treated as British nationals, and questioned the various passport statuses (BNO, BOC). He said it was great to see people from Hong Kong coming to the UK and that those individuals abused by the Chinese state deserved the protection of the British state.

On the European Partnership on Defence, Tugendhat remarked that the US tended to do the right thing after it has tried everything else. He continued to say that in the last few years too many countries had relied on US defence for too long. For him, spending on defence was not a luxury, but rather a fundamental duty of Government. The Military Industrial Defence Complex was necessary and could not go away. Thus, the European Partnership on Defence provided an apt moment to consider what should be done in the UK.



# Regenerative agriculture: can farmers go green without going into the red?

Conservative Environment Network in partnership with Lloyds Banking Group

12:30, 3 October 2023

Panellists:

- Mark Spencer MP, Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries
- Selaine Saxby MP, North Devon
- Lee Reeves, UK Head of Agriculture, Lloyds Banking Group
- David Exwood, Vice President, National Farmers Union
- Jordan Lee, Nature Programme Manager, Conservative Environment Network (chair)
- Martin Hinds, third generation farmer and chair of the Nature Friendly Farmer Network

Overview

The panellists spoke about the opportunities for sustainability, and the potential barriers for improving this.

Opening statements

Mark Spencer MP, Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries, said that critics of the Government schemes were dissipating, and that they were warming to it and embracing it. Working with nature and farmers went hand in hand. Schemes were voluntary and they were seeing huge numbers of farmers tapping into them, and they were an easy thing to apply for with a menu of choices to ensure that what farmers wanted to achieve fit in with the criteria. They tried to make them as flexible as possible, and they were keen to help them access other forms of funding, direct grants and new technology.

He said it was a massive challenge, keeping the world fed and improving the environment and biodiversity, so they had to take on new technologies and change practices. They needed to make these technologies practically applicable to farming. He said that he was optimistic about creating these in the future.

Selaine Saxby, MP for North Devon, said she only got the concerns from farmers in her constituency. She said the farms were the custodians of the countryside and they knew better than anyone what needed to happen. She said that the farmers she spoke to were supportive of the schemes but they suffered through a lot of bureaucracy, and they had said that it was costing them more per sheet with the extra paperwork. She said they were struggling, therefore, to access the funds they needed.

She further said that they didn't have the certainty that they previously did with schemes.

She said that run off was an important thing to think about for farmers and would benefit them if they were compliant, however, many of those that wanted to be were unable to access slurry grants.

David Exwood, Vice President of the National Farmers Union, said more farmers were needed and any policy had to reflect that. He said that they needed to implement a circular system on the farm



so that everything worked together. The backdrop of this was increased volatility in markets and weather, though, and they couldn't take food production for granted.

He said farmers needed a budget that reflected the challenge they were dealing with and this could not be done on the cheap. He said there needed to be ambition in the budget. They needed an impact assessment on food production, trade deals that reflected British environmental standards, and common standards and a baseline. They needed to agree how to measure biodiversity and the carbon footprint and share this data to understand how to best use it.

Martin Hinds, third generation farmer and chair of the Nature Friendly Farmer Network, said to be sustainable they needed to rejuvenate, and not just produce food but other products as well. They had to make all of this circular.

He said that the principals of regenerative farming such as moving less soil and keeping the soil covered were also better for the business.

He said it was also important for supply chains to link into what the farming system could do for nature and carbon. If UK farming didn't change and adapt and move away from fossil fuels and make the environment better, "where would food security be in the future", as it was already a challenge now.

He emphasized the need for knowledge sharing as farmers were quick to adapt and learn from others. They needed to share data tech and information to understand what was going on to improve the environment. He said they also needed a long term business plan, and to do this, they needed a long term backing and support from the Government, from supply chains and from banks and finance.

Lee Reeves, UK Head of Agriculture at Lloyds Banking Group, said that they were supporting 50,000 farmers across their three brands. They helped farms to grow and to diversify and transition to more sustainable farming. He said what was needed was a proper decarbonisation strategy to sit alongside the national food strategy. He said this would give people the clarity they needed.

He said they were partnered with the Soil Association to learn and pass details and expertise onto the rest of the farmers. He said they would be happy to share any insights and one thing they needed was a central repository to store data for baselining.

#### Environmental Management Schemes

The Chair, Jordan Lee, Nature Programme Manager at the Conservative Environment Network, asked whether environmental land management schemes were ambitious enough.

The Minister said they could always do more but the first step was to put farmers on the ladder. They were giving them the tools and confidence to move in the right direction and then they could accelerate.

#### Increasing awareness

The Chair asked how to increase awareness of sustainable farming practices.

Saxby said awareness was not the issue but accessibility. For small farms it was the level of bureaucracy. They needed to consider how to use the land, and balance different uses of the land. She said there were unintended consequences of giving more money for rewilding as farmers still need land for food production, and they wouldn't be incentivized to keep producing food. She said they needed a land use strategy that went beyond farming.



### Benefits of sustainability

The Chair asked if there were any benefits to farmers adopting more sustainable farming practices.

Exwood said if a “they looked after the soil on your farm it will look after you”. It would be better in volatility and increase biodiversity. He said the sustainability practices were changes they should be making according to the Soil Association, but they could now be paid to do these things and make farms more sustainable at the same time. He said that there were challenges with the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI), however, there were good initiatives there and they were going in the right direction of travel. He highlighted that they had to make it work for farmers.

### Practical changes

The Chair asked the Reeves to talk through practical changes farmers could make.

Exwood said that they should be looking at less used fields and putting sustainability measures in them. He said that there was not a blueprint, as it was different for every farm. He said there needed to be a long term business plan, over three to five years, which would reduce capital costs and focus on soil health to release some capital costs.

### Private finance

The Chair asked what the role of private finance was in sustainability.

Lee said all banks were looking to support agricultural customers. They were finding that there were a number of customers struggling with the loss of the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) and couldn't afford to take on more debt. The bank was working on restructuring finances to help. He said that lots of farmers were willing to invest in their businesses and so the bank was offering cheaper finances. They were also encouraging people to go through the tool with the Soil Association. He said there were barriers, and they weren't seeing the demand for investment into sustainable projects as they didn't have confidence in them so they urgently needed a decarbonisation plan.

### Private finance

The Chair asked if Government schemes were crowding out private finance.

The Minister said they had to go hand in hand, and the Government were working with the private sector. They were starting with the building blocks of that process. He said they mustn't allow greenwashing as there was a real danger of this. He said there were two biggest threats of this: greenwashing by dirty companies, encouraging people to do the wrong thing; and those who backtracked on sustainability projects, only to redo them to get more payout. They could, therefore, not penalize those who'd done the right thing in the past, and they must reward those who had already made their farms more sustainable.

### Free trade agreements

The Chair asked if the regenerative farming transition was compatible whilst signing free trade agreements with lower environmental standards.

Saxby said it was complicated but there was a real risk of unintended consequences. The benefit of Brexit was opening the markets up and making sure to take advantage of them without disadvantaging the farmers. She said that she felt confident of this, as Badenoch, Secretary of State for Trade, had reached out to farming communities and went through a lot of NFU concerns ahead of trade deals. Therefore, there was awareness of these concerns in the Department.



## Barriers

The Chair asked about the barriers that farms had faced.

Exwood said they needed confidence in the teams. There had been a slow rollout which had not helped farmers along this journey. They needed to know what to do as it was technically difficult as it was a new way of farming. They needed to give advice and share best practice. Flexibility was key as well.

Hinds said they needed a bank of information and a whole farm approach. The pick and mix approach was good but some farmers who wanted to be ambitious and make the whole farm sustainable at once couldn't do it as easily now.

## Q&A

A member of the audience asked about the cost of the transition and how farmers would get information on the schemes.

The Minister said communicating these new schemes was a challenge. They were helped by the NFU, CLA, TFA who communicated to their members. Farmers listened to other farmers as well, once they got to a critical mass, farmers would be chatting about them, and this would be the best motivator. They were asking people to express interest and then the RPA would contact them about SFI which meant there was an action point to move forward.

# Online Safety: What should Ofcom's guidance about the safety of women and girls online say?

Digital Tories and Conservative Young Women with Conservative PCCs

17:30, 3 October 2023

Panellists:

- Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner
- Anne Longfield, Chair, Commission on Young Lives
- David Johnston MP, Minister for Children and Families
- Baroness Nicky Morgan, former Education Secretary and former Minister for Women and Equalities
- Sarah-Jane Sewell, Director, DigitalTories,
- Alexandra Marsanu, Chair, Conservative Young Women Committee
- Anna Edmundson, NSPCC

Overview

They spoke about the safety of women online, and the gendered nature of death threats and unwanted sexual attention. They also touched on the role of Ofcom and what Ofcom should focus on when considering VAWG.

Challenges

Alexandra Marsanu, Chair of the Conservative Young Women Committee, said that one of the biggest challenges was online safety. They had been working for more than a year with various groups.

They had heard three things that they were focusing on. Firstly, there was a disproportionately high number of abuse and stories targeted at young candidates. Secondly was the reports of poor mental health and the support they were trying to provide around that.

The last thing was that when these issues were raised and reported there was a lack of transparency and consistency on the application of rules. They hadn't seen a lot of satisfactory responses from social media companies on this. This was what they were most concerned about, and she hoped that the OSB could help that.

Online Safety Bill

Baroness Nicky Morgan, former Education Secretary and former Minister for Women and Equalities

Morgan said that the reality was that women were disproportionately attacked online. Unfortunately, she said, anyone who stepped forward as a female Conservative online will have faced death threats.

Morgan talked about her experience of receiving death threats online and said that the first death threat she received was not a direct threat, so it was not necessarily picked up by Twitter's algorithm.

Morgan noted that others had received the same sort of abuse and often much worse. She said she was very lucky to have a police force locally that was so keen to help and sort the issue, but not everyone has experienced that.



Morgan called for specific protection for conservative women in the spotlight.

Morgan said that it was a privilege to introduce the Online Safety Bill. She said it would make reporting easier and improve the guidance around meeting thresholds.

On thresholds, Morgan noted that sometimes the comment on its own did not meet the threshold, but when they added up all the comments made over time from a number of accounts it did then meet that threshold. She said that, up to now, people had to report each of those individually, but the new guidance will lay out what those thresholds will be going forward.

#### Standards

Sarah-Jane Sewell, Director of DigitalTories, said they had been having this conversation every year for the last decade. These were issues that were a wider educational thing, and she noted that prevention needed to start from a young age.

She cited Refuge research which showed that one in three women in the UK had suffered online abuse and one in six of those were from someone they knew. She highlighted that this was an everyday thing that happened.

Another huge issue was the online dating scene, and she mentioned that Bumble had been proactive at blocking images and using AI to make reforms. She said that other platforms could be doing this a bit more.

She made clear that lots of abuse didn't violate community standards on the platforms they were made on. She said Ofcom needed to listen to victims of this abuse and hear first-hand what could've made the situation better. Panels of experts didn't get it which was why they didn't have proper processes in place at the moment.

#### Policing

Lisa Townsend, Surrey Police and Crime Commissioner, said she received her first death threat on Facebook in 2015 when she ran to be an MP in Norwich. She showed it to the Police, and they were "absolutely fantastic" but, ultimately, they could not do anything about it.

From a crime point of view, Townsend said it was really interesting that in her area online was now the frontline of crime. She said the best thing she could do for the most vulnerable and for women in her community would be to get more people behind desks and finding the people who were committing online crimes.

Townsend noted the importance of the role the police had to play. She said officers in her constabulary were being trained to emphasise the help that vulnerable people need.

#### Online Safety Bill opportunities

Anna Edmundson from the NSPCC said the OSB was a groundbreaking piece of legislation. The eyes of the world were on us which was why Ofcom's guidance was so important. It was about the young people in this country, but also about those across Europe, so they were watching how this goes.

She said the Bill was an important child protection measure, and when they started to unpick the priority areas for Ofcom, child safety was up there but there was a gap on VAWG. It was important that this was added in.

She said that the figures were shocking – since online grooming was recognised as a crime, the NSPCC had asked police forces for their data. In the year ending 2022, four in five of all victims under

child safety of online grooming crimes were girls. This was, therefore, a hugely gendered issue. At ChildLine, she said disproportionately (70 percent), the number of calls around unwanted sexual images, related to girls.

She said there were three things that they would be pushing for to happen with Ofcom. Firstly, it was that Ofcom recognised that girls were uniquely vulnerable – because of their age and their gender. She said they couldn't take a one size fits all. She said that one of the best ways to understand that would be to talk to those victims.

Secondly, as this was such a fast-moving space, guidance needed to be fit for purpose now and for the future. They needed to tackle emerging harms. They were already seeing disturbing images around AI generated child sexual abuse material and deepfake.

Finally, they needed to make sure that when Ofcom was thinking about all the different aspects of this, freedom of expression of girls and women to be online, was vital. A lot of people pushed back as they said the Bill would stop freedom of expression, but women and girls had a right to be online safely.

Going further

Minister for Children and Families, David Johnston (Con, Wantage), said he wanted to speak last as everyone else on the panel had a more detailed experience and greater understanding of the subject.

Johnston told the meeting that he has his comments hidden on social media, but he knows he is not getting the same sort of sexual threats that happen to women. He said female colleagues have had to pursue criminal charges against people that have these threats made against them.

He said he was keen on teaching boys the appropriate ways to behave.

Johnston said that when speaking to online platform providers about the measures in the Online Safety Bill, he suggested that if it was incentivised by money, they would fix these issues.

Johnston reflected on research which had found that social media platforms were pushing dangerous adverts aimed at young people.

He said he supported the Online Safety Bill and the guidance but warned that people should not pin all their hopes into this while ignoring all the other online threats.

In some areas of safeguarding, Johnston said guidance can become so unwieldy and that can go against what the Government was trying to achieve if the Government tries to make it a bible on everything that can happen in life.

Johnston suggested the Government were asking a lot of OfCom and there was a risk that by placing so much expectation on the agency, it might miss the central point about making sure children and young people were safe online.

# Rebuilding Growth: How unlocking housing supply can boost the

Onward and Taylor Wimpey

Tuesday 3 October, 11am

Panel

- Lee Rowley, Minister for Local Government and Building Safety
- Stephen Bush, Associate Editor at Financial Times
- Jennie Daly, CEO at Taylor Wimpey
- Sam Richards, Director at Britain Remade
- Adam Hawksbee, Deputy Director at Onward (chair)

Overview

The panel discussed what can be done to solve the housebuilding shortage, with remarks from Lee Rowley on how the Government were tackling the problem.

Opening Remarks

Minister for Local Government and Building Safety, Lee Rowley, was asked how the Government was trying to improve housing supply. He claimed the Conservatives have built 2 million homes in the last 13 years, more than during the New Labour Government. He said the quality of housing was a huge challenge the Government is facing, and that attention needed to be paid to the way properties were built as well as the quantity.

Rowley said the priority would be building more houses in urban areas, but that he was also supportive of more brownfield development. He pledged that the planned reforms to the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects programme will facilitate more housebuilding.

Jennie Daly, CEO of Taylor Wimpey, said the lack of housing was negatively impacting the building industry, and supply needed to be unlocked. She welcomed the Government's wish to build more urban housing, but said the housing crisis was across the country and that the Government needed to pay attention to all regions to truly deliver levelling up. She also lamented the funding cuts and staff shortages in local government, which were the cause of significant delays in planning approvals.

Stephen Bush, Associate Editor at Financial Times, welcomed the interest in building more housing from the Conservatives even if it did not lead to action, saying it was the first step towards addressing the issue. He argued the Conservatives today were less courageous on building infrastructure and absorbing the political pressure than the Thatcher or New Labour Governments. However, he also criticized Labour's reversal on nutrient neutrality, arguing this was due to a potential backlash amongst voters concerned about the environment.

Sam Richards, Director at Britain Remade, said one of the reasons he launched Britain Remade was to help unlock housing supply. He believed that the UK was significantly behind other countries in building more housing for two main reasons: policies that restricted house building such as the green belt; and the bureaucracy involved in the planning process that made getting development approvals extremely difficult. He said the housing crisis was having a spillover effect on the wider economy, by pushing up peoples cost of living. Finally, he was disappointed to hear the Prime

Minister shift his priorities away from public transport in and between cities, as they were the main drivers of economic growth.

#### Discussion and Q&A

Rowley was asked about the long-term plan for towns, and if there was a trade-off between cities and towns in the Government's approach. He argued one didn't have to profit at the expense of the other, and said the Government were devolving powers to both urban areas and towns. However, he said that towns had not been part of the conversation as much as they should have been, and that the Government were now paying special attention to towns to redress this balance.

Melissa Lawford from the Telegraph asked if the Government should remove powers from local people in the planning process to facilitate more housebuilding. Daly said that planning had always been politicised, and that she supported consulting local people despite her wish for more development. However, she wanted to see the current planning processes sped up.

Bush argued the planning system does not reflect the majority opinion of local people, as people who are in opposition to building are overrepresented in the process. He said the problems were a result of political cowardice, and that the Government needed to push developments forward and accept that not everyone will be supportive.

Richards agreed with Bush, and said incentives needed to change to encourage more infrastructure to be built. He said that street votes could be a critical part of this, by offering local people incentives for housebuilding in their area.

Rowley said that local politicians had failed to address this issue, with many not creating or updating local plans in the last decade. He used the example of North East Derbyshire council in his constituency, which prompted Bush to ask if his constituents felt they had been failed. Rowley replied that there was a wider failure on building infrastructure in the area caused by the previous Labour council.

The last question was on lobbying the Treasury for more funding to build homes. Rowley argued the Government were providing a substantial amount of money already, and that the current economic situation made more funding difficult. He said that any request for more funding needed to be balanced by less spending elsewhere, which he believed was often overlooked in the discussion.





# Open banking: the catalyst for a UK digital economy

ConservativeHome in partnership with Open Banking

3 October 2023, 4.30pm

Panellists:

- Paul Scully, Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy
- Marion King, Chair, Opening Bank
- Stephen Wright, Head of Regulation and Standards, NatWest Group
- Francesco Simoneschi, CEO & Co-Founder, TrueLayer
- Emily Carver, Head of Media, Institute of Economic Affairs

Overview

This panel discussion explored open banking's potential benefits for a variety of consumers including SMEs and individual users of open bank accounts. The panel also discussed the next steps for the open banking industry.

Open banking

Paul Scully, Minister for Tech and the Digital Economy, said that open banking was fantastic and was an amazing opportunity. He said there were so many people using it and it was a seamless tool. He said they did not need to shout about open banking to customers as they hadn't realised they were using it.

Scully shared that 11.4 million open banking payments were made in July 2023. He said that the UK was world beating at open banking and the UK were the first country to get to this stage. He said that open banking was transparent, good for business and good for consumers. Scully said he wanted to go from open banking to open finance.

Targets for open banking

Marion King, Chair of Opening Bank, said that they needed to do a lot more on open banking and this was the beginning of a journey. She said there had been big consumer engagement up to this point.

King said there was still more to do around data flows and consumer protection. She said they were looking to level up here, and wanted to ensure open banking runs efficiently in the future. She said these targets were being worked on now and would come to fruition within the next year.

User experience

Stephen Wright, Head of Regulation and Standards at NatWest Group, said they should be excited by open banking as it had the potential to create innovation and could really help the consumer. He said if they looked at the consumer side of this, for example people being able to pay bills far easier than before, then open banking simplified experiences and allowed small businesses to be more efficient. He said this was just the beginning. If they went to open finance, this would be even bigger for the UK.

Creation of open banking

Francesco Simoneschi, CEO & Co-Founder of TrueLayer, said that in 2010/11 there was an explosion in the digital account. He said that he was interested in financial innovation and technology. He said he stumbled upon the work undertaken in the UK and came across industry banking as a concept. He said his company was on the forefront of open banking adoption in the UK.

Simoneschi said there were several reasons for imagining payment networks working in a slightly different way. He said that if they did not keep on investing and developing, they would stagnate. He said they needed to keep pushing on open banking. He warned if this was not bought to corporate legislation, many of the strengths would vanish as they would not be going to the full extent they could go to deliver benefits for companies and consumers.

#### Social good

King said that open banking could do social good, as this could help more vulnerable people or those with slim credit files. She said enabling consumers access to this data fosters a much fairer approach. She said open banking could also help consumers with getting mortgages.

King said that another area of strength was how open banking helped SMEs. She cited using cloud accounting or embedded finance as tools small businesses use, and said importing data into software packages allowed small businesses to manage their cash flow more easily. She said this was stimulating the opportunity for consumers and businesses to control their finances more effectively.

Wright agreed that open banking would be useful for vulnerable customers.

Scully said that for SMEs, tax returns took forever to do. He said that he had used all the software available when he used to do his tax returns for his business, but open banking tracked all transactions, and it allowed people to run their businesses much more easily.

#### Online banking standards

Simoneschi said they designed an online banking standard, and regulators created an industry wide framework and a regulatory regime which assigned liabilities. He said they had made sure that data processors, and the way those bodies stored data, were accountable.

Simoneschi said for digital services there must be company responsibility and everyone in this environment needed to take this seriously. He said it was a balancing act between making sure everything was safe and secure, but also making services frictionless and ensuring a good user experience.

King said the important thing to remember was, the reason why they had strong security was the use of security frameworks from banks. This played to an advantage for the UK. She said they could rest assured in the UK that open banking did not open the gateway to people accessing all of your data.

Wright said that Google made \$4bn per year from users' search data. He said in open banking, users had that control and that visibility over their data.

#### Q&A

On buy now pay later firms, one audience member asked what the impact of this would be on people's credit history.

Scully said Klarna and PayPal were more acceptable alternatives to pay day loans. Wright said the consumer had the ability to see all their buy now pay later arrangements in one place now.

Simoneschi said there was potential for other digital dashboards to be created, and they would be embedded into larger business models. He said that danger of a data dashboard model for a business was the selling on of the data collected. King said this was an immature market and they do not yet have a full funding model.

## Delivering growth in high-potential sectors: Do world-class skills hold the key?

WorldSkills UK and Airbus

9:30, 3 October 2023

Panellists:

- Ben Blackledge, CEO, WorldSkills UK
- Oriel Petry, Airbus
- Neil Hatton, CEO, UK Screen Alliance
- Mark Lehain, Head of Education, Centre for Policy Studies (chair)
- Sander Kristel, Interim CEO, UCAS

Overview

The panellists spoke about the importance of apprenticeships in creating high skills that the country needed. They also touched on how to increase collaboration and clarity in the system.

Opening statements

Ben Blackledge, CEO of WorldSkills UK, said they were looking internationally to get inspiration for what the UK should do. Young people needed to be excited about skills and choose skills for this to work.

He said that world class skills did hold the key, and the more you looked at the high potential industries that the Government had identified, this was the way of attracting inward investment to the UK. He said that favourable tax law and infrastructure were important, but the right level of skills was vital.

He said that for a long time the UK had a knowledge economy, and universities could be exported around the world, but a world class economy was now also important. He said that all high potential areas were missing skills, and there was an issue at the moment of not having the skills they needed to function. If the UK was going to decarbonise at scale, across the board, they needed green skills.

He said they needed to bring the young people into what skills were needed and they needed SMEs to join in as well. He said that investment in the workforce was needed.

Oriel Petry from Airbus said that world class skills were critical to global success. They had recruited the highest number of early careers this year, and unless they got the skills right they couldn't compete internationally.

She said there were two main challenges – firstly, they needed to scale up productivity and therefore skills; and secondly, they needed to decarbonise. These were two completely different drivers for skills - productivity was about upskilling in robotics, turning it into data analysis, while decarbonisation was about rethinking the flight and physics.

To address all this, they had to approach this in different ways. They had to work with the ecosystem and create partnerships with Government. She said they wanted the levy apprenticeship to be more flexible, for lifelong learning for instance. They could develop apprenticeship skills that they needed but it was a lot harder for the supply chain, so they were looking at passing the apprenticeship levy onto the supply chain.

Sander Kristel, Interim CEO at UCAS, said that globally, UK higher education was delivering world class skills. Where the challenge and opportunity came in was the number of applicants - by the end of the decade they would have up to 1 million applicants to the higher education system, which was 250,000 more than now. To add to that, the behaviour of young people in what they were applying for, due to changes in the working world like AI, had increased some courses, such as computer science.

He highlighted that the competition for places would be unequally unfair on those who were from more disadvantaged areas. The solution was universities needed to be flexible, which was already happening, but also they needed more apprenticeships on the higher end degree level would make the system more flexible. However, apprenticeships would still not supply all of this at present, and they needed to be on equal par with undergraduate courses.

Neil Hatton, CEO of UK Screen Alliance, said the creative sector was one of the latest sectors to be added to the high potential sectors. It was a high skill sector, but there had always been a problem with the education system when the direction of travel was towards STEM. There hadn't been the concentration of the nexus of digital technology and creativity.

He said that they had created a level 3 extended diploma in visual effects, animation and video game skills which had 900 people on the programme. It provided high level progression into high level apprenticeships and into higher education. However, he said it was in the cross hairs for defunding as it was not a T level, which meant it was incompatible with the Government's changes incoming.

### Optimism

The Chair asked whether the panelists were optimistic about having the skills we needed.

Blackledge said people in the sector were optimistic about what they could do to improve the situation. Focus and investment were needed to make sure people created these opportunities were supported. He said: "if we're not positive we're in big trouble".

Hatton said there was an idea that the UK was an employer-led skills system, however, he didn't it feel like it at the moment. They were trying to work their way through an existing system in his sector. He was optimistic in the fact they would win through as it's an important area, they just needed to get over problems with defunding their qualifications rather than having T levels. He liked the idea of this but said that the implementation of it was testing.

Petry said they had to be optimistic, and there was a duty to come together to solve critical issues. They had a lot of capacity but there needed to be provision to specialise in certain sectors. They needed to be realistic and develop clusters, triangle between universities, schools and the supply chain, as joint working was critical. There would have to be give and take on this, as they couldn't replicate all skills everywhere. They were in a position where they felt they could shape some stuff, but it was also partly being done to them.

Kristel said these problems looked scary from the top, but small continuous changes would help the environment. They all needed to collaborate in an ecosystem. Employers working with universities would make it better, so he was positive. He said that if they were to make more apprenticeships

then they needed to do something about the chaotic nature of them at the moment, and do something about the application process. There needed to be more clarity and transparency of apprenticeships, particularly by putting the applications in one place.

#### Creating apprenticeship ecosystems

The Chair asked about ecosystems and what help they were giving their supply chain.

Petry said that they wanted to spread the apprenticeship levy across their supply chain because they relied on their supply chain massively. There was a vulnerability, and the resilience was lacking there. She said there was a duty to the wider environment in which they worked to help them. They were not only passing on the levy, but also passing on expertise to making these apprenticeships.

Hatton said they had been helping their supply chain for a while, and said it worked well as there was an advantage here. If they transferred the levy the company got 100 percent of funding not the 95 percent.

#### Collaboration

The Chair asked what other form of collaboration was going on.

Hatton said they were one of the first sectors to get apprenticeship standards developed. One of the big challenges was that it was a sector dominated by SMEs and freelancers, which meant contracts were generally less than 12 months, which was the minimum for apprenticeships. They had been working on flexi job apprenticeships with agencies, as the BBC had made it work, but these were a very expensive way of delivering that kind of training. They were looking at portable apprenticeships and also modularising it, to allow people to build up competence over a longer period of time.

#### Understanding of apprenticeships

The Chair asked if young people were understanding apprenticeships more.

Kristel said the understanding was growing but it was not as effective as it should be. There was still lots of confusion on how to get into them, even if they knew about them. He said apprenticeships were becoming more appealing due to earning at the same time as learning, and the fact there was no loan.

Blackledge said was a change in how apprenticeships were viewed. Young people were having first-hand experience of them and seeing their value. He said that people just weren't familiar with it, but they needed stability in the system and to look at careers advice in different ways, and then you could work out the more minute detail.

# Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: CEN Councillor Networking Breakfast

Hosts: Conservative Environment Network

Date and Time: 2 October, 9:30am

Panel

- Rebecca Pow MP - Minister for Environmental Quality and Resilience;
- Sam Hall - Conservative Environment Network, Director;

Overview

This event explores the big changes to how we power our economy, heat our homes, and travel which are necessary to reach net zero. But what actions are the public willing to take to do their bit to save the planet? Will we have to stop eating meat or going on holidays abroad? Is there a way of getting to net zero that doesn't involve us all drastically changing how we live?

Opening Remarks and Discussion

The discussion focused on waste and waste reforms and what this means for local government. There have been recent reforms to improve recycling, such as the deposit return scheme, although there are equally measures that have been delayed. Rebecca Pow noted that she was proud that everything from a Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs 2016 pamphlet was now policy. Pow argued that waste and recycling was a big part of everything else on the environment because it relates to what we put into the planet.

Pow stated that there are lots of networks within DEFRA who work with councillors. She argued that both Government and councils are going in the same direction; making it easier for people to do the right thing and engage with resources. She noted that the Government has a long term commitment to eliminating avoidable waste by 2050, which Pow argued they have made great progress with. For instance, the carrier bag charge has led to a 97% reduction in plastic carrier bags. She recognised that the pandemic was a setback for single use plastic.

She noted that there are both 2042 and 2028 targets. The latter of whom entails cutting down on different types of waste; namely, plastic, glass, and food. She acknowledged that these were initially scheduled for 2025, Pow said it was a difficult decision to prolong the deadline, but they had to think about the cost of living. She argued that this extension gives more time to get the system right. She cited the producer responsibility scheme as an example of a key measure, its initial focus is on food packaging which is the single biggest littered item. It is anticipated the deposit return scheme will be implemented in October 2025 and Pow expressed hope that these schemes will all dovetail together. In terms of the doorstep collection scheme, Pow confirmed that there will not be seven bins. The Government have also consulted on reducing plastic cutlery waste because currently 2.7bn pieces of cutlery are thrown away; there are equal measures in place for cotton buds.

The new prevention scheme is focused on maximising resources and minimising waste. The Government are also working on an international treaty to eliminate harm from plastic waste by 2040. Pow argued there would be no point doing this if the Government couldn't demonstrate they were doing this domestically.

## Q&A

On food waste, she notes that this is the biggest emitter of net zero and equally people should not be disposing of so much of it. She noted a recent backbench report, in which they found that the average family threw away £800 a week of food.

She argued that recycling needs to be collected more consistency, so there is a consistent supply of recycling which industry can use to produce more recycled goods.

Pow argued that the focus of extended producer responsibility is food packaging because this is the main item that is littered. She noted that on the spot litter fines have just been raised to £600 and for fly tipping this has been raised to £1,000.

Pow expressed support for banning plastic other than PET, so that we do not have plastic that cannot be recycled.

# Scientific Synergy: Unlocking the UK's potential to become a scientific industrial powerhouse

Onward and UCL

Tuesday 3 October, 1:30pm

Panel:

- Andrew Griffith, Economic Secretary to the Treasury
- Lord David Willetts
- Katherine Bennett, Chief Executive at High Value Manufacturing Catapult
- Richard Jones, Professor of Physics at University of Manchester
- Geraint Rees, UCL Vice Provost on Research, Innovation and Global Engagement
- Adam Hawksbee, Onward (chair)

Overview

The panel discussed what policies the Government could adopt to make the UK realise its potential in R&D, with remarks from Minister Andrew Griffith on what role the Treasury can play in capital investment.

Opening Remarks

Treasury Minister Andrew Griffith said a core priority of the Government's science strategy was to increase the R&D budget, and he saw his role in this as increasing investment from capital markets. He said the Treasury would be working to implement the recommendations of the Investment Research Review, and that he would work hard to mobilise institutional capital and fuel innovation to help the UK become a science-based superpower.

Richard Jones, Professor of Physics at University of Manchester, said the university research sector was great at producing papers and creative thinking about new technologies, but not good at converting this into manufacturing those technologies. He said a successful modern economy needed every sector to be a tech sector, by making the most of technology to boost productivity. Therefore, he lamented the flatlining of productivity growth in the UK, and he argued the Government needed to rediscover the urgency it had in building infrastructure over 30 years ago.

Katherine Bennett, chief executive of the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC), said she wanted to continue the catapult centre's policy goal of 'de-risking innovation'. She agreed with Jones on the need to build more technology in the UK, adding she was disappointed that many ideas created here were built elsewhere. To become a science superpower, she wanted to see the Government take longer-term decisions and provide sustained funding for the R&D sector. She also advocated for more collaboration within the UK, and suggested that, rather than competing with one other, companies in the R&D sector should prioritise competition with other countries.

Former sciences minister, Lord David Willetts, said the role of Government in R&D should be to bear risk that was too great for private sector companies alone. On his priorities for the sector, he said that Government should collect more data to identify new R&D cluster locations and provide support for universities which are reducing their R&D funding to subsidise a lack of money from UK student fees. He also wanted the Government to give financial backing for new technologies and take more risks in procurement by investing in R&D contracts that could provide a long-term benefit.



Geraint Rees, Vice Provost on Research, Innovation and Global Engagement at UCL, said the goals of becoming a science superpower and levelling up could be resolved together by the good work that research universities across the UK were doing in R&D. He said he would like to see a scale up in capital funding, and he welcomed the commitment from Griffith to focus on this. He also welcomed the commitment to implement the Investment Research Review. He argued that there should be a greater focus on developing R&D projects in the arts and humanities, rather than just the physical sciences.

#### Discussion

Onward deputy director Adam Hawksbee asked Lord Willetts if the recent focus on science would last within Government. Willetts believed it would, and he argued R&D was so pervasive because of its importance to national defence and security, more so than its commercial impact.

The Minister said the Government G-Cloud was one of the biggest transformative changes in the R&D sector, which did not come about because of Government intervention or support. He argued that the role of Government was to leave businesses to innovate.

Bennett disagreed with his point on state intervention, and said the Government sometimes needed to provide better regulation and support for businesses to invest in R&D.

Jones said left behind places were poorer because they didn't have enough private sector businesses to grow their economy. He said a key goal of levelling up was about creating innovative businesses in these areas.

#### Q&A

Griffith was asked to elaborate on how the Government would unlock capital markets for investment in science. He said private capital was hugely important, as the Treasury only had a finite amount of money. He wanted to create the 'appetite for risk' amongst private sector companies that would encourage investment.

The Minister also said 'scale-up' capital was important, which often comes from pension funds. He hoped that this would reduce reliance on international investment and create more within the UK, which was a policy goal of the Government.



# The aviation conversation with Mark Harper

Host: ConservativeHome

Date and time: 3 October 2023 at 3pm

Panellists:

- Mark Harper, Secretary of State for Transport
- Paul Goodman, Editor for ConservativeHome (chair)

Overview:

The conversation touched on key issues such as the plan for aviation and how this would affect consumers.

HS2

Paul Goodman, Editor for ConservativeHome, asked how important HS2 was to airports given that they need to be connected to roads and rail. Mark Harper, Secretary of State for Transport said that the PM made it clear this morning that he would take time to make his decision correctly and not be rushed by the media. He said they were getting on with building it and lot of money was being spent on the first phase which was going at a considerable pace.

Aviation

Paul Goodman asked what Mark Harper's priorities for aviation were between now and the next election. Mark Harper said playing their part in ensuring that the things that they had responsibility over worked well and working on the decarbonisation agenda with sustainable aviation fuel and developments on hydrogen. He said people really did want to fly which they discovered during the pandemic for family reasons so when considering climate obligations, telling people they can't fly or taxing them was not the way to go. Instead, they wanted to work with industry to develop technology to make flying friendly for the environment.

Voter perception

Paul Goodman asked what Harper thought of the voter perception of the industry is and if people still felt like it was bad to fly due to emissions. Mark Harper said there was an issue here but if you spoke to any airport or airline, they "absolutely" know they would only get permission to operate in the future if they decarbonised air transport via the range of solutions available to them.

Sustainable fuel

Paul Goodman asked Harper about his plans for sustainable fuel and who would bear the costs. Harper said the modelling that had been done would suggest a modest increase in prices for consumers, but this needed to be as minimal as possible to keep people flying. Paul Goodman asked if the consumers would simply accept price rises or if there will be a revolt. Harper said consumers were aware of the emission consequences of flying and wanted aviation to impact the environment less. He said taxpayers' money would accelerate development and reduce the cost of it so that ordinary people could still fly. He also revealed that Virgin Atlantic would attempt a 100% sustainable aviation fuel flight from London to New York.



## Expanding airports

Paul Goodman said there had been a rumbling issue of the expansion of airports and asked if there was a problem with planning and building in this country. Harper said there was some planning in the works for airports right now and thought we had a decent planning system for airports. He said decision makers had to balance competing interests such as noise and traffic which had to be considered when looking at the planning system, which was complex and time consuming. He said the system could possibly be better but could not say whether it could be quicker due to the balancing interests.

Paul Goodman asked if conversations about expansion of airports had been too South focused over the last decade. Harper said the conversations had been where the demand had been. Harper added that expansions had been more regional focused lately, exemplifying an airport in Bristol which had expanded well. He said he would like to see airports expanding everywhere but in a way that was consistent with the environmental agenda.

## Will the housing crisis determine the next election?

ConservativeHome in partnership with RTPI/RICS/RIBA/CIOB

2 October 2023, 6pm

### Panellists:

- Rachel Maclean (Con, Redditch), Minister for Housing and Planning;
- Sandi Rhys Jones, Senior Vice President, The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB);
- Sue Bridge, President, Royal Town Planning Institute;
- Muiyiwa Oki, President, RIBA;
- Martin Samworth, Chair, RICS;
- Angus Wyatt Chief Executive of ConservativeHome.

### Shortage of staff

Sandi Rhys Jones, Senior Vice President, The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), said that they had to focus on the older stock of housing that the UK had. She said they had issues with delays and affordability of new homes.

Rhys Jones said the way they shift the dial would be through collaboration across sectors. She said they were working together to show they are a unified, coordinated voice. She said they needed to bring on the surveyors, the architects and people concerned with sustainable energy. She said they were 225,000 people short to build homes the homes needed.

### Sustainability

Muiyiwa Oki, President of RIBA, said they were focused on advocating for a more sustainable built environment. He said this could be achieved through retrofitting, but they were also using innovative methods and technologies to deliver new homes.

### Public sector spending

Sue Bridge, President, Royal Town Planning Institute, said that they had found themselves in a perfect storm. Council planning budgets had fallen, and a quarter of qualified planners had left the public sector. She said they needed to look at how they could make procedural changes, but these changes alone would not address all the issues. She said politicians needed to step up to the plate and needed to support the delivery of new homes.

In a similar vein, Martin Samworth, Chair of RICS, said real estate agenda should be in the political sphere more than it was. He said housing was an issue that touched everyone's lives and impacted, in some way, every aspect of their lives. He said that there was demand, but there needed to be a more balanced equation with supply.

He said that government should consider how to facilitate a functional planning system. He said there were issues with local plans and the five-year land supply.

Samworth said they needed more flexible mortgages and innovation on the products used to buy a property. He said they needed to broaden demand by having more shared ownership and more rent to buy homes.

Minister for Housing and Planning

Rachel Maclean (Con, Redditch), Minister for Housing and Planning, said this was a controversial topic. To answer the question posed in the meeting title, she said it depended on where you lived and who you were. Maclean agreed that planning had become a very divisive issue. Her reflection on housing was that they needed to look at this as a system. There was no one single element to fix it overnight.

Maclean explained that they had a long term, strategic view of this issue. She said their current focus was to look at the supply side on an interventionist basis. She said London was not stepping up to delivering the housing needed, and said Cambridge had affordability pressures also. Maclean explained that she believed in free markets, but the housing market was not one that was free. She said it was not wise to rip up the system, but that they should work together to address issues.

Role of collaboration

Angus Wyatt, Chief Executive, ConservativeHome, said that there were lots of moving parts not necessarily moving as they should. He asked, what role did collaboration have to play in solving this issue?

Rhys Jones encouraged the room to look at the core objectives, which included delivering affordable housing and sustaining current stock. She said that with collaboration, they could work a way around the log jams.

Rhys Jones said the elephant in the room was land prices. She asked how they could make it possible for SME builders to develop. She said by finding a way of making it possible for smaller builders to acquire land at a lower price, they could acquire local people to work on these projects and this would be largely useful.

Rhys Jones also said they needed to look at local plans and think about what was suitable locally. She said policy was an enabling structure to see what was happening on the ground. She said there were three key things to look at; land, local collaboration, and understanding how to make things work.

Rhys Jones spoke about two acronyms which would be useful in this discussion, which were 'DAD' and 'MUM'; decide, announce defend which formed 'DAD' and meet, unify, motivate which formed

'MUM'. She said they needed to move from 'DAD' to 'MUM' and move from emotion to practical solutions.

#### Local plans

Maclean said that in local plans, they were required to think about what was needed locally. She said the major objection to developments was around infrastructure gaps, for example residents were concerned by not being able to get GP appointments or school places if a development was built.

Maclean said there were problems, and they were not where they needed to be, but they needed to learn from experience and see what does work. On overall housing supply, she said they had delivered the highest three years of housing supply over the last 30 years. She said when local plans do work and consider infrastructure, those areas deliver fourteen percent more houses.

Bridge said successful local plans were led by leaders, not just in the council, but local leaders as well. She said community involvement and engagement, and ownership of those plans, ensured they could be delivered properly.

RTPI said they wanted a stronger plan led system. They had launched their 'Planifesto 2024' and she said that focus on planning would assist in dealing with the housing crisis.

Oki said local plans cannot be too prescriptive so that local places could apply the plans to their own local contexts. He said local plans needed to be adopted and updated quicker than they were. He said they needed to be able to close down the skills gap within local planning authorities. In all, Oki highlighted the main thing was the quality of the built environment and the fact local plans do support development of good housing.

Samworth said they were encouraging more people to work in the built environment more generally. He said this was an ongoing program. In the point of collaboration, he said this made a massive difference. Whilst collaboration was valuable and important, he said he was unsure why local authorities were allowed to be unaccountable for local plans or five-year land plans.

#### Q&A

Ben Twomey, Director of Generation Rent, said that evictions and rates of rent increases had gone up. His question was on Section 21, and he asked whether if they did not end Section 21, this would impact voters' perception of the Conservatives going into the next election.

Another audience member asked about second staircases in high rise buildings.

Rhys Jones said that her organisation was actively looking at second staircases, risk and uncertainty. She said they needed to be quicker with their guidance, but they needed to be safe. She said "let's get on with getting certainty" on something which was at its core a safety issue.

Samworth said that guidance on standards for second staircases was something professional bodies on the panel could work on.

Maclean said they should not be restricted from developing properties because of EU nutrient neutralist laws. On Section 21, Maclean said that in their manifesto they had committed to the abolition of Section 21, but they needed to do this in a way which was also fair to landlords as they did not want to have unintended consequences of the scrapping of Section 21. She said they would get this legislation through parliament, and she was determined to do this.

An audience member from asked how they could get local governments to want to deliver plans for their places.

Maclean said plenty of local authorities were creating local plans. She said they needed to do the right thing and be clear that those who did not have a local plan needed to be held accountable for not delivering for their residents. She said the housing debate sometimes got difficult to navigate, as people would say “we don’t mind houses as long as they are for locals” and she emphasised that is not how planning operates. She cited Spelthorne as an example of this niche planning.

Bridge said that as we live in a democracy, they were never going to be able to take politics out of this process. She said they needed leadership, and they needed vision. Community involvement at the earliest stage in the plan making process was not just discussion but involvement. She said local government was so under resourced they would not be able to get the level of engagement they wanted. She said they needed more resources and more planners working in a collaborative environment.

One audience member from The Spectator asked whether there were any plans to look at how people could get their hands on a mortgage.

One audience member said that entrants enrolling onto built environment degrees was going down in number. He asked how to overcome this, and how they could get people through the door.

On mortgage access, Maclean said she as working closely with Andrew Griffiths on this. She said that some ideas did have legs, but the need here was very clear. She said she was an advocate for some of these new financial products which were coming in. She said some mortgage lenders were doing things already, but Government had a role here too.

Rhys Jones said most people in the construction industry were in it by accident. 25 percent were in it because a family member was, or maybe someone turned up at school who was interesting and encouraged them into this sector, but the rest were there by mistake.

Rhys Jones said she thought the construction industry was “magical”. She said it was amazing, that one could not live, work, play, or turn a tap on without construction. She said that they tended to focus on the negative aspects of the industry as it was a hard industry. She said they needed to have certainty in the industry, so they did not see another boom and bust.

Rhys Jones said it would be good to have a built environment course at GCSE level which showed what construction did.

Samworth agreed with Rhys Jones the diversity of the built environment profession.

Bridge said they needed more employers to embrace apprenticeships and apprentices, and this was how they could deliver more people to the built environment work force.

Oki added that they needed flexibility in this sector. He said he was an architect and shared that they were constantly being told the job market would be changing as they transitioned to next zero. He said that the idea of change needed to be embraced by built environment bodies and architects. He said they were currently looking at revitalising their reduction Programme. He said flexibility was one way to address this issue.

Will the housing crisis determine the next election?

On the question of whether the housing crisis would determine the next election, Bridge said this would not determine the next election, but would be an important part of the discussion as a safe and secure home was an inalienable right.

Oki said this would determine the next election in some capacity. He said it was not about the number of houses, but it was about the quality of the homes built.

Maclean said that she thought that they would have to find a way to give an aspirational offer to younger voters as voters would not vote Conservative if they could not deliver on home ownership. She said there would be heated local battles on this issue between MPs and candidates, as she predicted many would run on a “NIMBY platform”.

Rhys Jones said locally, she agreed with Maclean. She said it was beyond buying houses, it was how they could ensure people had a decent roof over their head wherever they were.

Samworth said the housing crisis should be a big part of all party manifestos. He said to focus on the solution, not just the problems. He said that there was no silver bullet, but there were lots of solutions to this.

## Creating communities: planning public spaces to build in beauty and safety

ConservativeHome and LSE

2 October 2023, 3pm

Panellists:

- Angus Parsad-Wyatt, Chief Executive, ConservativeHome;
- Dr Julia King, Policy Fellow, LSE;
- Nicholas Boys Smith, Director, Create Streets;
- Cllr Abi Brown, Deputy Chair, LGA & former Leader, Stoke City Council;
- Laura Farris, Conservative MP for Newbury, Chair of Access to Justice APPG.

Overview

This session focused on the design of public spaces, with a particular focus on planning for young women and girls.

Opening remarks

Dr Julia King, Policy Fellow, LSE, said she was an architect previously. She said that she currently worked with young people and young women and engaged with them on their experience of public spaces. She said public facilities did not cater well to young people, especially not young women. She said spaces designed for young people were primarily used by young men and boys. She said that young women had articulated they wanted better spaces, but they most of all just wanted to be engaged with and that was a political project. She said this was about designing girls in, not designing boys out.

King said asked what did better look like. She said that in Sweden, they had increased lighting, reduced hiding spots and added additional exits to underpasses. In Vienna, the city found that Multi

Use Games Areas (MUGAs) were being dominated by boys, and this left any young people unwilling to play football excluded from this space. Adding social seating between MUGAs, adding more activities, adding more paths and routes between the spaces in MUGAs then made this example in Vienna a success.

King said that the social MUGA in London Borough of Newham had traditional play facilities but also had space for socialisation and informal play areas. These spaces were created by speaking with young women and girls on what they would like. MUGAs were often an off the shelf solution which would not always work effectively.

King encouraged planning not to be a box ticking exercise and instead encouraged the room to engage with the people who were impacted by the planning.

#### Place, paradox and process

Nicholas Boys Smith, Director, Create Streets, spoke about the '3 Ps' which were place, paradox and process.

Boys Smith said that the types of place where people wanted to be were quite predictable. The places people like were not subjective and there were common factors. He said that clear backs and fronts was associated with lower crime, texture and tone was beautiful to all, so there were predictable patterns to this. He said greenery was good for the public.

Boys Smith said children were the indicator species of what made towns and cities work.

On paradox, Boys Smith said that everyone cared about planning deeply, but it was not discussed. He said that too much of the development pursued had been unloved and faceless.

#### Pride in places

Abi Brown, Deputy Chair, LGA & former Leader, Stoke City Council, spoke about Stoke and the journey of building pride and narrative in place. She said that the city would soon be the home of the Office for Place.

Brown said she was proud that pride of place was central in the levelling up debate. She said they needed place leadership. She said this was a part of the wider debate about why women did not feel included in public spaces. She said there was a challenge to put ourselves in the shoes of other people when designing planning.

She said there was a compelling industry discussion to be had on planning. She noted grassroots empowering of local organisations to drive forward planning.

#### Beautiful developments

Laura Farris (Con, Newbury) said that when a significant housing development was delivered, and if there was "a new town vibe to that discussion", she said there would not be any development which residents would be happy with. She said on bringing beauty, there were some lovely developments but there was still an assumption that any development would not be beautiful, and the aesthetic would drag down the area that they love. She said it had been notable how little community involvement there had been in planning. She said that councils did not engage with the residents directly.



Farris said that one area young people recommend building was more sporting facilities. She said that even if creative work happened in the early stages of planning, the objections were raised by the least dynamic in the process such as by older people.

#### Community engagement

King said that from her perspective, designers and architects were not paid to engage with communities, so it often became a box ticking exercise. She said that by engaging with young people directly, it often allowed for the creation of more sophisticated and cheaper spaces.

Boys Smith said underpasses were inherently dangerous and should not exist apart from in very busy places. He said they were still designing some things they should not be designing.

On engagement, Boys Smith said that they designed the system to be expensive by having consultation on a case by case basis. He said it was important to engage wide and deep. He said thanks to mobile phones and AI there was now space to share with the public representations of what the future could look like. He said they should ask simple questions like where do you feel safe and where do you like to be when planning. Once they know the answers to these questions, they could build from here.

#### Q&A

Boys Smith described urban greenery as the urban wonder drug. He said that his organisation had discovered that one would need multiple people to sign off on getting trees planted. He said there had to be a top-down vision on this and said it was crucial to understand where to make savings from other sectors to give the public greenery in the right spaces.

One audience member said that they needed accessibility to be included in planning, not just beauty.

King said that on toilets and accessibility, this was consistently cited as an issue, for example people would not use park toilets as they were not accessible and that dissuaded them from accessing the park.

Farris said that more beautiful aesthetics could be fed into design codes. She said it was a dispiriting thing to see communities reject new developments on the basis of assuming developments would not be nice or would be bad for the community. She said when people felt something was being done to them, not for them, or if they feel their community would be damaged, there would always be massive push back from the community.

#### 15-minute cities

One audience member asked should power not be handed back to local councils rather than central government.

Brown said that she agreed with localism and that no one knows a place as well as locals do, but there was an element that they did need to convene power. She said they should explore how there could be better interplay between central and local government.

Farris said that the sense of powerlessness was a local issue. Farris said she was not suggesting a heavy-handed role from central government, but it was not a bad idea for central government to have a think about how beautifying and developing should happen and then build frameworks for councils to use.

King spoke about 15-minute cities and said that every young woman she has worked with does not have mobility and the 15-minute cities was about local places working for local people.

## Breaking down barriers to apprenticeships

UCAS

13:45, 2 October 2023

Panel:

- Robert Halfon, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education
- Lauren Dogood, Environmental Practitioner Degree Apprenticeship student
- Sander Kristel, Interim Chief Executive, UCAS
- Barry Fletcher, CEO, Youth Futures Foundation
- Nichola Hay, Chair, AELP and Director Policy and apprenticeships at BPP Education Group (Chair)
- Anna Purchas, London Office Senior Partner, KPMG

Overview

The panel spoke about the opportunities for apprenticeships and young people.

Value of apprenticeships

Robert Halfon, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, said that UCAS had been working with DfE to make UCAS Apprenticeships work. This would help break down the barriers for people who wanted to look at different options, and meant that they could see apprenticeships and university courses side by side. He said he had visited UCAS on exams day and saw the Beta form and said it would fit in with the work they were doing with the Government.

He said the Swiss had an incredible education system, with 70 percent of students going onto to do vocational education and that they were students of great prestige. He wanted the UK to move this way, with 90 percent of secondary schools being part of a careers enterprise hub.

He said the Education Secretary was passionate about teaching degree apprenticeships, as this would enable teachers to understand the system, and how to access apprenticeships could be passed onto students. He said that the UCAS apprenticeships scheme was going to have a massive impact on the sector.

He spoke about the skills ladder of opportunity. The first rung was careers, the second was quality qualifications. He said apprenticeships were "a no brainer". He said it was a sea change that places were offering these apprenticeships, and taking that as an option. The Government were spending £40m on this now, an increase from £8m, to help providers and businesses support more degree apprenticeships.

He said that the top of this ladder was job security and prosperity, but to do this, we had to get to a stage, like the Swiss, where we, as a society, valued apprentices and skills as well as formal education.



The Chair, Nichola Hay, Chair of the AELP and Director Policy and Apprenticeships at BPP Education Group, said it was important to get parity of esteem.

#### Lessons from an apprentice

Lauren Dogood, Environmental Practitioner Degree Apprenticeship student, said she was working four days while doing part time learning. She spoke about how important it was to get young people into work, as there was a lot of discrimination against them in the workplace.

She said providers needed to look at functional skills. She said especially for those without maths or English GCSEs, it was tricky to get into apprenticeships. She also said that there was no opportunity to move out of an apprenticeship or take a break if it was no longer suiting their needs. She said they couldn't get a diploma if they had not finished the apprenticeship, even if apprenticeship the apprenticeship wasn't suited for a new role they had moved into. She said it would be good to be able to part-qualify or modularise.

#### Reforms of apprenticeships

Anna Purchas, London Office Senior Partner at KPMG, said they were a graduate employer but had over 1000 apprenticeships. She said apprentices were brilliant as part of a workforce. She said apprentices were loyal, so you were co-investing in their learning but they also stay around. It was also important for the social mobility agenda. Apprenticeships could be done at any stage, including with the current workforce as they could be used to reskill the workforce.

She had three asks for the Government. Firstly, on the apprenticeships levy and the way it was set up, she said there was not a lot of flexibility. You paid the levy and if you didn't use it within 24 months you lost it. This was not good for a long-term view of looking at what apprenticeships they could need in the future. She said it would be good to have more flexibility, and it would be good to offer apprenticeships for less than 12 months to reskill the workforce.

Secondly, she said that there needed to be a consistent framework across the devolved nations and England. Thirdly, she said they should continue to work with businesses and employers in terms of what they needed to mean that they were relevant.

#### Responses from Halfon

In response to the opening statements, Halfon said that apprentices could do functional skills while they did the apprenticeships. On the modular issue, apprenticeships should be a minimum of 12 months to ensure they built the quality of apprenticeships and to help build the prestige and ensure the apprentice had enough skills.

On flexibility of the levy, he said it was flexible as they could use 25 percent of the levy to pass onto SMEs. He said they hadn't got any big changes planned but were always listening.

#### Q&A with Halfon

A member of Onside Youth Zones asked about how to make young people see the quality of apprenticeships and how to get rid of the bad quality ones.

Halfon said under any system it was impossible to make every provider perfect. Everything they had done was to get quality, including Ofsted involvement and designing apprenticeships with employers. Bad cases were a minority, but they had to follow it up.

A member of the University Alliance asked how to get more SMEs involved in degree apprenticeships.

Halfon said they wanted everyone to take on apprentices. They had increased funding from £8m to £40m as mentioned. They had removed the cap for small businesses for how many they could employ. They were working with relevant bodies to encourage universities to do all level apprenticeships as well.

He said it came down to demand, and more SMEs would take them up as more apprentices came on board.

A member of OFS said there were too few providers and too many people were already qualified when doing degree apprenticeships.

Halfon said they had a strategy for widening participation and that was what the £40m was for. They wanted as many new people as possible to do degree apprenticeships, but it was also important for adults to retrain throughout their life. This was especially true with the introduction of AI and the fourth industrial revolution, it was possible to let them retrain.

#### Supporting young people

The Chair asked how to support young people with apprenticeships.

Barry Fletcher, CEO of Youth Futures Foundation, said they had done a lot of work on what made an impact for young people and how to get them back into work. If young people came out with bad GCSEs there weren't pathways for them to move onto apprenticeships. He said that degree apprenticeships made up a small percentage of the overall.

If a young person was out of work when young that had a long-term impact on their earnings and on the economy. He said the impact on the economy of getting those in work was £69bn for the economy. They should be looking at the Netherlands where they had a strong apprenticeship system but they didn't have a good system in the past. Now they were focusing on vocational technical apprenticeship.

He said that the access to apprenticeships was unequal as those with more inequalities were less likely to do them.

#### Equalising apprenticeships with degrees

Sander Kristel, Interim Chief Executive of UCAS, said that many students didn't consider an apprenticeship due to them not being talked about in the classroom. Parents still didn't think about it either, and they were thinking of them as level 2 and level 3 type skills not the degree apprenticeships.

He said they had 500,000 say they were interested in apprenticeships through UCAS, but research with Sutton Trust showed it was hard to find an apprenticeship due to supply. They were investing a lot in apprenticeships to show apprenticeships as an equal pathway and by the end of next year they would have the application surface on the website.

He said they were forecasting 1m applicants for apprenticeships by the end of the decade, and if they stuck with traditional undergraduate degrees, they wouldn't be able to deal with the supply.

Dogood welcomed the more structured and standard approach to apprenticeships.

#### Increasing vacancies



The Chair asked what could be done to get businesses to generate vacancies.

Purchas said it was about making them aware of what's out there and explaining the process and the benefits.

#### Q&A

On a question about improving applications from those with disadvantaged backgrounds, Fletcher said they needed to look at the barriers. He said that child benefit was £2000 a year which was very impactful, however, if the child is on an apprenticeship the family wouldn't receive this. They would if the child was on a T level though.

In answer to a question on increasing supply and barriers for the employer, Purchas said that apprentices were training graduates at KPMG. It was about standing back and seeing the different way of constructing your workforce. Time had to be spent on this.

Kristel said that many students made choices about their university on pastoral care and the help with the transition to university, so apprenticeships would be no different.

In answer to a question from the Association from Learning Providers about the national minimum wage and being able to afford to travel for work, Fletcher said that the minimum wage was a barrier and there was good evidence young people were not doing them due to this. He said this was especially true for under-19s. He said it was beneficial to the economy to increase the minimum wage for young people as well, as young people spent the money.

Sander said apprenticeships in SMEs were local and a lot of apprentices make these choices as they are local. Increasing supply in local areas is important.

Purchas said she agreed on the living wage, as apprenticeships did long hours and systems needed to be in place to get them paid per hour.

#### Key points

The Chair asked what key point each panelist would push.

Kristal said full time undergraduate university was still important, but they needed to increase supply of apprenticeships. The Baker Clause needed to be consistently rolled out in schools.

Purchas said they needed to look at the workforce strategy. Fletcher said they should focus on equality of access. Dogood said they should talk to young people.

## How to make 'Maths to 18' a reality

Hosts: Education Policy Institute and AQA

Date and Time: Monday 2 October, 5:30pm

#### Panel

- Natalie Perera, CEO at EPI;
- Damian Haigh, Headteacher at University of Liverpool Maths School;

- Colin Hughes, CEO at AQA;
- Mark Lehain, Centre for Policy Studies;
- Helen Drury, Director of Curriculum Programmes at Ark Curriculum+;

## Overview

The panel discussed the prospect of pupils studying maths to 18 and how the Government can facilitate this, including a discussion on whether it was desirable for the Government to focus on implementing this or prioritise teaching maths at other levels.

## Opening Remarks

Natalie Perera explained that the panel will focus on 'how' to make math at 18 a reality, rather than 'whether'. She welcomed the renewed interest from the Prime Minister in maths, and said she was hoping to see the Government implement their proposals.

## In favour of 'Maths at 18'

Mark Lehain said he supported 'Maths at 18' and wanted to see a formal strategy published by the Government. However, to make this succeed he argued maths at 16 should come first. He did not blame the Conservative Government for shortcomings such as the high level of pupils retaking maths GCSEs, as he said this was a long-term problem that also existed in other countries. He argued there was a role for technology in schools to help with teaching maths, and that families should do more in addressing their children's hesitancy to study the subject.

Damian Haigh agreed with Lehain on the need for maths at 18. He said a different approach from Government was needed, given the sector had a huge problem in recruiting maths teachers. He advocated for long-term education policy to be taken out of the hands of Government and put in the hands of an independent public body, due to the high turnover in education Ministers and subsequent lack of policy direction. He also believed that more focus should be placed on making maths enjoyable to learn, in order to encourage more pupils to study and be successful in the subject.

Colin Hughes also supported maths at 18, and agreed with Lehain that it should be taught even earlier to 16. He was also supportive of using technology in schools, that would facilitate better interactions between teachers and students. Hughes said he wanted to advocate for the 'forgotten third' of pupils who must do GCSE re-sits, and he argued policymakers needed to address these pupils left behind.

## Against 'Maths at 18'

Helen Drury disagreed with the panel, and argued that maths at 18 was too late. She believed it needed to be developed sooner, and priority should be given to maths teaching at early years, primary and secondary before considering post-16. She said poor numeracy is costing the UK billions of pounds a year, and a plan to boost low numeracy rates would contribute significantly to economic growth.

Drury said that national reference tests were showing a significant decline in maths performance at GCSE, and this demonstrated that more needed to be done at primary and secondary level before celebrating the good outcomes elsewhere. She also argued that the maths at 18 policy could reinforce the notion that some people are naturally good at maths, which was not the case. Instead, she wanted to see the Government focus on closing the attainment gap for disadvantaged pupils who are studying maths.



# Levelling-up through skills and apprenticeships

Liverpool City Region

12:30, Tuesday 3 October 2023

Panellists:

- Sarah Atkinson (Chair), CEO, Social Mobility Foundation
- Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority
- Lia Nici MP (Con, Great Grimsby)
- Therese Villiers MP (Con, Chipping Barnet)
- Naomi Clayton, Deputy-Director, Learning & Work Institute

Overview

The session focused on increasing the number of apprenticeships being taken up and what Government could do to incentivise employers to take on apprentices. There was also discussion on the role that regional leaders had to play and whether the Government should devolve some responsibilities to local authorities.

Skills gaps

Steve Rotheram, Metro Mayor, Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, began the session by telling the fringe that every conversation he had with employers always ended up on skills, because employers were finding it difficult to hire people with the right skills and there were skills gaps, especially in the technologies of the future.

Rotheram said that the current system did not fulfil the needs of the country and that was evident in the skills gaps.

Therese Villiers MP (Con, Chipping Barnet) agreed that there were significant labour shortages and the Government should use apprenticeships and T-levels to fill those.

Naomi Clayton, Deputy-Director, Learning & Work Institute, said that apprenticeships played a vital role in meeting employers' skills needs and offered individuals a wider set of opportunities.

Lia Nici MP (Con, Great Grimsby) said that levelling up would happen with higher skills. In Grimsby, her constituency, she said it was an economy that had worked on low skills and lots of hands, until Brexit). Before Brexit, there was cheap migrant labour, but Brexit had woken up employers as they now needed to upgrade their equipment and bring in robotics and automation, and the skills to go with it.

Devolution

Rotheram said he believed regions should work collaboratively with the government, even suggesting piloting an approach in Liverpool, which would in turn make the country more competitive and drive productivity.

He told the meeting that central Government cannot solve all the challenges alone, as regions can be more agile to the needs of its area. Investment into the regions and flexibility around the apprenticeship levy, suggesting the creation of a skills and apprenticeship levy, could be more flexible and provide "more bang for buck".

Villiers said that apprenticeships were a key driver for any city that wanted to take part in the levelling up process.

Clayton said there was a role for local leaders to drive up apprenticeships and bring together the range of services that will help drive the uptake of those courses.

Rotheram said there did need to be a national strategy for skills apprenticeships because there were national gaps, but regions could play a part because there were specific shortages in certain areas of the country. He also pointed to regional infrastructure projects, telling the meeting that building national infrastructure needed lead-in time and skills strategies to ensure those job opportunities could be taken up when they did come around.

#### Benefits of apprenticeships

Villiers said that apprenticeships had a role to play in facing the challenges of society, in particular commitments to the environment.

Villiers said that skills and apprenticeships were pivotal for raising the skills profile of the workforce.

It boosts growth and raises living standards.

#### Complex system

Villiers highlighted the need to make it easier for SMEs to take on apprentices and reduce the complexities for SMEs. She urged for a streamlining of the apprenticeship levy.

Nici agreed that the government needed to simplify getting people into apprenticeships. She said university entrants had grown so much because youth unemployment had grown and it was easy to get into, if you're an employer and want to engage an apprentice, she said it was incredibly difficult. She added that instead of making it easy to apply for a student loan, it should be easy for employers to take on apprentices.

#### Apprenticeship trends

Clayton highlighted that spending on lower level apprenticeships had fallen, whilst the spend on higher level apprenticeships had grown. She suggested this undermined the initial purpose of apprenticeships, to train up younger people. She said this had an unequal impact on those from less advantaged backgrounds as those on free school meals were less likely to take on those higher level apprenticeships.

She said the trend provided justification for ring-fencing a portion of the funding for young people.

Clayton added that one of the biggest challenges was the UK's low levels of investment, including skills, workforce training and development. The rates, she told the meeting, were below the EU average and had decreased in real terms since 2005.

#### Business investment

Clayton urged the Government to look out for how to improve the financial incentives for businesses to invest. She said businesses would invest in training according to their models and needs, but



there was a case for looking at how to improve incentives and suggested a skills tax credit and a super skills tax credit for certain areas.

## Tutoring for the Future: What can a Long-term Tutoring Policy Offer to Improve Outcomes and Close the Disadvantage gap?

Education Policy Institute with Action Tutoring, Get Further and The Tutor Trust

3 October 2023, 12:30pm

Panellists:

- Jon Andrews, Head of Analysis, Education Policy Institute (EPI)
- Dr Sally Burtonshaw, Associate Director for Public Education, Public First
- Damian Haigh, University of Liverpool Maths School
- Susannah Hardyman, Founder and CEO Action Tutoring
- Ed Marsh, Chief Executive, the Tutor Trust
- Sarah Waite, Founder and Chief Executive, Get Further

Overview

The panellists discussed how tutoring policy could be reformed to improve social mobility. The panel agreed that the pandemic had affected children nationally and put them behind on education outcomes.

Introductory Remarks

Susannah Hardyman, Founder and CEO of Action Tutoring, said the evidence base for tutoring was clear and those who could were willing to pay for it but that many couldn't afford that advantage. Whilst the national tutoring programme had a great deal of potential it had not been given sufficient support to truly flourish. She spoke on how the attendance crisis amongst those from disadvantaged backgrounds made successful tutoring programmes more difficult, but also flagged that students who did attend tutoring often reported being more motivated to attend school, an important spillover benefit.

Funding

Hardyman said the subsidy model was not working for schools because school budgets were already so stretched. She noted that the funding models had not been updated since the pandemic despite years of inflation. Furthermore, the reporting system was difficult and complicated which meant schools had to invest significant resource just into managing their benefits of the national tutoring programme.

She called for a clear focus on the disadvantaged, a stronger focus on following the evidence and reducing group sizes and solving the funding dilemma and moving on from the subsidy model.

Geographic factors

Ed Marsh, Chief Executive of the Tutor Trust, spoke on the geographic nature of the disadvantage gap, where attainment and other problems were much more prevalent in the North of England than the South. He said his research had found that 12 weeks of tutoring was worth around 24 weeks of classroom learning. He said that the disadvantage gap was around 3 months so a strong tutoring programme for the disadvantaged of around 12 weeks would effectively close that gap as a “silver bullet”.

#### Impact and buy-in for tutoring

Sarah Waite, Founder and Chief Executive of Get Further, said that during the pandemic the UK was seen as being “ahead of the curve” with how quickly a tutoring offer was made. She said that with such a strong evidence base there was now an opportunity to make tutoring a permanent part of the UK’s education system.

Dr Sally Burtonshaw, Associate Director for Public Education, Public First, said her work had focused on looking at what the future of tutoring might look like. Burtonshaw said her research showed that children liked tutoring and she emphasised that finding an education intervention that children liked and had “bought into” was very rare and important. Parents were massively in favour of tutoring which also brought spillover effects on attendance and confidence.

Damian Haigh, of University of Liverpool Maths School, said disadvantaged students suffered from practical issues like lack of sleep, poor health, poor diet and less time to get their homework done. There was also a higher rate of domestic violence and mental health issues. He noted that tutoring was a good route into teaching and so greater tutoring policy could aid in teacher recruitment.

#### Q&A

##### Flexibility

An audience member asked how tutoring could be made to work for tutors, who often suffered from infrequent and unsociable hours.

Hardyman said she disagreed that tutoring should be integrated into the school day because there was already so much to pack into a school day, and tutoring should be additional.

Marsh said he found working tutoring into the school day did work better for his organisation. He argued that a more efficient model for provision via the national tutoring model would enable greater flexibility for tutors.

##### Parental awareness

An audience member asked how to raise the profile of tutoring amongst disadvantaged pupils.

Burtonshaw said pupils were currently identified via schools and so this was also the most efficient way to contact parents and pupils and educate them on the benefits of tutoring. She said that when parents were contacted, they were overwhelmingly enthusiastic. She agreed that many parents had expressed disappointment and not hearing about tutoring from the start of their time at the school and not having better communication.

Marsh said bringing in tutors with similar backgrounds to the children was important for establishing them as role models and improving on the profile of tutors amongst certain communities.

##### Spillover Effects

Andrew asked the panel to elaborate on spillover effects. Hardyman said confidence was the biggest spillover effect that she heard from teachers. Students were more confident to raise their hands in class. She noted that improvements in maths via tutoring often led to a spillover into other subjects such as science.

#### Definition of disadvantage

An audience member asked about how the definition of disadvantaged pupils led to some being excluded from support when they would benefit from it and if this was a foundational change that needed to be made.

Burtonshaw said no definition was perfect but that most organisations tackled this issue via having multiple measures where they could measure it.

Haigh and Hardyman both agreed that no definition was ever going to capture everyone it should and that improvements could be made.

#### Relationship between schools and tutors

An audience member asked if the relationship between schools and tutors had improved from during the pandemic and if work was being done to promote the integration of tutors into the day-to-day of school operations.

Burtonshaw said that building a tutoring programme in the pandemic was never going to be perfect but she believed that the system had come on leaps and bounds in the last few years.

Hardyman said schools had struggled to integrate tutors during the pandemic but the longer that tutors and tutoring organisations had embedded themselves in the school, the stronger those links became. She added that this was why she was so disappointed at the funding stopping in 2024, as some schools had said to her they couldn't "be bothered" to put effort into further integration given that the programme was ending.

Waite agreed that the circumstances of how the NTP was born led to some "chaos" in the early days but this had massively improved.

## Embedding work experience in the curriculum: a driver for skills and growth

Education Policy Institute & Speakers for Schools

10:30, Tuesday 2nd October 2023

#### Panellists:

- Nick Brook, Speakers for Schools;
- Oli de Botton, Careers and Enterprise Company;
- John Cope, Conservative PPC, Esher and Walton;
- Leora Cruddas, Confederation of School Trusts;
- Carl Cullinane, The Sutton Trust;
- Natalie Perera, Education Policy Institute;

Overview

The panel discussed the benefits of rolling out work experience placements universally. The session focused on how to incentivise businesses to take on placements and how to embed it within the school curriculum.

#### Inequalities

Nick Brook, Speakers for Schools, said Speakers for Schools existed to level the playing field between state and independent schools.

Brook said that by inspiring young people through the speaker programme and providing one-to-one support to help young people to drive the opportunities available to them we can close the gap between the most and least advantaged.

#### Work experience placements

Brook said that there was an ambition that by 2028 every young person in the country would have access to high quality work experience placements. Currently, he said, half do not have that access and at the moment it was only usually available to the children of middle-class parents and their network which meant those from less well-off backgrounds had limited access to those opportunities.

Carl Cullinane, The Sutton Trust, said that the benefits of work experience were not just about skills but that it also helped develop soft skills and build social capital and networks.

He agreed about making work experience more universal for schools, but rolling it out too quickly will bring about huge challenges and should be phased in. He urged for any initial phases to be focused in those more disadvantaged areas first.

#### Curriculum

Leora Cruddas, Confederation of School Trusts, said that education was a good in itself and the entire point of every childhood. She said the main point of education was not in service to the economy and employment, but it ensured the first step to happy and financially stable lives.

She said that education was a force for social justice and not social mobility. Social mobility, she clarified was the lifting up of a few and social justice is about lifting up of all. The conflation of the two, she said, was dangerous.

However, Cruddas added that careers education did have an important place in the education system.

Cruddas reflected that it was easy to fall into the trap of driving the curriculum towards the skills that the economy needed. However, she warned this was dangerous as then education was viewed as a means to an end and a move away from subjects and knowledge. She said this would position the system towards 21st century skills gaps. Whilst, she suggested, we should embed employment within the curriculum rather than be the driver.

John Cope, Conservative PPC, Esher and Walton, called for a resistance to politicians and government telling schools what should be in their curriculum. The impact of that prescriptive instruction can often be short term and not long lasting.

#### Involving employers

Oli de Botton, Careers and Enterprise Company said they should be including employers earlier in education. When working with schools, employers can highlight the different routes into work. She said work experience should not be viewed as a one off, but an ongoing partnership instead.

#### Teachers

De Botton said that a recent Ofsted review of careers education found that teachers were keen to help but they needed more knowledge of the sector. Therefore, he advocated for more training for teachers to help support work experience placements.

Cope said there had been "an enormous shift" in interest in apprenticeship and technical education opportunities. He said that 50% of young people going to UCAS were interested in apprenticeships and technical education.

#### Levy and incentives

Cope said the apprenticeship levy had doubled the amount spent on apprenticeships but reasoned that it is still not enough. He suggested that an introduction of skills tax credits could incentivise businesses into taking on apprentices and work experience placements.

Cope said the biggest issue for SMEs were cash flow and suggested that cash flow incentives would be good for SMEs whilst the tax credits would be good incentives for big businesses. He also floated the idea that bigger businesses could share apprentices with an SMEs "one day a week".

## Practical Solutions to the Housing Crisis

Hosts: Policy Exchange

Date and Time: 1 October, 4:30pm

#### Panel

- Rachel Maclean MP - Minister of State for Housing and Planning, MP for Redditch
- Aisha Cuthbert - One Housing, Communications/Marketing, Sustainability, Green Services & Open Spaces, Bromley Council
- Brandon Lewis - Secretary of State for Justice
- Richard Cook – Group Director of Development, Clarion Housing Group
- James Vitali - Cambridge University, In education or training
- Ben Everitt – Member of Parliament for Milton Keynes North
- Ike Ijeh – Head of Housing, Architecture & Urban Space

#### Overview

Housing is a policy area saturated with areas, but which interventions would realistically help ease the housing crisis in the short and medium term? This event will showcase the best thinking on how to deliver the new homes that the UK desperately needs.

#### Opening Remarks and Discussion

James Vitali, Cambridge University, began by delivering three points on Policy Exchange's take on the housing crisis. He said that Policy Exchange saw the housing sector and its challenges as a political problem, as well as a policy problem. Second, he said that quality and quantity were not mutually exclusive. Third, he said that planning reform was necessary, Government needed to reduce the discretion involved in the planning system and give more certainty for local authorities.

Ben Everitt, MP began by speaking about his constituency, Milton Keynes North. Milton Keynes was in the process of transitioning to an urban city, which delivered a lot of lessons. The crucial policy challenge was building more houses, in the right place, at the right time, of the right quality. There had been decades of Government intervention to fix the housing market, but the net result had been to make the market more complicated. The majority of recent interventions had been demand side, but the difficult element, supply side intervention, must now be tackled.

Everitt urged to raise the profile of the planning system, to get more people into planning and to make it a desirable profession. Levelling Up provided a real opportunity; a joined up approach was essential to this, in other words people cannot just be transported to areas for work, it is important they want to live there as well.

Aisha Cuthbert, Bromley Council outlined the key issues within her council. Bromley sold off a lot of their housing stock in the 1990s, but in the past decade had witnessed a massive growth in people needing temporary accommodation. The council had since been focused on new development.

Cuthbert set out two focuses for Government. The first was land supply, he said that the Government needed to focus more on regeneration, in response to where local housing was exacerbated. The second was apprehension of people agreeing to new homes in their communities. He said that government should look at making CIL payments more democratic, so communities saw the benefits of this money.

Later on, she reiterated the importance of local government addressing the concerns of the general public. There needed to be a level of trust that developments would benefit the wider community. Everitt agreed with this, he argued sustainable, affordable development appropriate to local vernacular was essential. Everitt believed community engagement should take place earlier and this should be digitised so more people could access this.

Richard Cook, Group Director of Development, Clarion Housing Group, gave a brief summary of the work of Clarion; they were a housing developer, with a focus on brownfield development and affordable housing. Cook emphasised the importance of collaboration and long-term thinking in the planning process. At present, policy change and a lack of clear legislation was stalling progress, because contractors got stuck in a standstill waiting for secondary legislation. Cook was pleased by the investment from Homes England into the regeneration of existing homes, but argued that absentee landlords stalled the progress of major regeneration projects by holding out for as much money as they could get.

Ike Ijeh, Head of Housing, Architecture & Urban Space, was very clear in his three priorities. First spoke about the reform to the planning system. He said it was too slow, too inefficient and didn't provide enough certainty or mitigate against risks. Ijeh argued not everything should be at the discretion of the planning committee, but regulations were needed to break this discretionary system.

Secondly, Ijeh spoke about democratising the planning system. He said that NIMBY was not a helpful term, rather Government should seek to understand and recognise why there were objections. It was important to build high quality and beautiful spaces. Beauty may be subjective, but there were certain commonalities.

Finally, Ijeh touched on more council housing. He cited the figure that the average house in London costs twelve times the average salary, and accordingly advocated for the need for affordable housing. The Government spent billions on housing benefit, but Ijeh argued that this money would be better spent on affordable housing. Beauty and quality need not be expensive; this was a design decision, rather than an economic decision.

Rachel Maclean also issued three focuses. Firstly, reform the planning system. Maclean confirmed that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill would be back in the Commons after recess. Maclean hoped the Bill would provide clarity, tackling the discretionary nature of planning and making the process quicker and easier.

Secondly, Maclean spoke about beauty which was an important part of Michael Gove's vision, the Government were working with lots of local groups, such as Create Streets, so that communities could appreciate development.

Finally Maclean spoke about a holistic approach. She said that money was not sufficient to resolve the problem, and there were long and short term priorities.

Maclean subsequently identified London, Leeds and Cambridge as priority areas. In London, the Mayor was not delivering on what he needed to. Whilst in Cambridge, Maclean hoped the city would become the life sciences capital of the country. She proposed greater neighbourhood planning forum funding, because it was important for local councils to go through this process coherently in order to obtain community consent.

#### Q&A

Maclean was interested in the idea of council tax rebates for people who built new homes in their areas. She was in favour of incentivising but didn't feel that a reduction in council tax was the best way to do this. The Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities had invested in the use of technology to innovate community engagement.

Everitt stated that he thought modular homes was a good idea, if it could be scaled as a UK industry. This could be an excellent opportunity for high quality jobs.

On the topic of Small and Medium Sized Building Companies, Maclean promised she was listening to SMEs and stated it was wrong that the industry was dominated by large companies. She said that the Government was considering making public sector land available for SMEs, making Homes England grants more accessible for SMEs and creating a better planning system for smaller sites that SMEs would be looking to access.

## Cost of Living Crisis - Working together to overcome financial barriers to homelessness

Shelter

10.30am, 3 October 2023

Panellists:

- Felicity Buchan (Con, Kensington)
- Osama Bhutta, Director of Campaigns, Policy, and Communications at Shelter
- Nigel Cates, Head of Financial Support and Controls at HSBC

#### Overview:

The panellists discussed the extent of the issue of homelessness in the UK. They looked at the topic from a personal finance perspective and discussed what the Government were doing to tackle the crisis.

#### Barriers to housing

Nigel Cates, Head of Financial Support and Controls at HSBC, opened by saying that not having an address was a significant barrier to having a bank account, and not having a bank account was a complete barrier to housing. He said they had been working with Shelter to stop people getting into problems and giving them access to support when they did get into rent or mortgage issues. Cates added that HSBC did a lot for their customers to identify signs of financial difficulty early and intervene when this happened. Their partnership with Shelter was to support all aspects of what they did to help people with homelessness, and they wanted to invest a lot of money, time, and expertise into it.

#### The extent of the housing crisis

Osama Bhutta, Director of Campaigns, Policy, and Communications at Shelter, said that home was a place where people were safe and secure and politically, there is an argument to be made that it was a human right and a societal responsibility to ensure that everyone had this. However, he said that this was also an issue of prosperity, that there was a man-made humanitarian emergency in housing. Bhutta said that a quarter of a million people are homeless, half of whom are children, which has normalised the issue. 1.6m people were on the waiting list for social housing, 11m people are private renters a quarter of whom say it affects their health.

#### Actions for Government

Bhutta continued, saying that the local housing allowance had been frozen since 2020 and needed to be unfrozen because the level of difficulty it was causing was untenable. He added that housing prices were already high before things like food and electricity went up, and there was an issue of the most vulnerable people in society not getting the help that they need, describing it as a structural problem. In Shelter's manifesto which was launched with Michael Gove, it was said that the next Government needed to build 90,000 social homes a year to alleviate the housing burden. Bhutta's plea on behalf of Shelter to the Conservative Party was for them to use their power to make decisions wisely because people needed hope.

#### The Government's commitments to tackling the crisis

Felicity Buchan (Con, Kensington) said that this government were entirely committed to tackling rough sleeping and they had a budget of £2bn to spend in the period 2022-2025 to tackle the issue, which was an unprecedented amount. She continued by saying there was a difference between rough sleepers and homelessness, the latter of which, were in temporary accommodation such as B and Bs which is illegal for the Government to house people in for more than 6 weeks. She evidenced the 'End Rough Sleeping for Good' strategy which was published in 2022 to show that the Government had been committed to this across all departments. Buchan said rough sleeping numbers are 28 percent lower than pre-pandemic levels and 35 percent lower than 2017 levels. Buchan said she was a believer in helping rough sleepers into work which is why the 'Employers



Covenant' was launched and was responded very strongly to by employers. She said the Government were focused on building more affordable homes with their £11.5bn affordable homes programme and she agreed that more homes needed to be built.

## Green industrial revolution: is the UK winning or losing?

Conservative Environment Network & Centrica

17:00, Monday 2nd October 2023

Panellists:

- Lynsey Jones, Senior Climate Programme Manager, Conservative Environment Network;
- Chris Skidmore MP (Con, Kingswood);
- Laura Sandys, CEO, Challenging Ideas;
- Chris O'Shea, Chief Executive, Centrica;
- Claire Coutinho MP, Secretary of State, Department for Energy and Net Zero;
- David Duguid MP (Con, Banff and Buchan);

Overview

The session focused on the USA and UK's efforts to step up their offer to green businesses incentives in the UK green energy market. They discussed the Government's recent changes to its net zero strategy and what the impact that would have on its targets.

Secretary of State

Claire Coutinho MP, Secretary of State, Department for Energy and Net Zero kicked off the session by telling the meeting that she believed people had to be pragmatic about net zero measures and protect vulnerable households.

She reflected on the recent changes to the Government's net zero strategy and said she was still confident they were going to "get there". In terms of heat decarbonization, she said they had changed to an incentivisation scheme and Octopus Energy's recent fivefold increase in applications showed that incentives worked better.

She said that the biggest announcements were around the grid, as this had been the biggest challenge around connectivity of the grid.

Asked whether she thought net zero was a religion, she said there were people who say we can never question net zero, and that was not how a government should function. She said they wanted to be practical about it and look at the ways in which you can get there.

Recent net zero announcements

Chris Skidmore MP (Con, Kingswood) suggested that the recent announcements did not change the dial very much. The EV mandate effectively remains the same. He noted that the net zero strategy already set out exemptions on EVs and boilers, so very little had changed in terms of the policy.

He warned not to forget those already working with the technologies that already exist and will need to transition and called for them to be trained on the new and emerging technologies.

Laura Sandys, CEO, Challenging Ideas, said the good part of Sunak's announcements were the points about speeding up decisions around grid improvements.

A world leader

David Duguid MP (Con, Banff and Buchan) said the UK was winning for the most part, although there were still challenges. He said he thought the UK Government was taking the right approach in terms of reaching net zero. He welcomed Skidmore's net zero review, particularly on carbon storage sites.

He said the country could be a lot better, delivering the energy transition and the skills better than it was.

Skidmore said the announcements had, though, caused some concern about whether the UK will remain a market leader. The challenge was that other countries were now catching up, and pointed to Germany's hydrogen strategy and France's heat pumps guarantee.

He added that the UK had been admired across the world for its regulatory and policy consistency.

On the value of emerging technologies, he said there was an opportunity to export the UK's net zero policy and technologies.

Laura Sandys, CEO, Challenging Ideas, said the UK was losing momentum and falling back and was beginning to lose the confidence of the investor community.

She said that undermining the destination and confidence was not just a political decision, but had financial consequences too.

Chris O'Shea, Chief Executive, Centrica, said that where the UK moved quickly, it did so very well. He highlighted its work on offshore gas oil and wind where it now owned a lot of the intellectual property around the technologies.

Supply chain

O'Shea reflected on the need for a continuous supply chain or demand profile in order to drive demand, get costs down and improve conditions for customers.

Customers care that their home was habitable at an affordable cost, care less where the energy actually came from.

Non-renewables

O'Shea told the meeting that right now the UK was burning coal to generate energy, because the country was not acting fast enough on renewables in the same way that it had in offshore.

Q&A

Q: "What does the panel think we need to do to speed up investment in the UK's green energy market?"

A: O'Shea said it needed to support investment in grid connections. He suggested stipulating that anyone wanting to buy into the UK market had to make a commitment to upgrading the grid, otherwise they would have to get out of the queue.

Q: "Where do we get the hydrogen from? Will we be importing LNG and then converting it?"

A: O'Shea said that drilling to find natural hydrogen was taking place, but had no idea how long that process would take. He said the UK and Norway could produce hydrogen at scale. At first, he noted, the blue hydrogen creation would take importing LNG, but ultimately green hydrogen will win out, but the UK had such an advantage with its supply of water when compared to surrounding countries.

Skidmore said that the challenge around hydrogen was that the UK had a chance to move away from the rainbow of hydrogen. The challenge, though, was that the limited demand risked making the perfect the enemy of the good.

## How does health drive prosperity?

IPPR

13:00, 2nd October 2023

Panellists:

- Chris Thomas, Head of the Commission on Health and Prosperity, IPPR;
- Carys Roberts, Executive Director, IPPR;
- Lord Bethell, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Health and Social Care;
- Barbara Reichwein, Programme Director, Impact on Urban Health;
- Zoe Grunewald, Policy and Politics Correspondent, New Statesman;
- Baroness Camilla Cavendish, Journalist and Broadcaster;

Overview

The session focused on the value healthy lives had on local economies and what governments should do to promote and ensure people lived such healthy lives. It reflected on a recent IPPR report which examined the lives of people and their financial prosperity according to their health status.

Value of health

Chris Thomas, Head of the Commission on Health and Prosperity, IPPR, said it was striking that through history health's innate value had always been backed by its economic value. He noted that the onset of sickness was behind the majority of people falling out of the labour market, which often meant that people lost over £2,000 of their income. If this was the US, he said, that would be catastrophic because of the cost of healthcare, however, because it this was measured in earnings in the UK, it was not seen as such a catastrophe, but that made it no less important to address.

Lord Bethell, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State, Health and Social Care told the meeting that next year the absence from the workforce will cost the country £22bn and half of that was due to ill health.

He added that all serious economists were now focused on health in a way that they never were before. Policymakers, he said, were concerned by an unsustainable NHS and people were just too ill to work and warned "they are costing us too much money."

Barbara Reichwein, Programme Director, Impact on Urban Health, said their social model of health gains each person £2,000 per year in income, linking health and economic income.

For employers, she said it makes sense to have a healthy workforce, she highlighted the cost of inactivity (£70m workdays are lost to mental ill health) and told members that for every £1 towards mental ill health, employers received £5 in return.

#### Sugar tax

Baroness Camilla Cavendish, Journalist and Broadcaster, said the sugar tax had been a successful policy in removing a third of sugar from drinks. She said it had been miscommunicated as a sin tax but was actually about getting industry to reform their products rather than punishing behaviours.

She said that brands questioned whether it was easier to take the sugar out rather than raise costs and noted that manufacturers were very good at producing substances that are addictive, so needed some incentives.

Cavendish said it was a shame that most of the other measures in the obesity strategy had either not been implemented or only half-implemented.

#### Prevention

Bethell said that after the pandemic there was a window of opportunity to think about how hard the country had been hit because of the state of the country's health, so there was a chance to focus on prevention.

Since then, though, he said the country had fallen back quite a long way.

Cavendish said the NHS was not capable of prevention and may in fact need a parallel service focused on solely prevention.

#### Interventions

Bethell suggested that if there were healthier habits (Sleeping, drinking and addictions) people could live for many more years and told the meeting that even if you change your habits in later life, you can still claw those years back.

He said that interventions around things like housing would take a huge amount of time and investment but suggested that the public were desperate for ways to improve their lifestyle, and there were ways around junk food and cleaner air that could be achieved quickly. He highlighted that Sadiq Khan in London and Andy Burnham in Manchester had made interventions on this, but action was needed on a national level.

Reichwein told the panel that a cross-benefit analysis of free school meals made a sound economic case for investment. However, she noted that the data was not readily available, so it made sense to bring it all together in a commission like this.

She suggested there was a role for government in regulating industry, but also that consumer-first promotion of healthier foods resulted in people making healthier decisions. She said healthy food brands, with support, could displace unhealthy foods. Programmes, she added, had shown there

was demand for healthier foods, but there was still a place for the Government to consider how it can support new, healthier food brands.

Zoe Grunewald, Policy and Politics Correspondent, New Statesman, said there was a disconnect between health and politics, and journalists were guilty of focusing on the psychodrama of Westminster. Whilst there was only a focus on these areas when there was a crisis that brings it into focus.

She said there were a couple of things in the system preventing these long-term solutions from being continued. She said the recent high churn of PMs and Ministers were one such thing, but ultimately the short-termism built into the election cycle made it difficult for politicians to make unpopular, tough decisions when they were vying for votes every few years.

Q&A

Q: How can we create the political space for politicians to talk about these issues?

A: Lord Bethell said we needed to unpick the current health covenant. He agreed that it was a universal commitment, and one we should never get rid of, but it was a one-way contract that implied that the NHS would always be there to nurse people back to health whatever circumstances they arrived in.

He said it was difficult to move the needle as Prime Minister, and needed others to mobilise and do that for the mayors, NHS leaders and wider civic society.

## Connecting the Dots: How the climate is shaping humanitarian emergencies

Coalition for Global Prosperity, CAFOD

11:30 02/10/2023

Panellists:

- Louise Abraham, Government Relations Officer, CAFOD;
- Alexander Stafford, MP, Member of the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee;
- Ryan Henson, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition for Global Prosperity;
- Resham Kotecha, Global Head of Policy, the Open Data Institute;

Stafford's visit to Kenya

Alexander Stafford MP, Member of the Energy Security and Net Zero Committee, had just led a trip to Kenya where climate change was bringing devastation via droughts. He was surprised at how previous efforts had failed to implement sustained progress which then led to the problems returning at a later date.

Stafford said the UK should be doing more to upskill Kenyan, and other nations', officials in how to build strong institutions and democratic accountability in order to make their governance stronger.

Abraham agreed that there was a need for information sharing but said progress could not be made in countries like Kenya without consistent and reliable funding. Funding reductions undermined development efforts, she argued.

#### The Promise of Technology

Resham Kotecha, Global Head of Policy, the Open Data Institute, spoke on the promises that AI offered for aiding humanitarian emergencies. She raised the Google flood tracker which used machine learning and had helped millions of people react better to floods as well as other examples of where big data and AI could help people affected by climate change, conflict and human trafficking.

#### East Africa Hunger Crisis

Louise Abraham, Government Relations Officer, CAFOD, said at a recent meeting with donor countries had provided just a third of what was needed to solve the hunger crisis in East Africa. The FCDO's contribution was £30m lower than the year before.

She spoke on how CAFOD provided food and water aid as well as helped communities improve their resilience and diversify their local economies.

She said the Government was not doing enough to lead on global climate adaptation and the world's poorest would suffer the most as a result.

Abraham expressed anger at the Government's recent announcements on net zero and said this was shared by her contacts abroad in countries such as Sierra Leone.

#### China

Stafford said the UK and other Western countries abdicating from responsibility had provided a space for China to dominate parts of Africa. Stafford said there was a case for aid in that it increased the UK's soft power and influence abroad as well as security.

Kotecha said that there was a genuine threat from China's increasing international power and agreed that the West needed to respond.

#### Faith Actors

Abraham spoke on how faith actors were so well embedded in local communities that they were best placed to help in the provision of aid and development. Furthermore, they could be important partners with international NGOs by helping them to understand local cultures and customs.

She said the Government needed to develop a comprehensive strategy which could bring in faith, and other local actors, provide them with funding and integrate them within relief efforts.

#### Q&A

##### Migration

An audience member asked about how the Government could prevent further mass migration amidst an increasing global population.

Stafford said the world could support more people and a larger human population. However, the Government were not doing enough to make people not want to migrate. He added that unless the

birthrate in the UK increased, they couldn't solve migration because fundamentally there were not enough children being born.

Abraham said migration highlighted how important investment in climate adaptation was because these problems were only going to continue increasing.

Kotecha said these questions highlighted how vital the education of women was in terms of aid as this increased prosperity and reduced birth rates. However, she added that it was vital for the UK to also address domestic issues such as childcare costs to boost the domestic birthrate.

#### Long-term thinking

An audience member asked how long-term solutions could be implemented in an unstable aid environment which the UK was currently in.

Stafford supported the aid reduction to 0.5 percent of GNI and said this was the right thing to do given current economic conditions. He advocated for a refocusing of the UK's aid strategies, saying that only projects which could be supported for 5-10 years should be supported, rather than trying to do too much and therefore falling into short-termism.

Kotecha said people, and journalists, rewarded at the ballot box short-term benefits and short-term thinking. Fundamentally unless this was changed, progress would be slow.

Abraham said CAFOD wanted to see a commitment from the UK to prioritise local actors in the next international development white paper.

## Royal United Services Institute - What Next for Defence Policy?

Royal United Services Institute

8:30 02/10/2023

- Grant Shapps, Defence Secretary;
- Malcolm Chalmers, Deputy Director General, Royal United Services Institute;
- Lucy Fisher, Whitehall Editor, Financial Times;

#### Opening remarks

Lucy Fisher, Whitehall Editor, Financial Times, opened the discussion by saying many had been surprised to see Grant Shapps, Defence Secretary, had gotten his new role. She asked why he was given the role of Defence Secretary given he had no defence connections

Shapps said he was experienced in running complicated, infrastructure heavy departments. He said he was particularly experienced in dealing with procurement programs and making sure they didn't run over.

He added that it was common for civilians to run the military in democratic societies.

He said he believed that Defence Secretary was the most important job in Government given that defence of the nation was a government's primary function.

#### Defence Spending

Fisher noted that Shapps had previously advocated for spending 2.5 percent of GDP on defence, she asked when this would happen.

Shapps said he'd like it to be done today but that could only be done when the economic situation allowed and when Government finances were more stable.

He said progress was being made, given that a few years ago the debate was around whether the UK would hit 2 percent, but was now sitting comfortably at around 2.5 percent.

He backed up his previous pledge from his leadership bid that he believed the long-term trajectory should be that the defence budget hits 3 percent of GDP.

Shapps also said that it was important to look at spending efficiency rather than purely budgetary concerns.

Malcolm said that capital spending had increased in recent years and that the Government had now increased spending slightly above 2010 levels in real terms.

He raised the Government ambition to increase munitions stockpiles and production in the context of the war in Ukraine. He noted that any extra spending in this space would probably come from somewhere else, unless overall funding was to increase.

He also raised a Governmental pattern on overcommitting with ambition and then having to scale back projects at a later date under budgetary pressure. He emphasised the need for stability in supply chains in order to support industry.

#### Replenishment

Shapps said the need to replenish the UK's warfighting capability, after so much equipment and munitions had been gifted to Ukraine, was clear and the Government were moving on this.

He added that not all replenishment should be "like for like". He argued that some products, such as the AS-90 gun were coming to the end of their lifecycle and so would not need to be replaced exactly, and instead UK capability could be upgraded.

#### Zelensky

He told an anecdote about meeting with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky who had said "when this war is over, we will write a new book about Ukraine, and at the first page will be blank. I'd like the United Kingdom, to right that first page". He said this was in regard to the UK being so quick to support Ukraine when it was needed.

#### Royal Navy in the Black Sea

Fisher raised reports in the media that the Royal Navy might deploy to the Black Sea to protect commercial shipping.

Shapps denied these reports. He said that Zelensky had been quoted as saying this in the media, but that this was not an option being considered.

However, he added it was important to protect freedom of navigation in international waters when necessary.

#### Poland Situation



Shapps said Poland had been fantastic in their support for Ukraine and taking on refugees. He very much hoped and believed that when the Polish election was over, more sensible, “common sense approaches” would be taken which could ease the recent tensions between Ukraine and Poland.

He said the tensions were fundamentally about the export of grain and it would help if Ukraine had the ability to export grain via the Black Sea. For this reason, he welcomed recent positive signs of Ukraine fighting back against Russia’s black sea fleet.

#### US Support

Shapps was asked about US support under a possible Trump presidency and what the risks were.

Shapps said the US had taken on the “lion’s share” of support for Ukraine and been hugely important in the war. He believed the discourse in the US was a long way off from withdrawing its support entirely. Therefore, he was not concerned and the stay on US funding as part of the budgetary considerations was only temporary, he hoped.

Chalmers said he believed this would be a long war and go on at least until 2025. The Russian calculation was to wear the Ukrainians down and that the Western alliance would fracture. He said that was already visible in some ways in the American discourse and in other countries questioning how long they could focus on Ukraine when other issues like China demanded their attention. Other distractions included the Serbian army massing on the border with Kosovo.

He said the risk of the US withdrawing their support could be mitigated by Europe taking on a greater share of responsibility.

#### GCAP

Fisher asked for an update from Shapps on the tensions regarding the prospect of Saudi Arabia joining the GCAP programme.

Shapps said he was new to this brief so couldn’t claim to know everything but that he didn’t recognise the media reports that there were tensions. In his view, all the GCAP partners were in broad agreement.

GCAP showed off the best of what Britain could do after Brexit because it showed how the UK could act as a convenor, bringing together its allies in shared projects.

He was determined to avoid a repeat of the AJAX programme which had gotten too expensive and complicated with too many versions being produced.

#### Q&A

##### Indo-Pacific

An audience members asked if the UK still had the capacity to impact the indo-pacific if it was “doubling down on Ukraine”.

Shapps said the UK was one of the only countries with the capability to have an impact in that region. He pointed to AUKUS as a particular example.

##### Support to Ukraine

A Guardian journalist asked if it was time to do as Ben Wallace had suggested to spend £2.3bn on supporting Ukraine this year.

Shapps said he could not pre-empt budgetary measures, but the UK would continue to support Ukraine for as long as was needed.

Saudi Arabia

An audience member raised the topic of human rights concerns delaying the sale of typhoon fighters to Saudi Arabia. It was asked if the UK shared those concerns and if they could truly be an ally with Saudi Arabia given their human rights record.

Shapps said Saudi Arabia was a rapidly changing society and that it often had an unfairly maligned impression in the West.

He said in international relations you always had to work with people you didn't always agree with but Saudi Arabia was very much moving in the right direction, he described Saudi Arabia as a "strong ally" and said he was working with German colleagues to move forward with the Typhoon deal.

Trump Presidency

An audience member asked if a Trump administration was a "worst case scenario".

Shapps said it was unclear what Trump would do if he won the election. He said one thing to be sure on was that Trump was concerned about China and Taiwan. Allowing Russia to win in Ukraine would send the wrong message to China about Taiwan, so there was reason to believe that Trump would change his state approach and support Ukraine as President.

Chalmers said this was a critical turning point in terms of the UK's place in the world and that the West more broadly needed to dig in for a long war in Ukraine.

## In Conversation with Andrew Mitchell

Coalition for Global Prosperity

Water Aid

12:45, 01/10/2023

Panellists:

- Andrew Mitchell, Minister for Africa and International Development;
- Ryan Henson, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition for Global Prosperity;

Overview

In this event Andrew Mitchell reflected on the Government's record on international development and argued that the current international order, particularly the United Nations was not functioning. He confirmed that the International Development White Paper would be published on the 20th of November 2023.

Minister's Remark

Ryan Henson, Chief Executive Officer, Coalition for Global Prosperity, asked what had changed in the last year, and what had surprised Mitchell in his role.

Andrew Mitchell, Minister for Africa and International Development, responded that there was too much “doom and gloom” at the conference and said it would be a mistake to just focus on how funding had changed. The Government were currently spending about as much as the last labour government at the moment.

He said it was important to remember that the current international order was broken, given that Russia, a member of the UN security council, was flagrantly acting against the aims of the UN and keeping the security council in a permanent state of paralysis. He said, “we live in an era of narrow nationalism... the era of the strongman”.

Mitchell spoke on the need for a rules-based international order as a way to bring together nations to tackle shared challenges such as pandemics, terrorism, climate change and protectionism.

He argued that the UK still had a leadership role in international development and that the Jenner Institute was about to announce it had developed a 2nd malaria vaccine in an “earth changing” development.

#### International Development White Paper

Mitchell then confirmed that the international development white paper would be published on the 20th of November 2023. He said it needed to command cross party support and set down the strategy stretching right to 2030 if it was going to make a real difference.

#### Aid Spending

On the reduction to 0.5 percent of GNI spending for international development he acknowledged that this was not his view when the decision was made, but Parliament had voted for it and that the Government were certainly committed to increasing the funding again when possible.

He noted that Labour had not committed to increasing the spending back up to 0.7 percent.

Mitchell said there were other ways, such as co-funding, which could make less money go further. He said he hoped that when the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia visited the UK, the Prime Minister could announce some specific measures of how Saudi Arabia and the UK were going to work together on some specific aid projects.

#### Q&A

##### Water Resilience

An audience member raised the issue of floods and droughts and asked how the Government would improve water resilience and adaptation in the poorest countries.

Mitchell said that whenever aid was delivered into the poorest countries, building resilience and adaptation into those programmes was vital. He accepted that this increased the costs of programmes but said that this just needed to be built into the projects.

##### Coups and Corruptions

He said the recent wave of coups in former French colonies in Africa was in many cases not surprising. He said the coup in Niger was particularly sad because they were making so much progress and now this was “incredibly depressing”. He said the UK were supporting the Economic Community of West African States in how they were handling the situation.

##### The Rights of Women

Mitchell said the merger of DFID and the FCO had led to a great recognition of women and girls as being central to international development. He said the department now saw international development through that lens.

He said across Africa, and even the United States of America, there were attacks on the rights of women and LGBT people. He said the law passed against LGBT people in Uganda was “absolutely terrible”.

## What is the future of government outsourcing?

Institute for Government and Serco

Tuesday 3 October, 8:30am

Panel

- Baroness Neville-Rolfe, Cabinet Office Minister
- Brendan Clarke-Smith MP
- Nick Davies, Programme Director at the Institute for Government (chair)
- Anthony Kirby, CEO at Serco UK
- Sarah Vibert, CEO at National Council for Voluntary Organisations

Overview

The panel discussed the state of the procurement sector, the role of the private sector and charities in providing services, and what impact the Procurement Bill would have on improving the system.

Opening Remarks

Baroness Neville-Rolfe, Cabinet Officer Minister, said the goal of the Procurement Bill was to simplify and improve a complex EU regime of procurement. She said it would deliver more transparent, better written contracts and change the current system of outsourcing. She said SMEs should have a bigger slice of the £300bn ‘pie’ that outsourcing was worth, and believed the Bill would help facilitate this. Finally, she said the Bill would remove bureaucracy and allow the Government to remove bad suppliers who have not delivered.

Anthony Kirby, CEO of Serco UK, said there was overwhelming evidence on the ability of the private sector to provide Government services. He said the private and public sectors should be seen as equals in the procurement process. He welcomed the plans to improve transparency and accountability, but said we needed to be aware of the behaviours it could foster. It could lead to the Government becoming more prescriptive on KPIs, rather than looking at the wider picture. He said he was frustrated by the bureaucracy of some contracts and wanted to see the Government become a ‘better customer’ in private outsourcing.

Sarah Vibert, CEO of the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), argued charities should be treated differently in the procurement system, by taking a person-centred approach that best supported their services such as youth centres or refuge centres. Charities were often treated as the last-ditch cheapest option, as Government commissioners knew they wouldn’t walk away if the alternative meant people were left behind. Voluntary services were badly underfunded as a result, and she said they were unable to meet their costs due to inflation.

Brendan Clarke-Smith MP agreed with the points made by Baroness Neville-Rolfe, and said he wanted to prioritise value for money in outsourcing. He was also very supportive of getting more local SMEs involved in the bidding process.

#### Discussion

Nick Davies, Programme Director at IfG, asked Baroness Neville-Rolfe about the Government providing sufficient funding. She said it would be wrong to say a lot of extra money is available, adding that bringing inflation down had to be the priority. She instead argued that bureaucracy and wasteless spending needed to be addressed within the current spending limits.

Kirby was asked about Serco's profits generated from public sector contracts. He said sustainable profit growth should not be seen as a bad thing and that their profit margin goals were only 5 percent of their revenue, which he felt was acceptable.

Vibert was asked if charities were bidding too low for contracts and if they should take a more commercial attitude. She said charities had increasingly become a safety net, as private sector businesses could walk away whilst charities would not leave vulnerable people alone. She said they have been challenging the Government more on costs, in light of the cost of living reducing their ability to subsidise their margins.

Baroness Neville-Rolfe was asked how the Government were ensuring smaller capacity organisations such as SMEs would be supported in delivering contracts. She said the Government understood the greater challenges they would face, and there would be a National Procurement Guidance Framework released once the Bill passed Parliament.

#### Q&A

The first question was on what data was available to organisations to allow them to make better decisions on bidding for contracts. The Minister said there was an online system for bigger contractors, which provided information for outsourcers. She said prompt payment data was important, and that the Bill will force the supply chain to better provide in this area.

Kirby welcome this, and said Serco reviewed their prompt payments consistently for best practice. Vibert said most charities are classed as SMEs, so prompt payment was very important to them. They also do not have big procurement teams, so the transparency on data and notices was vital for the sector she argued.

The next question was on driving more competition in the procurement market. Clarke-Smith said the Government needed to focus on which outsourcers delivered best outcomes rather than the cheapest costs, which would drive better standards.

He also wanted to make the procurement system more transparent and less bureaucratic to attract more SMEs to bid. Baroness Neville-Rolfe agreed, and said even big organisations were dissuaded from engaging due to the bureaucracy involved.

The third question was on the future role for crown representatives. Vibert said more people were needed to better communicate what the Government wanted, and so she welcomed the continuation of crown reps. Kirby agreed, and said crown representatives were very important in holding Serco and other contractors to account.

Kirby was asked what services should be outsourced and which should not. He used immigration services as an example and said there was a role for Serco to help speed up the immigration backlog

by working on bureaucratic processes. However, he said that Serco should not be explicitly deciding whether migrants should be allowed to stay in the UK.

## Why invest in us? Putting children and young people at the heart of the next government

Children's Charity Coalition: Action for Children, Barnardo's, NCB, NSPCC, Children's Society

3 October 2023, 8am

Panel:

- Cllr Samuel Kasumu, former SpAd to Boris Johnson and chair of the panel;
- Mark Russell, CEO, The Children's Society;
- Muhammad & Yulay, young people;
- Dr Mike McKean, Vice-President for Policy, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health;
- Alex Thomas, Programme Director, Institute for Government;
- Cllr Cosima Towneley, Cabinet Member for Children & Families, Lancashire County Council.

Overview

This session covered budgets, political will, and the challenges faced by children at present. The panel discussed these challenges and how they, as a coalition, would suggest improvement.

A new deal for children

Mark Russell, CEO of The Children's Society, called for a new deal for children and young people. He said it was vital young people were involved in the decisions which impacted them. He said that life was too hard for too many children.

Russell said that what was needed was urgent reform and investment to ensure children were healthier, happier and have more access to opportunities. He said that public services were in a cycle of increased demand, but investment was not being put in early help and prevention support services.

Russell touched on mental health needs, and said he knew young people were waiting too long for mental health support.

He said his team at The Children's Society saw the demand from the cost-of-living crisis and emphasised that poverty was "the enemy of opportunity". He cited a report published by Barnardo's which showed that 1 in 30 children did not even have a bed.

Russell concluded by stating that with the right political leadership, they could change children's lives. The Children's Society called for children and young people to be at the centre of political policy.

Young people on the panel

Muhammad and Yulay, two young people on the panel, said young people faced a myriad of difficulties in today's world, including exploitation and lack of parental support. They said that safety concerns were a reality, and drug misuse and knife crime were also casting long shadows.

Muhammad said they could not continue to stand by without addressing these issues. He recommended investment in awareness programmes for exploitation, as well as affordable childcare options. He said that affordable housing could also provide opportunities for growth and stability.

Yulay said schools' focus was too fixed on the curriculum, which disregarded individuality and did not prepare students for real life.

#### Children's health

Dr Mike McKean, Vice-President for Policy at the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health (RCPCH), said if you were five years old in this country now, you had a thirty percent chance of having tooth decay. He said there were 72,000 children waiting to see a speech and language therapist. He said there were 416,000 children on waiting lists at present waiting to see consultants overall. Dr McKean said that waiting lists were nothing to do with strikes from junior doctors, despite this being suggested by some.

Dr McKean said things could be done about children's health if people wanted it to. He said investing in children was the right thing to do.

#### Political will

Alex Thomas, Programme Director at the Institute for Government, said this all came back to political will and clarity of political objectives. He said it was about persuading the Prime Minister and other senior politicians to get behind this agenda. He said once things were firmly on the agenda, things did start to move.

Thomas then discussed money. He said that money was siloed into departments, which made sense for accountability purposes, but it created incredible siloes between different departments rather than joined up working. He said if they were to tackle a cross cutting set of problems, they had to think about budgets and how they allocated budgets.

Thomas concluded by speaking about clarity of objectives and following through on commitments. He said objectives were more contested within this sector, and clarity of objectives had not yet been defined. He said it would be beneficial to work out what government could achieve in this area and how they could do this.

#### Local government and children

Cllr Cosima Towneley, Cabinet Member for Children & Families at Lancashire County Council, said they did not have clarity but this was something they needed as they had constrained budgets and need to be able to use these effectively.

Cllr Towneley said they listened to the voices of their children in Lancashire, and this was exhibited through their new ways of working and safeguarding. She said early help was the only way to go on this, and they were currently developing their early help offer. She spoke about family hubs and how these had been welcomed.

Cllr Towneley stated they did not receive sufficient funding for infrastructure. She said funding a programme was more attractive than funding the building in which they would host the programmes.

Moving on to challenges, she said that managing housing sufficiency for children in care, care leavers and in general was a current issue. She said they needed to work on the building blocks for a happy,

healthy and cohesive community. She did note that whilst they needed more money, the money itself was not a cure and it had to be used wisely.

Thomas said that the political will was the entry point to change.

Cllr Towneley said her officers were drowning in policies which then changed every other year. She said having so much policy stopped imagination.

## Beyond the School Gates: Overcoming the barriers children face to fully access education

The Centre for Social Justice

Monday 2 October 2023, 8:30am

Panellists:

- Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education
- Harriet Sergeant, journalist
- Dr Lindsey MacDonald, CEO, Magic Breakfast
- Jessica Prestidge, Centre for Social Justice
- Iain Duncan Smith, MP
- Elijah Jennings, Further Education Alliance

Overview

The Education Secretary spoke about getting children back into school following the pandemic, and where the priorities were for the Government. Other panellists spoke about the need to join up services, the value of school breakfasts, finding the so-called 'ghost children', and the importance of confidence.

Secretary of State opening statement

Gillian Keegan, Education Secretary, said children accessing education was a unique challenge that the pandemic had left us, and the problems were the same throughout the G7. She said she knew it was not an equal picture throughout the country and for every child. It had left some damage, with the most disadvantaged and the most in need who were the ones most at risk. She said that disadvantaged students had fallen further behind, even though the Government were making key changes before the pandemic, which was reducing this inequality gap.

She said that the National Tutoring Programme had stabilised the numbers a little more, in terms of the inequality gap.

She highlighted that the challenge was getting children back to school. She said there was a group in Government to decide what actions could be taken to get those children back to school, including the Children's Commissioner and mental health practitioners. They had been trying to put illness into perspective now, with Chris Whitty, the Chief Medical Officer, sending out guidance to practitioners to explain to parents about illnesses and the importance of attending school.

She said that attendance hubs were important and it was also important for schools that were doing well to show other schools effectively how to do it.



She spoke about SEND children, who felt like they were behind and getting more behind. They needed action focusing on working with parents so that they could ensure parents understood that outcomes would be better if children were in school – she said that was the message they wanted to get out.

#### Joining up services

Elijah Jenning from the Further Education Alliance spoke about personal experiences of ADHD and mental health problems. He left school in year 9, spending a year off the books. He said his experiences showed that it was important to address the growing mental health crisis to stop children dropping out of school. He said that he had had an opportunity to re-engage with education but highlighted that not everyone had that same opportunity and motivation. He highlighted that those friends who had parents who didn't go through further education or didn't understand the UK education system were less likely to go on to A levels and professional qualifications.

He said that communication between the different services he needed to get back to education was limited. He wanted to see more prevention and an increased drive for de-escalation to prevent people dropping out. Preventing self-exclusion was important – better funding and join up of funding around families.

#### 'Ghost children' and the impact of the pandemic

Harriet Sergeant, journalist, highlighted the issues with the pandemic she discovered when doing a series of articles on 'ghost children'. Disadvantaged children were hit the hardest and were three times more likely to go missing if they were on free school meals.

She continued that others were “under the blanket” – these were children who were just about coping in family set ups, but when the pandemic hit those ways to cope for children were shut, for example youth centres. She said the pandemic had created two groups – those that were depressed or anxious so they remained in their rooms, and others that were aggressive, angry and bitter so they ended up on streets into crime. Schools played a major role in all of this – how their schools reacted to the pandemic really played a role. There was divergence between what teachers were doing within the same schools as well. She said there was evidence of a lack of motivation from their teachers, not marking work.

#### School breakfasts

Dr Lindsey MacDonald, CEO of Magic Breakfast, said that morning hunger for children had been an issue for decades. This had now been exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis and pandemic but was complicated and complex. The positive to magic breakfast was they knew what worked and therefore how to help further.

She said that there were so many different reasons why children were facing barriers to school and breakfast, including: the workday and the school day not lining up; travelling too far for school; and not getting enough food. She highlighted that the need for breakfast provision was very different and varied depending on the circumstances in the family.

It was important to have a soft start to the school day if they made it into school. She said that breakfast provision was proven to reduce those missing days of school. It also helped to engage parents with learning about food and the education their child was receiving.

She implored the Government to continue investing in breakfast, as there were more than 10,000 schools that would benefit from breakfast clubs, but only 2700 were being reached. This would need more investment.



## Barriers to school

Iain Duncan Smith MP said that it should be a combination of the state and parents that needed to help overcoming barriers. The problems existed at home for many of these children. He said there was an intergenerational failure in the education system, those parents without higher education found it more challenging helping with homework and therefore, their children were more likely to not go into higher education too.

He said that every one of the barriers to education was reflective in every area of policy. Family breakdown was a big problem with education, so it was important to identify those families, but this required the whole system to work together.

He concluded by saying that children were the least likely to suffer from covid and yet it had now impacted them most. He said it was a “terrible experiment”.

## Attendance Mentors

The chair dug into child absences, and said that attendance mentors was what the CSJ were calling for. She asked the Minister to share the findings from the attendance mentor pilot and rolling pilot more widely.

Keegan said they didn't have the evidence yet, but saw that engagement with the parent and the child together helped remove some barriers. She said that identifying the barrier and working to overcome it was the only way forward.

On the pandemic, she said that one of the first things DfE did was getting consistency with the technology throughout the school system and putting out guidance to support the rollout.

On attendance mentors, she said that pupil premium and recovery money were also helping to support children how they needed.

## Q&A

### Voluntary organisations and sport

In answer to a question from Street Games on the role of the voluntary sector, Dr MacDonald said the sector was important as it had the ability to innovate. However, they could only do that if they were properly funded and knew that the funding would be in place for a long time so that long term decisions could be made.

Duncan Smith said that for far too long, they thought sport was an add on rather than a key part of a curriculum. Sport was critical to the whole week for children, as sport taught you a lot about not succeeding. Sport was the best teacher of coping with triumph and disaster and how to muddle the way through that.

### Confidence

A member of the North East Chamber of Commerce said that a lack of confidence was the main aspect that came out of research. She asked how they could catch people up in confidence and if the way to do that was through schools and colleges.

Jenning said role models of success were important. Also, the promotion of tutoring and meeting people from a similar place in life to you were vital.

Keegan said she agreed. This was always the challenge of the school system, the disparities in confidence. Teachers did this by working with children one on one. All the other activities in school life helped confidence as well, which was why they were using the holidays and activities fund to instil vital confidence and invite those children back into the curriculum.

#### Nutritional education

A school Governor of a comprehensive school in Westminster asked about the importance of teaching parents to cook and including children in making nutritional meals, as many schools did not have the capacity to teach food technology.

Duncan Smith said there was a breakdown in the last 40 years in not handing down how to cook and make food. Boys and girls should be part of the process in schools to make food, as future families would require the tips.

#### Joining up Services

A member of the Fairer Education Alliance asked about better joining up public services to help with addiction, and whether this would help to get more services to support families. Duncan Smith said family hubs were the key to joined up services.

The Chair asked if school meals were a sticking plaster. Lynsey said it was, but it was a good sticking plaster. A lot of families did not have the equipment to make meals, so it gave equipment for proper meals to be made, increased nutritional value, and allowed children to try new food. Providing opportunities for food education was important, and having breakfast reduced obesity, and improved nutrition and health more widely.

## Powering Potential: The role of schools and teachers in tackling inequality

Onward and Teach First

11am, 2 October 2023

#### Panellists:

- Jess Lister, Associate Director, Public First
- Russell Hobby, CEO of Teach First
- Adam Hawksbee, Deputy Director, Onward (Chair)
- Nathan D'Laryea, Assistant Head Teacher, Loreto High School
- Baroness Barran, Minister for the School System and Student Finance

#### Overview

The panellists spoke about the reasons for inequality and the barriers to tackling these inequalities. They also spoke about mental health of students and the opportunities that would present themselves if there was a focus on teacher retention.

#### Three elements to tackling inequalities

Baroness Barran, Minister for the School System and Student Finance, said there were three elements to tackling inequalities in schools – curriculum, teaching and leadership.

On the curriculum, she said they had focused on phonics, which was at the heart of teaching children to read. This had been reflected in a big improvement in international comparative rating, up to fourth in 2021 for England, compared with eighth in 2016. She said the lowest performing children were showing the greatest improvement. Maths was similar, and they were learning from South East Asian countries. The curriculum focus was not just on the knowledge side, but also the skills side, with reforms, such as T levels extremely important in opening children and young people's eyes to other experiences, especially given the combination of classroom and work-based learning that they offered.

Secondly, it was about supporting the workforce. They had made major reforms in terms of initial teacher training and professional development. They were funding those subjects, like physics and maths, and areas with the levelling up premium meant early career teachers received a £3000 uplift for their first five years. She highlighted the National Tutoring Programme as well, which meant 1.3 million children now received a course, with almost half of these students on free school meals, and almost 28 percent of them SEND. This meant these had been well targeted.

On leadership, she said there had been variation in performance, with the top quartile of schools at least 25 percent points higher than the bottom quarter. She said this was not necessarily about differential resources, but actually about leadership quality. She said that strong families of schools in strong multi academy trusts showed their worth due to the difference seen.

She said other areas that would be important on narrowing inequality would be AI and how that would be used.

#### Reducing inequalities

Russell Hobby, CEO of Teach First, said that inequality was still very prevalent in the education system. Forty-one percent of those on free school meals received a good pass in English and maths, but this was at 69 percent for wealthier students. He said that those who had free school meals at school were five times more likely to not be in education, employment or training. He said this was a concern for the whole country as inequalities persisted into later life, especially in health outcomes. He continued that inequality also led to fragmentation, as if not everyone has a stake in the future, the need to push towards more extreme solutions would become real.

He said inequality creating outcomes was not a fact of life as there were exceptions, but it was about organising the system to achieve better equality.

He said that quality of teaching was a vital factor, as young people from disadvantage backgrounds benefited more from high quality teaching. It was important to get curriculum and phonics right, which meant that recent reforms had been incredibly important.

He said there were huge recruitment challenges which were risking this. It was hard to persuade people into the profession and to keep people in. He said that hybrid and flexible working and pay levels in other jobs, meant that schools were not competing with other jobs on the market.

He said that the numbers of pupil premium at some schools meant that some schools had a harder job to meet the same levels of attainment.

#### Mental health

Jess Lister, Associate Director at Public First, said that there were mental health challenges in schools, and that schools were having to play a role they weren't equipped to handle due to a lack of mental health support in the NHS. She said that the cost of living created more issues, with parents not understanding the value of schools and taking children out when they wanted.

#### Retention

Lister highlighted the retention issue, and that it was hard for parents to trust the school if there was a high turnover of teachers. This mattered as a lot of things that drove inequality was income and parents' educational experience. Schools were a tool to make a difference to future families, and could make a difference later in life and outcomes.

She said retention was a system level issue, not just about pay, but a wider system level system.

Nathan D'Laryea, Assistant Head Teacher at Loreto High School, said recruitment and retention was a problem. He suggested Teach First was an important step in the recruitment process.

He highlighted that sometimes problems inside and outside the classroom sometimes could not be separated. The narrative that would increase more people staying into teaching was the experience that teachers were having now. The main thing that teachers wanted was to feel heard and valued, and then other things would automatically lighten and there would be real enjoyment in the job. The best teachers were not in it for the money, but because they cared and wanted to address the inequality. They wanted to get back to where they were pre-pandemic.

#### Mental health provision in schools

The Chair, Adam Hawksbee, Deputy Director of Onward, said the language of mental health and CAMHS was getting into the general public vernacular. He asked the panelists to what extent schools should tackle the mental health crisis and how they could do this.

Hobby said the child and adolescent mental health service couldn't cope, and this was not just about funding but workforce numbers. He said they needed to balance the curriculum, sustaining the rigor and excellence, but with other ways for young people to excel, and recognise some of the creative subjects. He questioned whether as a system it was reaching diminishing returns on the pressure that was put on children.

Baroness Barran said children were coming into year 7 with an attainment too low, which was making them drop out of school and creating more mental health problems. There was also worry about those who attended school some days and not others. She said there need to be care taking, as not everyone could be put in the same mental health box.

#### Q&A

In response to a question on the power of AI in reducing inequalities, D'Laryea said that AI had been a conversation. There was a vast experience in the workforce, but when there was something new there was a need to upskill teachers and the policymakers needed to be wary of that. He said that AI hadn't been a focus as there were so many other areas to focus on.

Baroness Barran said they were thinking about AI a lot. There were many to use it, but the objective for them was about reducing inequality, in terms of economic disadvantage and SEND. That was their principal objective, and in terms of their role, they would be a market shaper if not a market maker. They had to understand the safety aspects of it as well as the opportunities. They hadn't had real transparency on the impact of these tools, so she couldn't promise anything yet. They wanted to

work with teachers and schools and leaders in the sector to test out other options and start at the low risk end of AI.

On a question about regional inequalities, especially with physics teachers, Baroness Barran said that

physics was the area of recruitment they were most worried about. There was a massive gender split in this, as well as a geographic split.

Lister said the big regional divides were when educational attainment jumped onto the back of other inequalities. Education had to be a big part of the levelling up agenda. Schools should be used as anchor institutions and in the way of multi-academy trusts to be part of a wider regional network, with universities too. That would mean that good graduates stayed in the region that linked back to the schools and benefitted the whole system.

On a question about Covid catch up, Hobby said the social construct had been broken, and the importance of schools were not thought about enough. If young people could see good employment opportunities, they would invest in their education more.

## NHS crisis – How can we improve Britain’s health service?

Hosted by: Institute Economic Affairs

Date and time: 2 October 2023, 4.30pm

Panellists:

- Matthew Lesh, Director of Public Policy and Communications at IEA (chair)
- Toby Brown, Senior Policy Lead at King’s Fund
- Dr Luke Evans, MP for Bosworth
- Dr Sandesh Guhane, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care
- Dr Kristian Niemietz, Head of Political Economy at IEA

Overview

The panellists discussed how the NHS could be improved and if it was possible to move to models that other countries were using successfully.

Working in the NHS

Dr Luke Evans, MP for Bosworth, said when he worked in the NHS as a junior doctor, he always asked why things were done the way they were, and he would often get told that he’s “too junior” or that they had “always done it that way”. He said he saw people struggling in the NHS and there wasn’t enough time to stop and improve the system apart from during the covid period. He said he thought the NHS was salvageable, but people needed to be given the responsibility to try and solve its problems.

How to fix the NHS

Dr Kristian Niemietz, Head of Political Economy at IEA, said he did not believe that the NHS could be fixed, it had been re-organised many times and if there was a way to fix it, it would have been found by now. There were systems nearby that outperformed the NHS such as the healthcare system in the Netherlands where everyone has private health insurance of a particular kind.

Health insurers could not discriminate based on any reason such as conditions or age and coupled with this, there was a system in place for those who could not afford the premiums. Consequently, poor people didn't get worse service than rich people and there was hardly any public or state-owned health system in the country. This showed that you could have a system that combined the best features of a public market with that of a private market, and the result was that it outperformed everyone else quite comfortably.

He said getting to this system in the UK would not be as disruptive a people thought as there were examples of countries such as the Czech Republic and Slovakia who had abandoned their public systems and moved to one like the Netherlands.

#### Reasons for the current crisis

Toby Brown, Senior Policy Lead at King's Fund, said the NHS had proven that it could deliver in the past with investment, funding and sustained political traction such as in the 2000s when it got waiting times from 18 months to 18 weeks, and 95% of people were seen in A&E within 4 hours. The current crisis was not a surprise and was a result of long-term policy failures such as lack of long-term capital investment in infrastructures, beds, and scanners after the financial crash. There were policy failures from a workforce point of view as the 100,000 vacancies in the NHS were known for about 10 years but not addressed. To fix it, he said outcomes were based on how much investment they received. Most countries try to improve things within the model they have due to transitions cost, culture shifts, complexity, and lack of competency. Brown said that the alternative was to take on long term issues like making health care attractive to work in and tackle the biggest risk factors to the population such as obesity, alcohol, and smoking.

#### Health care in Scotland

Dr Sandesh Gulhane, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care said the SNP ran the health service in Scotland and they were in total crisis with high numbers of people using drugs and drinking alcohol. He added that Scots were dying for no reason on long waiting lists and people were spending their life savings on basic cancer treatment. To fix things, a modern efficient local health service was needed, the number of managers in the NHS needed to be halved and made more accountable with a regulator. Also, he said the patient population needed to be taken along the journey by being given the tools needed to keep themselves healthy.

#### Discussion

Matthew Lesh, Director of Public Policy and Communications at IEA, threw Toby Brown's point about the reforms in the 2000's back to Dr Kristian Niemietz, who replied saying that Blair's reforms were similar to how you would start if you were to move towards a social insurance system. Real term spending in the Blair years went up by 7-8% every year which was not sustainable in a stagnant economy and would mean 100% of GDP is spent on healthcare at some point.

# Tackling intergenerational unfairness: how can we make the housing market work for all

Hosted by: ConservativeHome

Date and time: 2 October 2023 at 1:30pm

Panellists:

- William Atkinson, Assistant Editor for ConservativeHome (Chair)
- Sir Brandon Lewis, MP for Great Yarmouth
- Neil Jefferson, Managing Director, Home Builders Federation
- Rachelle Earwaker, Senior Economist for Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Overview

The panellists discussed the current state of the housing market and what interventions the Government needed to make to improve it for first time buyers.

The housing market

Sir Brandon Lewis, MP for Great Yarmouth began by saying that stability was needed at Ministerial and Secretary of State level before we would see improvements in the housing market. He said they needed to look at a range of things across the housing agenda and recognised that housing developers could only build so many houses a year, so other areas needed focus such as providing financial support for first time buyers.

Neil Jefferson, Managing Director, Home Builders Federation expressed similar concerns and said the housing market worked for some, but not everybody and home ownership had fallen significantly for young people, while it had increased for those over 65 who are retired. At HBF they had done work in this area and found that 72 per cent who responded to their survey were worried about the future of home ownership. Housing completions had fallen by 11 per cent and 60 local authorities had received the prompt to scale back on building houses.

Actions for the Government to take

Jefferson said the Government could take steps, such as tackling the housing supply by building more homes, 320,000 homes per year, and giving local planning authorities the resources they needed to resume building more houses. He said with inflation coming down, there could be good news ahead because the average deposit being paid by the first-time buyer was £42,000, which was too high. Jefferson said that this was the first time that the Government was not offering anything to help first time buyers therefore a targeted scheme was needed.

Private and social renters on low income

Rachelle Earwaker, Senior Economist for Joseph Rowntree Foundation said there was a need to focus on all tenures including private and social renters who made up 4 in 10 of every household in the country. She added that what people were paying in rent needed to be looked at in comparison to their income because the housing market was not working for low-income households in the UK. This was because a lot of people were paying over 40 per cent of their already low income on rent. The lack of investment in housing exacerbated the cost-of-living crisis because people needed to pay more on heating as their houses were not heat efficient. The social housing and home ownership



tenures needed to be looked at to grow and Government support for first time buyers needed to go to those who needed it, and not for those who were on the brink of buying already.

## Can the next Government afford the NHS

The Institute for Fiscal Studies and the Nuffield Trust

2 October 2023, 12.15pm.

Panellists:

- Neil O'Brien, Minister for Primary Care and Public Health;
- Paul Johnson, Director for Institute for Fiscal Studies;
- Thea Stein, Chief Executive of the Nuffield Trust;
- Rachel Sylvester, Journalist at The Times.

Overview

In this session, the panel discussed the Government's efforts to focus on prevention of illnesses as well as the efficiency of the NHS. The panel also discussed social care and community care settings.

Improvements in the NHS

Neil O'Brien, Minister for Primary Care and Public Health, said that it was worth noting some of the achievements made by this Government for the NHS. He cited the fact that infant mortality rates had improved as one such example, but noted there were also tremendous pressures on the NHS.

O'Brien said that the ageing population was driving up the number of GP appointments used. He said health costs escalated sharply with age. He said people wanted the NHS to do ever more and so to best equip the NHS, they were looking to improve prevention and improve efficiency in the health service.

Prevention

On prevention, O'Brien said that less people smoked than before. He said the Government had doubled excise duty on cigarettes, and rolled out other incentives to stop smoking, for example voucher incentives to quit smoking in pregnancy, and posting smokers free vapes.

O'Brien said if you tackled root causes, one could intervene at the mouth of the river and save a huge amount of money later on. On obesity, he said they were bringing in calorie labelling and the sugar tax. He added they were now bringing in new anti-obesity drugs and these were "potential game changes in the obesity crisis."

O'Brien said on secondary care, they were doing more checks in the community. He said they would increase the number of blood pressure checks undertaken in pharmacies and would use things such as the NHS app to encourage people to book winter vaccinations. O'Brien said they had an emphasis on convenience and making things hassle free for users of the NHS.



### Accountability and efficiency

O'Brien shared that they were rolling out electronic bed management, and this was all about getting the flow through hospital better. He said they were also trying to invest in capital to improve efficiency for example investing in BrainOmics, which he shared was an AI tool which gave people a quicker stroke diagnosis. He said they were using lots more automation and they were improving basic processes for example improving how they assisted outpatients, as well as not automatically inviting people to expensive follow ups with consultants that they did not need.

O'Brien said they were focused on new technologies, making the NHS hassle free, and improving overall accountability within the NHS.

### Convenience and productivity of the NHS

Thea Stein, Chief Executive of the Nuffield Trust, spoke to multi-morbidity and said that cost of living crisis and poverty was driving up ill health. She agreed they needed the NHS to be more accessible, convenient, and productive. She said that she would agree that investing more in big buildings and bringing the resources to community and primary services would deliver "more bang for their buck". Stein said that all European and international analysis showed that doing this would also cost more year on year and this was the case across the world – this was not a UK issue alone. Stein said all of what O'Brien said was correct, but they needed to continue to invest at a rate of three to four percent a year.

### Social care

Rachel Sylvester, Journalist at The Times, said that the short answer was no, they could not continue to afford the NHS. She said she did not think they could improve the NHS through continued efficiency savings or by applying more pressure to doctors.

Sylvester said they would never fix the NHS without fixing social care. She said there needed to be a mindset change as to what the public thought of health as being. She explained that the UK had a "sickness system" which needed to change to a healthcare system. On technology, she said that the NHS was behind the curve and numerous hospitals were still paper based.

### Hospitals versus community care

Sylvester said that hospitals were not always the best solutions. She said Denmark had closed half their hospitals and cut their beds by a fifth. She said they had to shift to community care instead of relying on hospitals.

On public health and obesity, Sylvester said the UK were due to start spending £10bn to deal with obesity. She said there was so much more which could and must be done.

### Capital investment

Sylvester said a capital investment in proper technology was required. On prediction and testing, she said that there were developments in this area which were exciting and there were lots of reasons for optimism.

### Q&A

One audience member asked about budgetary constraints and accountability in the NHS.

One audience member noted the emphasis on prevention. He said one of the advantages of the UK was that the patient did not have to do anything bureaucratically for example it was free at point of use. He asked about the potential charge for missing appointments also.

Another audience member asked why more was not being done to optimize current health care professionals for example why were optometrists not screening for potential life-threatening diseases, diabetes, or cancer.

O'Brien said they were enthused by the idea of doing more with optometrists.

On no shows, Sylvester said they were likely to hit the poorest and the sickest. She had looked into this issue and said that this may put some people off, but they would inevitably target the wrong people.

## Skills Britannia: Developing workforce capabilities to drive social mobility.

Onward and EY

9:45am, Monday 2 October 2023

Panellists:

- Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education
- Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester
- Jonathan Townsend, Chief Executive, The Prince's Trust,
- Siobhan Baillie MP, Member, Work and Pensions Committee, Member, Onward Advisory Board
- Hywel Ball, UK Chair and UK&I Managing Partner, EY
- Sebastian Payne, Director, Onward (Chair)

Overview

The panellists spoke about the need for focus on vocational systems as much as the focus on universities, and the need for greater guidance to students on how they could access them.

Opening Statement

The Chair, Sebastian Payne, Director of Onward, said they were going to focus on apprenticeships and vocational training in this panel.

Manchester Reforms

Andy Burnham, Mayor of Greater Manchester, said there was no difference between what the Minister said and what he would say. He said he came with a big offer, on a cross party basis, to fix technical education in a way they hadn't done before. If he won a next term, he would integrate technical education, as the fragmented landscape needed to become a system to connect young people to the opportunities.

He called the devolution deal a “trailblazer” for post-16 technical education. He said there was still snobbery in education in this country, which said that the university route was the thing that mattered – that was one of the problems he was finding. Secondly, Britain was a centralised country, but you could not fix technical education from a centralised system. There needed to be local input in a standardised approach because each area in the country had different needs.

He spoke about the Greater Manchester baccalaureate which he said was the answer to this. He said it would create two clear equal routes at 14. At the moment, two-thirds didn't go onto university and the same number didn't take the EBacc, but the EBacc was used to judge schools.

He said there was not enough direction given to young people who wanted an alternative, parallel route alongside university with local relevance to young people. At 14, he would introduce equivalent to the EBacc, the MBacc, which was the GCSEs that the employers in the region would want. It would start with core subjects at 16 then there would be seven gateways into the Greater Manchester economy.

This would give students visibility of T levels but with links to work placements and businesses in the area through a UCAS-style system called Greater Manchester Apprenticeships and Careers Service. This would give them a clear line of sight to their future. This would raise aspiration in the region, and would be a degree without debt.

#### Skills ladder

Rt Hon Robert Halfon MP, Minister for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, said they were undertaking a revolution in the country with apprenticeships and skills. He said the Swiss had an incredible education system, with 70 percent of students going on to do vocational education. He said there was a skills ladder of opportunity.

One side of the ladder was about place, privilege and prestige – in other words social justice. Devolution didn't mean devolving power to institutions but to people. He said the Lifelong Learning Environment, which had just gone through parliament, would enable every adult to borrow £37,000 to do short courses at a time of their own choosing, by 2025. This would also allow people to retrain, and give people a choice. They were also pushing degree apprenticeships to “earn while you learn”.

The other side of the ladder was strength in higher education and further education. The first rung on the ladder was careers. Other countries had great skills advice and they needed to improve that. They had brought in the Baker Clause which forced schools to have encounters with technical educators, and there was also a skills network going round the country.

The second rung of the ladder was quality qualifications. They had reformed the apprenticeships standards, to ensure these were designed by employers. In this way they were building a skills system that got people into skilled and well-paid work.

#### Maximising Opportunity

Hywel Ball, UK Chair and UK&I Managing Partner at EY, said they must maximize opportunities and the talent pool. In Manchester, they had created a neurodiversity centre of excellence to support those who had neurodiverse conditions.

He also spoke about the EY foundation which was a charitable organisation, and gave support to disadvantaged kids into a pathway into work. EY were also working with Manchester on the MBacc.

He said that lifelong training was something they had in mind all the time, and said that to do this, employer focus and collaboration was really important. Innovation was a long term game, which

meant they didn't actually know the skills they needed for the future, and therefore, didn't know what apprenticeships and vocational learning they would need either.

#### Complexities of the system

Siobhan Baillie MP, Member of the Work and Pensions Committee, and Member of the Onward Advisory Board, said the Government had moved mountains to get technical skills on the agenda. They had set it up so that young people could change jobs and retrain. They were never going to develop this workforce and help social mobility if they didn't remove the complexities of the system, however. She said it was too complicated at the moment, but ultimately it was as simple as pay them so they could earn and learn.

She said that the vast majority of employers were SMEs, but they had no capacity to deal with apprenticeship levy paperwork or similar. She wondered whether a new system, such as the MBacc, might overcomplicate the system instead of just using the same system countrywide. She concluded by saying that 60 percent of jobs could not work at home and that they needed childcare and hairdressers, and the like, and at the moment these were skewed in terms of what was valued in this country, but these were the skills the UK needed.

#### Social Mobility

Jonathan Townsend, Chief Executive of The Prince's Trust, focused on social mobility, and disadvantaged communities. He said that 800,000 young people were not in education, employment or training, which amounted to 12.5 percent of young people in this country. He said these young people couldn't be left behind.

He said progress had slowed since after the pandemic, in terms of young people in employment. He said there were inefficiencies and capacity issues when funding was devolved, particularly through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund which he said was a block to progress.

He said that apprenticeships were vital to the career system but had lost the focus for young people. The nature of the apprenticeship levy had focused on upskilling existing workers and providing high level training – this was important but couldn't happen at the expense of creating opportunities and pathways for young people. He said that 75 percent of apprenticeships should be for under 25s and 50 percent for new starters within the business. They wanted to use 10 percent of the levy to target reemployment programs.

#### Universities vs. vocational courses

The Chair asked if Tony Blair's 50 percent target for the number of students at university was wrong, or if there was just not enough focus on the other side.

Burnham said it was a bit of both. He said to make such a hard target was an issue as it had not been hit. He said it had, however, helped more people go to university. The real mistake was not having enough for the other 50 percent. The English Bacc entrenched it in his view, as these were the subjects were most favoured by the top universities.

He wanted to create simplicity not more complexity with the MBacc, the institutions could then fit into an employer driven system. He said the Government initiatives needed to knit into a system that was as clear to children as university was.

#### Disparities

The Chair asked how the UK could push the cultural divide and disparity between university and technical education.

The Minister said the purpose was to reduce this disparity. Degree apprenticeships increased prestige throughout the system.

They had done a huge amount of work for the traditional crafts, such as hairdressing and beauty, to reduce the regulatory burden. They had also increased funding for particularly frameworks, such as hospitality, and removing the cap for SMEs so they could have as many apprenticeships as possible. He said the apprenticeship levy funded other costs in the apprenticeship system which was why it was as it was.

Townsend said that they needed an amendment to the apprenticeship levy.

## Delivering the skills Britain needs – the role of modern universities

ConservativeHome in partnership with MillionPlus

2 October 2023, 10.30am.

Panellists:

- Gillian Keegan, Education Secretary;
- Graham Baldwin, VC of University of Central Lancashire;
- Naomi Clayton, Learning & Work Institute;
- William Atkinson, leader of the panel for ConservativeHome;
- John Cope, Conservative Councillor and policy director for UCAS

Overview

This session focused on skills and apprenticeships, with particular emphasis on the role which universities could play in closing the skills gap.

Opening remarks

Gillian Keegan, Education Secretary, said that business and education needed to meet to deliver on skills. She said there was no doubt that post-pandemic when you looked at the technological shifts ahead of them, AI for example, there would be a lot of pressure on people to get skills globally. She said if you looked at any industry that wanted to grow, they would say they needed to get the right skills to support their business.

Apprenticeship and skill reform

Keegan spoke to the two big reforms delivered by her government. The first complete reform she discussed was regarding school standards, for example reforms on training, the curriculum and the reform of technical education. She said a lot of people had tried these reforms and initiatives before this government, but these had largely failed.

Apprenticeship levy and T-Levels

Keegan said they had introduced the apprenticeship levy and built a completely new scheme from this levy. She said they had mapped with 5,000 employers how to ensure the right things were being taught in schools, which had led to T Levels and had also led to the Government introducing new skills bootcamps.

She said to be a science superpower, the UK would need to have more focus on stem and science degrees. She said they were now introducing the lifelong learning entitlement, so everyone in the country could access student loans and chunk it into different sections across various skills. She said that degree apprenticeships and apprenticeships standards were taken seriously by this government.

#### Skills agenda

Graham Baldwin, VC of University of Central Lancashire, said that the skills agenda was currently at the forefront of policy making in England. He said there was strong appetite for skills discussion and the Government was committed to expanding the pathways to skilling, and re-skilling, people throughout their lives. He said this provided an exciting opportunity. He said their role as modern universities was to deliver higher education which delivered not just on the academic but the vocational also. He said collaborations with business was something that was natural to universities.

#### Skills gap

Baldwin said that universities were crucial regional anchors to delivering the skilled workforce needed by UK industry. He said that the skills gap facing the UK was a major economic threat. He said closing these gaps required expanding skills and it was crucial to ensure modern universities provided flexible learning options to make this goal achievable for a wider group of learners.

Baldwin said skills education was not an alternative to universities but that unis must be seen as supporting the development of skills. He said modern universities possessed unmatched understanding of real world needs and could provide the support to deliver the skills needed. He said they had to create an economy which left no one behind.

#### Skills growth and levelling up

Naomi Clayton, Learning & Work Institute, said higher education was increasingly important to growth and levelling up. She said that they needed a diversity of routes for skills education at all ages, and she asked how they could widen the number of people who could use these routes. She said one in five apprentices under 19 came from the most deprived neighborhoods, but this was not the case when you looked at degree level apprenticeships, where one in eight came from the least deprived areas. This suggested higher levels of inequality in degree apprenticeships.

#### Lifelong learning

Clayton then spoke about the role of universities in supporting lifelong learning. She said that they needed a system which supported people to change careers and upskill throughout their lives. She said that the lifelong learning entitlement was a welcome move, but for many people, the idea of taking on more debt could be a barrier to accessing education and training. She said they needed to consider how they could effectively engage and target messaging at people of different ages. Clayton said they needed to consider their motivation for learning and the barriers they faced too. She said this meant working with employers and having lots of flexible learning opportunities. She said they needed to create ladders of opportunity.

#### Quiet revolution of educational changes

John Cope, Conservative Councillor and policy director for UCAS, said there had been a quiet revolution in regards to the changes which had happened in the education system. He said the UK had risen up every single ranking and they were the “best in the west” for literacy.

Cope said funding for apprenticeships had more than doubled and UCAS reports showed that half of people going to UCAS were interested in pursuing an apprenticeship. He said that the apprenticeship courses on offer were very diverse.

#### Funding for apprenticeships

Cope said that in delivering world class apprenticeships and through having a strong higher education system, they had managed to close the attainment gap between the most and least disadvantaged. He said that if on free schools meals, children’s chances were now better in school than in 2010.

Cope put forward three ideas. Firstly, he said that the money for apprenticeships was still not enough. He suggested they look at tax incentives for pursuing apprenticeships. Secondly, he said that in the breadth of curriculum, it was odd to narrow down the subjects studied at 16 and then 18. He said they should allow specialisation to happen a lot later. Finally, he said that there should be focus on adults for skills training, as there was a real conversation to have about employers continually investing in their staff.

#### University attendance

William Atkinson, leader of the panel for ConservativeHome, asked whether they had too many people going to universities, and if not, how they could adapt their courses to encourage people to go to universities and get skills.

Keegan said it was difficult to generalise. She said there were very few skilled careers that were not vocational or technical in nature, in some capacity. She said that it was not useful to have arbitrary targets, but they needed to make sure there were no rungs missing on the ladder for people to access a variety of opportunities.

## The Power of Football: Helping football clubs to continue delivering for northern communities

Hosts: ConservativeHome, English Football League and Northern Research Group

Date and Time: Monday 2 October, 9am

#### Panel

- Stuart Andrew, Sports Minister
- John Stevenson MP, Chair at Northern Research Group
- Rick Parry, Chairman at EFL
- Daisy Powell-Chandler, Director at Public First
- Angus Parsad-Wyatt, Chief Exec at ConHome (chair)

#### Overview



The panel discussed the importance of football clubs to their communities, particularly in the North of England. They also discussed better regulation for football.

#### Opening Remarks

John Stevenson MP, Chair at Northern Research Group said that football clubs were one of the last remaining community organizations that existed, along with universities and colleges. He welcomed the fan led review and said he hoped that the legislation on football regulation would be introduced in the Autumn. Stevenson said he wanted a sustainable football environment through better regulation.

Angus Parsad-Wyatt, Chief Exec at ConHome asked Stuart Andrew about the timetable for the upcoming legislation. Andrew said he could not give an exact date, but that he hoped it would be introduced soon. He said the opportunity for regulation had been in the hands of football for years, but now it was time for the Government to step in. He said he wanted financial regulation that was proportionate to clubs financial and league position. The wider goal was financial stability of the clubs, which the Government would achieve by owners and directors' tests, and requiring business plans to demonstrate clubs were prepared for financial shocks.

Rick Parry, Chairman at EFL spoke next and said he wanted to see clubs less reliant on owner funding. He said owners funding was fantastic, until it was withdrawn, and clubs were put under financial distress. He raised the example of Scunthorpe United, where fans recently had to bail out the club after owners funding was withdrawn. Parry also said he wanted a redistribution of finances between the Premier League and the Football League, which had been completely overshadowed financially by the former. To achieve these goals, he argued that the regulator should have statutory powers. Finally, he pleaded for the 'State of the Game' review to be published soon.

Daisy Powell-Chandler, Director at Public First spoke last and discussed the polling Public First had conducted on football. She said investing in local football clubs was more important for levelling up than investing in other local organisations, according to the public. The polling also showed that the public wanted to see more regulation and were supportive of introducing this to Football.

#### Discussion

Parsad-Wyatt asked Andrew if football regulation was the beginning of the Conservatives embrace of regulation and more state intervention. Andrew said this was a one-off that only applied to football, due to the unique circumstances.

Next Parry was asked about why the huge money being made by some football clubs was not being redistributed. He said self-interest was the reason, and that it would be very difficult to persuade 14 clubs in the Premier League to vote for greater financial regulation. He argued that some of those clubs had forgotten where they came from.

Stevenson was asked about the impact of local towns losing their football clubs. He said it would be huge and could even lead to his own 'demise' at the next election. He said the importance of the legislation was not just about regulation, but also about investment in lower league football clubs which desperately needed money to become sustainable.

Parsad-Wyatt asked Andrew about the 'bullying' of smaller clubs by bigger, richer clubs. Andrew said there were some clubs that were not happy about the introduction of regulation, but his message was that they had wasted the opportunity to self-regulate. He said these plans would not prevent clubs from going into administration, but that the regulator would be able to identify financial problems in clubs at a much earlier stage.

## Q&A

Jason McCartney, MP for Colne Valley, asked how the fit and proper persons test could ensure positive leadership of football clubs. Andrew said the fit and proper person tests would be backed up by statutory requirements, and Parry reiterated that there needed to be a reduction in dependence on owner funding.

Mark Eastwood, MP for Dewsbury, asked about safe standing. Parry said that he was open to the idea, but that safety needed to be the priority. He raised the problem of the capital costs that changing stadium seating would cause. Andrew agreed that safety must be the priority, but said he was open to introducing safe standing if evidence was supportive.

Powell-Chandler said polling suggested that many fans supported safer standing because of the presumption it would lead to lower costs. However, without that cost reduction people actually preferred to sit down.

Finally, Andrew was asked about the role of regulation in women's football. He said the Government were considering bringing it under the regulatory framework considered for the men's game, but that ultimately it was decided to stick to the recommendations in the fan-led review that the women's game should be governed differently.

## How can science and innovation support an ambitious plan for economic growth?

Hosts: Institute for Government and Imperial College London

Date and Time: Monday 2 October, 1:15pm

### Panel

- George Freeman, Minister for Science
- Katherine Bennett, CEO at High Value Manufacturing Catapult
- Professor Nigel Brandon, Dean of Faculty of Engineering at Imperial
- Giles Wilkes, Senior Fellow at IfG
- Gemma Tetlow, Chief Economist at IfG (chair)

### Overview

The panel discussed priorities for the Government in science and innovation, and what the main challenges facing the sector were.

### Opening Remarks

George Freeman, Minister for Science said the Government's mission was to shift the economic model towards research, innovation and science, away from the current services economy. He believed the Government had become more engaged with science in the last ten years and made huge strides in developing the sector. He said there was no such thing as the economy, instead

there were thousands of micro-economies. If they were allowed to grow, it would allow the wider economy to grow he argued.

On the challenges facing the sector, Freeman first argued was Whitehall's lack of ability to move at the same pace as the science sector. Second was the lack of skills. He said there was a disconnect between recruitment lists for jobs and the source of skills to meet them in many R&D clusters. Third was the lack of devolving more powers to R&D clusters. He said instead of dictating policy from London, more power should be given to areas such as Oxford, Cambridge and Warwick.

Professor Nigel Brandon, Dean of Faculty of Engineering at Imperial spoke next. He said the UK was lucky to have so many excellent research universities, but that he wanted to see more stability in Government and a greater longevity of policies and incentives offered to the sector. He believed the priorities for research universities should be greater investment, access to a pipeline of talent and more international collaboration with other institutions.

Katherine Bennett, CEO at High Value Manufacturing Catapult spoke next and praised the new emphasis on science and innovation from Government, including having five Ministers dedicated to this area. She listed the work that HVM Catapult were doing to promote R&D clusters, but said there was more work to be done.

Giles Wilkes, Senior Fellow at IfG spoke last and said catapult centres had been a very successful policy. He believed the most important concept for innovation was openness, and he was very pleased to see the UK rejoin Horizon. Wilkes argued that picking winners was needed, and we needed to choose where to focus attention and prioritise unlike countries such as the US which can cover more ground.

#### Discussion

Gemma Tetlow, Chief Economist at IfG (chair) asked Freeman how to get the balance between devolving powers and deciding at a national level. He said that over-centralisation was a huge source of the UK's problems, and that further devolution was one of the Government's main missions. He said that levelling up was about a fundamental shift from a 'London, southeast economy' to a 'UK-wide research, innovation economy'.

Freeman said there was a huge demand to invest in UK R&D, but that previous Government policy had made it harder to do this. He wanted to allow regional leaders to make decisions on investment, and to incentivize them to collaborate with each other. Wilkes said that competition for resources was a problem caused by devolution, and that he wanted to see solutions to prevent this. Brandon said that competition should not be concentrated between UK regions, but with other countries such as the US and China.

Tetlow asked Brandon about attracting more talent, and what universities were doing in this area.

Brandon said that the higher education sector was managing well for international recruitment, but that visas costs desperately needed to be reduced.

Freeman said that universities were subsidizing teaching with overseas students, which was not sustainable and that he wanted to address this funding gap. However, he said he supported more recruitment of international talent, and said the UK could not be a science superpower behind a visa paywall. He said he had been negotiating agreements with other EU countries, such as Germany, to facilitate greater science and research collaboration and travel between the countries.

#### Q&A

The first question was from Cancer Research UK about how scientists and researchers were failing to receive the equipment they needed due to trade barriers post-Brexit. Freeman said the Government were working to address this, particularly looking at how clinical trials had significantly reduced post-pandemic.

The second question was about modernizing the MHRA. Freeman said they were a huge asset, but that he wanted to work with the regulator to facilitate quicker access to patients' data which would attract more pharmaceutical organisations to invest in the UK.

## Breaking barriers: How can we unlock the UK's housing potential and deliver sustainable homes?

Conservative Home, NHBC

Sunday 1st October 2023

Panellists

- Rachel Maclean, Minister for Housing,
- Brian Berry, Chief Executive, Federation of Master Builders
- Henry Hill, Deputy Editor, Conservative Home
- Lewis Sidnick, Director of Corporate Affairs, NHBC
- Jennifer Daly, Chief Executive, Taylor Wimpey

Overview

The panellists discussed how to solve the housing crisis. They agreed that there was a serious challenge to be tackled, the Minister maintained that the Government were on track to hit their targets and had bold plans. Some panellists criticised the Government for causing instability in the sector. Questions were asked on nutrient neutrality, planning reform and energy regulations.

Opening Statements

Lewis Sidnick, Director of Corporate Affairs, NHBC, opened the event by saying that the housing sector was in great "trouble" but that this hadn't been recognised by the Government or wider society yet. He said that new builds were down about 42 percent for the last quarter compared to a year ago.

He said more Government support to get young people on the housing ladder would help by increasing demand. Furthermore, working on skills and apprenticeships would be vital to restore the sector's workforce, which was increasingly aging. Lastly, he said Europe was ahead of the UK when it came to modern methods of construction (MMC) and other innovations.

Jennifer Daly, Chief Executive, supported Sidnick's remarks about dropping demand. She spoke on planning and skills.

Daly said the planning profession in local authorities was under resourced, particularly by Government, and this was a core issue affecting the housing market. Secondly, she said the Government's policy changes and inconsistency, increased instability which also constricted housebuilders. She said the absence of a cohesive housing strategy was a major barrier.

She advocated for long-term thinking on skills. Again, she noted that a lack of consistency meant the sector could not properly invest in this.

Brian Berry, Chief Executive, Federation of Master Builders, said the rumour was that this year less than 100,000 homes would be built. He said a large part of the problem was that housing ministers only tended to be in the role for a year.

He said supporting SMEs was vital, particularly because it was local housebuilders which would teach "the next generation of housebuilders" rather than the larger contractors.

He said the population was growing rapidly and housebuilding was not keeping up. He said the planning system constricted housebuilding and needed urgent reform.

He echoed Daily's comments on the under resourcing of planning departments but added this affected SME housebuilders much more than larger companies.

Finally, he argued for a review of the greenbelt which was a concept not properly understood.

Rachel Maclean, Minister for Housing, said the Government understood the scale of the challenge their housebuilding targets posed, and the need for radical action.

She said it was important to note that the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill would have royal assent before the King's Speech in November and this would bring through some planning reforms.

She said hoped to see leasehold reform in the King's Speech.

In the Autumn Statement, she said it was "essential" that supply-side support would be brought through to help first time buyers.

Maclean said the Government would solve the "nutrient problem" of nutrient neutrality. She expressed regret that the Labour party had voted that amendment to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill down in the House of Lords.

She referenced the young liberals and said "we need to build more bloody houses" and highlighted London as a particularly problematic area where housebuilding was not sufficient and price pressures were particularly acute.

Q&A

Planning Reform

Henry Hill, Deputy Editor, Conservative Home, asked Maclean if truly comprehensive planning reform was the only real answer.

Maclean said over time new regulations had been added to the planning system to make it "labyrinthine" and true reform was needed. This would be a long process and couldn't be done overnight.

Nutrient Neutrality

An audience member asked about nutrient neutrality and what plans would prevent environmental damage.

Maclean said the framework was already prepared and there would be no environmental damage. She argued that new houses created almost no environmental pollution, it was outdated EU law which needed to be removed.

#### Housing Need

In response to another audience member who asked about the need to build new homes, Maclean said strong action was needed due to the coincidence of the pandemic, inflation, the war in Ukraine and “let’s face it, the mini-budget” all producing negative economic effects.

Daly said the “policy vacuum caused by reform after reform not progressing” was suppressing housebuilding and whilst external factors were impacting the short-term housebuilding volume, the medium term was “stark” due to Government policy.

#### Energy Regulations

An audience member asked about energy regulations in the private rented sector.

Maclean said she didn’t want private landlords to have excessive costs to improve their stock but that there was a need to make sure that homes were warm and efficient. She said the direction of travel was the same, but by imposing costs over a longer period and less steeply, the Government hoped to reduce pressure on homeowners.

Berry said it was essential to improve energy efficiency, for energy security and reducing fuel poverty. However, the “mixed messages from Government” had slowed what was always going to be a slow and complicated process.

## Does England’s education system have the workforce it needs?

ASCL, NAHT & NEU

18:00 01/10/2023

#### Panellists:

- Richard Bettsworth, Public Affairs Director, ASCL;;
- Emma Balchin, Co-chief executive, National Governments Association;
- John Andrews, Head of Analysis at the Education Policy Institute;
- Jeff Barton, General Secretary, ASCL;

#### Overview

The panellists were in agreement that recruitment and retention of teachers was “in crisis”. They discussed Government policies which may have exacerbated the situation and some potential solutions. Audience members asked questions on SEN staff, flexible working, and what the roadmap could be to tackle the issue.



## Summary

John Andrews, Head of Analysis, the Education Policy Institute, said the education system had bounced back from the pandemic but faced ongoing challenges in recruitment, pay and other areas and this was felt most keenly at further education colleges.

Recruitment hadn't kept pace with demand and DFE had failed across the board on this.

He said it was important to remember that it was not just teachers, also teaching assistants and other administrative roles also suffered from low salaries and retention.

Emma Balchin, Co-chief executive, National Governments Association (NGA), agreed with all of Andrews' points on struggling with recruitment. She said there was a growing issue with workload too for all of the NGA's clients.

Jeff Barton, General Secretary, ASCL, said Government did not understand the makeup or roles of the modern education workforce. He said the industry had to do more to educate Government on how the workforce had changed in recent years. He particularly highlighted that he did not believe any Ministers had a teaching assistant at their schools.

In terms of what the Government could do to improve the retention problems, he said the most important thing was pay. This was particularly important in the context of changes to working patterns in other areas of the economy, such as working from home where teaching would struggle to match this.

He criticised performance-related pay as being unworkable and said the Government were the only ones in favour of it.

Barton advocated for student-loan forgiveness for teachers as a way to boost recruitment as well as more integrated learning and development.

He commented that an unhelpful trend from the current government was centralisation. He accused the Government of thinking that they knew what being a teacher was much better than the teachers themselves.

## Q&A

### Flexible Working

A member of the audience asked about the gendered aspect of recruitment and how flexible working could be made more accessible in teaching.

Balchin said some school boards were experimenting and being innovative in this space but there was a substantial challenge to be overcome. Often, she said, it was about a cultural reluctance and parents' preferences for having just one teacher for their child, particularly at young ages.

Barton said that independent schools had said to him that their recruitment was often coming from state schools because of quality of life rather than pay. This was highlighted in the cases of student behaviour and flexibility.

### Roadmap

An audience member asked what the roadmap would look like for a better balance with learning and development and a new narrative about teaching as a whole.

Barton said communicating a different narrative was not the answer. Instead, it was important to accept there was a serious crisis at play and making concrete changes.

He said that the ASCL had told the Government to try piloting having 50 percent as the maximum teaching time for new teachers and to monitor what this would do to recruitment and retention.

Andrews said the research showed that professional development was one of the greatest ways to improve outcomes for students, much greater than other policies such as performance related pay. He added that schools which wanted to do more learning and development often didn't know where to look and better signposting was needed.

Balchin said a massive investment was needed. Whether that was in professional development, or in marketing and communications, there was a large investment needed.

#### Specialist Support Staff

A question was asked for the panel to discuss how recruitment issues were being manifested in the space of specialist staff for SEN children.

Balchin said SEN was more complicated than the rest of the sector. She said she believed that working with existing staff and upskilling them to be able to handle complex needs was a feasible approach.

Andrews said getting in specialist teachers and support staff was even harder than getting in less specialised teachers. He said his recent research had looked at how the funding algorithms for allocating funding to SEN teaching were outdated and not fit for purpose.

## Playing by the Rules: The Governance of English Football

ResPublica

Mon, 2 Oct 2023 10:30am

Panellists:

- Anna Firth MP (Con, Southend West);
- Rt Hon Stuart Andrew MP (Pudsey), Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport, Gambling and Civil Society, and Minister for Equalities;
- Dr Rakib Ehsan (report author, For Fans Too), Chair;
- Kevin Miles, Chief Executive, FSA;

Overview

Panelists discussed the future governance of English football, focusing on the recent White Paper and the Government's response to the consultation it. The conversation closely followed the experience of Southend United and its ownership. Issues covered included the distribution of finances throughout the football pyramid, the fitness of director and owners and the introduction of an independent regulator.





## White Paper

Anna Firth MP (Con, Southend West) said that fans needed a voice, and this report gave them that. She said that the club's fans wanted to thank ResPublica for their support in the White Paper. She added that the Paper pointed out that football was about so much more than the game.

Stuart Andrew MP (Pudsey), Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Sport, Gambling and Civil Society, and Minister for Equalities, said there were already over 90 clauses in the Bill and hoped to publish it very soon, and looking to have a shadow regulator to be brought in in the meantime, so it was ready to go as soon as the Bill was enacted.

Kevin Miles, Chief Executive, FSA, said the report made clear recommendations and as such this presented a huge opportunity for a reset of the way football was organised and financed.

## Place in the community

Despite languishing at the bottom of the National League, Firth said the club was a proud 170-year-old football club that should not be where it was now.

Firth said the club was now standing on the precipice of oblivion, with the club enduring 18 winding up notices in 5 years under the current owner. She said the club had faced multiple relegations, and had experienced the late filing of accounts. It had been hit with transfer embargoes and points deductions but had continued to draw an average of 6,000 fans in attendance.

On the club's place in the community, Firth told the meeting that fans built the stadium and donated it to the club, however this has resulted in them losing their independence as well as the ground.

Firth highlighted that the club was worth over £10m per year, delivering skills and education around the community whilst providing plenty of employment.

Andrew highlighted the economic impact of home games and the overflow that had on local businesses.

The Minister said football clubs were intrinsic to their communities. He said they did so much work in their communities and the hundreds of young people were a part of the organisation doing important activities.

During the pandemic, he noted, football clubs were very valuable resources to people who were vulnerable. When clubs get into trouble, he added, there was no wonder that the impact is felt so broadly across communities.

## Asks of the Government

Firth asked that the Government took note of one of the most active fanbases in the country when implementing its legislation. She highlighted that fans were not customers, but key stakeholders in football clubs. She added that fans had been considered a nuisance and a financial tap for too long.

She reiterated that football clubs were cultural assets, not businesses and without changes, football clubs would remain at the disposal of owners.

She called on the Government to give local authorities the power to protect local clubs from being used for financial gain. She also asked the Government to provide formal education and training to each club's nominated fans spokesperson.

Miles said the FSA could not see why EDI should not form part of the football regulator code. He said the regulator should also have oversight of the women's game, perhaps not immediately but capacity should be accounted for.

Miles urged the Government to include the legislation in the King's Speech with a pledge to act on it with urgency. He said that "every week we leave it, there is potential for a new disaster", and questioned 777's role with Everton Football Club.

Fairer distribution of finances

Anna Firth called for a fairer distribution of wealth from the Premier League downwards.

Miles said that the distribution of finances to lower leagues needs to be reset, too, to benefit the game as a whole rather than clubs' own interests.

Football Regulator

Andrew said the Government did not want the regulator to be too onerous for those that were at the bottom of the football pyramid. He said this was about bringing sustainability for the clubs from the top to bottom of the pyramid.

He said each club would be expected to submit a business plan for each year and their preparedness for any financial shocks. He said they would have to prove where their resources have come from, and the regulator will have the powers to obtain that information.

Fan engagement

Andrew said there should be meaningful engagement with fans. Whilst it would be very easy to say fans should have control over the day-to-day running, things like club history and stadium will be important for the fans to have engagement on and more realistic.

Miles said welcomed that in the Government response to the consultation on the white paper there was a firm commitment to fan engagement as part of the regulator.

## Maths for Growth: Why Maths Excellence is the key to British prosperity

Policy Exchange sponsored by Mathematics Education for Social Mobility and Excellence

5.30pm, 1 October 2023

Panellists:

- Nick Gibb, Schools Minister;
- David Thomas, CEO of MESME;
- Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner;
- Leora Cruddas, CEO of CST;
- Tom Chivers, science writer at the i;
- Iain Mansfield, director of research at Policy Exchange.



## Overview

This session focused on maths and numeracy literacy, with particular emphasis on building on math's education from primary school to secondary school, as well as maths education post-16.

### Background to maths changes

Nick Gibb, Schools Minister, said that the Conservatives were worried in 2005-10 about the UK's maths ranking internationally. He said that he and Michael Gove set out to find out why the UK was ranking poorly. He said that when discussing maths 11-18, they had to understand primary school maths and the issues which had stemmed from there. He cited the grid method and the chunking method as issues in primary school maths which secondary schools then had to address.

### Maths mastery

Gibb said on maths mastery, every child in every school would be taught maths in the same way and would cover all relevant maths topics. He said when they went around schools now, the children were much better at times tables than before. On TIMSS results, he said there had been significant improvement for year 5s but for year 9s this progress had plateaued.

Gibbs said there was an increase in rigor in the maths GCSE and A Level, but that this had better prepared people for their maths A Level. He said that they had set up an expert advisory group which would investigate a number of things. Firstly, they would look at what type of maths someone who focused on humanities would be taking up to 18, and how could they ensure they had the right number of teachers to teach maths to 18. He said that the changes made to maths were as important to those made to reading.

### Economic growth and GDP points

David Thomas, CEO of MESME, said that England was doing very well at maths and the ways maths had been taught had improved in recent years. He said that over the past decade they had seen that it was possible to make a significant change in education.

Thomas said England was squandering the talent of children, which was an individual and collective tragedy. He said on the collective tragedy, England needed economic growth to support the country. He said that the standard deviation increase in schools attainment was associated with another two points of GDP growth per annum. He said the opportunity here was real and it was big. He said when they looked at 11-year-olds that were top attainers in primary school, only half got a good grade at GCSE.

Thomas said they needed to look at secondary school classroom experience. He said when they moved from primary to secondary, children found maths less challenging and less enjoyable – these factors came as a pair. Thomas said they should also focus on school culture. Finally, they needed to challenge the anti-maths attitudes which were prevalent in the UK.

### Girls in maths education post-16

Rachel de Souza, Children's Commissioner, said that Nick Gibb was amazing on the maths programme and had done fantastic work on maths hubs.

De Souza said that in the Big Ask survey, conducted when she first took her post, many children stated that they wanted to have a great career. De Souza looked at the maths data and saw the large number of girls who did not continue maths post-16 which concerned her. She said this number was not where it should be. She said that girls did not take on this at A Level as they did not feel as

comfortable in maths or physics classrooms as there are fewer girls. Her call was for all children, but especially girls, to continue maths education past 16.

De Souza had been asking children this year if they wanted to continue maths post-16. She said they wanted maths to cope with their financial lives, mortgages, and the online world, but there was a push back on all pupils having to do maths to 18 at A Level. She emphasized that there should be a focus on primary maths improvement.

#### Maths in democracy

Tom Chivers, science writer at the i, said that it was important for democracy that people were good at maths. He said there was an expansion of the franchise in the nineteenth century and with this there was an increased need for literacy. Effectively, democracy could not be successful if people could not read in the nineteenth century. He said people now needed to understand numbers, for example crime figures and economic statistics, and society needed to investigate numbers and understand them, in order for democracy to function.

Chivers said that everyone felt that they were bad at maths, but this was not the case. He said that maths was really important for democracy and that the majority of people had the ability to understand maths concepts if the message was delivered correctly.

#### Tapestry of education

Leora Cruddas, CEO of CST, spoke from an implementation perspective.

Cruddas said maths was fundamentally important in the early years and could be used as a building block in the secondary years. She said that it was also the case that children's early mathematical knowledge was associated with their later educational attainment.

Cruddas emphasised the need to improve the teacher retention rates and called current staffing levels a crisis. She said excellent maths teaching required really good content knowledge, but also a knowledge of the way in which children actually learned maths. She said it was important for them to know how to teach maths effectively.

Cruddas said it was important to see the tapestry and not just the thread. She said they needed to create a tapestry of incredible education, and not just focus on the thread of maths to 18.

#### Maths in the future

Iain Mansfield, director of research at Policy Exchange, directed a question at Gibb. He asked where the minister thought efforts on maths should be directed to in the future.

Gibb said that this had been a challenge for a long time. He said one thing they asked the expert panel to do was to think of imaginative ways to encourage teachers to join the workforce for maths. He said they had created a levelling up premium. Gibb said policies like that should continue, or be enhanced, to encourage uptake of maths teaching.

#### Q & A

One audience member asked what they could do to prevent those who did not get good GCSE grades from dropping out of the system.

Cruddas said there was still work to do to stop children leaving the system without good grades. She said that they needed to build on maths during the course of their education.

On core maths, Thomas said that this was a useful thing for pupils to do. He said that core maths was a great example of showing that you could create a degree within the curriculum which delivered maths in an interesting way.

Chivers said that statistics and things like probability were topics close to his heart, and these topics were important to know to get by in the world, not just for educational gain.

Gibb said that maths to 18 was not a quick fix and would take time. He said that he was very optimistic about young people being able to get grade four or above in maths, but there was nothing to stop 100 percent of students getting a grade four or above.

One audience member asked about tutoring and the attainment gap, with particular reference to the north south divide.

Gibb said on tutoring, he was a big fan of this. He said tutoring was a particular help those children who fell behind or were from disadvantaged backgrounds. On the attainment gap around the country, he said this was the root of all educational reform around the country. He said they were closing the gap right across the country, before the pandemic, but he was confident that the reforms which were still in place would address the issues which developed from the pandemic.

## Is a Diagnostics Revolution the Key to Improving the NHS? Policy Exchange

Policy Exchange

2pm, 1 October 2023

Panellists:

- Dr Sean Phillips, Head of Health and Social Care, Policy Exchange (chair)
- Neil O'Brien, Health Minister
- Dr John Dean, Clinical Vice President, Royal College of Physicians
- Dr Susan Mitchell, Head of Policy, Alzheimer's Research UK
- Sarah Neville, Global Health Editor, Financial Times,

Overview

Panellists discussed how important diagnostics were to the health of patients and understanding how to treat them. They also addressed some of the challenges facing the area such as inequalities and putting more strain on the NHS.

Health inequalities

Neil O'Brien, Health Minister, began by saying that there had been a huge growth in diagnostics due to the decisions the Government made in SR21. O'Brien highlighted the challenge posed by health inequalities and said screening diagnostics would be used to tackle this issue.

John Dean, Clinical Vice President, Royal College of Physicians, said that health inequalities posed a huge barrier to people in deprived areas. He said these people were vulnerable and socially

excluded which stopped them from getting help and the approach taken with lung cancer screening was the way to go.

### Dementia

Susan Mitchell, Head of Policy, Alzheimer's Research UK, began by saying that they faced a diagnostic revolution in the dementia space which was exciting and gave people specific information on their condition rather than simply being told they had dementia which umbrellas many conditions.

She continued and said that currently one million people were living with dementia in the UK but only two thirds of those people got a diagnosis. She said Dementia attracted a lot of negative stigmas which stopped people coming forward, so diagnosis could help by bringing a lot of understanding to the diseases which it umbrellas and allow for future planning.

The first new treatments were coming through with the first one being approved in the US. This would be most suitable for early-stage diagnosis and the digital NHS check might be the way to go for this.

### Challenges

Dean said traditional pathways for diagnosis and treatment needed to change so early diagnostics and interpretations were made. He added that over testing and over treatment was something to be cautious about as this could affect a patient's well-being.

Dean said the issue of diagnostics could not be separated from the issue of workforce because a human was needed to interpret the diagnostic test for the patient. People who had left the NHS workforce was a massive problem that affected diagnosis and knowing how to retain them was essential.

She also spoke on the workforce issues for genomics which was where most of the promise on early diagnosis stemmed from because the technology allowed the NHS to switch their focus from reactive, to preventive healthcare. She said there were not enough clinical scientists needed to interpret and report on genomics data, an area which AI was not yet able to help on.

### Diagnostic equipment

Susan Neville, Global Health Editor, Financial Times, highlighted that the figures behind diagnostics were striking; between 1 in 4 and 1 in 3 people were waiting more than 6 weeks for cancer tests, which was higher than the operational standard that stated that, no more than 1% of patients should have waited this long. She added that infrastructure and laboratory capacity both of which, the UK built up very well during the pandemic had been scaled back now which was understandable but, needed to be thought about if the UK were to move towards a wider range of testing.

She said late diagnosis of cancer was a British disease which linked to where the UK sat on the league table for diagnostic equipment compared to other countries such as Turkey, Latvia and Russia in CT scanners, and on MRI scanners the UK were behind Lithuania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

# The UK as a Science and Technology Superpower – how can we stay ahead of the global crowd and help deliver growth, security and net zero for Britain?

Conservative Conference 2023 fringe: The UK as a Science and Technology Superpower – how can we stay ahead of the global crowd and help deliver growth, security and net zero for Britain?

Airbus

7pm, 1 October 2023

Panellists:

- Michelle Donelan, Culture Minister
- David TC Davies, Secretary of State for Wales

Overview

Panellists discussed skills and regulation, in relation to science and technology. They also addressed some of the difficulties in meeting net zero targets.

DSIT

Michelle Donelan, Culture Minister, started by saying that many people questioned why DSIT was created initially, but no one was questioning it now due to the great work they were doing on innovation and research.

She continued by saying it wouldn't be government that achieved research and development, but it would be academia. She said the Government did not know all the answers, so they had tried to bring in the best of minds such as the AI advisory board, and the secondment scheme they had started in their department so that there could be a collaboration with the industry.

Areas of focus

She emphasised that if the nation was to be successful and grow in technology, they must work with the industry. Donelan said that the three areas they were focusing on, were skills, scale up, and regulation. She added that the UK were fantastic at scale ups for startups, but they had a habit of hitting a ceiling which was something they needed to be better at.

Skills

She said when it came to skills, the UK had four of the top ten universities in the world but the UK needed to break the model of finishing education at 21 because people would have multiple jobs in their lives. Consequently, consistently upskilling needed to become the norm.

Regulation

Regulation could help businesses by giving them clarity and a framework to work in, so it needed to be fixed and stable. Also, the regulatory system needed to foster innovation by working together collaboratively and gave advice in the same way.

Net zero

David TC Davies, Secretary of State for Wales, started by thanking Airbus for all they were doing for the Welsh economy. He said Rishi Sunak made an important point regarding reaching net zero in a fashion that did not punish people who flew on planes or hit them with taxes. He said the UK could reach net zero if they encouraged people to do things differently, and not prevented them from doing things altogether.

## Zoning in on Growth: Driving prosperity through place-based strategies.

Onward and Durham University

1 October 2023, 15:45

Panellists:

- George Freeman MP, Science Minister
- Rain Newton-Smith, Chief Economist, CBI
- Adam Hawksbee, Deputy Director, Onward
- Dr Shaid Mahmood, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion), University of Durham
- Oriel Petry, Senior Vice President UK Public Affairs, Airbus

Overview

Panellists discussed the challenges around the regional growth and innovation agenda across the UK. They described the skills shortages and suggested ways in which the government could help boost investment and certain areas to focus on, in partnership with education institutions.

Regional growth and innovation

George Freeman MP, Science Minister, began the session by telling the audience that he thought the Brexit referendum was a "roar" from the public against the state of domestic politics, just as much as it was about European politics. He said people were upset about the focus on London and were tired of having to wait for the benefits to "trickle down".

On making the country a science superpower, he said this was a gateway to a 50-year cycle of growth in the UK. He said the only way to get out of the old cycle of boom and bust, there needed to be investment in the businesses of the future.

He suggested that the country would not succeed if they did not fundamentally change the way they view "place" in the context of R&D and innovation.

He said that to ensure private sector investment, the Government needed to nurture clusters all around the country and told the meeting that there were around 25 all over the country. He said that instead of national policy, the Government should look at what the individual clusters needed.



Freeman said that the Government needed to make it easier for those who were interested in investing money into the R&D economy and added that he and Dominic Johnson would be revealing measures for that at the upcoming Global Investment Summit.

He called for much stronger local leadership and added that they needed the data to investigate why places were not being strengthened in the way that the Government thought they should be.

Rain Newton-Smith, Chief Economist, CBI, outlined the economic context of regional growth and innovation. She said it was a critical time for the UK economy, reflecting on the stagnant growth. She said economic challenges, such as high inflation and skills shortages meant there would be a likely fall in real-terms incomes. Although, she said, inflation had likely peaked.

#### Pride

Freeman suggested that if the Government were serious about wanting the public to believe in the UK, there needed to be a new social contract.

Newton-Smith said that the businesses she had spoken to wanted the Government to be proud of the UK and this could be reflected in the strengths of the UK's regions and that included R&D and innovation.

Oriel Petry, Senior Vice President UK Public Affairs, Airbus, said that for Airbus, place-based growth was a source for great pride. She said the UK was a huge part of its worldwide success story and said that this year it had recruited its largest number of early careers people for the last ten years. She said none of it was accidental, noting that the wings of all of its aircraft were manufactured in the UK. She said the history and success of the company ran deep and it was local. She told the meeting that the pride it has in its history does need to be fostered and said the trick was using the long history of innovation and the people who drove the innovation. She said that history needed to be pointed and focused on the future.

#### Devolution

Newton-Smith said that all of the plans around growth and innovation could not be driven from central Government and suggested that devolution would help drive that, calling for data to be provided to the regions to help push the agenda in "places".

Newton-Smith called for devolution settlements to be rolled out to all the English regions that wanted them, allowing them to go deeper and work alongside mayoral combined authorities. She pointed to Andy Street in Birmingham and Ben Houchen who had worked alongside private companies to attract investment from the private sector. She told the meeting that Mayors could be real beacons from investment both in the UK and Globally as well.

#### Universities

Newton-Smith said the UK was lucky to have world-class universities in all regions of the UK and there needed to be a nurturing of those institutions from schools to colleges and universities. She welcomed the UK re-joining as an associate member of the Horizon Programme.

Dr Shaid Mahmood, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion), University of Durham, said that the University had recently adopted a twin-track approach to its role in the North-East of England. Firstly, the University of Durham was one of the world's leading research-intensive universities and had a vital role in working with businesses to deliver sector needs, both nationally and locally. Secondly, he said the university recognized its role as an anchor institution which meant that it had a key role in the local and regional community.

Mahmood added that he felt strongly that the university had a partnership role with other universities in enabling a global education system to ensure their local areas thrived. He suggested that this approach to local communities would ensure the country harnessed the potential of all its young people.

#### Securing future investment

Petry told the meeting that to ensure Airbus' close ties to certain areas were to continue, they relied on a close working relationship between private businesses and the Government. She gave the example of designing and manufacturing the "wings" of the future and suggested the Government needed to work with private businesses to ensure that the wings for net zero planes continued to be created in the UK. She said that international competition for local manufacturing was fierce and said the UK needed to face up to the fact that international competitors were pumping a lot of public money into the sectors that were going to be so critical for the Government's long-term science superpower ambitions which Airbus shared.

#### Investment Zones

She called for investment zones and greater latitude from the Government on how businesses decide to invest in things like the apprenticeship levies and said they needed the Government to drive sustainable aviation fuel legislation and investment in hydrogen technologies. She said they also needed the Government to think about its own procurement that recognized that in some markets like defense and space it had a make-or-break market force, which meant that the Government's plans needed to have an eye on the UK's long-term manufacturing capability.

She reflected on the Chancellor's roll out of investment zone policies, where place-based policies were at its heart. She said they could be a real route to leverage R&D, universities and help lock-in investment. She said the CBI had identified 96 areas of high economic output in the UK, which helped improve overall growth and productivity.

Dr Shaid Mahmood said investment zones provide an opportunity to work with clusters and local government to develop human and social capital and bolstering the business environment and fostering innovation.

#### Connectivity

Freeman said that connecting the North's cities, universities and innovation centers was a fundamental in its own right. He said that all the data showed that if you connected or reduced the cost of distance, you drive the supercluster.

## A vision for health: delivering for people with long term conditions

ConservativeHome in Partnership with British Heart Foundation, Stroke Association, and Asthma & Lung UK

Monday 2 October, 12pm

Panellists:

- William Atkinson, Assistant Editor, ConservativeHome (Chair)
- Lord James Bethell, former health minister & APHG member
- Juliet Bouverie, Chief Executive, Stoke Association
- Paul Bristow, MP for Peterborough
- Catherine Fowler, Trustee, Aortic Dissection Charitable Trust

## Overview

The panel spoke about how what has been attempted by the Government to help deliver for people with long term conditions and how much more needs to be done going forward compared to how European peers.

## Health interventions by the Government

Lord James Bethell, former health minister, started by saying that one of the good legacies from the pandemic was the consensus around the future of health. The Prevention White Paper and Disparities White Paper had massive momentum, but he suggested this had been reversed. Lord Bethell said the Major Conditions White paper was a “sad moment” that sunk the Disparities White Paper with it, even though it addressed issues such as workforce shortages and new treatments, it didn’t address early detection and public intervention. He continued saying that we had seen announcements on leaflets in cigarette packets, but this had been one of very little measures announced to tackle disparities or prevention. Lord Bethell said that the poor health of the population had an estimated cost of £20bn which would cost the party hard in the polls. He said the UK needed a U-turn in this area away from a focus on operation optimisation and more towards prevention, early diagnosis and reducing the burden on the taxpayer, and the NHS.

## Stroke, cardiac, and respiratory conditions

Juliet Bouverie, Chief Executive of the Stoke Association, said stroke was horribly prevalent, striking every five minutes. It resulted in mental health problems because of how hard the condition was to live with, and it cost the UK £26bn a year, which would grow to £75bn by 2035. The good news was that it was preventable, treatable, and recoverable if they got to hospital quickly. Bouverie said there were fantastic innovations in stroke treatment and care as 90 percent of hospitals had implemented AI to help with stroke consultant led brain images. However, she said the system was not geared up to implement what works now and there were shocking inequalities in terms of who could access these interventions. Bouverie expressed that the UK were way behind Germany, Portugal, US and Australia in accessibility and more political leadership was needed for stroke, cardiac and respiratory conditions. She added that they needed to respond to what patients say in terms of support for their needs and involving them in decision-making.

## Early intervention and pre-treatment

Paul Bristow, MP for Peterborough and member of the Health and Social Care Select Committee, opened by speaking about four typical people in his constituency; 1) being an over 60 with cardiovascular disease and diabetes who would probably develop dementia, 2) someone at a surgery who was Eastern European with a very physical job who smoked and drank, 3) a young person with asthma living in a home which was inadequate, possibly with a neurological condition and with parents on low income, and lastly, 4) someone with COPD who may not have worked since covid who might not work again. He said he met these people all the time and early intervention and pre-treatment would make a massive difference to these peoples’ lives. He added that data and transparency was needed to help these people along with technological innovations which was evident during covid, but not so much now.

## Q&A

William Atkinson asked what examples of best practise in the UK and worldwide should the UK try to emulate. Lord Bethell said there was no clear-cut country we should be like but there were countries to admire such as Japan, who had a good culture around food, which meant people lived longer. Countries like Korea had great innovations but there was not a specific example to follow.

# Building on the Budget: Can the Government deliver on its plans for childcare reform?

Early Education and Childcare Coalition

15:30, 1 October 2023

Panel:

- Sarah Ronan, director of Early Education and Childcare Coalition
- Tina McKenzie, FSB deputy chair of policy and advocacy – founding members of the coalition
- Purnima Tanuku, CEO of NDNA – founding members of the coalition
- Victoria Benson, CEO of Gingerbread – founding members of the coalition
- Philip Anderson, Strategic Director of External Affairs, National Children’s Bureau – founding members of the coalition

## Overview

The panel spoke about the provision of childcare and the need to improve provision for all children, including SEND and the poorest. There was also talk about making sure childcare providers could afford to stay open, and childcare staff could stay in the job.

## Video

The video spoke about the importance of early years and the first few years of a children’s lives in the adults they would become.

It spoke about the importance of pay for providers, and how they were moving onto other professions, as they felt undervalued. It spoke about the lack of funding given to childcare providers. The new childcare scheme in the Budget was likely to be underfunded and so would make childcare providers worse off.

There was also an issue with availability, and entrenching educational inequality, especially inequality in the sense of parents not going back to work. Childcare was where inequalities could be removed. The video spoke about how childcare exacerbated the problem of women not going back to work. This was because of the gender pay gap so women were usually the lower owners. If there was more high-quality childcare and more of a choice, more people would be back in work. The system was so broken and there was no choice.

There was mention of SEND children, and that there were no options for SEND provision sometimes. Most providers didn’t have the expertise to deal with SEND children, and so parents didn’t want to send them there. The final point was that, economically, childcare paid for itself over time.



## Closures

Purnima Tanuku, CEO of NDNA, said that since Covid the workforce was under a lot of pressure. The reason for more closures was because of better pay, less stress and better conditions elsewhere. Some closures were linked to funding and others were linked to not having qualified staff.

Sarah Ronan, director of Early Education and Childcare Coalition, the chair, said that workforce challenges were likely to mean that there would be minimal uplift in availability of places. She asked about workforce challenges and the importance of supporting businesses.

## Tax rates and the Budget

Tina McKenzie, FSB deputy chair of policy and advocacy, said the Budget was exciting when the Government mentioned childcare. However, with the detail and the context of the economy, they were less excited. Availability of labour was pressuring small and medium sized businesses. 97 percent of those who worked in the sector were women, but they needed childcare too. There were 1.7 million people who wanted to increase their hours, which would add £10bn to the UK economy, but they couldn't due to the availability or cost of childcare.

She said that the Government had offered 38 weeks from nine months, but most parents worked 52 weeks so this didn't add up. Inflation was high, it was the highest tax environment in decades, and England had to pay business rates if they were a childcare provider, therefore, no matter how much they wanted to keep it open, they couldn't.

## Putting children first

The chair said that there were omissions from the budget, and there was no mention of children. She highlighted that this was one of the most important professions in the economy. She asked what the panelists' concerns were with not mentioning children and how to put children at the heart of the problem when so much focus on parental employment.

Philip Anderson, Strategic Director of External Affairs at the National Children's Bureau, said that so much of the narrative was economic, but quality was so important. There was a recruitment drive, but also they needed a workforce strategy that looked at retention and qualification. At the NCB, they thought about all children, and if the Government wanted to change inequality, there was no better place to start than early years.

On SEND, he said it was transformational to identify these needs early, and could be very detrimental if they were not found. They needed to think about all children, not just the most economically valuable parents.

## Single parents

The chair spoke about the fact parents didn't want to relax ratios. They didn't just want cheap childcare, but high-quality early education experiences. Workforce participation was a key benefit of affordable childcare and universal credit reforms in the Budget were welcomed, but they needed to think about the childcare element was treated and the amount and way in which it's paid.

Benson said she worked with single parent families and 90 percent of single parents would be on universal credit. Prior to the budget, many had to pay the upfront costs before universal credit was paid, but this had changed. She said it was also good news that the childcare cap increased.

Other changes were not so good – increased requirements on single parents to meet work coaches and work more hours. Under employment was a real issue for single parents – single parents wanted to work, but by increasing these conditions parents wouldn't have the choice.

Future policy

The Chair said that the Budget had given an extra £4bn for the sector. She said that 42 percent of respondents to their survey had said that childcare would be a big factor in their vote for the next election. This had similar numbers for those who didn't have children.

She said it was specifically about affordable available childcare – the question was, how to work 30 hours if the childcare isn't available to enable you to do so.

She was glad it was on the agenda, but asked what else was good and what they would like to see in Autumn Statement and the manifestos.

McKenzie said they were calling for exemption for business rates for childcare providers. They were looking at VAT thresholds, and tax measures that could support small businesses providing childcare, as well as corporation tax for the smallest businesses to allow more people into the labour market which helped the childcare providers. When you looked at Nordic countries it just made sense. There were also social justice issues and she questioned why 38 weeks not 48 weeks of cover. She said that higher wages were needed so needed to pay these companies more.

The Chair said they didn't ask primary and secondary schools to pay business rates.

Tanuku agreed with the business rates discussion and business rates were based on area of floor and each child needed a certain amount of space. People didn't appreciate the importance of early education and the fact that these providers were educators due to the way that the brain was developing at that age. There was a lack of parity in funding with primary school funding. She also said childcare providers were getting about a third of the money per child, than dog walkers got per dog.

Benson said free childcare didn't cover those who wanted to be in educational training, so parents were stuck in low paid jobs. She welcomed increases in the cap, but it was not enough, especially in expensive areas such as London it would cover 55 percent of the costs of nursery. Many parents must stop work before the summer holidays and restart afterwards, so the Government needed to look at provision of childcare. There also needed to be an increase in social security and increase in social housing allowance – there was a gap between this and rent and they had to move away from family support and childcare in place for their children.

The Chair asked Anderson what it looked like to put children first.

Anderson said they amplified the voice of all children. They supported businesses rates but wanted to bring this back to a fundamental bond. This did not run counter to the economic argument, but the Government were not going to fulfil its policy objectives in this area, and they wanted to see them listening and responding and do that extra bit in the autumn budget. They needed a comprehensive workforce strategy. Parties needed to get serious about child poverty and they could not transform outcomes unless this happened.

# Turbo charging the next generation: How enrichment & education can spearhead tomorrow's workforce

Foundation for Education Development (FED) and the Duke of Edinburgh's Award

Monday 2 October, 11am

Panel:

- Mims Davies, Minister for Social Mobility, Youth and Progression
- Ruth Marvel, CEO at Duke of Edinburgh's Award
- Dr Rania Marandos, Chair of the FED (chair)
- Shaun Odili, Member of the FED Learners Council

Overview

The panel discussed improving skills education and opportunities for young people, focusing on extra-curricular activities and gaining experience beyond academic qualifications.

Opening Remarks

Rania Marandos, chair of the Foundation for Education Development (FED), asked Shaun Odili what he had learned from his experiences going through the Duke of Edinburgh award.

Odili, also a member of the FED Learners Council, said that the confidence and skills he had gained were more important than any formal qualification. He said it would be a disservice to young people to not include skills development in the curriculum, and that if skills were treated at the same level of grades it would make a huge positive difference.

Youth Minister Mims Davies said the Government was committed to supporting young people, and that building confidence to overcome barriers was a huge part of this. She said the youth offer for inactive claimants was successfully capturing more young people who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). The Minister said that Level 1 and Level 2 maths or English were so important to getting young people into employment and better opportunities, and that it was lack of these two skills that led many pupils down a negative pathway in life.

She said she wanted to challenge the narrative of going to university and give young people more options and choices in their career rather than specialising in one area. The Minister said that employers had a bigger part to play and wanted to see more engagement from them in developing young people's careers.

Ruth Marvel, CEO of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, said experiential education was overlooked in comparison to other forms of education, and the academic curriculum was so focused that it prevented young people from gaining broader experiences. She said that private education offered enrichment opportunities that were lacking in the state sector and lamented the decline in extra-curricular activities in state schools that had not been brought back post-pandemic. She argued that the solution was in front of us – and that the sector needed to prioritise and invest in a broader range of skills education, and that skills needed to be treated equally to academic qualifications.

Discussion

Marandos asked what could be done to be address the million people who were currently NEET.

Odili argued that there needed to be more engagement with young people who are left behind by the education system to find out why. Minister Davies agreed, and argued the network of youth hubs being created by the DWP was doing great work on this.

Marvel said that schools needed to be an attractive place for young people to encourage them to attend. She believed the sector was failing on this front, with record levels of school non-attendance post-pandemic.

#### Q&A

The first question was about greater co-operation between organisations in the sector, and at the top of Government between the DWP and DfE.

The Minister agreed that there needed to be greater co-operation between Government departments, but she said she was working on the National Youth Guarantee with Education Minister Robert Halfon and was proud of the work being done there. She went on to say that she was frustrated with some thinking in Government, and that she wanted more focus on improving outcomes for young people rather than just expanding their number of options with no longer-term thinking.

Marvel said there was a lack of connection on youth provision between schools and local community organisations, and that she wanted to see schools and colleges play a greater role in identifying young people at risk of dropping out and making sure they have access to extra-curricular activities.

The last question was on the plan to capture young people who had already left education. The Minister said that youth hubs are there for those young people, and that she wanted to empower youth hubs to take decisions locally rather than making centralized decisions from Whitehall.

## Hire, train, retain: future proofing the NHS workforce

The Health and Care Forum in partnership with Roche and UCB

Monday 2 October, 10:15

#### Panellists:

- Paru Naik, Health Professional Programme Director, Multiple Sclerosis Trusts (Chair)
- Elliot Colburn, MP for Carshalton
- Adam Sampson, Chief Executive, Association of Optometrists
- Ann-Louise Ward, Chief Operating Officer, Maggies
- James White, Head of National Influencing, Alzheimer's Society
- Dr Sandesh Gulhane MSP, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care

#### Overview

The panellists spoke about the main challenges the NHS faced concerning its workforce which included insight into why employees are unhappy, why they are leaving and how to improve this. The issue of Dementia and how it put added pressure on the NHS was also discussed.

Challenges to overcome in the NHS workforce and working environment



Adam Sampson, Chief Executive of the Association of Optometrists, began by saying that they did not have a workforce problem in optometry and the majority of people had simple conditions which were easily dealt with. Sampson continued saying that across the sector, there was a more profound challenge they needed to focus on, which was stopping people from leaving the NHS over the focus of new recruitment.

Ann-Louise Ward, Chief Operating Officer for Maggies, echoed this and said it was about creating a happy workforce that stayed as people were coming in for the short term, and then either went to a different career or country. She added that pay conditions can be changed but if you felt undervalued in your workplace you won't stay. Ward said there had been a lack of investment in the NHS infrastructure which meant no place to eat, rest or do paperwork which would not be acceptable in other working environments and has added to the mood of feeling undervalued. Employees with standard resources were much happier because they spent less time worrying about these things and more time on their job.

Dr Sandesh Gulhane MSP, Shadow Cabinet Secretary for Health and Social Care, expressed that the issue in Scotland was that there was a lack of joined up thinking in between the people being trained and the people already in the workforce. He said that training needed to happen locally so that people were retained locally. Gulhane revealed that a lot of people were leaving Scotland to go to other countries because they can't get into medical school or Scottish universities, which narrowed the pool of talent. He added that a change of culture was needed such as having hot food at nighttime and staff being felt like they were cared for. Gulhane also said that they need to ensure that management in hospital were not in charge of health care and a regulator for managers was needed for accountability.

#### Dementia and the NHS

James White, Head of National Influencing for Alzheimer's Society, explained how they funded research and open campaigns for change. He said people with dementia relied heavily on health services as they ended up in hospitals for avoidable reasons and stayed in there longer than necessary due to lack of care resources. Additionally, a quarter of NHS beds were occupied by people with dementia. White said that political short termism was a challenge and lack of commitment from politicians added to this. White said that there was no social care workforce plan which was needed and had to extend beyond the NHS because capacity across both sectors needed to increase otherwise, people with dementia would not have their needs met.

#### Q&A

Paru Naik asked what could be done to address the issues spoken about.

Sampson said the aging population was a serious problem and correlates with eyesight issues. The current presumption was that everything was managed fine in secondary care, but there was an issue of making use of the skills of the appropriate workers. Sampson said that none of the structures in the DHSC apply to social care, which needed to be looked at so that joined training and workforce planning was across the entire range of HSC, and not just the NHS.

Ward said the UK had a lot of people in health care doing the wrong things and they had stopped listening to clinicians. She said when people left the NHS, there was a loss of experience as they were replaced with juniors who did not have the intuition and same level of judgment as their predecessors. People didn't have an appetite for change because they were struggling with their working environment and mental health.

# What should be in Conservative manifesto for schools and teachers?

NASUWT – The Teachers' Union

1pm, 1 October 2023

Panel:

- Rosemary Carabine, National President for NASUWT – The Teachers' Union
- Patrick Roach, General Secretary of NASUWT – The Teachers' Union
- Sinead Mc Brearty, Chief Executive Officer at Education Support

Overview

This session focused on what the Conservative manifesto should include for schools and teachers. Panel members discussed staff retention, staff morale, how the workforce can support children, and the creation of a new deal for teachers. Gillian Keegan, Secretary of State for Education, was unable to attend.

Efficiency of schooling and education systems

Rosemary Carabine, National President for NASUWT, said that opportunity was diminished without efficient schooling and education systems.

Sinead Mc Brearty, Chief Executive Officer at Education Support, said she had three objectives to bring forward today. Firstly, exploring the issue of the critical role played by the teaching workforce for each child. Secondly, she wanted to discuss enabling the workforce to fulfil its mission of supporting children. Finally, she wanted to discuss better support for children in addressing issues in the education system.

Health of the workforce

Mc Brearty stated that, as an organisation, they supported teachers and conducted research into the health and wellbeing of the workforce. They said they had produced a lot of research over the last 18 months which concerned the health of the workforce.

Retention crisis

Mc Brearty wanted three main contributions for the manifesto. Firstly, she wanted to address the retention crisis. She said they had produced the teacher wellbeing index, which found there had been a big bump in attrition, and teachers are unhappy and want to leave the profession. She said they had put together the teacher retention commission, and from this they had heard about the high workload, the home-life balance, external services not being able to deal effectively deal with public services, as well as poverty and material need appearing as issues in their classroom.

Regarding material need, she said that children were not being fed and clothed efficiently to learn. She said that teachers wanted to make a difference to children and young people and there was a high degree of purpose in this role, but it was deeply demoralising to not be able to do this role efficiently.

Job satisfaction

Mc Brearty said that one thing to commit to was to improve the job satisfaction of teachers and school leaders. She said they did not need to fear prioritising the adults in this setting. She said they needed to plot a course away from this retention crisis, and teachers should not be put off because it was an unattractive environment to work in.

#### Resource bargaining

Mc Brearty referred to resource bargaining between government and schools. She said the government couldn't heap additional requirements on schools, but that they needed to help with resourcing. She said on the issue of persistent absence, there was not enough in place to support the education system to keep kids in school. She said they needed to rectify this.

Mc Brearty said that education concerned itself with creating opportunity for people, but if they were underfunded and under-supported, there was a material lack, so the children could not learn. She said they needed to aim high on this and they need to be brave and bold. Mc Brearty said they needed to invest real cash into the system and ensure teacher training delivered the right supply of teachers, to give educators professional time and professional development.

#### Culture and accountability of the system

Mc Brearty said there were low levels of trust in the education system. She said teachers felt scapegoated. To address this, they needed to look at the accountability system in its entirety. She said they needed to overhaul the accountability system, and to make teaching more than a military style of duty.

#### Succession of education secretaries

Patrick Roach, general-secretary of NASUWT, said there was still work to do for teachers. He thanked the teachers and said that teachers loved teaching, but that there was something else impacting morale in the profession.

Roach noted the succession of secretaries of state: six since 2019/20. He said that as a result of that succession, it was important to have good leadership and to have good leadership on behalf of their schools. He said that it was important that secretaries of state that held office should engage with teachers and education. He said that there had been some good ideas in the last few years, such as ensuring all schools and academies worked together but as soon as the white paper hit, they moved onto the next education secretary.

#### Gillian Keegan

Roach said he knew Keegan was anxious for praise, and he would have praised her slightly but there was an argument that she could also be doing better. He asked if they should be thanking ministers and Keegan, and queried what had been achieved so far. He cited the Government failing to meet the teacher training targets, a workload crisis which had a bad impact on teacher wellbeing, national industrial disputes which were still ongoing, and it was not a good place for anyone to be in. He said two-thirds of teachers were seriously considering quitting the teaching industry for good. He said that they had to learn some lessons from what was being exhibited in the education system.

#### Extensive working hours and teacher wastage

Roach said that whatever they did for education – whether it was improving maths education or something else – they couldn't do it without great and committed teachers. He noted the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) had found that for every six teachers who left the profession prematurely, they had to replace them with 10 more. He said that if they wanted to make

the best use of taxpayer funding, they had to address teacher wastage, and pay for training new ones to cover the cracks in the profession.

Roach called to address the workload and extensive working hours. He asked who could criticise the idea of giving teachers greater agency over their work and working time.

Roach said he wanted the electorate to be able to choose a future government which put education and teachers at the very top of its list of priorities. He said that as a union they put teachers first, so that teachers could put the children first.

Roach's priorities for government

Roach firstly requested to secure a better deal for children and young people. He said that there were indications that the UK was lagging behind the likes of France, Denmark and Germany in terms of how children themselves rated their quality of wellbeing. Secondly, they needed a join up between what was happening in schools and wider services for children, young people and families. He said they were beginning to hear more about supporting children than they did under 2010 leadership, but in the context of austerity, services for young people were being stripped to the bone. He said this could not continue and it did not work. He said he was intrigued about the 14-19 phase being discussed by the Government. He said he wanted to see teachers who could enthuse children and young people. He said if they had demoralised teachers, this would impact children's education.

Roach asked to fund schools properly. He said that children funding, both to schools and external agencies, needed to be properly resourced.

Roach said they wanted to give a new deal to teachers. He said he would probably thank Keegan for having some engagement, limited though it may have been, as her predecessors did not engage with them previously. He said unions were not the problem and that they were helping to address the crisis. It was important for Government to be working with the professions, and the representatives of the profession such as trade unions. He said that education and teaching should be put at the centre of government.

Carabine said that funding was the primary issue for teachers right now, but they continued teaching as they love it.

Q&A

A headteacher from Hertfordshire said he was concerned by balancing the mental health needs of the students to those of the staff as, whilst they had to support students, he had a duty of care to teachers and support staff. He said Hertfordshire County Council had said that for kids who refused to go to school, they were going to buy "robotic looking devices" to transmit live lessons to children at home. Whilst he wanted to help students, many of whom were suffering, he was concerned with the extra workload that would go to his staff. He said the lessons would have to be adapted, and it was an extra thing to add onto the teachers.

Another audience member said he was a governor in a school in north Leeds, and he was struck by children attendance rates. He asked what the Government could do to improve attendance in schooling.

A representative from Conservatives for Women said they had heard of teachers who either had to self-censor or were being sacked as they refused to use preferred pronouns for children who identified as the opposite gender.

Mc Brearty said that the question regarding gender and pronouns had not come up in any of their focus sessions with teachers so she could not comment on this.

Mc Brearty said that AI and digital technology was assumed to fix things that were broken, but were things used alongside alternative solutions and AI was not the solution itself.

Mc Brearty said that there was a lot more attention on persistent absence, and that it was fair to say the social contract had broken down and that was a legacy from Covid. She said the material need mattered here. She said children felt they did not have the right materials, and they did not want to go to school as a result of this. She said that this generation of pupils had been through a pandemic, austerity and the stripping out of resources in schools, and there was just not enough support in the state schools to help that.

Roach said that on the use of tech and AI to try to plug the gaps, they had to deal with the causes of this. He said a laptop and a camera being in the classroom, hoping the child was at the other end of the room and was doing what they were asked to do, was a big ask. He said he did not envy teachers who were being asked to do that, but the fault was AI was being seen as the solution to a much deeper problem. He said the issue was persistent absence from school and sticking a camera in the room did not solve the issue. He said there were big issues around safeguarding on this as well.

He said they needed to look at the child holistically, including housing services, or social services, but this information was not being shared between external agencies and schools. He said in 2010 a system that was in its infancy to connect schools and wider services for young people and families was scrapped as it was deemed too expensive. He said they do need to invest in infrastructure and kids were not going to be safe in school or in their communities without the right services.

Roach said that on preferred pronouns, it was interesting to hear teachers were being subject to disciplinary procedures. He said nowhere had teachers been told what to do in this particular space. He said that there should have been consultative guidance delivered six months ago and that this guidance needed to be delivered with some urgency.

One audience member asked about multi-academy trusts and their experience of this.

Another audience member asked how they can remove left-wing politics from the school. He said that left wing agendas were ingrained in the curriculum across different subjects.

Another audience member asked should they be elevating the Ofsted inspection of SEND and safeguarding.

Another audience member who worked for Magic Breakfast said that children who had eaten breakfast made a positive impact on classroom behaviour, so he asked whether breakfast should be looked at by the government to address children's behaviour and teacher retention.

Roach agreed with breakfast provision and said free lunches were very important. He said they were seeing the impact of the cost-of-living crisis, and they had to make sure that schooling was accessible to every child.

On the expansion of multi-academy trusts, he said that their expansion had mixed results for teacher workload. He said that they trusted teacher professionalism and it did not matter if they were in multi-academy trusts, free schools or independent schools – as long as teachers had the right working conditions and environment, then teaching and learning would flourish.

On the left-wing bias in schools, Roach said that it was not something he recognised.

On Ofsted and SEND, Roach said that this was a really interesting point, and he has a lot of sympathy regarding this. He said that the situation was parlous on SEND provision and the resourcing was not there for SEND. He said it was not just about assessing capacity of an individual school, but the ability of schools to support SEND provision. He said they were asking schools to do an awful lot with very little. He said they did also need to elevate safeguarding. He said kids who required SEND provision were in the most precarious position.

Mc Brearty said on multi-academy trusts, her organisation did a lot of work on the education workforce. She said that eight out of ten people in the sector experience serious stress. She said they do look at specific schools and type of school from time to time, e.g. does working in a multi-academy trust make a difference, but it was more the leadership of the school. She said there were circumstances where school leaders were absorbed into multi academy trusts, and this was not handled well.

On the left-wing workforce, Mc Brearty said that this was not as big an issue as the audience member thought.

To the point on SEND, she said she would not start with inspection. She said SEND provision would be marked inadequate and they already knew that. She said that it pains her how this would play out. She said that they needed a strategy to assist young people and children.

On the free school meals, Mc Brearty supported this and said the welfare cost later down the line without pupil premium was going to be very large, and the problems as a result of this would not melt away.



## About Dods Political Intelligence

We provide intelligence, insight, and impact through a comprehensive suite of policy tools. Our services comprise of three main elements:

- **Intelligence** - Dods Monitoring – our platform offers real-time alerts, diaries and legislative trackers, inhouse parliamentary coverage, and a powerful historical search function of policy information from over 13,000 sources in the UK, EU, France and Germany.
- **Insight** - Dods Consultancy – our sector-specialist consultants provide analysis, bespoke research, and impartial guidance on the latest policy developments and trends.
- **Impact** - Dods People – our constantly updated database of biographical and contact information for UK and EU parliamentarians, the digital version of the original who's who in politics established in 1832, enables you to identify and address the right policymaking audience.

For further information and to request a complimentary trial, visit [dodspoliticalintelligence.com](http://dodspoliticalintelligence.com) or contact us at: [customer.service@dodsgroup.com](mailto:customer.service@dodsgroup.com)

UK customer service +44 207 593 5500

EU customer service +32 274 182 30

**Political monitoring. Set apart by heritage, personal touch and breadth of coverage.**

