

GIVE & TAKE

**How conservatives
think about welfare**

Ryan Shorthouse
and David Kirkby

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Executive summary

Since the middle of the twentieth century, ‘welfare’ has been increasingly provided by the government. Today, the government’s welfare budget (excluding pensions) represents £120 billion and over 17% of annual public expenditure. The ‘welfare state’ has grown in size but public support for it has fallen, particularly among conservatives.

However, government is not the only source of welfare; a person’s wider family, charities and local communities all play a role. We conceive that, together, they form our ‘welfare system’. This system is vital for helping the vulnerable and impoverished in our society, which includes both those in work and out of work. To ensure the survival and success of our welfare system, it is important to boost public support for it, especially among conservatives.

As Chapter One demonstrates, public support for our welfare system is influenced by a combination of interrelated factors: the underlying views and principles people have, the economic cycle, personal experience, the media, the institutional structure of the welfare system and political leadership.

The primary focus of this report is outlining the different views and principles of conservatives. This will provide decision makers and opinion formers with a more detailed understanding of how conservatives think about welfare. Also, it will enable us to develop policies based on some of these principles to not only improve the welfare system, but boost conservative support for it.

Since the start of this parliament, the prevailing narrative from this Conservative-led government on welfare has been reducing public expenditure on it. Fiscal contraction has been necessary. And, as this report will show, a key belief of conservatives in particular is reducing the role of the state in the delivery of welfare. But the Conservative Party in particular should now develop a richer narrative and policy offering on welfare that draws on a wider set of conservative views and principles. Now is the opportunity to reform our welfare system by putting contribution, personal responsibility and interdependency more at the heart of it.

Focus of this research and the methodology

This report addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the views and principles of conservatives in relation to welfare?
2. How do these views and principles on welfare vary amongst Conservative voters?
3. Drawing on these views and principles, what new policies could be introduced to improve the welfare system and boost support for welfare amongst conservatives?

The way we determine whether a principle or view is conservative is in three ways. Firstly, the principle is endorsed by typical Conservative voters; secondly, it is prominent in the thought of conservative opinion formers and commentators; thirdly, it is enshrined in the policy of Conservative governments.

To answer the three research questions, we employed three research methods, described in detail in Chapter Two. These included an extensive literature review drawing on UK and international evidence. Bright Blue also designed and undertook polling with Survation to unearth the differences in the views of Conservatives and non-

Conservatives, and between Conservatives. The polling also enabled us to test whether respondents supported our policy suggestions.¹ Finally, a roundtable of experts from the policy-making community was convened to explore ideas.

Research Findings

We identify three broad areas of conservative thinking on welfare: views of benefit claimants (the subject of Chapter Three), views on the purpose of welfare (the subject of Chapter Four), and views of different welfare providers (the subject of Chapter Five). We demonstrate different conservative views and principles under these three broad categories by drawing on our own polling and wider academic evidence.

Views of benefit claimants

The first conservative principle we identify is a belief in **individual control and personal responsibility**. Conservatives tend to see individuals as agents who can shape and determine their circumstances, and so are seen to be more responsible for their impoverishment. This principle also lends itself to an opposition to paternalism in the delivery of welfare. On this view, claimants ought to be expected and encouraged, as far as possible, to make their own decisions about how they spend their money.

In our polling, we asked respondents to rank the causes of poverty from 0 to 10, where '0' signifies poverty being caused entirely by circumstances beyond people's control, '10' signifies poverty being caused entirely by people not doing enough to help themselves, and '5' signifies an even mix of both. Conservatives were significantly more likely to opt for numbers above than 5, while Labour voters preferred numbers less than 5. In response to a further question in

1. All the results from the polling questions presented in this report exclude those respondents who answered 'Don't know'.

our polling, Conservatives were most likely to report “lack of work ethos” or “unwillingness to accept boring/menial jobs” as causes of impoverishment compared to Labour voters who were more likely to cite “lack of available jobs” and “low wages paid by employers”.

The second principle we unearth is that conservatives make a clearer distinction between **the deserving and underserving** among benefit claimants. Conservatives see groups such as pensioners and disabled people to be especially deserving and contrast these sharply with groups deemed undeserving such as the unemployed and immigrants.

The third conservative principle we identify concerns the **rational agency** of claimants. Claimants are often understood by conservatives as making a rational choice to rely on the state. On this view, claimants are seen to be responding rationally to the various incentives they have available to them in the same way that non-claimants also seek to maximise their financial position. This view prompts a policy focus on the financial disincentives to work that the welfare system creates.

The fourth conservative principle we explore is that relying upon benefits gives rise to a psychology and culture of **dependency**. Claimants are seen as suffering from individual shortcomings – attitudes and entrenched behaviours – which set them apart from non-claimants. In our polling, we found that 65% of Conservative voters see being “dependent on the system” as a typical characteristic of benefit claimants, compared to 36% of Labour voters. Thirty nine percent of Conservative voters judged that welfare cuts have been good for claimants compared to 12% of Labour voters.

The fifth view we unearth concerns the **lack of trust** conservatives have in benefit claimants. In our polling, we found that Conservative voters are nearly twice as likely as Labour voters to judge that the best description of the welfare system is “full of fraud and abuse” – 44% of Conservatives compared to 22% of Labour supporters. Furthermore, even for legitimate claimants, we found that an overwhelming majority

of Conservative voters (68%) do not trust them to spend their benefits sensibly and without government interference. This contrasted starkly with the view taken of individuals in general, who are deemed best placed to know how to spend their money; 69% of Conservatives agreed with this.

Views of the purpose of welfare

The first principle we identify in this area is the importance of **reciprocity** to conservatives. Reciprocity is the principle that what an individual receives should be related to what they have given or offered: ‘something for something’. Conservatives tend to think that welfare ought to enshrine and deliver reciprocal outcomes.

One way to deliver reciprocity is to allocate welfare resources on the basis of past contributions to the tax system. In our polling, we found that Conservative voters were markedly more likely to prefer allocating benefits on the basis of contribution, as opposed to need, than Labour voters. Fifty percent of Conservatives preferred prioritising those who had contributed compared to 24% of Labour supporters. A second way to deliver reciprocity is by focusing on claimants’ current reciprocal behaviour; specifically, the conditions attached to receiving benefits. Other survey evidence finds that Conservatives support tougher conditions for claiming benefits.

The second conservative principle we identify regarding the purpose of welfare concerns **promoting opportunity**. Welfare should be a means of enabling people to improve their own situation and providing opportunities to help them do so.

In our polling, we found that a majority of Conservative voters (57%) prioritise a welfare system which enables people to contribute to society in the future over one where less is spent on benefits. We also found that given the choice of making society more equal and ensuring individuals have the same opportunities, Conservative voters opt overwhelmingly for the latter, whereas the former appeals much

more to Labour voters. Seventy seven percent of Conservatives opt for a system which “ensures individuals have the same opportunities to flourish” compared to 47% of Labour voters.

Views of different sources of welfare

The first view we explore in this area is that there ought to be a **small state**. For both economic and social reasons, conservatives believe that the role and the size of the state should be limited. With regards to welfare, this tempers conservative support for extensive state provision of welfare. In our polling, we found that Conservative voters are less likely than Labour voters to see the state as primarily responsible for supporting people in financial difficulty. Given the choice of the state, families, local community, neighbours and friends and charities, 54% of Labour voters agree that the state is most responsible for supporting people in financial difficulty, compared to 41% of Conservative voters.

The second conservative view relating to sources of welfare we identify is **the importance of families**. Support provided within the family unit differs from state welfare in being more personal and involving mutual obligations. Our polling showed that Conservative voters see families as primarily responsible for supporting those in financial difficulty; given the choice of the state, families, local community, neighbours and friends and charities, 54% of Conservative voters agree that families are most responsible for supporting people in financial difficulty, compared to 36% of Labour voters. Our polling also found that a majority of Conservative voters believe that the state has a role in encouraging stable families (69%).

The final conservative view we discuss concerns **active communities**. Active communities, including volunteering and charitable giving, are integral to how conservatives think about welfare provision. Other survey evidence shows that Conservatives are more likely than Labour voters to want power to be taken away from government and

for charities and voluntary groups to be more involved in the delivery of public services. Increasing the support offered by these non-state providers has a particular value in a period of austerity.

Differences among conservatives

Conservatives are not a homogenous group and thinking on welfare varies between different types of conservatives. The views and principles we have described are sometimes contradictory; different types of conservatives will prioritise some views and principles over others.

Chapter Six outlines how different socio-economic variables such as age, social class and region – as well as personal experience of the welfare system – impact upon how conservatives view benefits claimants, the purpose of the welfare system, and the different sources of welfare provision. The main findings are as follows:

- **Age.** Younger Conservative voters (aged 18–34) are less likely than the oldest Conservative voters (aged 55+) to believe that the purpose of the welfare system is to provide a safety net (31% compared to 41% of those aged 55+) or an insurance system (27% compared to 37% of those aged 55+). Younger Conservative voters are more likely to believe the purpose of welfare is about providing opportunities (26%) than the oldest Conservative voters (16%).

Younger Conservative voters are also less likely to believe in state welfare: only 30% of younger Conservatives believe the state is primarily responsible for supporting people in financial difficulty compared to 43% of the oldest Conservatives. They are also more enthusiastic than older age groups about alternative sources of welfare such as the family and charities.

- **Social class.** Those Conservative voters in the lowest social class (DE) are more likely to be supportive of contributory welfare,

especially compared to Conservatives in the highest social class (AB). Sixty percent of Conservatives in the lowest social class prefer benefits to be prioritised on the basis of contribution compared to 45% in the highest social class.

- **Region.** Those Conservative voters living outside London are significantly more likely (63%) than those living inside London (42%) to believe that people in their early twenties should be self-reliant from their families. This is probably related to the high costs which young people face in London, especially housing. This shows the importance of experience in shaping views.
- **Experience.** There is a positive relationship between personal experience of benefits (having been on benefits or knowing someone who has) and believing that claimants have suffered as a result of welfare cuts. Those Conservatives with most experience of benefits are most likely to agree that claimants have suffered as a result of cuts (43%) and those with least experience (knowing nobody who has been on benefits) are least likely to agree (22%). This relationship also exists for trusting claimants to spend their benefits sensibly; the more Conservatives have personal experience of the benefits system, the more likely they are to trust claimants. Those Conservative voters with the least personal experience of benefits are the least likely to trust claimants to spend their money sensibly (26%). Those with the most experience are most likely to trust claimants in this regard, though still a minority (43%).

A new typology: economic and social conservatives

From our literature review and polling, we developed a new typology outlining two broad groups of conservatives when it comes to thinking on welfare: economic and social conservatives. This typology mirrors differentiation in conservative thinking that goes beyond views of the

welfare system. At the heart of economic conservatism is a belief in the consensual exchange of goods and services between individuals, with both the size of the state and its role in regulating consumption and industry minimised. On the other hand, social conservatism focuses upon the protection and preservation of social and moral norms and institutions, for example traditional religion or the monarchy.

The composition of and views and principles associated with these two groups are as follows:

- **Economic conservatives.** They tend to be male, younger and better educated. They prioritise a smaller state and believe those who are impoverished will best respond to financial incentives.
- **Social conservatives.** They tend to be older, retired and less educated. They prioritise family and community welfare and believe those who are impoverished suffer from dependency and require a change in behaviour and culture.

New policies

In the final chapter, we outline the details of four new policies to enhance the welfare system that draw on some of the conservative views and principles we have illustrated.

Conservatives believe in a smaller state with reduced welfare expenditure from government. But this need not be the only principle that guides Conservative governments. We suggest drawing on a wider set of conservative views and principles: specifically, contribution, personal responsibility and interdependency. Though this Government and the wider policy-making community have been devising policy based on these principles, we advocate more innovative policies to realise these key principles in our welfare system.

Recommendation one:**A contribution supplement in the Universal Credit**

This Contribution Supplement will provide additional money for claimants on the Universal Credit who have longer National Insurance (NI) contribution histories.

This Contribution Supplement will be tiered. So, the Government will decide a minimum number of years of NI contributions for which a claimant has to have previously worked for until their household becomes eligible for extra payment. If the claimant reaches a higher specific number of years worked with NI contributions previously, that household will be eligible for another payment. This Contribution Supplement would be time-limited. Households can only receive one Contribution Supplement at a time.

We propose simplifying the system and ending Contributory Jobseeker's Allowance (JSAC) and Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESAC). Claimants previously eligible for these benefits will be eligible for support through the Universal Credit and the relevant level of support through the Contribution Supplement.

Our polling showed strong support for this policy focus: 67% of Conservatives agreed that those who are unemployed and have contributed to the system in the past should be paid more than those who are unemployed and have not.

Recommendation two:**A contribution supplement in Statutory Maternity Pay**

After the first six weeks of maternity leave, mothers can receive a base rate of Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) of £138.18 per week (or 90% of previous earnings, whichever is lower) for 33 weeks. Some mothers who are not eligible for SMP can receive the Statutory Maternity Allowance (SMA), which gives them the same base rate as SMP (or 90% of their previous earnings, whichever is lower) for 39 weeks. Under our new proposal, mothers with longer National Insurance contribution

histories will be eligible for additional funding on top of the base rate they receive.

Mirroring the Contribution Supplement in the UC, this Contribution Supplement for SMP will be tiered. So, the Government will decide a minimum number of years for which an eligible mother has to have previously worked for with NI contributions until they become eligible for the extra payment. If the mother reaches a higher specific number of years worked previously they will be eligible for another payment. This Contribution Supplement would be introduced for the duration that a mother is on SMP or Maternity Allowance, after the first six weeks.

From 2015, parents will be entitled to shared parental leave. A mother can choose to transfer any 50 of her 52 weeks to her partner. In this scenario, fathers will be eligible for the SMP base rate. The payment they receive will be called Statutory Paid Parental Pay (ShPP) and will only be paid to them for a maximum of 37 weeks. We propose that fathers will also be entitled to be paid the Contributory Supplement of SMP through their ShPP if their partner is eligible for it.

A family will only be eligible for this Contribution Supplement for a maximum number of children. For subsequent periods of paid leave, eligibility will depend on the mother's total years of NI contribution record (which will have a year subtracted for each previous time a family has been benefiting from this Contribution Supplement).

Our polling demonstrated strong support for this policy focus: our polling found that 58% of Conservative voters agree that new mothers who have contributed more to the system in the past should be paid more through Maternity Pay than new mothers who have not.

Recommendation three:

Contributory top-up accounts

All people will be able to pay a new class of National Insurance into a personal Contributory Top-up Account. These contributions would go

into a tax-free, high interest savings account. Government could decide to further encourage savings to this account by topping up accounts for those on low incomes. The contributions to this account would be capped.

Individuals could draw down from these accounts when they are eligible for Universal Credit, when they or their partner are on paid or unpaid parental leave, or upon retirement. Alternatively, upon retirement, individuals could choose to transfer their surplus balances to other relatives. These relatives would receive the balances in their own Contributory Top-up Accounts, to be drawn down only if they are on Universal Credit, on Parental leave, or when they reach pension age themselves.

These accounts could complement the additional funding some people receive through the proposed contribution supplements in Universal Credit or Statutory Maternity Pay. Together, these three new policies ensure that two major benefits – Universal Credit and Statutory Maternity Pay – have strong contributory elements. Specifically, both benefits will have a time-related contribution (where those who pay more into the system because of having worked longer receive more) and earnings-related contribution (where those who pay more into the system because of having a higher income receive more).

Recommendation four:

Extending Shared Parental Leave to working grandparents

All working grandparents should be able to have any of the 50 transferable weeks of new Shared Parental Leave transferred to them. Grandparents would receive the usual guarantees of statutory parental leave – including being paid the base rate of SMP (or SMA or ShPP) for a maximum 37 weeks - and would be entitled to return to work upon completion of the leave. They would only be entitled to the Contribution Supplement of SMP if the mother transferring her leave is eligible for it.

Conclusion

Our polling demonstrated that there is an appetite among conservatives to draw on a wider set of principles beyond reducing the size of the state when reforming our welfare system. When thinking about an ideal welfare system, a majority of Conservatives (57%) said one that invests effectively in people and enables them to contribute to society in the future, compared to 43% who said they wanted one where government spends a lot less on benefits. We suggest, in particular, that policy-makers should draw more on the conservative principles of contribution, personal responsibility and interdependency.

Not only would our proposed policies ensure vulnerable and impoverished people benefit from a fairer and more effective welfare system. They are also likely to increase public support for the UK's welfare system, especially from conservatives. Sir William Beveridge, the architect of Britain's welfare state, realised that our welfare system could only survive and succeed with public support. That support urgently needs rekindling, now more than ever.

Chapter 1: Introduction

‘Welfare’ is an essential tool for supporting the vulnerable and impoverished, making our society fairer and more prosperous in the long-term. In recent decades, welfare has been increasingly provided by government. This growth in the ‘welfare state’ has run in parallel with a decline in public sympathy for it. In particular, conservatives – specifically, those voting for the Conservative Party – have become especially sceptical of the effectiveness of the welfare state.

To ensure the survival and success of the ‘welfare system’, it is important to boost public support for it, especially among conservatives. But to do this, we must first understand the factors that influence public support for welfare. This chapter outlines the level of support the public – particularly conservatives - have towards the welfare state, how that support has changed over time, and the different factors that influence public support.

What is ‘welfare’?

For the purposes of this report, ‘welfare’ is defined as support for those who face vulnerability and impoverishment. Such support can be for predictable circumstances (for example, old age or having children) or unpredictable circumstances (for example, unemployment or illness). Welfare, especially that delivered through the welfare state, supports people who are in work and out of work. For the purposes of this report, we shall focus upon welfare for those of working-age, thereby excluding pensioners from our discussion.

Since the middle of the twentieth century, the state has provided more welfare. But, prior to the emergence of the welfare state, support for the vulnerable was largely voluntary. Families, friendly societies, churches and other charitable organisations were all key actors.²

State welfare emerged as one of the central pillars of the post-war settlement. Though its roots extended back to Lloyd George's National Insurance Act of 1911, which insured contributing earners against illness or unemployment, it was the publication of the Beveridge report in 1942 and its subsequent implementation that accorded the state a comprehensive welfare role. Today, the term "welfare" is closely associated with the welfare state in public discourse. Though, of course, other actors such as a person's wider family and charities still play a major role in providing welfare.³

While we focus in large part upon thinking concerning the welfare state in this report – extensively discussing, for example, views of benefit claimants - we understand welfare more broadly to include other providers such as the family and the community. We conceive, together, these different forms of welfare support can be understood as the 'welfare system'.

Welfare can take the form of cash transfers, in-kind support (for example, caring) or services (for example, childcare) for the vulnerable or impoverished. Services such as the NHS or schools are excluded from our understanding of welfare because they are not specifically targeted at the vulnerable or impoverished, although of course they help them.

Support for welfare

Welfare is important for reasons of equity and efficiency. Protecting the vulnerable and impoverished is important as a moral imperative; society

2. David Gladstone (ed.), *Before Beveridge: welfare before the welfare state* (London: Civitas, 1999), 3.

3. Ryan Shorthouse, *Family fortunes* (London: Social Market Foundation, 2013), 22-25.

should support those in hardship. It is to some extent unfair, especially if they are children, to deny people resources and opportunities to have a reasonable standard of living or experience social mobility. In addition, welfare is an important means of helping people overcome challenges they face and becoming financially independent, thereby reducing the burden upon public finances in the long run and widening the talent pool available for UK businesses.

Worryingly, however, support for welfare – in particular the welfare state – is currently low. It wasn't always like this. Following the publication of the Beveridge report, there arose a belief in – as Professor David Gladstone puts it – “a comprehensive welfare ideology in which public social expenditure could be used to challenge and improve society”⁴. State welfare was part of a package of social reform which had not merely public support, but which excited real enthusiasm.

But since the late 1980s, public support for the welfare state has gone into sharp decline. In contrast to the high levels of support enjoyed by other major areas of public spending such as the NHS,⁵ the proportion of the public identifying welfare as a first or second spending priority for government is down from 13% in 1990 to 5% in 2012.⁶ The British Social Attitudes Survey shows that whereas in 1989, 83% agreed that the government should be responsible for providing a decent standard of living for the unemployed, only 59% agree today.⁷ Perhaps most tellingly, nearly nine in ten think that the welfare state is “facing severe problems”⁸.

While public support as a whole has declined for the welfare state, support amongst Conservative voters stands out as especially weak. Sixty nine percent of Conservative voters agree that welfare benefits are too

4. David Gladstone, “Editor’s introduction” In *Before Beveridge: welfare before the welfare state* ed. David Gladstone (London: Civitas, 1999), 3.

5. Rachael Jolley (ed.), *State of the nation* (London: British Future, 2013).

6. Alison Park, Caroline Bryson, Elizabeth Clery, John Curtice and Miranda Phillips (eds.), *British social attitudes survey 30* (London: NatCen Social Research, 2013), 39.

7. *Ibid.*, 38.

8. Nick Spencer, “Introduction” In *The future of welfare* ed. Nick Spencer (London: Theos, 2014), 9-17.

generous – compared to only 25% of Labour voters and 25% of Liberal Democrat voters.⁹ Similarly, Conservative voters are half as likely as Labour or Liberal Democrat voters to agree that the government should spend more on welfare benefits for the poor.¹⁰ This low level of support among Conservatives is especially significant because they represent a large proportion of the population. Their views will be the focus of this report.

The current, Conservative-led Government has sought to reform the welfare system to improve its effectiveness and efficiency, and improve public support for it. A series of reforms have been implemented to achieve the following:

1. **Reduce the size of the welfare budget.** The government's welfare budget has increased in recent decades, now costing £120 billion a year (excluding pensions) and accounting for over 17% of all public spending.¹¹ Main attempts to slim the welfare budget include: the introduction from 2015-16 of a cap on the Department for Work and Pension's Annual Managed Expenditure (AME) which includes working-age benefits and pensions, the means-testing of Child Benefit since 2013-14 and limiting the up-rating of benefits to 1%, equating to a cut in real terms over the course of this parliament.
2. **Encouraging more people into work.** Many families do not receive substantial increases in their incomes as they move into work because of the rate at which their benefits are withdrawn. To make work pay, the Government has introduced the Universal Credit with a standard taper (withdrawal) rate of 65% of earned income. The Government has also introduced greater conditionality on those claiming benefits, for example 'workfare', to make people more work-ready. The Man-

9. YouGov and TUC, "Survey results", http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/xzmltcdt5i/YG-Archive-results-TUC-121212-welfare-benefits-knowledge.pdf (2012).

10. Park et al., *British social attitudes survey* 30, 51.

11. Andrew Hood and Paul Johnson, "What is welfare spending?", <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/7424> (2014).

datory Work Activity Programme has imposed workfare upon some JSA claimants. Further plans for workfare for 18 to 21 year olds out of work for more than 6 months have been recently announced by David Cameron.¹²

3. **Greater fairness.** Steps have been taken to ensure the government does not provide funding which results in those on out of work benefits gaining more than the average household earnings. This is the justification for the Benefit Cap. To reduce abuse, the number of sanctions for non-compliance of conditions for receiving benefits has risen dramatically.¹³

These reforms have generally been well supported by the public. For example, the Benefit Cap is popular, especially amongst Conservative voters.¹⁴ However, it is far from clear that these reforms, though attracting approval individually, are significantly raising levels of support for the welfare system as a whole, including amongst conservatives, or leading to the system being viewed more positively. For example, the number of people agreeing that many claimants do not deserve help has remained almost unchanged since 2010.¹⁵

Public support is critical to the sustainability of the welfare system and achieving the public policy goals that welfare helps bring about. Indeed, Sir William Beveridge was keenly aware of this, often justifying his plans for social insurance on the basis that it would appeal to the

12. Patrick Wintour, "David Cameron unveils welfare changes in drive to end youth unemployment", *The Guardian*, 28 September, 2014.

13. Department for Work and Pensions, "Jobseeker's Allowance and Employment and Support Allowance sanctions: decisions made to March 2014", <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/jobseekers-allowance-and-employment-and-support-allowance-sanctions-decisions-made-to-march-2014> (2014).

14. YouGov and Sunday Times, "Survey Results", http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/5tdopk0ktm/YG-Archive-Pol-Sunday-Times-results-04-060113.pdf (2013).

15. Alison Park, John Curtice and Caroline Bryson (eds.), *British social attitudes survey 31* (London: NatCen Social Research, 2014), 101.

public.¹⁶ Without public support, it is harder for policy makers to commit the necessary resources to maintain a robust welfare system.

In order to achieve the important and necessary mission of rebuilding support for the welfare system, especially among conservatives, we first need to understand the factors that influence the support the public have for the welfare system.

What factors influence the support the public have for the welfare system?

There are a number of factors that affect levels of support for welfare:

- The economic cycle
- Personal experience
- The media
- Institutional structure of the welfare system
- Political leadership
- The views and principles of individuals

These factors are interrelated. The economic cycle impacts upon personal experiences. Political leadership can frame media debate. Similarly, the media not only helps shape political discourse and the principles of individuals, it also reflects personal experience. In practice, these factors are deeply entwined.

Nevertheless, the evidence is ambiguous on the degree to which each of these factors affects levels of support for welfare. All factors contribute to some extent to levels of public support for the welfare system.

Support does exhibit a certain cyclicity that correlates with the country's economic performance. People seem to recognise the value of welfare provision more during recessions, as jobs are scarcer and incomes squeezed.¹⁷

16. William Beveridge, *Social insurance and allied services* (London: HMSO, 1942), 11-12.

17. Elizabeth Clery, Lucy Lee and Sarah Kunz, *Public attitudes to poverty and welfare, 1983-2011* (London: NatCen Social Research, 2013).

For instance, the 2013 British Social Attitudes Survey indicates a marginally higher appetite for state welfare spending, which may be the effect of the economic downturn.¹⁸ Nevertheless, the downward trend in support since the late 1980s has occurred despite a wide variation in economic performance, including long periods of growth, during this period.

It is reasonable to expect that individual experience of benefit claimants affects support for state welfare and that those with stronger experiences of benefits may be more supportive. Nevertheless, at an aggregate level, there is some evidence to suggest that being supportive of state welfare is not a straightforward function of personal experience. Those living in neighbourhoods with high numbers of benefit claimants actually estimate higher levels of fraud and invoke similar conceptions of stigma as those who have less experience of claimants.¹⁹

Individuals are influenced by the opinions of others and the stories they are told. In this regard, the media clearly plays a pivotal role. However, the media also follows public opinion as well as shaping it and it is doubtful that the media is wholly responsible for the lower levels of support for state welfare amongst either conservatives or the population at large. Research has shown that the number of negative stories about benefit claimants in the media actually fell from 1998-2006 – the period during which support fell especially sharply.²⁰ As researchers at the think tank Demos stress, we should be wary of attributing people's support for state welfare simply to the media narrative they are presented with.²¹

The institutional structure of the welfare system itself has been claimed to have an effect upon support.²² Perhaps most importantly, it

18. Park et al., *British social attitudes survey* 30, 42.

19. Ben Baumberg, Kate Bell, Declan Gaffney, Rachel Deacon, Clancy Hood and Daniel Sage, *Benefits stigma in Britain* (London: Elizabeth Finn Care, 2012), 80.

20. *Ibid.*, 8.

21. Duncan O'Leary and David Goodhart, "Falling out of love with welfare", In *The future of welfare* ed. Nick Spencer (London: Theos, 2014), 17-25.

22. Ian Mulheirn and Jeff Masters, *Beveridge rebooted* (London: Social Market Foundation, 2013).

has been argued that more ‘social democratic’ welfare regimes which place a greater emphasis upon universal benefits and entitlements engender higher levels of support than those which are more selective.²³ Nevertheless, large-scale institutional change moves much more slowly than shifts in support.

In regards to political leadership, New Labour’s hardening of policy and rhetoric in relation to state welfare, particularly in relation to greater conditionality, has been cited as a possible explanation of the fall in support, at least among Labour supporters.²⁴ Furthermore, while Conservatives are less supportive of state welfare than non-Conservatives, on some measures, the greatest change in support over the past thirty years has been among Labour voters.²⁵

Still though, we should be cautious about simply attributing this change in support to political leadership. Firstly, the change in support amongst Labour supporters began before the rise of New Labour.²⁶ Secondly, the group of people voting for Labour changed during this period, as many disaffected former Conservative voters were attracted to the party. As a consequence, ‘Labour’ support may have changed in large part because different people were voting Labour. As Ipsos MORI have argued: “There is not enough evidence to conclude that either media coverage or political rhetoric have been the primary drivers of changes over time.”²⁷

The economic cycle, personal experience, political leadership, institutional structure and the media: these are circumstantial factors, that is, the social, political and economic world individuals inhabit. They interact to shape the final contributor to public support for the welfare system: namely, the underlying views and principles of

23. Christian Larsen, “The institutional logic of welfare attitudes: how welfare regimes influence public support?”, *Comparative political studies*, 2008, 41: 145-168.

24. Clery et al., *Public attitudes to poverty and welfare, 1983-2011*, 34.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*

27. Bobby Duffy, Suzanne Hall, Duncan O’Leary and Sarah Pope, *Generation strains* (London: Demos, 2013).

individuals. Many of these views and principles bear upon and relate to welfare, thereby shaping conceptions of what welfare should be and what it should achieve. It is these views and principles, specifically the views and principles of conservatives, which are the primary focus of the report.

Focus of this research

In this report, we identify the key views and principles held by conservatives on welfare. In addition, we will be able to show how acceptance of these views and principles varies among Conservative voters. This will enable decision makers and opinion formers to develop a richer understanding of variation in conservative thinking about welfare according to different social characteristics. Doing this will enable us to create and suggest new policies, based on these different principles, with the ultimate aims of improving not only the welfare system, but conservative support for the welfare system.

This report addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the views and principles held by conservatives in relation to welfare?
2. How do these views and principles on welfare vary amongst Conservative voters?
3. Drawing on these views and principles, what new policies could be introduced to improve the welfare system and boost support for welfare amongst conservatives?

The way we determine whether a principle or view is conservative is in three ways. Firstly, the principle is endorsed by typical Conservative voters; secondly, it is prominent in the thought of conservative opinion formers and commentators; thirdly, it is enshrined in the policy of Conservative governments. When describing each conservative

principle in the following chapters, we draw on national and international evidence to support each of these three elements.

The report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter Two** explains the methodologies employed, including public polling, an extensive literature review and an expert policy roundtable.
- **Chapter Three** begins to address our first research question by investigating how conservatives think of benefit claimants.
- **Chapter Four** explores another area of conservative thinking on welfare: what the purpose of welfare should be.
- **Chapter Five** turns to the final area of conservative thinking on welfare: how different sources of welfare are viewed.
- **Chapter Six** explains how there is variation among Conservative voters in their acceptance of and emphasis upon different conservative views and principles. On the basis of these differences, a new typology of different conservatives is proposed.
- **Chapter Seven** offers new policies to reform the welfare system which are founded upon some of the conservative views and principles identified.

Chapter 2: **Methodology**

As detailed in Chapter One, this report seeks to understand the views and principles held by conservatives in relation to welfare, how acceptance of these views and principles varies among different Conservative voters, and to devise new welfare policies that draw upon some of these views and principles. This chapter outlines how we define ‘conservative’ views and principles and the research techniques we employed to achieve these objectives.

What are conservative views and principles?

We judge a view or principle to be ‘conservative’ on the following basis:

- It is more likely to be endorsed by Conservative voters than non-Conservative voters;
- It is prominent in the thought of centre-right opinion formers and commentators;
- It is enshrined in the policy of Conservative governments, both in the UK and internationally.

While Conservative voters’ responses are a vital proxy of conservative views and principles – and we shall use this proxy throughout this report – they are methodologically distinct. Conservative views and principles are not confined to Conservative Party voters. They can be held also, to varying degrees, by Labour and Liberal Democrat supporters. Many non-Conservative voters will hold conservative views and principles.

In turn, these conservative views and principles relating to welfare need not be universally accepted by all Conservative voters. In practice, their acceptance is a spectrum; often, certain principles are more strongly felt by some Conservatives than others, not least because, as we shall show, some of these principles are in tension with each other.

As such, because the views and principles discussed in this report are not universally held by Conservatives, nor unique to Conservative voters, we characterise them loosely as ‘strands of conservative thinking’.

Of course, political standpoint is not the only variable that influences views and principles relating to welfare. Other socio-demographic characteristics are also important, such as age or social class. However, there is evidence that political beliefs may be more significant.²⁸ Our report focuses on this political variable. However, in Chapter Six, we do show how the acceptance of various strands of conservative thinking relating to welfare varies within the Conservative family, depending upon socio-demographic characteristics such as age, social class and region, as well as person experience of the welfare system.

Research techniques

We employed three research methods for this project:

- **Literature review.** An extensive review of existing UK and international evidence on conservative thinking relating to welfare was conducted. We reviewed:
 - Data surveys of Conservative voters’ thinking on welfare;
 - Relevant academic work, both sociological and psychological;
 - The views of centre-right opinion formers through books, articles and speeches;
 - Welfare policies of Conservative governments, through different decades, in the UK and abroad.

28. Adrian Furnham, “The determinants of attitudes towards social security recipients”, *Journal of social psychology*, 1985, 24(Pt 1): 19–27.

- **Expert policy roundtable.** Bright Blue hosted a discussion involving experts from the civil service, academia, think tanks, the media and non-government organisations in order to brainstorm policy ideas that draw on conservative principles and values (see Annex One for the full list of attendees).
- **Public polling.** A nationally representative poll, with a booster of those intending to vote Conservative at the next General Election, was conducted to identify the views and principles that people hold with regards to the welfare system, how Conservative acceptance of certain principles varies according to different socio-economic factors, and support for Government reforms and our proposed policies (see Annex Two for the full list of questions).

Polling

Our polling was designed subsequent to our literature review and expert policy roundtable in order that the questions asked could be informed by them.

Polling was undertaken by Survation in two phases. The first phase, conducted between September 12th and September 16th 2014, consisted of 1,052 British adult respondents, interviewed online. Results were weighted by Office of National Statistics (ONS) data to be nationally representative of age, sex, region, household income, education and 2015 General Election voting intention.

The second phase of polling was undertaken between September 12th and September 30th 2014. This was a booster sample that added to the nationally representative poll 2,064 respondents intending to vote Conservative at the 2015 General Election. They were interviewed online.

The two phases of polling enable us to analyse voters' perceptions in two ways. First, we can compare how the views of Conservatives – respondents intending to vote for the Conservative Party in the

2015 General Election – differ from non-Conservatives. As the largest non-Conservative group, we shall use the responses of Labour voters throughout this report by way of contrast with the responses of Conservative voters.

Second, the booster sample allowed us investigate how, within the ‘Conservative family’, socio-demographic characteristics such as age, social class and region – as well as experience of the welfare system – impacted upon the acceptance of principles and views relating to welfare. We wanted to illustrate the breadth in Conservative thinking and how Conservative voters with different backgrounds may differ in the views and principles they accept. This variation amongst Conservative voters is the subject of Chapter Six.

As will be explained in Chapter Six, the literature review and polling revealed two broad types of conservatives: economic conservatives and social conservatives. The distinction between economic and social conservatives is explained in detail in Chapter Six. To substantiate this typology, we identified economic and social conservatives in the polling sample to test views. Questions were asked to identify whether respondents were economic conservatives or economic statist: economic conservatives were those respondents that opted for less state intervention and regulation across a range of markets. Questions were also asked about whether respondents were social conservatives or social liberals: social conservatives were those respondents who supported action to protect and preserve various social and moral norms. Of course, from these questions, it is possible to be both an economic and a social conservative, and these segmentations were not designed to be mutually exclusive. Nevertheless, while it was possible for respondents to be classed as both social and economic conservatives, questions were designed to try and determine whether respondents were more influenced by economic conservatism or social conservatism, thereby reducing the overlap of the sets. For the full list

of questions and metrics used to determine these typological groups among Conservative voters, see Annex 2.

All the cross-breaks used to observe differences in the views of respondents are detailed in Box 2.1 below.

Box 2.1. Full polling cross-breaks

- Age
- Gender
- Region
- Ethnicity
- Social class
- Personal experience of benefits
- Employment status
- Family status
- Parent
- Grandparent
- 2010 General Election voting record
- 2015 General Election voting intention
- Social conservatism
- Economic conservatism

Our judgment was that “Don’t know” answers should be removed from our analysis and presentation of the polling. Thus, reported answers refer to a sample of respondents that gave a relevant answer. However, the removal of “Don’t know” responses from our analysis means that the findings are not completely representative of views across Britain.

Results from our polling will be presented throughout Chapters Three to Six, alongside data from other national surveys, where relevant. We will signpost throughout which data is drawn from our own polling, and which is drawn from other surveys.

Chapter 3: **How conservatives think about benefit claimants**

In Chapter One, we identified three areas of conservative thinking on welfare: views of benefit claimants, views on the purpose of welfare, and views of different welfare providers. This chapter focuses upon the first of these areas.

Drawing on our own polling and wider evidence, we outline five interrelated strands of conservative thinking relating to benefit claimants: individual control and personal responsibility, the deserving and the undeserving, rational agency, dependency and a lack of trust.

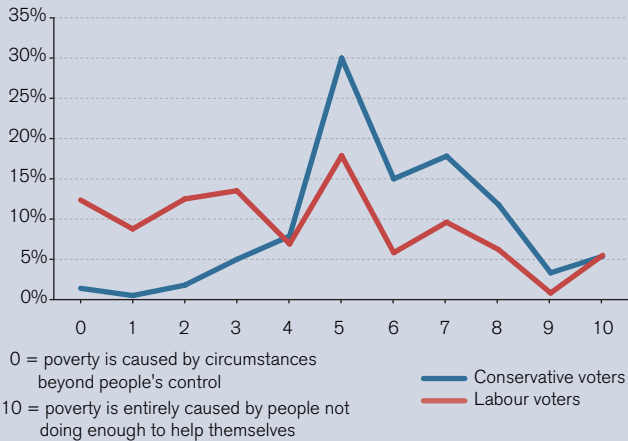
Individual control and personal responsibility

One key conservative belief concerns the degree of power and responsibility individuals have over their own situation. Conservatives tend to see individuals as agents who can shape and determine their circumstances, and so see them as agents responsible for such circumstances.

For instance, our polling revealed that Conservatives are markedly more likely to judge that poverty in the UK today is primarily caused by factors individuals have control over than Labour voters. We asked respondents to rank the causes of poverty from 0 to 10, where '0' signifies poverty being caused entirely by circumstances beyond people's control, '10' signifies poverty being caused entirely by people not doing enough to help themselves, and '5' signifies an even mix of both. Conservatives were more likely to opt for numbers above 5, while Labour voters preferred

numbers less than 5, placing a greater emphasis upon circumstances beyond people's control, as illustrated in Chart 3.1.

Chart 3.1. The causes of poverty in the UK today, by voting intention, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters and 242 Labour voters

Linking these gradations with specific factors, we asked respondents to rank a number of possible causes of poverty in the UK from most significant to least significant. We found that the two which Conservatives selected as being most significant in causing poverty in the UK were a lack of work ethos and people not being willing to accept boring/menial jobs, both of which are best seen as individualistic causes. By contrast, Labour voters chose instead a lack of available jobs and low wages paid by employers, which amount more to social circumstances beyond people's control. Similarly, other surveys have shown Conservatives to be over three times more likely than Labour supporters, 43% compared to 13%, to agree that most people living in

poverty in the UK today are doing so because of their own bad choices and decisions.²⁹

This right-left divide on the causes of poverty is not unique to Britons, and has been demonstrated to hold cross-culturally.³⁰ These beliefs about poverty fall-out from a broader conservative tendency to view individuals as agents which control their environment rather than objects passively *controlled by* their environment. For instance, 76% of Republicans - a voting proxy for American conservatives - agree that “most people who want to get ahead can make it if they’re willing to work hard” compared to only 20% who think that “hard work and determination are no guarantee of success for most people”. By contrast, this difference in responses is reduced to merely one point for Democrats.³¹ In this sense, those on the left tend to be less sure of the power of individual agency.

For conservatives, individuals have power over the course of their life and so are responsible for where they end up. In many respects, this can be seen as a positive, egalitarian doctrine about the ability of all to achieve and get-on in life. As the conservative commentator Janet Daley puts it: “...taking responsibility for yourself is a proper part of fully fledged grown-up life, and... not having such expectations of people demeans them”³²

29. Neil O'Brien, *Just deserts* (London: Policy Exchange, 2011), 12; see also: Gail Zucker and Bernard Weiner, “Conservatism and perceptions of poverty”, *Journal of applied social psychology*, 1993, 23(12): 925-943.

30. Norman Feather, “Explanations of poverty in Australian and American samples”, *Australian journal of psychology*, 1974, 26: 199-216; see also: Janak Pandey, Yoganand Sinha and Anand Prakash, “Right-left political ideologies and attributions of the causes of poverty”, *European journal of social psychology*, 1982, 12: 327-331.

31. Pew Research, “Most see inequality growing, but partisans differ over solutions”, <http://www.people-press.org/2014/01/23/most-see-inequality-growing-but-partisans-differ-over-solutions> (2014).

32. Janet Daley, “Welfare handouts aren’t fair – and the public knows it”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 23 April, 2011.

When applied to welfare, this fundamental belief in human agency has significant ramifications for how conservatives view benefit claimants. As we have demonstrated, since benefit claimants are viewed as having considerable control over their circumstances, they are held to be personally responsible for their situation. Also, it lends itself to an opposition to paternalism. On this view, claimants ought to be expected and encouraged, as far as possible, to make their own decisions. The Government's Universal Credit has been designed to increase the responsibility claimants have for their own finances by having, for example, Housing Benefit paid into the bank accounts of those in the social rented sector, instead of directly to landlords as was previously the case. The extension of personalised budgets, particularly for disabled claimants, also fits with this anti-paternalistic approach.³³

The deserving and the undeserving

Conservatives differentiate between deserving and undeserving benefit claimants. Of course, this is a distinction drawn by non-conservatives also. In fact, across Europe there is evidence for a remarkably consistent 'deservingness hierarchy': as Figure 3.1 shows, pensioners are viewed as most deserving, followed by disabled claimants and then single mothers, with unemployed claimants and immigrants judged to be least deserving.³⁴

33. Department of Health, "Closing the gap: priorities for essential change in mental health", https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/281250/Closing_the_gap_V2_-_17_Feb_2014.pdf (2014).

34. Wim van Oorschot, "Making the difference in social Europe: deservingness perceptions among citizens of european welfare states", *Journal of european social policy*, 2006, 16(1): 23-42.

Figure 3.1. The 'deservingness' hierarchy



However, for Conservative voters the differential between these groups is greater; they draw a sharper distinction between the deserving and the undeserving than non-Conservatives and prefer to see welfare focused much more exclusively on the deserving.³⁵ There is evidence to suggest that this may hold of conservatives across Europe.³⁶

The sociologist, Wim van Oorschot, has claimed that the most significant factor determining perceptions of deservingness is the degree to which claimants have control over, or are responsible for, their neediness. The more control, the less deserving.³⁷ Given how conservatives tend to see individuals as more responsible for their circumstances, it is clear how this could potentially lead to a sharper distinction of the deserving and undeserving. While certain groups, such as the disabled, do not have control over their neediness, conservatives may see other groups such as the unemployed and immigrants as, by comparison, much more in control of their neediness than non-conservatives, and judge them to be relatively more undeserving as a result.

An alternative explanation may be that conservatives' sharp distinction of the deserving and undeserving may also be driven by considerations of reciprocity: about the ability and willingness of

35. YouGov and Policy Exchange, "Survey results", http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/today_uk_import/yg-archives-fairness-policyexchange260411.pdf (2011).

36. van Oorschot, "Making the difference in social Europe: deservingness perceptions among citizens of european welfare states", 27.

37. Wim van Oorschot, "Who should get what and why? On deservingness criteria and the conditionality of solidarity of support among the public", *Policy and politics*, 2000, 28(1): 33-48.

claimants to reciprocate. We turn to the importance of reciprocity in conservative thinking in Chapter Four.

In essence, conservatives have a stronger notion of the distinction between the deserving and underserving among benefit claimants, which is driven by the belief that most people are and should be masters of their own destiny.

Rational agency

The emphasis upon personal responsibility puts the decisions and choices of individuals at the heart of conservative thinking about benefit claimants. A further, related element to be added to this picture is that often these choices are viewed as highly rational in character. Nevertheless, though related, it is a slightly different conception to the one detailed above of individuals being responsible for their impoverishment; this belief in rational agency suggests that the welfare system is somewhat more to blame, and individuals are responding to the poor incentives on offer.

For example, a recent YouGov and Policy Exchange survey found that Conservative voters are nearly three times more likely than Labour voters to attribute higher levels of welfare spending to people choosing to live on benefits.³⁸ While some of these choices may be viewed as short-sighted or mistaken in some fashion, conservatives often see these choices as rational calculations on the part of claimants, based upon the financial options facing them. For example, 67% of Conservatives agree that “if welfare benefits weren’t so generous, people would learn to stand on their own two feet”, compared to 47% of Liberal Democrats and 43% Labour voters.³⁹ The suggestion here is that claimants are responding rationally to the current generosity of benefits. In other words, claiming

38. YouGov and IPPR, “Survey results”, <http://www.ippr.org/assets/media/images/media/files/publication/2013/09/yougov-ippr-results-130606-welfare.pdf> (2013).

39. Park et al., *British social attitudes survey* 30, 51.

benefits is seen to be not merely a choice, but a rational choice, one which is sensitive to the incentives and disincentives available.

The idea that benefit claimants are rational agents choosing to rely upon the state for their living has been advanced by key conservative thinkers over the years. Perhaps the most prominent American conservative critic of the welfare state, Charles Murray, argued that benefit claimants should be understood as utility maximisers who will choose to rely upon the state if it is more attractive than the alternative: “poor and non-poor alike use the same general calculus in arriving at decisions; only the exigencies are different”.⁴⁰

This view led him to decry the perverse incentives of the welfare system which encouraged agents to behave in this way. The conservative author, James Bartholomew, has argued that the long term trend of rising unemployment from the end of the First World War to the end of the 1970s can be attributed to the increase in the real value of out of work benefits relative to average earnings.⁴¹ Indeed, this is said to have caused “unemployment which was on a scale never known before in British history”.⁴²

It is not only unemployment which the system may incentivise. Patricia Morgan has argued that rates of lone parenthood, divorce and separation are all influenced by the way in which the welfare system financially incentivises couples to live apart – the so-called ‘couple penalty’.⁴³ Working Tax Credit is paid at the same rate for single person households as for couples. Eligibility for income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance depends not only upon an individual’s circumstances, but upon those of their partner also. Accordingly, this means that many couples would be

40. Charles Murray, *Losing ground: american social policy, 1950-1980* (New York: BasicBooks, 1984), 155.

41. James Bartholomew, *The welfare state we’re in* (London: Politico’s Publishing, 2004), Chpt. 2.

42. *Ibid.*, 64.

43. Patricia Morgan, *The war between the state and the family* (London: Institute for Economic Affairs, 2007).

financially better-off living apart. The fundamental premise of Morgan's claim is that benefit claimants respond to such couple penalties in the system and adjust their choices accordingly. Interestingly, this premise is manifest also in Beveridge's declaration that "if money is paid on any condition, it tends to bring that condition about".⁴⁴

Over the past decade, there has been an increasing focus amongst conservative commentators and organisations on the way in which Marginal Effective Tax Rates (METRs) disincentivise returning to work or taking on more hours. METRs refer to the effective tax rate people face as they move into work and their benefits are withdrawn and income tax starts to be paid. Both the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) and the Adam Smith Institute (ASI) have underlined how, due to the way in which withdrawal rates for various benefits combine, METRs have been punitively high for many claimants, shattering the financial attraction of returning to work or increasing hours worked.⁴⁵ Some claimants have faced METRs of over 90%, meaning that they keep less than 10 pence of every extra pound earned.⁴⁶ Such METRs disincentivise entering the job market and disincentivise working more hours. As Fraser Nelson comments: "This is nothing to do with indolence... The tabloid critics are wrong – these people aren't scroungers, they're reacting in a way that any of us would in the same situation."⁴⁷

In government, Iain Duncan Smith has often described how the disincentives to work inherent in the welfare system 'trap' people in poverty: "A system that was originally designed to support the poorest in society is now trapping them in the very condition it was supposed to alleviate."⁴⁸

44. William Beveridge, *Voluntary action: a report on methods of social advance* (London: G Allen & Unwin, 1948), 149.

45. Centre for Social Justice, *Dynamic benefits* (London: Centre for Social Justice, 2009).

46. Matthew Triggs and Sam Bowman, *Welfare reform* (London: Adam Smith Institute, 2010).

47. Fraser Nelson, "Benefits Street exposes Britain's dirty secret – how welfare imprisons the poor", *The Spectator*, 18 January, 2014.

48. BBC, "Welfare 'trapping' people in poverty says Duncan Smith", *BBC*, 27 May, 2010.

The key policy in this regard, Universal Credit, is still being piloted, but will roll together and impose a single withdrawal rate for the six major means-tested benefits. Although this will affect the METRs of different claimants in different ways – with some claimants facing lower rates, and some higher – it will cap the maximum METR faced by any claimant at 76% of earned income. It increases the incentive to enter the workforce for those on benefits.⁴⁹

In essence, conservatives believe that claimants are not merely responsible agents, but often rational agents. In this sense, their impoverishment is because they are responding to the poor financial incentives in the welfare system. This has direct policy implications, heightening the significance of how the welfare system incentivises particular behaviours.

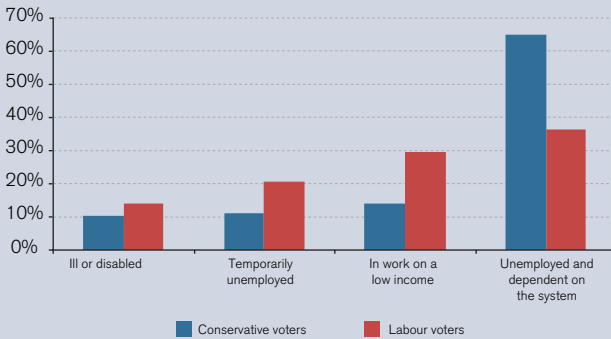
Dependency

One strand of conservative thought is that benefit claimants are exercising their rational faculties in choosing to rely upon the state, as outlined in the previous section. In many respects, this casts benefit claimants in quite a positive light, portraying their behaviour as akin to that of any individual – claimant or not – in seeking to maximise their financial position. However, there is a contrasting and more negative view of benefit claimants: one that stresses their individual failings and sees them as suffering from ‘dependency’.

Being dependent on the system is a characteristic of benefit claimants which springs readily to Conservative minds. As part of our polling, we explored what was regarded as the “typical” working-age welfare claimant. As illustrated by Chart 3.2, Conservative voters were nearly twice as likely to select “unemployed and dependent on the system” as Labour voters – 65% compared to 36%.

49. Mike Brewer, James Browne and Wenchao Jin, *Universal Credit: a preliminary analysis* (London: Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2011).

Chart 3.2. The typical working-age benefit claimant, by voting intention, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters and 242 Labour voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

Similarly, a recent YouGov and TUC survey found that 86% of Conservatives agree that Britain's welfare system has created a culture of dependency, "whereby many people, and often whole families, get used to living off state benefits".⁵⁰ This contrasts with 41% of Labour voters who agree and 47% of Liberal Democrats.

This idea of dependency, indeed, a culture of dependency, is distinct from the view of benefits being merely a rational choice on the part of claimants. Instead, it bespeaks of shortcomings or failings on their part, something which goes hand in hand with reliance upon the state. For instance, Conservative voters are more likely than non-Conservative voters to cite laziness as the main cause of long term unemployment.⁵¹ In contrast to the view of benefit claimants described in the previous section which downplayed the differences between claimants and non-

50. YouGov and TUC, "Survey results", http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/xzmltcdt5i/YG-Archive-results-TUC-121212-welfare-benefits-knowledge.pdf (2012).

51. YouGov and Policy Exchange, "Survey results", http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/today_uk_import/yg-archives-fairness-policyexchange260411.pdf (2011).

claimants, dependency is seen as a problem, if not unique to benefit claimants, at least far more commonly associated with them.

The idea that claiming benefits is related to individual failings, moral vice even, is a very old one. The Poor Law Commission of 1832 states that, due to income support: “Moral character is annihilated, and the poor man of twenty years ago, who tried to earn his money, and was thankful for it, is now converted into an insolent, discontent, surly, thoughtless pauper who talks of ‘rights and income.’”⁵²

In more recent years, this concern has been primarily the preserve of conservative thinkers. For conservatives, self-esteem and self-worth come with work or, more generally, self reliance. Jason Turner, architect of welfare reform in New York and Wisconsin, stresses the “corrosive” effects which relying upon the state has upon individuals.⁵³ Depending upon the state is seen to breed and correlate with a culture of laziness, fecklessness and often depression. This view of claimants as dependent is perhaps most prominent and pervasive in James Bartholomew’s book, *The welfare state we’re in*, in which he argues that the welfare state has made a significant proportion of claimants “less civil or even criminal”.⁵⁴ For Bartholomew, dependency is not simply a rational choice but, over time certainly, a kind of cultural disease, antipathetic to the cultivation of virtues which comes only with self-reliance. This culture is passed from generation to generation within families. It also comes to afflict whole communities. The CSJ points out that some particular neighbourhoods in Britain today have more than 67% of working-age people on out of work benefits.⁵⁵ Indeed, the conservative thinker, David Green, speaks even of *in-work* dependency, affecting those claiming tax credits.⁵⁶

52. Cited in: Bartholomew, *The welfare state we’re in*, 33.

53. Jason Turner, “Radical changes to the welfare system in the U.S. state of Wisconsin: the results” In *Europe’s welfare burden: the case for reform* eds. Benny Carlson, Alan Deacon, Hans Hoogervorst, Wilfried Prewé and Jason Turner (London: Civitas, 2002), 1.

54. Bartholomew, *The welfare state we’re in*, 78.

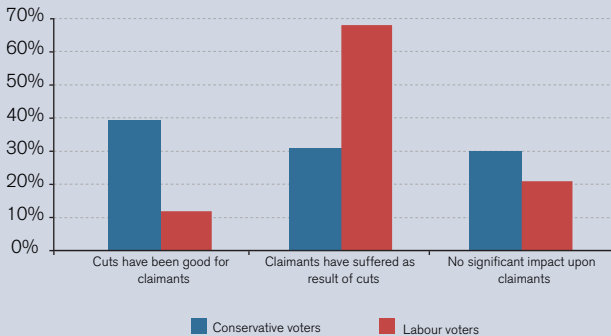
55. Centre for Social Justice, “Breakthrough Britain 2015: an overview”, http://www.centreforsocial-justice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/CSJJ2470_BB_2015_WEB.pdf (2014).

56. David Green, *An end to welfare rights: the rediscovery of independence* (London: Civitas, 1999), 2.

The difference between this negative view of claimants and the previously described more positive conception of them as rational agents is clear. While claimants are still held personally responsible for their situation, choices are seen not as rational in character, but habitual. Behaviour is still determined by claimants' attitudes, but these are not governed by enlightened self-interest, but by attitudes of, for example, fecklessness. With this, their impoverishment is more a result of their culture and psychology rather than financial incentives.

Conservatives approve of independence and, as will be discussed in Chapter Five, interdependence, but dependence is seen as highly pernicious: something which has damaging consequences for the individuals in question. So, many Conservative voters – 39% compared to only 12% of Labour voters – see welfare cuts as good not merely for the Exchequer or for the taxpayer, but good for claimants themselves, insofar as they reduce dependency. This is shown in chart 3.3.

Chart 3.3. The impact of welfare cuts on benefit claimants, by voting intention, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters and 242 Labour voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

Similarly, Pew Research in America has found that Republicans are nearly three times as likely as Democrats to think that government aid to the poor “does more harm than good by making people too dependent on government”.⁵⁷

However, there are also limitations to tackling dependency through financial means such as reducing the value of benefits. Dependency implies that benefit claimants are trapped as much by problematic habits and attitudes as they are by financial circumstances. This brings out the tension with the previous conception of claimants as rational agents. The policy implications of that view revolve around the way in which the system financially incentivises certain choices. By contrast, viewing claimants as dependent upon the system, the issue becomes less about the financial options facing individuals, less an issue of income maximisation, and more about tackling entrenched behaviour, habits and attitudes. For example, in a recent report from Policy Exchange, the authors argue that addressing the perverse incentives of the welfare system is not sufficient to overcome welfare dependency. What is also required is tackling the deep-seated attitudes of claimants.⁵⁸

In policy terms, one approach which has been advanced in this regard is that of workfare: compulsory work schemes for benefit claimants. While, as a form of conditionality, workfare has been justified on a number of grounds (as will be discussed in Chapter Four), one of these grounds has been that it is an antidote to the individual shortcomings bound up with being dependent upon the state. Conservative academic, Lawrence Mead, has argued that requiring claimants to work is critical to breaking the culture and intergenerational cycle of dependency. His views were key to the emergence of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families in America, which included a workfare component requiring claimants to undertake work activities: either subsidised employment, vocational training or

57. Pew Research, “Most see inequality growing, but partisans differ over solutions”.

58. Matthew Oakley and Peter Saunders, *No rights without responsibility* (London: Policy Exchange, 2011), 5.

community service.⁵⁹ In Britain, David Cameron recently announced plans for workfare for young people. Any 18 to 21 year old out of work for more than six months would be required to go on a community work scheme. This plan was justified on the basis of preventing dependency taking root at an early stage in adults' lives: "You can start a life on dependency and that is no life at all; that is no future for your children when you do have them. We are saying save the money, make sure after six months every one of those young people has to do a job or is in training."⁶⁰

In 2011, the Coalition Government launched the Troubled Families Programme, targeting 120,000 families with multiple, long-standing problems such as anti-social behaviour, worklessness, domestic violence and crime. The key premise of the programme was that such problematic behaviours and attitudes are commonly entrenched and concentrated in particular families, often becoming intergenerational. Though this government has implemented several cuts to welfare spending, in 2013 it was announced that the programme would receive extra funding and would be rolled out more widely.⁶¹

Ultimately, another central belief of conservatives is that benefit claimants are suffering from dependency and the problematic attitudes and entrenched behaviour this entails. The policy implication of this is that impoverishment cannot just be tackled by financial means, but also needs to tackle the behaviour and culture of these households.

59. Desmond King and Fiona Ross, "Critics and beyond" In *The Oxford handbook of the welfare state* eds. Francis Castles, Stephan Leibfried, Jane Lewis, Herbert Obinger and Christopher Pierson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 47.

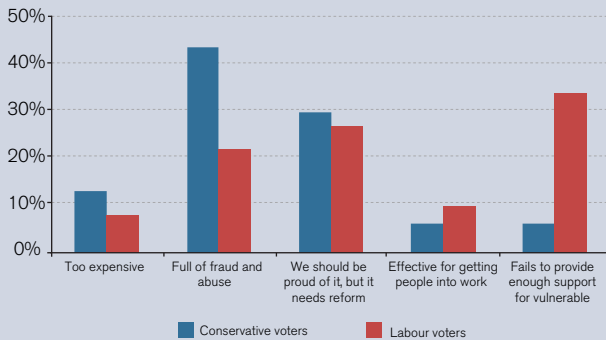
60. Patrick Wintour, "David Cameron unveils welfare changes in drive to end youth unemployment", *The Guardian*, 28 September 2014.

61. Department for Communities and Local Government, "Troubled Families Programme receives extra £200 million boost", <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/troubled-families-programme-receives-extra-200-million-boost> (2013).

A lack of trust

Conservatives exhibit a lack of trust in benefit recipients. This lack of trust takes a number of forms. Firstly, Conservative voters judge there to be a prevalence of welfare fraud and abuse. In our polling, 44% of Conservative voters chose “a system full of fraud and abuse” as the best description of the welfare state in the UK today, compared to 22% of Labour voters, as highlighted by Chart 3.4.

Chart 3.4. The best description of the welfare state in the UK today, by voting intention, according to Bright Blue polling



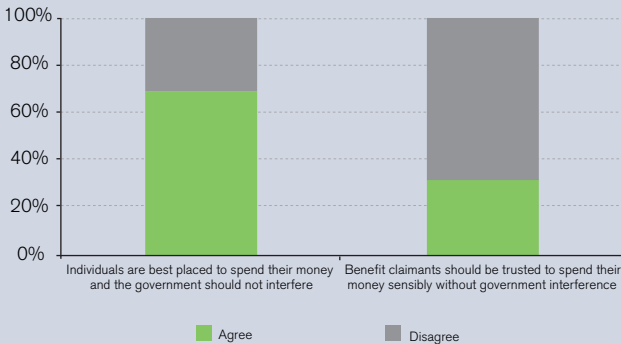
Base: 1307 Conservative voters and 242 Labour voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

This result is especially interesting since Conservative voters selected this option over alternatives which, *prima facie*, might be expected to appeal strongly to conservatives e.g. “a system that is too expensive”. Other surveys have underlined how Conservatives estimate a higher level of benefit fraud than non-Conservatives.⁶²

62. E.g. YouGov and TUC, “Survey results”, http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/xzmltcdt5i/YG-Archive-results-TUC-121212-welfare-benefits-knowledge.pdf (2012).

Lack of trust extends beyond the issue of fraud. Even for legitimate claimants, Conservatives harbour reservations about trusting them to spend their benefits appropriately. A recent Populus survey has found that 76% of Conservatives think that it is wrong that the majority of benefits are paid in cash rather than clothing or food vouchers. This compares with 53% of Labour voters.⁶³ As part of our polling, we asked two separate questions about trusting individuals to spend their money without government interference. As specified in Chart 3.5, in the first question, we asked about individuals generally, whereas in the second, we specified the subject as benefit claimants. While 69% of Conservative voters agreed that individuals generally are best placed to know how to spend their money, only 32% agreed that benefit claimants should be trusted to spend their money sensibly.

Chart 3.5. Proportion of Conservative voters who agree that individuals generally should be allowed to spend their money without interference, contrasted with proportion of Conservative voters who agree in the case of benefit claimants, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

63. Populus, "Welfare reform poll", http://www.populus.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/OmWelfare_Reform.pdf (2012).

The different responses we received in these two cases underline the tension in conservative thinking between wanting to treat individuals as rational agents, and yet seeing benefit claimants specifically as suffering from problematic habits and behaviours by being dependent. The latter view seems to imply that claimants cannot be trusted to spend money prudently.

This tension in conservative thinking is also exemplified by Iain Duncan Smith's announcement in autumn 2014 of the piloting of pre-paid benefit cards for some claimants instead of cash transfers. These cards will block purchases of certain items, such as alcohol and tobacco, thereby supporting "wellbeing" rather than "destructive habits".⁶⁴ Yet, this conflicts with many other government measures which have sought to encourage greater financial responsibility amongst claimants, such as the extension of personalised budgets (for example, for disability payments), or the decision to pay Universal Credit monthly in order to mirror typical employment conditions.

The third form which this lack of trust takes concerns claimants' willingness to seek work and fulfill their social responsibilities. Conservatives are especially supportive of conditionality: where certain responsibilities and obligations are imposed upon claimants in return for benefits. While conditionality, as discussed below, is also bound up with considerations of reciprocity, many conditions are about making sure claimants do what they should be doing, about checking up on them. Conservatives are more likely to support more stringent conditions with more punitive consequences for non-compliance.⁶⁵ Policy Exchange has proposed obliging job seekers to engage in job search in a 'full time' 35 hour capacity.⁶⁶ The Government has recently sought to codify and clarify the responsibilities claimants have to

64. Heather Saul, "Benefit 'smart cards' plan revealed by Iain Duncan Smith to stop claimants spending money on alcohol", *Independent*, 30 September, 2014.

65. O'Brien, *Just deserts*, 19-20.

66. Oakley et al., *No rights without responsibility*, 6.

return to work by introducing its Jobseeker's Allowance Claimant Commitment.

Essentially, one other strand of conservative thinking is that benefit claimants cannot be trusted in three respects: fraudulent claims are a significant reality; legitimate claimants will not spend their benefits appropriately; and claimants will not fulfill their social responsibilities without coercion.

Box 3.1. Mistrust of the system

As well as mistrusting benefit claimants, there is a mistrust of the welfare system itself to deliver effective provision. As Chart 3.4 shows, the majority of Conservatives believe the system is flawed in some way. The sheer scale of the bureaucracy underpinning the system, with the perception that it operates in a manner extremely detached from end-users, fuels the concern. For example, well-documented problems with IT-based projects such as the Universal Credit have heightened suspicion that the system cannot be relied upon, and is intractable to reform.⁶⁷ This mistrust of the system is connected to conservative views on the role of the state in providing welfare, which are the subject of Chapter Five.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have illustrated that there are five key principles and views in conservative thinking in relation to benefit claimants: that most claimants are and should be responsible for their lives; that there is a sharp distinction between the deserving and undeserving; that claimants are rational agents that respond to financial incentives; that claimants reliant on the state are suffering from dependency and exhibit

67. Nigel Stanley, "Tackling public attitudes", *Poverty*, 2013, 146: 9-13.

poor behaviour and values; and claimants cannot be trusted. Obviously, some of these beliefs are in tension with one another. Our purpose in this chapter was to provide a map of these contrasting views and principles in conservative thinking. Chapter Six provides a typology of different types of conservatives, who prioritise in their thinking specific views and principles we have identified here above others.

Chapter 4: **How conservatives think about the purpose of welfare**

In Chapter Three, we identified the main ways in which conservatives think of benefit claimants, and how these are related and sometimes contradictory. In this chapter, we turn to the views and principles of conservatives in relation to the purpose of welfare.

We will demonstrate that conservatives see two key functions for welfare: delivering reciprocity and promoting opportunities by providing people with the tools they need to flourish. We will explore these functions with reference to our own polling data and wider evidence.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity is the moral principle that what an individual receives should be related to what they have offered or given: ‘something for something’. That is, reward should be a function of behaviour. Reciprocity stands in contradistinction to any principle which determines reward on the basis of individuals’ status, such as their neediness.

There is considerable evidence that reciprocity is a principle especially valued by conservatives. For example, 84% of Conservative voters believe that fairness is about those who behave badly being punished and those who behave well being rewarded; only 49% of Labour supporters concur with this definition, the remainder

opting instead for one based upon equal distribution of resources.⁶⁸ When Conservatives talk about “fairness”, they are talking about reciprocity.

In fact, according to the psychologist, Professor Jonathan Haidt, this conservative emphasis upon reciprocity is rooted in conservatives’ moral psychology. Haidt argues that all human moral cognition is comprised of various encapsulated mental modules. These modules are: care for those in harm, liberty from repression, loyalty to the group, respect for authority, fairness as reciprocity, and the valuing of sanctity. For each individual, these various modules are more or less dominant.⁶⁹ He describes them as taste buds which are more or less sensitive in individual cases.

According to Haidt, conservatives differ from left-leaning, American liberals by drawing not only more often on all of these modules to form their moral judgments, but in particular, reciprocity. As such, Conservative voters’ emphasis upon reciprocity may be rooted in a distinctive moral psychology.

In terms of welfare, reciprocity can be realised in two ways: through contributory models (where welfare payments are related to past contributions through the tax system) and conditionality (where claimants are required to perform certain duties or obligations in return for benefits).

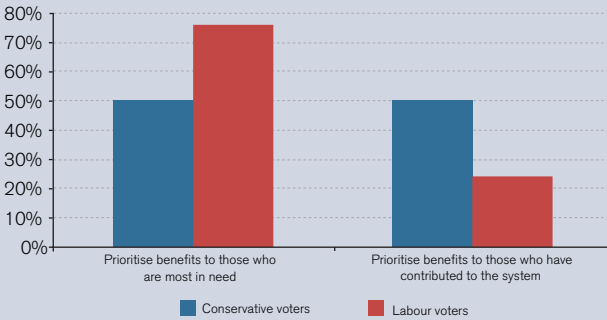
Contribution

Our polling found that Conservative voters have a greater desire for contributory state welfare.

68. O’Brien, *Just deserts*, 10.

69. Jonathan Haidt, *The righteous mind* (London: Penguin, 2011).

Chart 4.1. Benefits should be prioritised on the basis of contribution, or on the basis of need, by voting intention, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters and 242 Labour voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

Chart 4.1 illustrates the significant proportion of Conservative voters (50%), in stark contrast to Labour voters (24%), who opt for contributory state welfare. Moreover, the results are particularly interesting because respondents were explicitly asked whether benefits should be prioritised for claimants who have contributed even if they are not the ones most in need. In addition, as we illustrate later in this report in Chart 7.1, we also found that 67% of Conservatives agree that those who are unemployed and who have contributed in the past should receive more than those who have not contributed.

These findings are supported by other polling also. A recent YouGov and IPPR survey explored whether benefits should be targeted on the basis of need, contribution or universal right. Across all three kinds of benefit investigated – state pension, social housing and unemployment benefits – Conservatives overwhelmingly favoured targeting on the basis of contribution rather than on the basis of need or universal entitlement. In relation to unemployment benefits, YouGov polling has found that, for example, 66% of Conservatives favour focusing state

resources on the basis of contribution, while only 22% favour focusing on the basis of need.⁷⁰

Indeed, there is evidence that this may hold for non-British conservatives also. French conservatives, UMP voters, are over three times as likely as Parti Socialiste voters to say that the country's deficit should be tackled by restricting benefits to those who have contributed to the system.⁷¹

Clearly, a wealth of polling indicates significant Conservative support for contributory state welfare, markedly more so than amongst non-Conservatives.⁷² While it certainly does not follow from this that Conservatives would approve of an entirely contributory system or would support abolishing means-tested benefits altogether, contribution is clearly seen as an important consideration in determining welfare provision.

The conservative emphasis upon reciprocal contribution seems to lend itself to the starker separation of the deserving and undeserving observed in the previous chapter. If deservingness is about reciprocal contribution, a sharp differential follows between those who have reciprocated or who are unable to reciprocate (pensioners, the disabled) and those who are perceived to have not reciprocated (the unemployed, possibly immigrants). In other words, reciprocity may entail the hierarchy of deservingness already observed.

Interestingly, reciprocity was at the heart of Beveridge's vision for a welfare state: "Benefit in return for contributions, rather than free allowances from the state, is what the people of Britain desire... Payment of a substantial part of the cost of benefits as a contribution

70. YouGov and IPPR, "Survey results", http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/q2gwnjvtm/YG-IPPR-Archive-results-090812-Role-of-state-UK.pdf (2012).

71. YouGov and IPPR, "Survey results", http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/ltw4ahl3r/YG-IPPR-Archive-results-210812-Role-of-state-France.pdf (2012).

72. See also: Tom Sefton, "Moving in the right direction? Public attitudes to poverty, inequality and distribution" In *Towards a more equal society? Poverty inequality and policy since 1997* eds. John Hills, Tom Sefton and Kitty Stewart (Bristol: The Policy Press, 2009), 223-245.

irrespective of the means of the contributor is the firm basis of a claim to benefit irrespective of means.”⁷³

Perhaps in part because Beveridge is a venerated figure on both the right and left of the political spectrum, the voices calling for a more contributory system have cut across party lines.⁷⁴ Many conservative and non-conservative thinkers have come to regard more contribution as at least a partial remedy for falling support for state welfare.

Reciprocity can be identified in some of the Coalition Government’s thinking around welfare reform. For example, the Benefit Cap has been justified on the basis that it was “unfair” for households to receive more in benefits than average household earnings. In other words, it was justified on reciprocal grounds: roughly, those who are ‘paying in’ should not be rewarded less than those who are paying in less, or not at all.

However, while some of the Coalition’s policies have been justified on the basis of reciprocity, present and past Conservative governments have played an active role in eroding the reciprocity of welfare provision by reducing its contributory element. Since the 1980s, Britain’s welfare system has answered more and more to need rather than contribution. Margaret Thatcher’s government abolished the Earnings-Related Supplement to contributory unemployment and sickness benefits. In the 1990s, the duration of Contributory Jobseeker’s Allowance was limited to six months. The rise of tax credits under New Labour expanded the means-tested proportion of the working-age welfare bill considerably. Finally, the Coalition Government’s Welfare Reform Bill introduced a time limit on Contributory Employment Support Allowance, payments made to those with a disability, of twelve months for those in the Work-Related Activity Group, whereas there was no limit previously.

73. Beveridge, *Social insurance and allied services*, 11-12.

74. For instance, the Labour MP, Frank Field, has been a vocal advocate of a more contributory approach. See: Frank Field and Patrick White, *Help! Refashioning welfare reform to help fight the recession* (London: Reform, 2009).

Today, just 10% of working-age state welfare is spent on contributory benefits, down from over 40% in the late 1970s.⁷⁵ This erosion of contribution has been motivated, in part, by the need to reduce spending, focusing more limited resources upon those who need it most. As the DWP has recently stated, reducing welfare spending “to ensure that money is targeted on those most in need” serves to “help the UK’s challenging fiscal position”, but it conflicts with rewarding anyone who has happened to pay National Insurance.⁷⁶ There is therefore a tension between conservatives’ desire for reciprocity and the desire to limit the size of the state. The latter is discussed in Chapter Five.

Conditionality

Reciprocity is manifest in welfare systems not only where contribution is upheld, but also where some form of conditionality is prescribed. While contribution tracks claimants’ past reciprocal behaviour, conditionality focuses upon claimants’ current reciprocal behaviour.

While most voters support forms of conditionality, a recent YouGov and Policy Exchange poll has found that Conservative voters are more likely to opt for more stringent obligations. Ninety one percent of Conservative voters agree that those who have been out of work for 12 months or more should be obliged to undertake community work in return for their benefits, compared to 72% of Labour voters. Furthermore, Conservative voters are more in favour of strong sanctions for those on benefits who fail to undertake agreed steps for returning to work, with 86% agreeing that they should lose a large amount or all of their benefits, compared to 61% of Labour voters.⁷⁷ There is clearly

75. Steve Hughes, *Making contributions count* (London: Policy Exchange, 2014), 13.

76. Department for Work and Pensions, “Impact assessment: time limit Contributory Employment and Support Allowance to one year for those in the work-related activity group”, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/220156/eia-esa-time-limit-wr2011.pdf (2011).

77. YouGov and Policy Exchange, “Survey results”, http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/today_uk_import/yg-archives-fairness-policyexchange260411.pdf (2011).

a greater expectation amongst Conservative voters that considerable reciprocal behaviour should be expected of claimants – they should meet certain conditions – in return for their benefits.

Right-leaning organisations, such as Policy Exchange and the Taxpayers Alliance, have been at the vanguard of calls for more conditionality, such as sweeping workfare. Policy Exchange has proposed obliging jobseekers to engage in job search in a ‘full time’ weekly 35 hour capacity.⁷⁸

Since the 1990s, there has been a growth – originating in Brazil and Mexico – in Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) programmes. Here, claimants can only receive money if they take steps to improve their children’s attendance in school or health programmes. Meanwhile, conservative administrations in Wisconsin and in Australia have implemented various forms of compulsory work programmes – ‘workfare’ – as a condition of benefit receipt. John Howard’s ‘Work for the Dole’ programme in Australia, introduced in 1997, was driven by the idea that those receiving support from the state should give something back to the community.

In Britain, a key element of New Labour’s ‘third way’ was greater responsibilities for benefit claimants. The New Deal required those between the ages of 18 and 24 claiming Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) to undertake some form of training, education or voluntary work. The Coalition Government has expanded conditionality further. The Government has recently sought to codify and clarify the responsibilities claimants have to return to work by introducing its JSA Claimant Commitment. Lone parents with children between three and five are now required to undertake steps to “improve their readiness to work”,⁷⁹ while the Mandatory Work Activity Programme has imposed work upon some JSA claimants. Further plans

78. Oakley et al., *No rights without responsibility*, 6.

79. HM Treasury, “Spending round 2013”, https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/209036/spending-round-2013-complete.pdf (2013).

for workfare for 18 to 21 year olds out of work for more than 6 months have been recently announced by David Cameron.⁸⁰

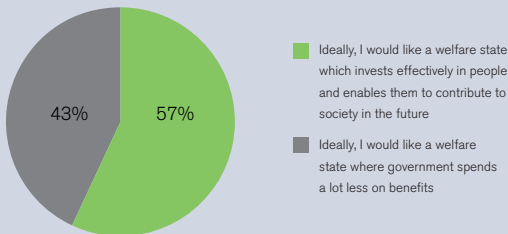
The principle of reciprocity – ‘something for something’ – is especially important to conservatives and possibly rooted in their distinctive moral psychology. As has been shown, conservatives believe that the benefits a claimant receives should be related to either past contributions or present conditional behaviour, or both.

Promoting opportunity

For conservatives, it is important that welfare should promote access to opportunities. It should be enabling: a means for individuals to get back on their feet and improve their own situation.

We asked Conservative respondents to choose between two possible welfare systems: one which costs less and one which enables individuals to contribute to society in the future. Despite the strong desire for less state expenditure on welfare, as discussed in Chapter Five, 57% chose the latter option, as illustrated in Chart 4.2.

Chart 4.2. Proportion of Conservative voters who prioritise state welfare being used to invest in people ahead of expenditure cuts, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

80. Patrick Wintour, “David Cameron unveils welfare changes in drive to end youth unemployment”, *The Guardian*, 28 September 2014.

Conservatives tend to prefer welfare support which takes the form of specific opportunities for individuals to get on in life, such as educational training, to that of cash transfers. A recent YouGov and IPPR poll showed that Conservative voters are more likely to support redirecting cash benefits for parents to childcare programmes: nurseries, childminders and Sure Start Centres.⁸¹ Given the choice, Conservative voters are also strongly in favour of denying young people access to cash benefits and spending the money instead upon greater access to education and opportunities for in-work training.⁸²

Evidently, promoting opportunity is not something valued uniquely by conservatives. Nevertheless, there are reasons for it featuring more prominently in conservative thinking around welfare. First, promoting opportunity is closely related to the conservative belief in individual responsibility and agency. Individuals have control over their outcomes and power to change their own circumstances. The role of the state therefore is not to manufacture outcomes for welfare recipients by redistributing wealth to them, but to provide them with opportunities to utilise their own resources.

For conservatives, ‘equality of opportunity’ is sufficient for individuals to attain fair outcomes. As Margaret Thatcher said: “what’s more desirable and more practicable than the pursuit of equality is the pursuit of equality of opportunity”.⁸³ By contrast, for many non-conservatives, social and economic conditions loom too large – the only way to ensure fairness is for the state to redistribute wealth and engineer outcomes and as a consequence, welfare must not merely be enabling, but redistributive or corrective. This difference is underlined in Chart 4.3. Seventy seven percent of Conservative voters favour a

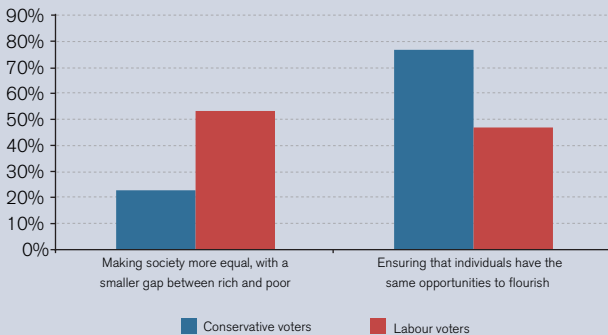
81. YouGov and IPPR, “Survey results”, <http://www.ippr.org/assets/media/images/media/files/publication/2013/09/yougov-ippr-results-130606-welfare.pdf> (2013).

82. Ibid.

83. Margaret Thatcher, *Speech to the Institute of Socioeconomic Studies: let our children grow tall*, 15 September, 1975.

welfare system that ensures individuals have the same opportunities to flourish over one which makes society more equal, compared to 47% of Labour voters.

Chart 4.3. Proportion of respondents who prefer a welfare system designed to deliver equal access to opportunities to one designed to make society more equal, by voting intention, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters and 242 Labour voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

Conservatives generally think that welfare should be enabling rather than corrective or redistributive. It should be a 'hand up, not a hand out'.

Second, promoting opportunity is also related to the conservative concern with dependency. Preferring the focused provision of opportunities to that of cash transfers is connected to the view that benefit claimants face challenges and obstacles which are not merely material: claimants are marked not merely by financial problems, but also by problematic habits and attitudes. For example, the CSJ has stressed that the root causes of poverty lie in educational failure, family breakdown, worklessness, debt, and drug and alcohol addiction.⁸⁴ Material poverty is, in certain respects, a symptom of these deeper

84. Centre for Social Justice, *Dynamic benefits*, 33.

problems which afflict individuals. On this analysis, the so-called 'poverty plus a pound' approach misses the mark. At best, cash transfers paper over the cracks; they do not tackle the fundamentals.

Indeed, it is for this reason that many conservative thinkers and politicians such as Rt Hon David Willetts MP and Neil O'Brien have argued against the current, material definition of child poverty as the prevailing measure.⁸⁵ This measure – those living in households with less than 60% of median equivalised income – defines poverty solely in terms of income and so encourages policy makers to 'solve' it by cash transfers. As the CSJ has put it though, the assumption that "because a child grows up in a household with an income more than 60 percent of the median, they will be fine is woefully mistaken".⁸⁶ By contrast, alternative definitions proposed have been broader, accounting for those habits, states and entrenched behaviours, such as parental drug addiction or alcoholism, which make children in those households vulnerable and in need of support.

All of this suggests that welfare which truly supports the vulnerable will not simply transfer cash or redistribute income, but will promote the opportunities claimants need to leave dependency behind. On this view, vulnerable individuals are trapped as much by their own habits and attitudes as by financial circumstances, and as such, welfare should promote focused and targeted opportunities which enable them to break out.

Third and finally, providing opportunity is connected to reciprocity since it can be understood as supporting people now so that they can contribute in the future through tax or other means. We might call

85. David Willetts, "The new contours of british politics" In *There is such a thing as society* ed. Gary Streeter (London: Politico's Publishing, 2002); Neil O'Brien, "Why we should change the child poverty target", *Policy Exchange Blog*, 13 June, 2012.

86. Tom Wardle and Ben Walker, "Setting the record straight: A CSJ response to the truth and lies and poverty report", [http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/Truth-and-lies-about-poverty---CSJ-response-\(3\).pdf](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/UserStorage/pdf/Pdf%20reports/Truth-and-lies-about-poverty---CSJ-response-(3).pdf) (2013).

this ‘forward-looking reciprocity’: a concern with what an individual contributes in the future, not only what they have contributed in the past through tax or in the present through meeting conditions.

In terms of the current Coalition Government’s policy programme, a significant realisation of the conservative concern with promoting opportunity has been its early years or early intervention agenda. There is a wide range of evidence which indicates that the most formative years for an individual – the years most important to a range of social and economic outcomes – are those before school age.⁸⁷ Comparing children from the top 20% of households to those in the bottom 20%, there are huge disparities in the likelihood of being able to read by the age of three, the amount of television watched, sporting activity undertaken and the likelihood of the mother suffering from illiteracy or innumeracy.⁸⁸ As such, promoting opportunities for children, particularly for children from deprived backgrounds, begins well before they utter their first word.⁸⁹

For example, the Family Nurse Partnership scheme, which provides tailored support for disadvantaged parents, has been extended.⁹⁰ Furthermore, even during a period of fiscal austerity, there has been extra support for childcare for those from more deprived backgrounds, such as free childcare for deprived two year olds for 15 hours a week.⁹¹ By contrast, child-related cash transfers such as Child Benefit

87. Graham Allen and Iain Duncan Smith, *Early intervention: good parents, great kids, better citizens* (London: Centre for Social Justice, 2008).

88. Neil O’Brien, “Rich children and poor children are living in different worlds. What can we do about it?”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 10 May, 2012.

89. The Centre for Social Justice has called for parents to have the opportunity of ‘front-loading’ their child benefit to ensure that parents are able to care for their children in the early “formative” years: Social Justice Policy Group, *Breakthrough Britain: economic dependency and worklessness* (London: Centre for Social Justice, 2007).

90. Department of Health, “Family Nurse Partnership programme to be extended”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/family-nurse-partnership-programme-to-be-extended> (2013).

91. Department for Education, “£755 million to double free childcare offer for 2-year olds”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/755-million-to-double-free-childcare-offer-for-2-year-olds> (2013).

and Child Tax Credit have been cut in real terms. When it comes to welfare provision, this Conservative-led government has prioritised investment in services above cash transfers.

As has been demonstrated, for conservatives, one key purpose of welfare is to promote access to opportunities in order to help and enable people to become financially independent. This concern with opportunities lends itself to a focus on services over cash transfers and more generally, to a belief that welfare is about more than money. As shown earlier in the chapter, what is also important for conservatives is reciprocity: that those who have contributed more should receive more from the welfare system.

Chapter 5: **How conservatives think about the sources of welfare**

In Chapter Four, we explored how conservatives think of the purpose of welfare: essentially, delivering reciprocity and promoting opportunity. In this chapter, we will review the leading views and principles that govern conservative thinking on various sources of welfare.

When most people talk about “welfare”, they tend to think of the welfare state: the support the state provides to people who are vulnerable. However, the sources of welfare available to people are multiple, including the family, charities and the wider community, as well as the state.

This chapter will show how conservatives view the role of the state, alongside demonstrating the greater emphasis they place on non-state sources for delivering welfare - specifically, a person’s wider family and wider community. These views and principles will be shown through the polling we have conducted and wider evidence.

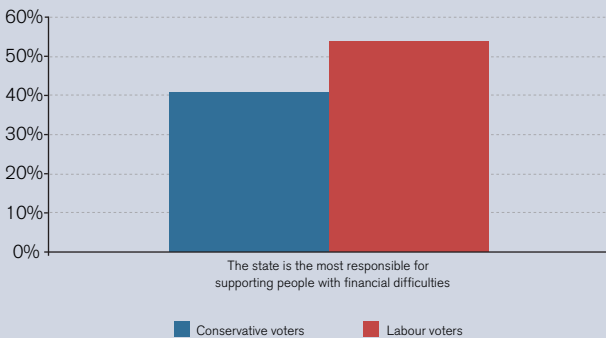
A small state

Conservatives favour a smaller state with a more circumscribed role. In a recent poll from YouGov and the Fabian Society, only 8% of Conservative voters wanted higher taxes to maintain and improve public services; 35%

approved of lower taxes and a corresponding narrower range of public services, compared to only 14% of Labour voters.⁹²

This preference for a smaller state has implications for conservative views of the state as a source of welfare. Our polling showed that Conservative voters are less inclined to see the state as primarily responsible for supporting people in financial difficulty, as illustrated in Chart 5.1. In fact, a majority of Labour supporters (54%) see the state as the most responsible for supporting people with financial difficulties, whereas only a minority of Conservative supporters do (41%).

Chart 5.1. Proportion of respondents who, given the choice of the state, families, charities, neighbours and friends, and the local community, choose the state as most responsible for supporting people with financial difficulties, by voting intention, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters and 242 Labour voters

Part of this desire for a small state can be traced to a desire for lower taxes. Conservatives are generally more likely to support tax cuts and a reduced tax burden overall. As Margaret Thatcher said in 1975: “It’s the Labour Government that have brought us record peacetime

92. YouGov and Fabian Society, “Survey results”, http://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/xqzac41b6x/YG-Archives-Pol-FabianSociety-AttitudestoState-100412.pdf (2012).

taxation. They've got the usual Socialist disease – they've run out of other people's money."⁹³

Beyond the desire for lower taxes, some of the contemporary conservative fixation with a small state in Britain can be traced to Freidrich von Hayek's warnings against state intervention and influence in the economic sphere. His ideas were "gathering momentum" within the Conservative Party throughout the post-war period.⁹⁴ On Hayek's advice, Anthony Fischer launched the Institute for Economic Affairs in 1955, which espoused the economic advantages of a small state.⁹⁵ In 1974, Keith Joseph founded the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS) charged with "converting the Conservative Party" to a more Hayekian outlook.⁹⁶ In 1975, the Vice Chairman of the CPS, Margaret Thatcher, was elected leader of the Conservative Party. This resulted in Hayekian opposition to an interventionist state dominating conservative thinking since the 1980s.

That the state's role in the economy should be as limited as possible is perhaps the key tenet of libertarianism, and during this period, libertarian thinking was prominent within British conservatism, but also American conservatism under the presidency of Ronald Reagan. He said: "I believe that the very heart of conservatism is libertarianism... a desire for less government interference or centralised authority and more individual freedom."⁹⁷

Conservative governments on both sides of the Atlantic sought to reduce the role of the state in the economy. Under Margaret Thatcher, UK government spending fell from 45% of GDP to under 40% by 1990.⁹⁸

93. Margaret Thatcher, *Speech to Conservative Party Conference*, 1975.

94. King et al., "Critics and beyond", 47.

95. Ibid.

96. Jerry Muller, *The mind and market: capitalism in western thought* (United States: Anchor Books, 2007), 378.

97. Ronald Reagan, *Interview with Reason magazine*, July, 1975.

98. Peter Hoskin, "The public finances under Margaret Thatcher and under the Coalition – compared", *ConservativeHome*, 17 October, 2012.

Conservative opposition to a large state and high taxes is founded upon more than economic considerations. For many conservative thinkers, the central case against a large state is a social one. It has become common amongst conservative commentators and politicians to differentiate the state from society.⁹⁹ Drawing upon a deep tradition of civic conservatism or communitarianism, led by philosophers such as Edmund Burke, society is understood in terms of civic institutions and structures: churches, families, communities and other voluntary groups.¹⁰⁰ This vision has been central to David Cameron's 'Big Society'. A large state is seen as separate from, and disruptive to, this civic order. Because it is impersonal, bureaucratic and operates at a great distance, its expansion is seen to crowd out civic life.¹⁰¹ Indeed, according to Danny Kruger, David Cameron's former speechwriter, the idea that a large state is inimical to a healthy society is one of the fundamental pillars of conservatism.¹⁰²

The aim of shrinking the state has been especially significant for the Coalition Government which has argued for the need for austerity, and with welfare spending rising under the previous Labour government as a proportion of GDP,¹⁰³ the drive towards a smaller state has had an especially significant impact upon welfare policy and reform. As the

99. Oliver Letwin, "For Labour there is no such thing as society, only the state" In *There is such a thing as society* ed. Gary Streeter (London: Politico's Publishing, 2002); David Willetts, "The new contours of british politics" In *There is such a thing as society* ed. Gary Streeter (London: Politico's Publishing, 2002), 59.

100. David Willetts, *Civic conservatism* (London: Social Market Foundation, 1994).

101. The question of whether the state can enable, rather than stifle, elements of civic life will be explored in the subsequent sections.

102. Danny Kruger, "Love, money and time: how to grow civil society" In *What's right now: conservative essays on the role of civil society, markets and the state* ed. John Tate (London: Social Market Foundation, 2005).

103. Matthew Holehouse, "Welfare spending: how Britain outstrips Europe", *The Daily Telegraph*, 15 January, 2014; Randeep Ramesh, "Welfare budget faces £10bn cut by 2016", *The Guardian*, 21 March, 2012.

current Chancellor of Exchequer has said: “Government is going to have to be permanently smaller and so too is the welfare system.”¹⁰⁴

The Coalition’s up-rating of benefits has been limited to 1%, equating to a cut in real terms, and the total value of benefits a single, out-of-work household can receive has been capped at £500 per week, with plans to limit this further after 2015. The Government has also introduced a cap on the Department for Work and Pension’s Annually Managed Expenditure (AME), which is primarily comprised of working-age benefits and pensions. George Osborne has announced further spending cuts to welfare worth £12 billion, to be imposed after the 2015 General Election.¹⁰⁵

Influenced by libertarian and communitarian thinking, a fundamental conservative principle is that welfare provided by the state ought to be limited.

The importance of families

Families are arguably the most significant sources of welfare, despite the common perception that welfare is to do with government benefits. Patricia Morgan calls intra-household support the “first line of welfare in society”,¹⁰⁶ and this support extends well beyond support for children. It has been found that 55% of people report receiving financial support as an adult from a parent, and that this ‘bank of mum and dad’ is just as common – although different in purpose and size – among low-income families as it is among more affluent families.¹⁰⁷

Our polling found that Conservative voters are more likely to hold families as primarily responsible for helping those in financial difficulty than non-Conservatives. In fact, as Chart 5.2 demonstrates,

104. Joe Murphy, “George Osborne pledges £12bn more welfare cuts in two years after general election”, *London Evening Standard*, 6 January, 2014.

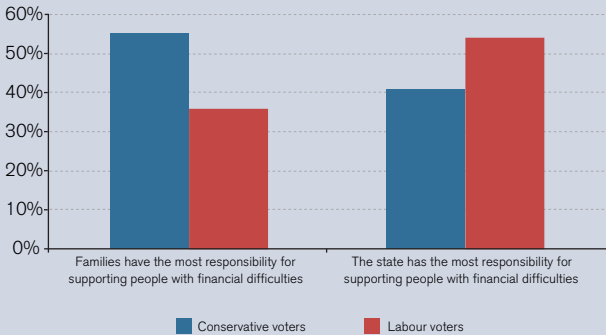
105. Nicholas Watt and Rowena Mason, “Cabinet split over George Osborne’s plan for 12bn more welfare cuts”, *The Guardian*, 6 January, 2014.

106. Morgan, *The war between the state and the family*, 79.

107. Shorthouse, *Family fortunes*.

a majority of Conservative voters (54%) believe that families are the most important source of welfare, in contrast to Labour voters who opt instead for the state (54%).

Chart 5.2. Proportion of respondents who, given the choice of the state, families, charities, neighbours and friends, and the local community, choose either the state or families as the most responsible for supporting people with financial difficulties, by voting intention, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters and 242 Labour voters

Families often feature in conservative thought as at the forefront of ‘civic society’. The conservative thinker, Phillip Blond, invokes Edmund Burke’s description of families as ‘little platoons’, where members support each other and those around them.¹⁰⁸ Many conservative commentators have warned against the erosion of the family unit, with the state seen as a pivotal agent in this.¹⁰⁹ Key to this view has been the so-called ‘couple penalty’: by assessing benefit entitlement on the basis of household income, couples can be incentivised to live apart.¹¹⁰ The

108. Phillip Blond, “Rise of the red Tories”, *Prospect*, 28 February, 2009.

109. Phillip Blond, “The post-liberal agenda”, *The ResPublica fringe magazine*, 2012.

110. Morgan, *The war between the state and the family*, 75; see also: Melanie Phillip, “It’s not just absent fathers, Mr Cameron. Family breakdown is driven by single mothers on benefits”, *The Daily Mail*, 20 June, 2011.

problem has been explicitly recognised by the Conservative Party itself: “What kind of values are we transmitting when the state, through the benefit system, actively discourages couples from getting together and staying together to bring up their children?”¹¹¹

As well as destabilising stable family relationships, the state has also been accused of supplanting the role of the family by providing support that has traditionally been the preserve of the family. It has been argued that higher levels of state spending displace existing family support networks. Kathy Gyngell, Co-Editor of *The Conservative Women*, has argued that George Osborne’s announced tax break of up to £2000 for childcare per child “drowns out” homecare of children.¹¹² Jill Kirby, a conservative commentator, has accused the state of “nationalising the upbringing of children”.¹¹³ Instead, she urges that beyond the prevention of abuse or neglect, the state should not be involved in providing or regulating childcare at all.¹¹⁴

The theme of state-family opposition or, indeed, “war” is not the only relationship that has interested conservatives. While the acts of the state are capable of undermining families, they are also capable of complementing and supporting stable family life. Our polling showed that a firm majority of Conservative voters (69%) agree that the government should be doing more to encourage stable families, illustrated in Chart 5.3. Perhaps surprisingly, considering a general preference for a smaller state, fewer Conservative supporters (31%) mentioned that the state should not interfere in families than Labour supporters (44%).

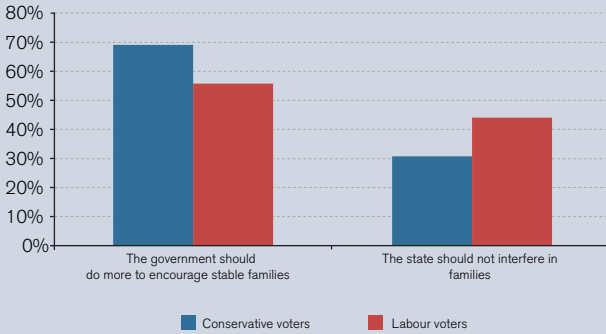
111. The Conservative Party, *Work for welfare: policy green paper no. 3*, https://www.conservatives.com/~media/files/green%20papers/welfare_policy_paper.ashx?dl=true (2008), 9.

112. Kathy Gyngell, “George Osborne nails his colours to the socialists’ childcare mast”, *Conservative women*, 18 March, 2014.

113. Jill Kirby, *The nationalisation of childcare* (London: Centre for Policy Studies, 2006).

114. Jill Kirby, “Childcare policy should start with children”, *ConservativeHome*, 17 October, 2012.

Chart 5.3. The government should do more to encourage stable families, by voting intention, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters and 242 Labour voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

Conservative thinkers and organisations have proposed ways in which the state could be doing more to encourage stable families through the welfare system. For example, the Social Market Foundation has argued that grandparents who provide significant childcare ought to be exempt from the reduction of the Spare Bedroom Subsidy and has proposed the creation of tax efficient, multi-generational family tax funds which would encourage families to collaborate financially and pool resources.¹¹⁵

Strengthening families through considerate policies has been a key part of David Cameron's 'Big Society' vision: "For years, government hasn't talked about families, hasn't understood the importance of support at the vital times, hasn't valued commitment...If we're serious about supporting families, this is what needs to change."¹¹⁶

Perhaps the most iconic measure in this regard has been the Transferrable Tax Allowance for Married Couples, which will recognise marriage in the tax system and provide a financial benefit where one

115. Shorthouse, *Family fortunes*.

116. David Cameron, *Speech to Relate*, 10 December, 2010.

spouse stays at home, perhaps to look after children. This measure has the firm approval of Conservative voters, according to a recent poll from YouGov and the Sun.¹¹⁷ In addition to this, the Coalition Government has increased financial support for low-income people in particular to be able to access parenting classes.¹¹⁸

Clearly, compared to state welfare, conservatives are more positive about that provided by the family, and there are a number of possible explanations for this. First, conservatives believe that families – grounded in marriage in particular – are not just a value-neutral social arrangement, but enshrine and uphold values which ought to be treasured and imparted to children, such as commitment, love and duty. As the conservative writer Melanie Phillips has argued, “The traditional family is sacred because it embodies the idea that there is something beyond the selfish individual.”¹¹⁹ Conservative commentators point to evidence that suggests the ‘traditional family unit’ is associated with the best life outcomes for children, whereas family breakdown and fragmentation are associated with higher levels of unemployment, crime and educational failure for children in the future.¹²⁰

The second explanation of conservative support for family welfare is that it is personal in a way that state provision is not. It consists of interactions between people, rather than of procedures operating at a distance.

Bartholomew notes that though claimants of state welfare may well be treated with “civility”, they are unlikely to receive “goodwill”.¹²¹ This may

117. YouGov and the Sun, “Survey results”, http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/b19u9tkor0/YG-Archive-Pol-Sun-results-300913-Conservative-policies.pdf (2013).

118. Department for Education, “Government trials parenting classes for all parents of children under 5”, <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-trials-parenting-classes-for-all-parents-of-children-under-5> (2011).

119. Melanie Phillips, “Why the left hates families: Melanie Phillips reveals how the selfish sneers of guardianistas made her see how the left actively fosters – and revels in – family breakdown”, *Mail Online*, 3 May, 2013.

120. Fraser Nelson, “David Cameron believes in marriage – so why doesn’t he support it?”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 May, 2013.

121. Bartholomew, *The welfare state we’re in*, 44.

be especially important to conservatives because, as already discussed, the purpose of welfare tends to be understood in less materialistic terms, and more bound up with educational failure, a lack of opportunities and a poverty of aspiration. Whereas a material conception of poverty can perhaps be redressed at a distance by state transfers, these less material issues seem to entail a more personal approach. For instance, as the Conservative Cabinet Minister Oliver Letwin MP has argued: “One-dimensional state benefits can compensate for the breadwinning role of an absent father but the state cannot also be a role model for the child or a source of emotional support and care for the child’s mother.”¹²²

Finally, conservative approbation of family welfare may have to do with how it enshrines clear lines of responsibility between those who receive support and those who provide it. In families, there are visible lines of obligations and duties holding of particular individuals. This is clearly not the case with regard to state support. As Professor Alan Wolfe commented: “...although the fates of everyone in general linked, the fates of each in particular are not”.¹²³

It is precisely this reliance upon a distant collective, where there are no clear lines of responsibility, which conservatives consider to be so corrosive to individuals and symptomatic of dependency. By contrast, in linking particular individuals together in webs of mutual obligations and responsibility, family support might be seen to constitute something quite different: interdependency rather than dependency. For example, Morgan argues that the responsibilities which members of a family bear toward one another provide impetus to seek work.¹²⁴

Of course, even interdependency is in tension with another conservative principle we have identified: personal responsibility and people being self-reliant. For example, young adults receiving assistance from their families

122. Letwin, “For Labour there is no such thing as society, only the state”, 49.

123. Alan Wolfe, “Welfare states and moral obligation: the case of Scandinavia”, *Politica*, 1989, 21(2): 149-64.

124. Morgan, *The war between the state and the family*, 38.

with housing costs – even, as is increasingly the case, living at home with their parents – reduces the personal responsibility they are taking for their own affairs. There is therefore an interesting tension between these two strands of conservative thinking around welfare. On the one hand, family welfare is a preferable means of delivering welfare since it amounts to interdependency rather than dependency. Nevertheless, in some cases this will conflict with another important conservative principle: that individuals should take personal responsibility for their own affairs. We discuss this tension further in Chapter Six.

Ultimately, welfare provided by families and within the family unit has a special value for conservatives, amounting to interdependency rather than dependency. While the actions of the state have sometimes undermined family welfare, there is increasing interest in how the state can bolster and strengthen support provided by families.

Active communities

If families are at the forefront of civic conservatism, communities are not far behind. Conservatives tend to prefer support which is delivered at the level of the community and which involves voluntary collaboration between individuals. A recent YouGov survey found that when asked about the Big Society – which is explicitly described as “giving more power to local communities and people” and “taking more power away from government and allowing voluntary groups and communities to run public services” - 67% of Conservative voters agreed that it is a good idea. This contrasts with only 27% of Labour supporters.¹²⁵

There is evidence that in America, conservatives do more to support voluntary and charitable organisations than non-conservatives. For example, self-described liberals under thirty in America belong to a

125. YouGov, “Survey results”, http://cdn.yougov.com/cumulus_uploads/document/umga6aoifa/Results%20120301%20Big%20Society.pdf (2012). Although some of this difference may be due to the fact that the Big Society is a Conservative policy approach, the very large differential between Labour and Conservative supporters indicates that beliefs about the role of the community and voluntary sectors are also playing a key role here.

third fewer organisations in their communities than self-described conservatives of the same age.¹²⁶ Similarly, liberals in America give less to charity both as a proportion of their income and in gross terms – 30% less in gross terms – than conservatives.¹²⁷

A number of conservative thinkers, adopting a historical perspective, have lamented how much support which was once provided for, and operated at, the level of the community has been replaced by that of the state. In the late nineteenth century, over five million people were enrolled with friendly societies.¹²⁸ These organisations pooled risk, generally at a local level and between people who were known to each other, insuring for medical care, unemployment and old age. James Bartholomew has bemoaned how, beginning with Lloyd George's National Insurance Act of 1911 and subsequent reforms in the post-war period, state expansion coincided with the demise of these friendly societies.¹²⁹ On this view, a smaller state is required in order to allow community support to flourish.

It is not surprising that some conservatives have seen the recent need for fiscal re-entrenchment and the political will for lower public welfare expenditure as an opportunity to increase the role of non-government providers. As conservative commentator Tim Montgomerie has argued: "When there's no more [government] money there has to be more family. More voluntarism. More charity. More social enterprise."¹³⁰

There are several reasons for conservative support for community and charity provision of welfare. In many respects, welfare provided by communities and on a voluntary basis is more akin to that of the family

126. Arthur Brooks, *Who really cares: the surprising truth about compassionate conservatism* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 22.

127. *Ibid.*, 21.

128. Christie Davies, "Crime and the rise and decline of a relational society" In *Relational justice: re-pairing the breach* eds. Jonathan Burnside and Nicola Baker (Winchester: Waterside Press, 1994), 36.

129. Bartholomew, *The welfare state we're in*, Chpt. 2.

130. Tim Montgomerie, "We Tories must conserve our compassion", *The Guardian*, 7 December, 2011.

than that of the state. Community support can be highly personal, face-to-face and operate at a small distance. As such, it may be seen as capable of the richer forms of support conservatives feel welfare should be offering. For example, Iain Duncan Smith has argued that communities and charities provide not only material security, but a sense of identity and belonging which the state is incapable of.¹³¹ Similarly, people within a community may be better placed to understand the opportunities that are available to those needing support than a distant state. Again, this ties back into to the conservative idea that poverty – and the related conditions which are the objects of welfare – is not merely a material problem, but a behavioural one which requires a more personal approach.

Furthermore, charity and community support may be seen as constituting interdependency. Although the lines of obligation between those who provide support and those who receive it will seldom be as visible as in families, there can still be a strong sense of agents taking responsibility for the welfare of individuals in their community or for groups of people who are struggling in a particular way, and recipients being obligated in turn. As David Cameron has argued: “The once natural bonds that existed between people – of duty and responsibility – have been replaced with the synthetic bonds of the state – regulation and bureaucracy.”¹³²

While recipients of community support are still in a state of ‘reliance’, these webs of mutual obligation may distinguish this from the state of dependency that conservatives regard as dangerous and ‘corrosive’. Dependency arises only with the “synthetic bonds” of the state.

A third possible reason for conservative approval of community and voluntary support is that it is something agents choose to engage in. Whereas welfare provided by the state is not something individuals are

131. Iain Duncan Smith, “The renewal of society” In *There is such a thing as society* ed. Gary Streeter (London: Politico’s Publishing, 2002), 34.

132. David Cameron, *Speech on poverty: Hugo Young lecture*, 10 November, 2009.

fully responsible for – taxes are coercive and so not “acts of compassion” – individuals are responsible for charity and voluntary undertakings.¹³³ Given the importance of agency and responsibility for conservatives, this could prompt a higher valuation of support which individuals choose to offer.

The relationship between the state and community welfare has not only been conceived of as one of competition. In recent years, much conservative thinking has centred upon how the state can support community and voluntary activism and boost its role in the provision of welfare. For instance, in a recent Taxpayers Alliance report, it is proposed that the state implement a form of workfare according to which claimants would work for charities or undertake community work such as cleaning parks.¹³⁴ Policy Exchange has proposed to break-up Jobcentre Plus centres in order to broaden the scope for charities and social enterprises to provide employment support services.¹³⁵

Boosting community activism and volunteering has been at the heart of David Cameron’s Big Society vision. In 2011, the Coalition Government launched the National Citizens Service, involving 16 and 17 year olds in volunteering and community action projects. The participation rate has risen sharply since and in 2015 there will be 150,000 places available.¹³⁶ Relatedly, the Coalition government has sought to contract welfare programmes, such as the Work Programme and Work Choice, out to third party organisations, including charities and social enterprises. Indeed, David Cameron has declared that the voluntary sector should be thought of as the “first sector”.¹³⁷

133. Thomas Sowell, “Who really cares?”, *Real clear politics*, 28 November, 2006.

134. Chris Philp, *Work for the dole* (London: Taxpayers Alliance, 2013).

135. Guy Miscampbell and Ruth Porter, *Joined up welfare* (London: Policy Exchange, 2014).

136. Theo Merz, “National citizen service: training the citizens of tomorrow”, *The Daily Telegraph*, 30 April, 2014.

137. David Cameron, “Foreword” In *A stronger society: policy green paper no. 5* (London: The Conservative Party, 2008), 4.

This chapter has shown that conservatives believe that welfare provided by the family in particular – but also the local community and charitable organisations - is generally preferable to state welfare. An important consequence of this for public policy is that, where possible, the state should support family welfare and state welfare services should be out-sourced to charities and social enterprises.

Chapter 6: **Variation amongst conservatives**

So far, we have unearthed an assortment of conservative views and principles on welfare by drawing upon the responses of Conservative voters and contrasting these with those of non-Conservative voters. However, Conservative voters are obviously not a homogenous group. This raises the question of how, and to what degree, these principles and views vary amongst Conservative voters.

Our polling revealed interesting differences among Conservative voters according to the following characteristics: age, social class, region and experience of the welfare system. In the initial part of this chapter, we will show how acceptance of conservative views and principles among Conservative voters vary according to these characteristics along the dimensions we introduced in this report: views of benefit claimants, the purpose of welfare and sources of welfare.

The final part of the chapter will develop a new typology of different conservatives, showing how views and principles on welfare among conservatives vary according to two groups: social and economic conservatives.

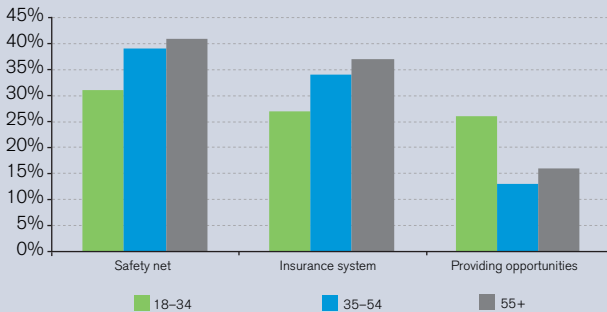
Age

The age of Conservative voters has an impact upon how the purpose of welfare is viewed.

As Chart 6.1 demonstrates, older Conservative voters are more likely to see the primary purpose of welfare as either that of a safety net to

protect anyone from falling into severe poverty (39% of 35-54 year olds and 41% of 55+ year olds) or an insurance system which people contribute to in order to protect themselves against future risks (34% of 35-54 year olds and 37% of 55+ year olds). These two purposes had markedly less appeal for the 18-34 age group, with only 31% choosing 'safety net' and 27% choosing 'insurance system', many of whom saw the purpose of welfare to be that of providing opportunities for struggling people to improve their own circumstances (26%).

Chart 6.1. The primary purpose of welfare according to Conservative voters, by age, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

This data suggests two conclusions. First, young Conservatives are less attracted to traditional ways of conceiving of the purpose of welfare. Since Beveridge, the two most prominent models of state welfare have been that of social insurance, a means of hedging against future risks such as illness and unemployment, and that of a safety net, protecting anyone from falling into severe poverty. While the system has always been too complex to fully realise either of these models, they have been at the heart of public discourse about welfare, and have each – in different respects – envisioned a major role for the state in providing systematic and significant support for the vulnerable. While

these models still have a clear resonance for older Conservatives, this diminishes for younger Conservatives.

Second, the polling also indicates that the diminished appeal of a ‘safety net’ or ‘insurance system’ amongst young Conservative voters is largely offset by a greater preference for conceiving of welfare as providing opportunities for people to improve their circumstances, a principle which we discussed in Chapter Four. As shown in Chart 6.1, nearly double the number of 18-34 year old Conservatives, compared to older age groups, believe the primary purpose of welfare is to provide opportunities.

The age of Conservative voters also has an impact upon how different sources of welfare provision are viewed.

Our polling showed that 18-34 year old Conservative voters are less supportive of the state as a provider of welfare than older Conservatives, as illustrated by Chart 6.2. Only 30% of 18-34 year old Conservatives believe the state is primarily responsible for supporting people in financial difficulty compared to 43% of Conservatives aged 55 or over.

Chart 6.2. Proportion of Conservative voters who, given the choice of the state, families, charities, neighbours and friends, and the local community, choose the state or the family as the most responsible for supporting people with financial difficulties, by age, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

As well as seeing the state as less responsible for providing support, the 18–34 year old Conservative cohort also saw the state as less effective at providing it than older Conservative groups. Given the choice of the state, families, charities, neighbours and friends, and the local community as most effective at providing financial support, 35% of this Conservative age group selected the state, compared to 43% of 35–54 year olds and 45% of those aged 55 or above.

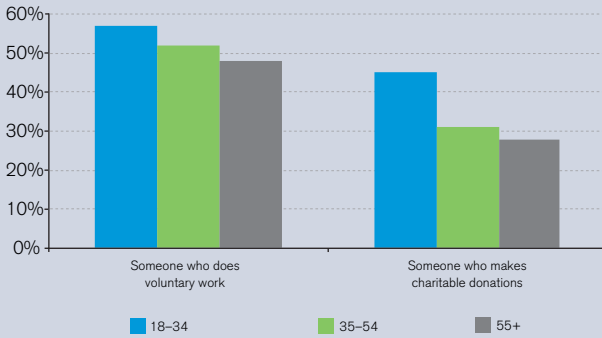
Younger Conservatives are more against the state as a primary source of welfare than older Conservatives, and this reflects other research which has shown that young people as a whole, irrespective of voting intention, have less pride in the welfare state than their parents and are much more likely to agree that the state should do less when it comes to welfare.¹³⁸

Our polling suggested that this wariness of the state among young Conservatives may correspond to a greater enthusiasm for alternative sources of welfare. First, as Chart 6.2 indicates, 18–34 year old Conservatives are slightly more likely than those Conservatives who are 35–54 or 55+ to see the family as most responsible for supporting those in financial difficulty – 58% compared to 51% and 55% respectively.

Younger Conservatives also placed a greater value upon volunteering and charity. For example, we found that they were more likely to consider voluntary work (57%) and charitable donations (45%) as constituting a ‘contribution’ to the system than older generations of Conservative voters. This is illustrated in Chart 6.3.

138. Duffy et al., *Generation strains*.

Chart 6.3. Proportion of Conservative voters who agree that someone should count as a contributor to the system, by age, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters

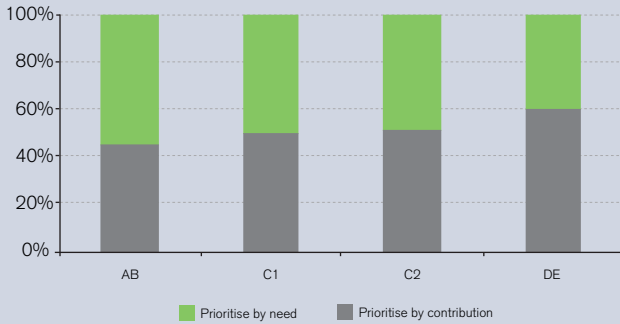
This emphasis laid upon charity and volunteering by young Conservatives suggests that their attitudes are more in tune with the Conservative Party's 'Big Society' vision. At the heart of this vision are active communities and a greater emphasis upon volunteering.

Social class

The social class of Conservative voters has an impact on how the purpose of welfare is conceived of and understood.

Our polling showed that those of a lower social class tend to be more supportive of contributory welfare than those of other social classes, as underlined by Chart 6.4. Sixty percent of Conservatives in the lowest social class prefer benefits to be prioritised on the basis of contribution compared to 45% in the highest social class.

Chart 6.4. Benefits should be prioritised on the basis of contribution, rather than need, according to Conservative voters, by social class, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

This result is interesting because it invalidates the idea that concern with contribution is the preserve of those most detached from, and least likely to have need of, the benefit system. Conservative voters classed as DE were the most likely to be personally receiving one or more benefits. Furthermore, as low earners, eligibility for means-tested benefits in circumstances of unemployment or illness would be higher for DE respondents. Despite this, DE Conservative voters exhibit greater support for contributory welfare than those of other social classes.

Region

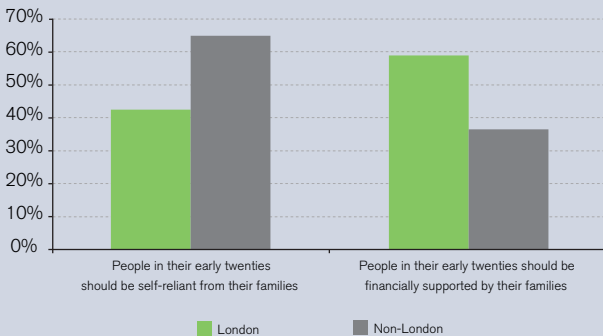
Region of habitation has an impact upon how Conservative voters prioritise a key tension in conservative thinking, relating to both the view of benefit claimants and sources of welfare.

As we highlighted in Chapter Five, conservatives see a special value in family welfare but this is, if not contradictory of, at least in tension with the conservative principle that people ought to be personally responsible. In order to explore this tension, we asked respondents

whether people in their early twenties should be financially self-reliant from their families or whether people in their early twenties are in a transition stage and should receive financial support from their families.

We found that there was a significant difference in responses to this question between those Conservative voters residing in London and those residing elsewhere in the UK. As Chart 6.5 shows, while a clear majority of Conservative voters outside of London (63%) agreed that individuals in their early twenties should be self-reliant, only a minority of Londoners agreed (42%), instead judging that these people should be supported by their family.

Chart 6.5. Proportion of Conservative voters who agree that people in their early twenties should be financially self-reliant from their families, contrasted with the proportion who agree that they should be financially supported by their families, by region, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

With regard to the tension between individual responsibility and family welfare therefore, London Conservatives appear to be exceptional in the degree of importance they place upon the latter.

This difference is likely due to the higher costs which young people face in London, including housing and transport, compared to those outside of London. This makes financial self-reliance more challenging, and may well serve to encourage greater acceptance amongst London-based Conservative voters that individuals in their early twenties need financial support. This is an interesting example of individual experience of the local environment influencing the acceptance of certain views and principles.

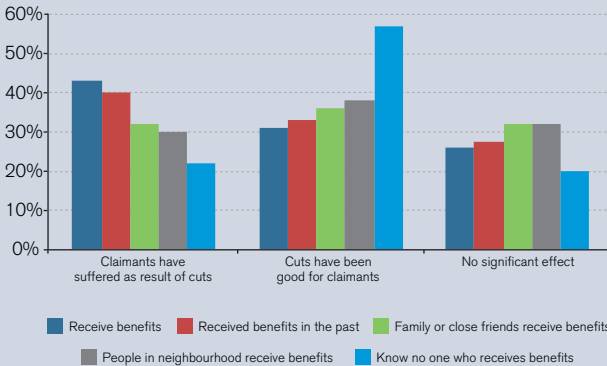
Personal experience

The experience which Conservative voters have had of the welfare system has an impact upon how claimants are viewed.

All respondents were categorised as either: personally receiving benefits, having personally received benefits in the past, having close friends or family who receive benefits, having people in their neighbourhood who receive benefits or knowing no one who receives benefits. These categories provided a spectrum from most experience of benefits to least.

Our polling indicated that Conservative voters with most experience of benefits were most likely to believe that claimants have suffered as a result of welfare cuts. As Chart 6.6 highlights, the proportion of respondents agreeing that cuts have caused suffering was positively correlated with personal experience of benefits. By contrast, the proportion of respondents agreeing that the cuts have been good for claimants was inversely related to personal experience, with those with least experience much more likely to agree (57%), and those with most experience least likely (31%).

Chart 6.6. The impact of welfare cuts upon benefit claimants, irrespective of the need to cut public expenditure, according to Conservative voters, by personal experience, according to Bright Blue polling

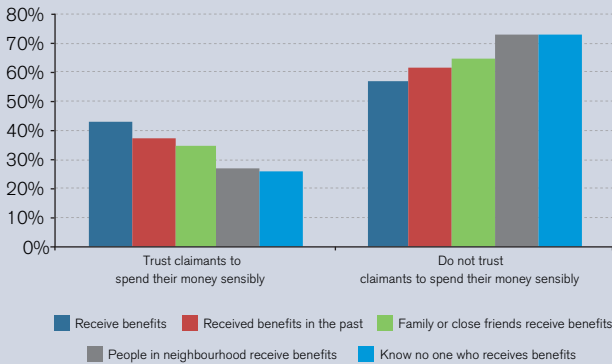


Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

This data may suggest that perceptions of dependency are greater for those Conservative voters at a greater distance from benefits. Cutting welfare may be good for claimants if they are perceived as trapped by a psychology and culture of dependency. By contrast, those with more experience straightforwardly see a cut in welfare as damaging for claimants.

Furthermore, we found that Conservative voters with most personal experience of benefits were more likely to trust claimants to spend their money sensibly (43%). By contrast, those with least experience of benefits had least trust in this regard (26%), as illustrated by Chart 6.7. Nevertheless, it is significant, and perhaps surprising, that even for Conservative voters who themselves receive benefits a clear majority (57%) do not think that claimants will spend their money sensibly.

Chart 6.7. Proportion of Conservative voters who agree that benefit claimants can be trusted to spend their money sensibly without government interference, by personal experience, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

Ultimately therefore, experience of the welfare system does impact upon how Conservatives think about welfare. Those with the greatest experience are more likely to be trusting of benefit claimants and more likely to think that cuts to welfare have led to claimants suffering.

A new typology: social conservatives and economic conservatives

In this report, we have shown the different strands of conservative thinking about welfare. We have demonstrated how some views and principles vary according to certain socio-demographic characteristics – age, social class and region – and experience of the welfare system.

From this analysis, we believe we can identify a new typology that includes two main types of conservatives when it comes to thinking about welfare:

- **Economic conservatives.** These conservatives prioritise the principles of individual agency, personal responsibility, ensuring welfare creates opportunities for individuals, and a smaller state. They tend to be younger.
- **Social conservatives.** These conservatives prioritise the principles of the family as a principal source of welfare and the view that welfare claimants are suffering from dependency. They tend to be older.

This typology matches a wider distinction in conservative thinking that goes beyond views of the welfare system. At the heart of economic conservatism is a belief in the consensual exchange of goods and services between individuals, uninhibited by external constraint. Markets should be allowed to operate as freely as possible, while both the size of the state and its role in regulating consumption and industry – both of which are seen as interfering and distortive of exchanges – should be as minimal as possible. On the other hand, social conservatism focuses upon the protection and preservation of social and moral norms and institutions, for example traditional religion or the monarchy. Of course, economic conservatism and social conservatism are not mutually exclusive, but in individual cases, one outlook will often be more prominent

We wanted to test through our polling the different characteristics of economic and social conservatives and how they differ in their thinking, to confirm and enhance our typology.

So, in order to categorise Conservative voters as economic or social conservatives, a series of questions were specially designed to test for social conservatism (as opposed to social liberalism) and economic conservatism (as opposed to economic statism). These questions are listed in Annex 3. Respondents were classified on the basis of their responses and the functions used to map responses to the two classifications can also be found in Annex 3. While it was possible for respondents to be classed as both social and economic conservatives,

questions were designed to try and determine which of these two types of conservatism were more prominent for each individual, thereby reducing the overlap of the sets. Where the responses of individuals did not point clearly toward social conservatism or economic conservatism, they were not classed in either category.

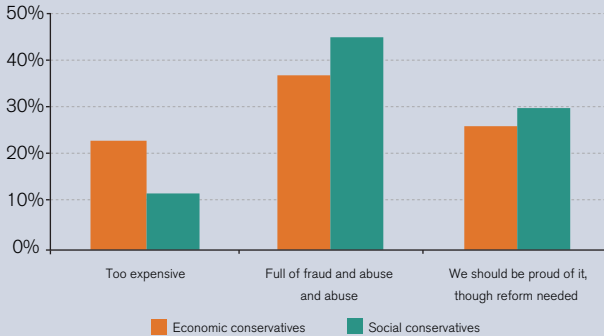
From our polling, we managed to get richer information on the demographic composition of these groups. We found that economic conservatives were indeed more likely to be young, particularly in the 25-34 age bracket. But, in addition, they were also more likely to be male, have significant educational qualifications and be in full-time employment. By contrast, social conservatives were indeed more likely to be older, particularly in 55-64 or 65+ age brackets, and were markedly more likely to be retired. But, furthermore, they were more likely to have lower educational qualifications, for example, lacking 'A' Levels or a degree-level qualification.¹³⁹

Turning to how these two groups think about welfare, we found two key differences. The first difference related to how benefit claimants are viewed. Specifically, social conservatives were more likely to see dependency as a characteristic of benefit claimants than economic conservatives.

Chart 6.8 shows that social conservatives are more likely than economic conservatives to believe the welfare system is full of fraud and abuse: 45% of social conservatives compared to 37% of economic conservatives.

139. These composition patterns should be treated with some caution. Inevitably, the function we used to classify individuals as social or economic conservatives had an element of arbitrariness about it.

Chart 6.8. The best description of the welfare state in the UK today according to Conservative voters, by economic conservatives and social conservatives, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

This suggests that social conservatives are more focused upon the individual failings of claimants – namely, their propensity to commit fraud and abuse the system – than economic conservatives. As we discussed in Chapter Three, emphasising the individual failings of claimants is integral to the view of them as suffering from dependency.

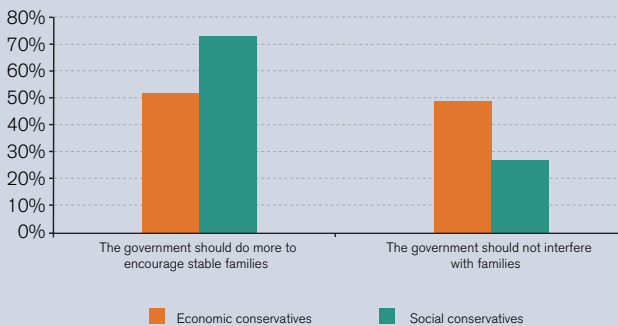
Relatedly, social conservatives were also more likely to agree that benefit cuts – irrespective of the need to cut government spending – had been good for claimants than economic conservatives, 42% to 32% respectively. This is again indicative of a greater concern with dependency on the part of social conservatives because it suggests that receiving higher levels of benefits is seen as positively damaging for claimants, perhaps reinforcing their situation. By contrast, economic conservatives were more likely to see these cuts as bad for claimants or having no significant impact (68% compared to 58%), suggesting that claimants are not as much distinguished from non-claimants in the way in which dependency entails.

The second difference we found between economic and social conservatives related to views of sources of welfare. On the one hand, we found that economic conservatives were more concerned with limiting state welfare provision and curtailing expenditure. As Chart 6.8 above illustrates, economic conservatives were nearly twice as likely as social conservatives (23% to 12%) to choose “a system that is too expensive” as the best description of welfare in the UK today.

Belief in a small state and low taxes is especially important for economic conservatives, so it is not surprising that, in the domain of welfare, they are more focused upon the cost of state provision.

While economic conservatives want to reduce state welfare, social conservatives wanted to boost family welfare. Specifically, our polling revealed markedly higher support amongst social conservatives for government intervention to encourage stable families (73%) than amongst economic conservatives (52%), as shown in Chart 6.9.

Chart 6.9. Proportion of Conservative voters who agree that the government should do more to encourage stable families, by social or economic conservatism, according to Bright Blue polling

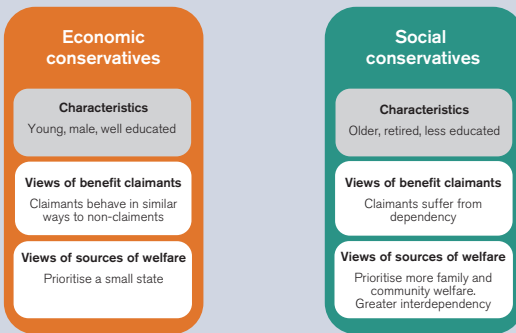


Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

Social conservatives were also more likely than economic conservatives to declare that someone who cares for children ought to be counted as a contributor to the system – 63% to 56%.

The additional polling we conducted to show how conservative views and principles differ along ideological lines confirmed and enriched our typology. This typology showed two broad types of conservatism in relation to thinking on welfare: economic conservatism and social conservatism. The composition of and principles associated with these two groups are detailed in Figure 6.1 below.

Figure 6.1. Characteristics of social conservatives and economic conservatives



Chapter 7: **Policies to improve the welfare system**

In the previous chapters, we have highlighted the various strands of conservative thinking in relation to welfare. The challenge now is to create credible policies that draw on these views and principles, with the aim of boosting support among conservatives for the welfare system. This chapter details some key principles where we believe there is space for further policies. Finally, we outline the details of our four new policies to enhance the welfare system, and improve conservative support for it.

Recent policy focus

Chapter One outlined the policy focus of this Conservative-led Government on welfare. These were: reducing the size of the welfare budget, (for example, a cap on the DWP's Annually Managed Expenditure (AME)) encouraging more people into work (for example, the Universal Credit), and achieving greater fairness (for example, the Benefit Cap).

Significant reductions in public spending since 2010 were necessary. The welfare budget was slimmed as part of this fiscal consolidation. Reducing the welfare budget has been one of the predominant themes of this Government. But, as Chapter One showed, support for the welfare system has remained largely unchanged since the start of this parliament. It is now time to look again at the breadth of conservative principles to instruct us on how we could improve the welfare system and public support for it.

Indeed, our polling shows that more Conservatives believe that principles other than reducing the size of the state should instruct policy making on welfare. Chart 4.2. showed that, when thinking about an ideal welfare system, a majority of Conservatives (57%) said one that invests effectively in people and enables them to contribute to society in the future, compared to 43% who said they wanted one where government spends a lot less on benefits. Similarly, as Chart 5.3 demonstrated, a clear majority of Conservatives (69%) believed that the state should be doing more to encourage stable families as compared to 31% who preferred that the state not interfere in families.

Of the conservative views and principles we have explored in the report, there are three themes that we will draw upon for our policy recommendations:

- **Contribution.** Conservatives believe strongly that fairness is about reciprocity. This leads to an assumption that in welfare, those who have contributed more should get more out of the welfare system. As Chart 6.4 showed, Conservatives from the lowest social class are most favourable to benefits being prioritised on the basis of contribution rather than need.
- **Personal responsibility.** Conservatives believe strongly that individuals are masters of their own destiny. Though some conservatives believe that welfare claimants are dependent and untrustworthy, another more positive strand of conservative thinking lends itself to the belief that people should have more responsibility over the accumulation and distribution of welfare resources.
- **Interdependency.** Conservatives believe strongly in families and charities playing a greater role in the funding and delivery of welfare.

Each of these themes has been the subject of proposals from government and the policy-making community in recent years. However, there is much more that can be done in these areas. We offer four innovative policies in which welfare in Britain can be made more contributory, more interdependent and more conducive to personal responsibility.

Recommendation one:

Contribution Supplement in Universal Credit

We propose to strengthen the contributory element of the welfare system by the creation of a new Contribution Supplement as part of the Universal Credit (UC). This Contribution Supplement will provide additional money for claimants who have longer National Insurance contribution histories. We propose two tiers of the supplement: the secondary tier will reward even more those with long National Insurance contribution histories.

Although it is still in a pilot phase, the UC will roll together six means-tested benefits including, Housing Benefit, Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSAi), Income-based Employment and Support Allowance (ESAi), Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit. As such, it marks a major simplification of the welfare system. It provides a single system for claimants who are out of work or on a low income.

The Universal Credit consists of a Personal Allowance that is given to a household, paid either at a single household rate or a couple household rate. Over and above this core payment, Universal Credit will consist of 'supplements' for housing, disability and children, depending upon claimants' circumstances. All elements of the UC will be withdrawn as a claimant's earnings rise at a single rate of 65% of earned income.¹⁴⁰

Eligibility for extra payments depends entirely upon claimants' circumstances (having children, higher housing costs or a disability) rather than their contribution records. We propose to change this by

140. Brewer et al., *Universal Credit: a preliminary analysis*.

creating a further supplement, a Contribution Supplement, which claimants would be eligible for if they have worked for a minimum number of years with NI contributions previously.

This Contribution Supplement will be tiered. So, the Government will decide a minimum number of years of NI contributions for which a claimant has to have previously worked for until their household becomes eligible for extra payment. If the claimant reaches a higher specific number of years worked with NI contributions previously, that household will be eligible for another payment. This Contribution Supplement would be tapered at the standard Universal Credit rate. The Contribution Supplement would also be time-limited. Upon the time-lapse of the supplement, claimants would be reassessed for Universal Credit eligibility on the means-tested basis. After having claimed Contribution Supplement, a claimant's contribution record – for the purposes of further eligibility for the supplement – would return to zero. Households could only receive one Contribution Supplement at a time.

Figure 7.1. Universal Credit with a Contribution Supplement



This supplement will provide more resources to households where at least one member has contributed more to the system in the past. Currently, contributory elements of the welfare state in the UK are low. In fact, Britain today has one of the lowest proportions of contributory benefits in the Western world.¹⁴¹ Aside from Statutory Maternity Pay, which has an earning-related contribution element in the first six weeks, there are only two working-age contributory benefits available: Contributory Jobseeker's Allowance (JSaC) and Contributory Employment and Support Allowance (ESaC). These are out-of-work benefits which are available to claimants who have at least two years of National Insurance contributions. Eligibility depends upon contribution, and is unaffected by the means a claimant may have, such as savings or partner earnings. However, both JSaC and ESaC are paid at the same rate as their means-tested counterparts, JSaI and ESaI. As a result, unemployed claimants who have contributed are paid no more

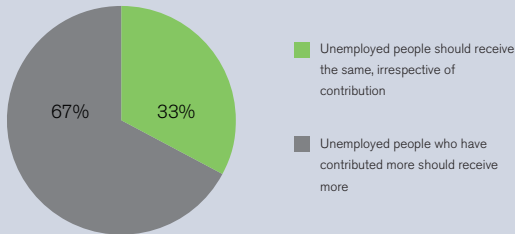
141. Declan Gaffney and Kate Bell, *Making a contribution* (London: Trade Union Congress, 2012), 19.

than those who have not contributed, and as such, these contributory benefits do little to enshrine the reciprocity which conservatives value.

On the Government's current plans for Universal Credit, JSaC and ESAc will be maintained as separate benefits lying outside of it. We propose simplifying the system and ending JSaC and ESAc. Claimants previously eligible for these benefits will be eligible for support through the Universal Credit and the relevant level of support through the Contribution Supplement.

We polled Conservative voters to find out whether they would support this policy of having higher levels of financial support for benefit claimants who have contributed more to the system. As Chart 7.1 indicates, 67% agreed that those who are unemployed and have contributed to the system in the past should be paid more than those who are unemployed and have not.

Chart 7.1. Proportion of Conservative voters who agree that those who are unemployed and have contributed in the past should receive more than those who have not contributed, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

Our Contribution Supplement will boost reciprocity by ensuring that those who have contributed to the system are rewarded. It also places contribution much more visibly at the heart of welfare provision, replacing the obscure and poorly understood JSaC and ESAc with a single supplement in the Universal Credit. This should increase

understanding and recognition of contributory welfare amongst the public in general, and conservatives in particular. By eliminating JSAC and ESAC and replacing them with a single Contribution Supplement as part of the Universal Credit, a layer of complexity will be removed and the welfare system will be simplified further, building upon one of the central motivations for the Universal Credit.

Recommendation two:

Contribution Supplement in Statutory Maternity Pay

We propose to further strengthen contribution in another major benefit - Statutory Maternity Pay (SMP) - by the creation of an extra Contribution Supplement. Mothers with longer work records will be eligible for additional funding on top of the base rate after the first six weeks. This Contribution Supplement will be tiered.

Currently, SMP is paid for up to 39 weeks. The first six weeks is paid at a rate of 90% of previous earnings. This can be considered as an earnings-related contributory element to SMP. The subsequent 33 weeks are paid at either a flat rate of £138.18 per week or 90% of previous earnings (whichever is lower). For some mothers who are not eligible for SMP, especially the self-employed, they are entitled to the Statutory Maternity Allowance (SMA), which gives eligible mothers 39 weeks on a base rate of £138.18 per week or 90% of previous earnings (whichever is lower). Both the SMP and SMA are a modest amount. Evidence suggests that women on low incomes in particular, who often do not receive additional support from their employers during maternity leave, return to the labour market sooner than they would like.¹⁴²

We propose adding a new tier, which will be a time-related contributory element to SMP – specifically, the base rate of £138.18 which starts after six weeks. We also propose applying this to SMA,

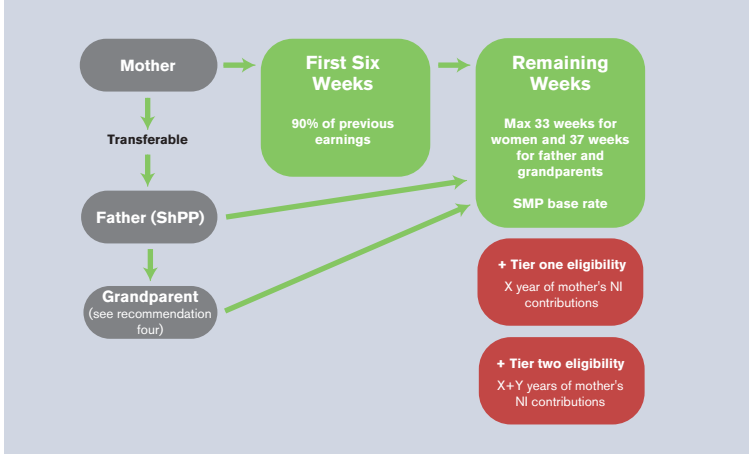
142. Ryan Shorthouse, “Maternity pay just isn’t fair”, *The Guardian*, 16 May, 2011.

after the first six weeks. Mirroring the Contribution Supplement in the UC, this Contribution Supplement for SMP will be tiered. So, the Government will decide a minimum number of years for which an eligible mother has to have previously worked for until they become eligible for the extra payment. If the mother reaches a higher specific number of years worked previously they will be eligible for another payment. These payments would be introduced for the duration that a mother is on SMP or SMA after the initial six weeks

From 2015, parents will be entitled to shared parental leave. A mother can choose to transfer any 50 of her 52 weeks to her partner. In this scenario, fathers will be eligible for the SMP base rate. The payment they receive will be called Statutory Shared Parental Pay (ShPP) and will only be paid to them for a maximum of 37 weeks. We propose that fathers will also be entitled to be paid the Contributory Supplement of SMP through their ShPP if their partner is eligible for it. If eligibility depended on the father's work record, this could substantially increase the numbers receiving the Contribution Supplement, thus diluting its impact.

A family will only be eligible for this Contribution Supplement for a maximum number of children. For subsequent periods of paid leave, eligibility will depend on the mother's total years of NI contribution records (which will have a year subtracted for each previous time a family has benefitted from this Contribution Supplement).

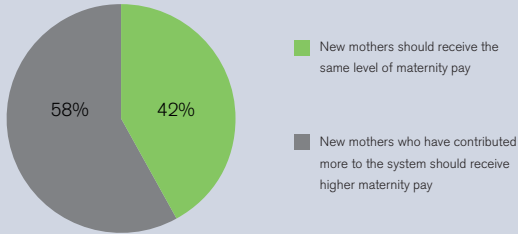
Figure 7.2. Contribution Supplement to Statutory Maternity Pay



This proposal will enable mothers, especially those on low incomes, who have contributed in the past – and some fathers and working grandparents - greater choice to care for their child at home during the year following birth. So it not only strengthens contribution, but also interdependency – in the sense that the family is being better supported through the welfare system.

As Chart 7.2 shows, our polling found that Conservative voters support this policy of new mothers who have contributed more to the system in the past being paid more through maternity pay than new mothers who have not (58%).

Chart 7.2. Proportion of Conservative voters who agree that new mothers who have contributed more to the system should receive higher maternity pay from the government, contrasted with the proportion who agree that all new mothers should receive the same, according to Bright Blue polling



Base: 1307 Conservative voters, minus those who responded 'Don't know'

Recommendation three:

Contributory Top-up Accounts

We propose that all people will be able to pay a new class of National Insurance into a personal Contributory Top-up Account. Individuals could draw down from these accounts during periods of unemployment or low pay, paid or unpaid parental leave or upon retirement. This could complement the additional funding some people receive through the proposed contribution supplements in Universal Credit or Statutory Maternity Pay.

This scheme will be entirely voluntary and open to all adults. A person could opt to pay from their salary this new class of National Insurance. These contributions would go into a tax-free, high interest savings account. Government could decide to further encourage savings to this account by topping up accounts for those on low incomes, similar to what the government did for low-income families through the Child

Trust Fund.¹⁴³ The contributions to this account would be capped to ensure that those with higher resources who can contribute more do not disproportionately benefit.

However, funding from these accounts could only be drawn down in three scenarios:

1. When the individual becomes eligible for Universal Credit.
2. When the individual or their partner goes on parental leave – so when they or their partner are receiving Statutory Maternity Pay, Statutory Maternity Allowance, Statutory Paternity Pay or are taking unpaid parental leave.
3. When the individual retires.

Under the first scenario, the individual could opt to draw down from their Contributory Top-up Account when they are on Universal Credit. The funding would serve to complement the income support they receive through the UC as an additional payment.

The money would be distributed on a monthly basis. The amount that could be withdrawn would be capped and time-limited.¹⁴⁴

It will be possible for two individuals to combine their contributions with the amount they receive through the Universal Credit, given that the Universal Credit is given on a household basis. With this role, low-earning people – particularly women – could be better supported in periods of unemployment and low pay due to

143. Rajiv Prabhakar, James Lloyd and Ian Mulheirn, *Better but cheaper?* (London: Social Market Foundation, 2010).

144. There could also be the option of opening up a Contributory Top-Up Account if you are on Universal Credit and have made no previous contributions. Such people would go into a negative balance on their account. Similarly, if someone with a Contributory Top-Up Account can only draw down limited funding on Universal Credit, they could go into a negative balance. Those who go into a negative balance would have to pay back this money when in work through the new National Insurance contributions paid into the Contributory Top-up Account. This is a contributory system: but the contributions are paid in the future rather than the past.

the drawing down of funds from the Contributory Top-up Account of their partner.

Under scenario two, a person can opt to draw down from their Contributory Top-up Account if they or their partner are on paid or unpaid parental leave. The funding would serve to complement the income support these households receive through Statutory Maternity Pay or Paternity Pay, the Statutory Maternity Allowance and any occupational schemes. The money could be distributed via a person's pay slip when they receive their statutory and occupational maternity or paternity benefits from their employer. In the case of Statutory Maternity Allowance or when parents are on unpaid leave, it would be paid directly into their bank account. The amount that could be drawn down would be capped.¹⁴⁵

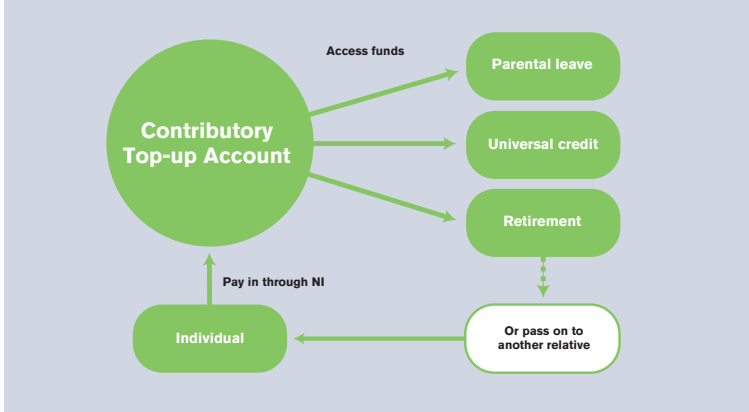
Finally, in scenario three, if a person has a surplus in their Contributory Top-up Account at the end of their working lives, the money could be released for them to choose how they spend it – for example, on pension provision or on social care.¹⁴⁶

Alternatively, individuals could choose to transfer their balances to other relatives. These relatives would receive the balances in their own Contributory Top-up Accounts, to be drawn down only if they are on Universal Credit, on Parental leave, or when they reach pension age themselves.

145. Again, there is the option of allowing individuals to go into a negative balance, which they would have to repay in future work through the NICs of a nominated person of the household.

146. Equally, if you do enable people to go into negative balance and their account is in a state of deficit when they reach retirement, they will be expected to pay the remaining amount by being taxed on their State Pension.

Figure 7.3. Contributory Top-up Account

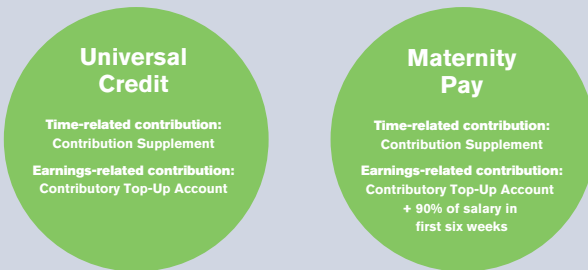


This proposal for a Contributory Top-Up Account achieves all three of our policy themes. It strengthens contribution by enabling those who have paid in more to receive more through the welfare system when they need extra support. It promotes personal responsibility by encouraging people to provide for their own welfare.

Finally, it helps interdependency by enabling people to better support other family members: either by supporting their partner when they are unemployed or on parental leave, by providing additional resources to help people look after their young children, or by enabling parents to pass on resources for welfare to their children or other relatives.

Box 7.1. Boosting contributory elements of the welfare system

Our three proposals – a Contribution Supplement in Universal Credit, a Contribution Supplement in Statutory Maternity Pay, and a Contributory Top-Up Account – significantly increase the contributory elements in the welfare system. They ensure two types of contribution exist in two major benefits (Universal Credit and Statutory Maternity Pay): time-related contribution (where those who pay more into the system because of having worked longer receive more) and earnings-related contribution (where those who pay more into the system because of having a higher income receive more).



Recommendation four:

Extending Shared Parental Leave to working grandparents

Finally, we propose to strengthen interdependency and the welfare provided by families by enabling all working grandparents to have any of the 50 transferable weeks of Shared Parental Leave transferred to them.

In 2015, the government is introducing Shared Parental Leave. This measure preserves the current provision of 52 weeks Statutory Maternity Leave, but enhances flexibility by allowing parents to share fully the leave between them. With the exception of the two weeks immediately

following birth which must be taken by the mother, parents will be able to choose how to use their parental leave, for instance, by taking blocks of leave alternately or by ‘doubling up’ leave and using it concurrently.

We propose that this shared leave be extended to include working grandparents also. Parents would be able to transfer some portion of their Shared Parental Leave entitlement to a working grandparent. Grandparents would receive the usual guarantees of statutory parental leave – including being paid the base rate of SMP (or SMA or ShPP) for a maximum 37 weeks - and would be entitled to return to work upon completion of the leave. They would only be entitled to the Contribution Supplement of SMP if the mother transferring her leave is eligible for it.

As well as encouraging greater interdependency and support provided within the family unit, this measure also recognises the contribution which grandparents often make to childcare.

Conclusion

Our intention with these four recommendations has been to transform the welfare system to better enshrine contribution, personal responsibility and interdependency. These measures will not only increase the support available to those on welfare but, because these reforms are based on conservative principles, they should engender greater support amongst conservatives for the welfare system.

Of course, there will be costs to the public purse as a result of the implementation of these proposals. The cost of the contribution supplements in Universal Credit and Statutory Maternity Pay would depend upon the value of the two tiers of the supplements, and the numbers claiming. Since Contribution Top-up Accounts will be tax-free, and could include government funding for low income families, this would bring costs to the Exchequer. Finally, extending eligibility of Shared Parental Leave to grandparents will involve paying the basic

rate of Statutory Maternity Pay to a wider and thus potentially greater number of people. These policies will also have administrative costs.

The amount they will cost will vary depending on different factors: the value of the two tiers of contribution supplements, the cap on the amount of NI taxpayers can pay into their Contribution Top-Up Account, and the tax break available for saving through the Contribution Top-Up Account, as well as any top-up funding government provides to low income families through these accounts. Since fiscal resources are constrained, this will affect the generosity of these different factors. Reductions in state expenditure elsewhere may be needed to fund these policies. Crucially however, we believe these policies will be worth it for improving the welfare system and restoring public confidence in it.

There is an appetite among conservatives to draw on a wider set of conservative principles to reform our welfare system, beyond reducing the size of the state. We suggest, in particular, that policy makers should draw on the conservative principles of contribution, personal responsibility and interdependency.

Our four ideas – a Contribution Supplement in Universal Credit, a Contribution Supplement in Statutory Maternity Pay, Contributory Top-Up Accounts and extending Shared Parental Leave to working grandparents – could all improve the welfare system, and conservative support for it.

ANNEX 1: POLICY ROUNDTABLE ATTENDEE LIST

- **Adam Memon**, Head of Economic Research, Centre for Policy Studies
- **Bobby Duffy**, Managing Director, Ipsos MORI Social Research Institute
- **Dr Catherine Hakim**, Professorial Research Fellow, Civitas
- **Damian Lyons Lowe**, Chief Executive, Survation
- **David Kirkby**, Researcher, Bright Blue
- **Ellie Brawn**, Public Policy Advisor, Scope
- **Imran Hussain**, Head of Policy, Child Poverty Action Group
- **Janet Daley**, Columnist, The Sunday Telegraph
- **Kate Webb**, Head of Policy, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission
- **Katharine Sacks-Jones**, Head of Policy and Campaigns, Crisis
- **Krisnah Poinasamy**, Policy Officer, Oxfam
- **Dr Patricia Morgan** Research Fellow, Institute for Economic Affairs
- **Paul Kirby**, Former Head of Policy, Number 10 Downing Street
- **Ruth Jackson**, Parliamentary and Advocacy Officer, Oxfam
- **Ryan Shorthouse**, Director, Bright Blue
- **Steve Hughes**, Deputy Head of Economic and Social Policy, Policy Exchange
- **Samantha Smethers**, Chief Executive, Grandparents Plus
- **Tom Peters**, Public Affairs Officer, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

ANNEX 2: POLLING QUESTIONS

1) In general, which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

- Individuals are almost always best placed to decide how to spend their own money and the government should not interfere by trying to influence their decisions
- The government should use measures that encourage people to spend their money in responsible ways to their own long term benefit
- Don't know

2) On a scale of 0 to 10, how much of an impact would you say the following factors have on causing poverty in the UK today, where 0 means poverty is entirely caused by circumstances beyond people's control, 10 means poverty is entirely caused by people not doing enough to help themselves and 5 is an even mix of both factors.

0 (Circumstances beyond people's control that cause them to be poor)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

10 (People not doing enough to help themselves out of poverty)

3) How significant do you think each of the following factors are in causing poverty in the UK? (rank from most to least significant)

- Lack of available jobs
- Low wages paid by employers
- Lack of good schools
- Difficult family environments

- Illness / disability
- Lack of aspiration
- Lack of work ethos
- People not being willing to accept boring / menial jobs
- Children not working hard at school to get necessary skills
- People wasting their money / failing to manage household budgets

[Only for respondents currently in full/part time employment or self-employed]

4) If you were to lose your job tomorrow and become reliant on benefits, which of the following do you think you ought to do?

- Take the first available job that you could find, even if it is not in the sector that you want to work in
- Take your time to find a job that suits you, in the sector that you want to work in

Provide definition of "benefits" (excludes pensions)

Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA), Employment and Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support, Disability Living Allowance, Carer's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Benefit, Universal Credit, Tax Credits

5) What is your personal experience of people who receive benefits or tax credits such as these? [Tick all that apply]

- I personally currently receive one or more of these benefits
- I have personally received one or more of these benefits in the past
- I have close friends or family who receive benefits
- People in my neighbourhood receive benefits
- No-one I know receives any benefits
- Don't know

6) Thinking about you and your family, how do you feel that benefits are most relevant to you, if at all?

- It is reassuring to know there is a safety net of benefits to protect me from falling into severe poverty
- My family have been helped by benefits payments we have received
- I have contributed into the system so I feel entitled to support in case of unpredictable circumstances in the future
- I do not think benefits are relevant to me and my family
- I feel like I am paying too much through my taxes for people to live on benefits

7) Which of the following do you feel is the most important goal for the government to focus on when designing the welfare system?

- Making society more equal, with a smaller gap between rich and poor
- Ensuring that all individuals, regardless of background, have the same opportunities to flourish
- Don't know

8) What do you think is the best description of the condition of the welfare state in the UK today?

- A system that is too expensive
- A system full of fraud and abuse
- A system that we should be proud of, but needs reform
- An effective system for getting people into work
- A system that does not provide enough support for vulnerable people
- Don't know

9) What should the primary purpose of the welfare state be?

- An insurance system that people contribute to and which protects them if they fall on hard times
- Providing opportunities for struggling people to improve their own circumstances

- A system of redistribution to reduce inequalities in our society
- To provide additional support to ease current financial pressures
- A safety net to prevent anyone in society from falling into severe poverty
- Don't know

10) Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

- Ideally I would like a welfare state where government spends a lot less on benefits
- Ideally I would like a welfare state which invests effectively in people and enables them to contribute to society in the future
- Don't know

11) Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

- Benefits should be prioritised to people who have already contributed to the system, even if they are not the ones most in need
- Benefits should be prioritised to those people who are most in need, even if they have not contributed to the system
- Don't know

12) In regard to benefits, which of the following would you consider to count as a 'contributor' to the system?

- Counts as a 'contributor' Does not count as a 'contributor'
- Someone who pays income tax / National Insurance
- Someone who does voluntary work
- Someone who cares for elderly / disabled relative
- Someone who makes charitable donations
- Someone who cares for children

13) Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

- Unemployed people seeking work should all receive the same level of benefits, regardless of how much they have contributed into the system in the past

- Unemployed people seeking work who have contributed more into the system in the past should be entitled to higher benefits than those who have contributed less
- Don't know

14) Which of the following is closest to your view?

- People who receive benefits can be trusted to spend the money they receive in sensible ways and the government should allow them to do what they think best with it
- People who receive benefits can't be trusted to spend the money they receive in sensible ways and the government should try and control how they spend it
- Don't know

15) Please rank the following in order of how much of a responsibility you think they have to support people who are having financial difficulties, with those with the greatest responsibility at the top and the smallest responsibility at the bottom.

- State
- Family
- Charities
- Neighbours and friends
- Local community (e.g. churches, WI groups)

16) Please rank the following in order of how effective you think they are at supporting people who are having financial difficulties, with the most effective at the top and the least effective at the bottom.

- State
- Family
- Charities
- Neighbours and friends
- Local community groups (e.g. churches, WI groups)

17) Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

- People in their early 20s are responsible adults who should be financially self-reliant from their families
- People in their early 20s are in a transition stage and should be financially supported by their families e.g. with housing
- Don't know

18) Should benefits and tax credits for children be focussed on all children (under 18) equally or mainly on young children (under 5)?

- Younger children (under 5)
- All children (under 18) equally
- Don't know

19) The government has cut child benefit for high earners. At the same time, it is introducing as a universal benefit free school meals for all infant schoolchildren. In general, do you think welfare benefits such as these are better as universal benefits available to everyone in society, or as means tested benefits that focus on helping only those most in need?

- Better as universal benefits because it ensures everyone feels they are getting something from the welfare state
- Better as universal benefits because it is easier to administer and makes it less likely that people in need miss out on receiving it
- Better as means tested benefits because we cannot afford everyone receiving benefits
- Better as means tested benefits because we should focus money on the poorest and those most in need
- Don't know

20) What is your view of the government's expansion of free state-funded childcare e.g. giving parents childcare vouchers equal to 20% of weekly costs?

- A good thing; state should provide free childcare widely to help parents into work
- A good thing; childcare is good for children's development, especially poorer children
- A bad thing; children are almost always better looked after by parents themselves
- A bad thing; it is too expensive for the state to be providing childcare support to nearly all families
- Don't know

21) The government is trying to encourage stronger families, for example by providing vouchers for parenting classes. Which of the following statements is closest to your view?

- The government should do more to encourage more stable families
- The state has no business interfering in people's families
- Don't know

22) What are the best ways for the government to ensure that people already *in work* are not in poverty? [select up to two options]

- Raising the minimum wage
- Providing more in-work benefits such as tax credits to top up low wages
- Targeting tax cuts at these low earners
- Providing more opportunities for people to obtain skills / training
- Government funding to help parents with the cost of childcare and raising children
- Strengthening trade unions
- It is not the government's job to do this
- Don't know

23) With regard to working-age benefits claimants, which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

- Benefits claimants are typically people who are ill or disabled
- Benefits claimants are typically people who are temporarily unemployed
- Benefits claimants are typically people who are in work on low incomes
- Benefits claimants are typically people who are unemployed and dependent on the system in the long-term
- Don't know

24) Over the last four years, the government has reduced the level of benefits and tax credits people receive. Regardless of whether you agree or disagree with the need for government to reduce spending, which of the following statements is closest to your view?

- Benefits claimants have suffered as a result of these reductions
- These reductions have been good for benefits claimants
- These reduction have had no significant impact on benefits claimants
- Don't know

25) What is life like for benefits claimants today?

- On average, benefits claimants today have a very easy life
- On average, benefits claimants today have quite an easy life
- On average, benefits claimants today have quite a difficult life
- On average, benefits claimants today have a very difficult life
- Don't know

26) Which of the following statements is closest to your opinions?

- New mothers should all receive the same level of Maternity Pay from government, regardless of how much they have contributed into the system in the past
- New mothers who have contributed more into the system in the past should be entitled to higher Maternity Pay from government than those who have contributed less
- Don't know

ANNEX 3: QUESTIONS AND METRICS USED FOR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CONSERVA- TIVE CLASSIFICATION

From responses to the questions below, we create 2 derived variables:

S from -4 to +4 (count as “Social conservative” if $S > 1$)

E from -4 to +4 (count as “Economic conservative” if $E > 1$)

1) What do you think is the best family environment for children to grow up in?

- With a mother and father living together in the same household [+1 S]
- It doesn't matter who the family are as long as they are loving [-1 S]
- No opinion

2) Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

- It is generally better for everyone if the man is the main income earner outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family [+1 S]
- It is generally better if men and women both work and share the task of taking care of the home and family [-1 S]
- No opinion

3) Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

- The government should not regulate businesses and should leave them to get on with trading [+1 E]

- The government should regulate businesses to prevent them exploiting their employees and customers [-1 E]
- No opinion

4) Which of the following statements is closest to your opinion?

- The government should impose strict rules on landlords to protect tenants from poor quality dwellings [-1 E]
- The government should not interfere in the rental market and should leave landlords to operate freely [+1 E]
- No opinion

5) To what extent do you think that commercial advertising aimed at children under 12 should be regulated?

- Should be freely allowed for all legal products [+1 E, -1 S]
- Should be banned for harmful things like unhealthy foods [-1 E, +1 S]
- No opinion

6) To what extent do you think that the internet should be regulated?

- There should be strict restrictions on pornography and other harmful materials to protect children and uphold social values [+1 S, -1 E]
- Not at all, free flow of information and free speech must be preserved [-1 S, +1 E]
- No opinion

Our welfare system is important for supporting the vulnerable and impoverished. But public support for the welfare state is low, especially amongst conservatives. To ensure the survival and success of our welfare system, a richer understanding is required of the principles individuals want it to enshrine and their views of where the existing system falls short.

This report outlines in detail how conservatives think of welfare. Interrelated themes are unearthed relating to benefit claimants, the purpose of welfare and sources of welfare. Drawing on these themes, original welfare reforms are proposed, designed to boost the effectiveness of – and public support for – the welfare system.



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