

# POLICY BRIEFING

August 2020

Welcome to our NLGN Policy Briefing, exclusively for our members.

This policy briefing collates the most interesting reports that we have come across over the last month.

This month's issue features research recommendations from NLGN's newest Board Member, Professor Sir Chris Ham. If you'd like to contribute to next month's briefing, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Pawda Tjoa at [ptjoa@nlgn.org.uk](mailto:ptjoa@nlgn.org.uk).

Our briefing covers reports across the following topics:

- Community Paradigm Read of the Month (p2)
- Devolution, Growth and Industrial Strategy (p2)
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## Meet our Board Member

**NLGN:** Professor Sir Chris Ham

**What publications would you recommend for inspiring councils to overcome the range of challenges they face?**

[Radical Help](#) by Hilary Cottam: In this book Hilary Cottam draws on her experience as a social activist to diagnose the weaknesses of established ways of meeting people's needs and to outline an alternative approach grounded in her own work. She makes a compelling case for listening to people, understanding their concerns and what matters to them, and using multiple forms of resource to develop their capabilities. It is a book full of hope and possibility for those of us willing to think and act differently about the welfare state.

[New Power](#) by Henry Timms and Jeremy Heimans: This book offers a fascinating analysis of the rise of social movements and online activists and their ability to disrupt the forces of old power. The authors are alive to ways in which new power can be damaging and offer invaluable insights to those of us who work in or with bastions of old power. Essential reading for those leading organisations on the impact of social media and leaderless movements like Extinction Rebellion and Me Too that are challenging the status quo.

[Team of Teams](#) by General Stanley McChrystal: McChrystal's account of how the United States military adapted to the challenge of insurgents in Iraq has relevance to public and private sector organisations alike. He shows how conventional military tactics were failing and forced radical decentralisation of decision making. The 'team of teams' was created to bring together people and expertise from different agencies and divisions to counter siloed thinking and working. This was underpinned by information sharing and a focus on the whole system.

## ■ COMMUNITY PARADIGM READ OF THE MONTH

### **Community Mobilisation: Unlocking the potential of community power**

New Local Government Network

When communities come together, they have the power to do extraordinary things. This is something that is increasingly being recognised across the public sector. Public bodies of all kinds are realising that they can no longer go it alone, and that they do their best work, and make their most robust decisions, when they are working hand-in-hand with the communities they serve. But how can we develop communities to the point at which their potential can be fully realised?

This is where community mobilisation comes in – the process of building communities into cohesive wholes, with clear objectives and clear plans. This report offers a how-to guide for organisations interested in this process, illustrating a range of potential approaches that can be taken to build active, networked and powerful communities.

## ■ DEVOLUTION, GROWTH AND INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY

### **Fiscal Devolution: Adopting an international approach**

The Local Government Association and Localis

COVID-19 has brought into sharp relief the financial challenges facing English local government. It has also underlined the transformative role councils can play in supporting their communities and economies if they are given the freedom to get on and deliver.

This report established the UK as an international outlier, one of the most fiscally centralised countries in the developed world. The goal of this report is to bring forward a discussion of increased local fiscal powers, in England's unique context. This report draws on case studies from three countries (the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland), aiming to cover a range of different theories and practices in the devolution of fiscal powers and growth funding.

There are three main recommendations from the report:

- The UK Treasury and Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government should launch a consultation with councils to identify the most popular options for local levies under fiscal freedom.
- The suggested Commonwealth Games tourism levy in Birmingham should be extended as pilot schemes in the MC9 group of combined authorities.
- The Government should work with councils to develop a German-style infrastructure and connectivity indicator for distributing monies from the Shared Prosperity Fund to ensure non-metropolitan areas can also level-up.

### **A Green Recovery for Local Economies**

Centre for Local Economic Strategies

This report argues that Covid-19 and the climate emergency both expose, in different ways, the underlying dysfunctions in our national and local economies. The report calls on localities across the UK to adopt a green recovery for local economies after Covid-19 to develop recovery packages centred on social, economic, and environmental justice.

The report provides a roadmap for how localities can begin to put these principles into practical action. This roadmap is based around a new local economics, green industrial strategy, and harnessing the community wealth building toolkit.

## **Building a Green Stimulus for Covid-19: A recovery plan for a greener, fairer future**

New Economics Foundation

By expanding on a New Economic Foundation research published in January 2020, this report sets out a framework for establishing a priority green infrastructure stimulus in response to Covid-19.

Key findings from the report include:

- Carbon emissions have temporarily fallen due to a massive reduction in travel and economic activity, but a rebound in their levels has already been observed and we are at risk of a further increase as the economy accelerates.
- The immediate economic crisis resulting from Covid-19 is likely to come in the form of extremely high unemployment.
- A large package of investment in 'green' infrastructure projects, selected on the basis of their potential to create large numbers of jobs across the country rapidly, must sit at the core of government efforts to boost the recovery.

The central recommendation from the report is that the policy response to the current crisis should contain within it the largest feasible stimulus in priority zero-carbon infrastructure. The report proposes a framework for choosing projects based on the speed at which projects can begin, intensity of job creation, the extent to which jobs are spread across the country but can be intensified where they are most needed, and the extent to which projects are resilient to further tightening of social distancing, among other factors.

## **Sharing Prosperity? Options and issues for the UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

Institute for Fiscal Studies

From 2021 and beyond, the UK government faces choices over what to replace the European Structural and Investment (ESI) funding with. The government has announced the creation of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) to this end, but has so far given few details around its scale, design and implementation. Drawing on a review of the current ESI schemes, this report explores some of the key issues that the government and stakeholders need to consider for the new system.

The report examines the current EU structural funding system, the design of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, what needs-based funding allocations might look like, and the implications of the Covid-19 crisis. The report identifies a number of factors for consideration including that there is a key decision as to whether to adapt the UKSPF so that one of its objectives is to support parts of the country that are struggling to recover from the COVID-19 crisis, or that potentially have other more targeted programmes and funding for this task.

## **COVID-19 and Food Supply**

House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

The Government's necessary actions to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, combined with the public and industry's own reactions to the threat, disrupted the food supply system in the UK. This report is intended to inform future Government and industry action, both in response to the current pandemic and future disruptions to food supply.

Key findings include:

- Increased consumer demand for food in February and March left empty shelves and put immense pressure on retailers. Once the crisis hit, Government worked well with the retailers to quickly put in place measures to respond. However, the Government does not appear to have anticipated the situation, despite the experience of other countries.
- The national voucher scheme for free school meals was set up at commendable speed. However, it initially relied on the larger retailers who were able to meet the technical requirements, excluding discounters and convenience stores, even when they were able to offer workable voucher schemes which would have helped more children.
- The closure of foodservice and hospitality businesses was a huge shock for their food and drink suppliers. The Government could have done more to anticipate the problems that would arise.

### **The Science Economy: The role of health research**

Institute for Public Policy Research

This document makes the case that putting science into a central role within the UK economy would help address the productivity crisis that has beset Britain since 2008. Poor productivity stifles growth and prevents living standards increasing. The report argues that we have underinvested in research and development in this country to the tune of £222 billion since 1985, compared to OECD averages. Readdressing this balance can solve the productivity puzzle, and needs to be made a priority. In particular, this report feels that this investment would be best targeted into health research.

## **■ PUBLIC SERVICE REFORM**

### **Readying the NHS and Social Care for the COVID-19 Peak**

House of Commons Public Accounts Committee

The COVID-19 outbreak posed severe and immense challenges to health and social care services in England. After the first cases of COVID-19 in England were reported on 31 January 2020, the NHS and the adult social care sector had to act quickly to prepare for the impact of the pandemic within hospitals and care homes. Thanks to the commitment of thousands of staff and volunteers and by postponing a large amount of planned work, the NHS was severely stretched but able to meet overall demand for COVID-19 treatment during the pandemic's April peak. Unfortunately, it has been a very different story for adult social care, despite the hard work and commitment of its workforce.

Reflecting on the Government's response to the pandemic so far, the Committee are also particularly concerned by its failure to provide adequate PPE for the social care sector and testing to the millions of staff and volunteers who risked their lives to help us through the first peak of the crisis. There are many lessons that the government must learn, not least giving adult social care equal support to the NHS and considering them as two parts of a single system, adequately funded and with clear accountability arrangements.

### **The Henry Fords of Healthcare**

Institute of Economic Affairs

This report examines the lessons Western nations could learn from some developing countries in fostering innovation and entrepreneurship in healthcare. Health systems in Western countries are

“plagued by inefficiency and productivity growth”: in adopting a new approach they could cut costs, increase quality, and reduce waiting times.

It outlines how, during much of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century, Western nations embarked on a policy route in which entrepreneurship was allowed to change the service delivery model of most sectors of the economy, yet healthcare was heavily regulated and thus impeded from enacting change.

## Resuming Health Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Nuffield Trust

As in many countries, the NHS cancelled all non-urgent, planned surgeries to free up capacity for patients with the virus, contributing to a mounting backlog of health issues that the service will have to address in the pandemic’s wake. But while the government hastily made clear that ‘the NHS is open’ and essential and urgent services must continue, we have seen signs that demand has been suppressed as more patients are now reluctant to go to hospital, or have had their care cancelled as resources are redirected towards Covid-19. As the UK resumes elective care, this report aims to understand how other countries are handling these issues and what the implications might be for the NHS.

Key findings include:

- Resuming care during the pandemic introduces a number of logistical hurdles that will severely limit the ability of the NHS to deliver what it could previously.
- The UK entered the crisis with stark socioeconomic and racial inequalities relative to other countries, which may make the virus deadlier and multiply its spread.
- There is now an opportunity to learn from and sustain positive changes the service has made in response to the pandemic.

## Covid-19 and the Nation’s Mental Health

Centre for Mental Health

Levels of psychological distress and mental ill health are rising internationally in the wake of Covid-19. This second forecast of the mental health impacts of the pandemic warns that a combination of challenging factors may affect the whole UK economy and have a major knock-on effect on mental health.

The document warns that the combination of a possible rise in Covid-19 cases combined with seasonal flu, the absence of financial safety nets such as the furlough scheme, and a no-deal Brexit may affect the whole UK economy and have a major knock-on effect on mental health. Centre for Mental Health is calling on the Government and the NHS to take urgent action to prevent mental health difficulties wherever possible and to reach out to people who need support before they reach a crisis.

## Teenagers Falling Through the Gaps

Children’s Commissioner

Covid-19 has increased many of the risks facing teenagers. Not just in terms of the epidemiological risk, but also in terms of the additional risks that the lockdown itself has created, such as an increased risk of poor mental health, exposure to domestic violence and addiction in the home, and exposure to exploitation. These risks have been exacerbated by the closures of schools, youth services, summer schemes, parks and leisure activities; reductions in mental health support; and the increased strain on families.

This report assesses the number of teenagers in England, and in each local area, who were *already* vulnerable and falling through gaps in the education and social care systems before Covid-19. The risks focused on here are important signals of children at higher risk of future educational failure and unemployment, as well as of falling into crime and criminal exploitation.

## Lockdown Living: Housing quality across the generations

Resolution Foundation

Age and the coronavirus crisis intersect in complex ways. From the health perspective, older people are clearly the most exposed; from the economic, younger people are plainly at the sharp end. This publication investigates a social issue that has come strongly to the fore during the pandemic, and that is living conditions. By analysing long-term trends across the generations, it shed light on the housing circumstances that have been of such consequence in the past three months. While lockdown may be loosening, the issues the report uncovers will be more pertinent than ever in the event of local or second-wave lockdowns in the winter months, and demand attention even when the pandemic fades.

## Building More Social Housing

House of Commons Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

More and more households have no option but to rent privately, as it becomes harder for first-time buyers to join the housing ladder and social housing is often unavailable, but private renters spend the most on household costs. This report investigated the long-term delivery of social housing, including how much was needed, the adequacy of current funding levels, and the effectiveness of the Government's approach. It concludes:

- There is compelling evidence that England needs at least 90,000 net additional social rent homes a year and it is time for the Government to invest. The sector estimates that £10 billion in extra grant funding will be needed.
- A social housebuilding programme should be top of the Government's agenda to rebuild the country from the impact of COVID-19.
- The purpose of Right to Buy is to provide a route into homeownership, not reduce the number of social homes or supplement the private rented sector.

## Asylum Accommodation and Support

National Audit Office

This report examines the government's replacement of the COMPASS contracts for accommodation and support for asylum seekers, with seven regional accommodation contracts and the national AIRE (Advice, Issue Reporting and Eligibility) contract, which began operating in 2019.

Key findings include:

- The Department is paying an estimated 28 per cent more to providers after finding that COMPASS was under-priced and negotiating service improvements.
- The majority of accommodated asylum seekers did not have to relocate during the transition to new providers, although in one region there was a serious risk of disruption to around 3,600 people.
- Accommodation providers are now broadly meeting performance standards set by the Department, but providers new to their contract regions struggled in the early months.

## **Making Housing Affordable After COVID-19**

### **Affordable Housing Commission**

A policy change in favour of social and affordable housing will be key to a post Covid-19 recovery. Besides providing more – much needed - genuinely affordable homes, increasing investment in social housing offers the opportunity to support jobs and local growth, improve the nation's ageing housing stock, reduce carbon emissions, and combat poverty.

The Commission recommends that government – in partnership with local government and the housing sector – takes the initiative to put in place a 12 point housing-led recovery plan, including:

- Increase investment in a scaled-up and fast tracked social and affordable housing programme, with grant rates returning at least to 2010 levels.
- Reform the land market, based on recommendations from the Letwin Review to get homes built out faster and to 'capture' land value for social benefit.
- Give Councils full discretion over Right to Buy discount levels and the opportunity to recycle 100 per cent of sales proceeds into new social rented homes.

## **Home Truths: How well are councils implementing the Homelessness Reduction Act**

### **Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman**

Problems with the way councils are meeting new housing duties are making some homeless people's situation worse. This report examines lessons that councils can learn from the first 50 cases following the introduction of the Homelessness Reduction Act in 2018.

Problems identified in the new report include councils delaying helping people and difficulties in issuing Personalised Housing Plans – the documents which set out what has been agreed between the homeless person and local authority to address the problem. The Ombudsman also found simple communication issues, with people left unsure about the next steps they need to take, or not being told about their rights to challenge a council's decision.

## **Covid-19 Recovery: Renewing the transport system**

### **Campaign for Better Transport**

The Covid-19 crisis has changed how transport will have to be planned and managed in future. The government's support has sustained the sector through the crisis so far, but the planning, design, scope, scale, funding and management of transport all need to be explored in the changing context.

Prior to the crisis the government began to set out an agenda that would have seen the transport system transformed, including greater levels of sustainable transport through increased active travel and public transport, and the move to zero emission vehicles.

The government should now increase its ambition and accelerate the delivery to ensure that transport better serves communities across the country. This agenda should be integral to a green recovery programme. There is an opportunity to transform the transport system to facilitate economic growth, meet legal obligations around carbon emissions and air quality, and tackle social exclusion. A future focused strategy from the government is essential for the transport system to survive and communities to retain connectivity.

In this tenth instalment of the Leadership Index, as councils turn their attention to recovery from Covid-19, the NLGN Leadership Index survey asked local government leadership how they are preparing for the potential resurgence of new cases in their local areas. The results from this quarter's survey reveal a bleak picture of declining confidence level in both the local economy and councils' capacity to deliver key services. It also sets out crucial steps that central government should take to help recover this confidence and help councils take crucial action against COVID-19.

Key findings include:

- Almost three quarters (74 per cent) say they aren't receiving enough support from government to deal with a potential second wave.
- Top of their requests for additional support are more funding (85 per cent), quicker data sharing (76 per cent) and better quality data sharing (72 per cent).
- Council heads are significantly less sure of their ability to deliver key services. Confidence in delivering adult social care dropped by 30 per cent, and in environmental services and children's services confidence fell by over 25 per cent.

## ■ DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

### **Platforms for Growth**

Centre for Policy Studies

Digital platforms, media, and tools are incredibly important to the success of smaller businesses - particularly in times of economic difficulty - but 22 per cent of them don't use them at all. This report argues that Britain has failed to fully recognise the economic impact of the digital revolution, and identifies a role for government in supporting the private sector to take full advantage of it in order to boost the country's economic health.

Recommendations in this report include:

- Review the apprenticeship levy to ensure employers use funds to invest in digital training.
- Introduce tax breaks for self-funded training in digital literacy.
- Approaches for maximising connectivity and cyber-security nationwide.

### **Missing Numbers in Children's Services**

Institute for Government and Nesta

This report explores how better access to relevant data could help to improve outcomes for children and young people by empowering youth services and children's centres and allowing for more effective, preventative, and early interventions. It finds that the lack of consistently good-quality data restricts the ability of frontline staff, local authorities and central government to understand what works and therefore to intervene in an evidence-based way.

Its recommendations cover the identification of data supply and demand, the analysis of the gaps where services need more data, and the initiation of data transformation projects.

## Digital 2020 Report

### We Are Social

This report aggregates global research to provide a snapshot of trends in use of digital and online technologies in the first half of 2020. Findings include that:

- Internet traffic has grown by as much as 30 per cent this year, with many of the new digital behaviours adopted by people during lockdown enduring even after restrictions are eased.
- People are accessing and searching the web in more diverse ways than before - using images, audio, and different kinds of devices.
- The 'death of the office' narrative may have been exaggerated: though many more people are now working from home, and video-conferencing seems likely to sustain its new importance, these trends have only continued a longer-term pattern of working in more diverse ways.

## FINANCE

### Easing Does It: Economic policy beyond the lockdown

#### Resolution Foundation

As Britain eases lockdown, the government's attention is being turned to the economic crisis it now faces. This report provides a blueprint for an economic policy platform which can 'support a rapid, strong and sustained recovery'. It argues that we will need a fiscal rescue package that is far larger than was seen in previous recessions (around 10 per cent of GDP), and that we will need very targeted policy measures to prop up sectors who have borne the brunt of the crisis thus far. As this economic situation is largely unprecedented and quickly changing, our policy approach will also have to be highly responsive and flexible.

### Bounce Back: How to put Britain on the path to prosperity after Coronavirus

#### Onward

Dealing with this economic crisis means accepting that this recession has been caused by an exogenous shock, and is a crisis of demand. Accordingly, we need to recognise that there is 'no off-the shelf playbook' for dealing with it, and our policy response must be flexible, responsive and timely. It also must be ambitious and wide reaching in scale, matching the scale of the crisis itself. On this basis, this report makes a number of recommendations for government, which together form a detailed plan for addressing the crisis through measures targeted at skills, jobs, corporate debt and public finances.

### Tackling the Tax Gap

#### National Audit Office

2018-2019 saw HMRC report record tax revenue of over £600 billion. However, there was still a tax gap (meaning the gap between what was collected and what was theoretically owed nation-wide) of around £31 billion. While this represents a significant improvement on 2013-14, where the tax gap peaked at £38 billion, it remains the case that mistakes, non-compliance and insolvency are costing the country billions per year.

## Local Authority in Commercial Property

### Public Accounts Committee

Councils spent £6.6 billion on acquiring commercial properties in 2018-19 – an extraordinary figure which is 14 times more than in the previous three years. The Committee finds that this is an understandable response to funding reductions. The vast majority of this spending has been financed by prudential borrowing, and its purpose is to provide councils with long term income from rental yields.

## NHS Capital Expenditure and Financial Management

### Public Accounts Committee

The NHS has had to go above and beyond the normal call of duty in order to get to grips with the COVID-19 crisis. The Public Accounts Committee, however, are concerned by issues of procurement that arose during the crisis. The shortage of PPE faced by frontline workers was a major issue, and the committee is “not convinced” that the department of Health and Social Care have put in place the procedures to procure and distribute sufficient PPE in the event of a second wave.

On the wider issue of funding, while the writing off of NHS loan debt in order to provide the service with greater funding has been welcome, it has not addressed the underlying issues facing NHS funding sustainability. COVID-19 needs to become the impetus to put this right.

## ■ EMPLOYMENT AND SKILLS

### COVID-19 and the Career Prospects of Young People

#### Institute for Fiscal Studies

There is evidence that economic downturns are particularly damaging for the careers of young people, with ‘scarring’ effects on their pay and employment lasting several years after the end of economic contractions. The pandemic therefore threatens to have a prolonged negative economic impact on young people by reducing demand for the jobs that are typical among workers at the start of their careers and making it harder for workers to find better opportunities than their current jobs.

As the Government attempts to manage the labour market impacts of COVID-19 in the coming months, it should have a particular focus on the challenges facing the young.

### Guaranteeing the Right Start: Preventing youth unemployment after COVID-19

#### Institute for Public Policy Research

There is a strong case for bold policy interventions to prevent youth unemployment. Becoming NEET results in a ‘scarring effect’ that lowers long-term employment prospects and earning potential. Furthermore, those from the poorest backgrounds and with the lowest qualifications are likely to be the worst affected.

Recommendations include:

- Create a Right Start Fund (RSF), to provide up to 140,000 subsidised transitional jobs for those who are not ‘labour market or apprenticeship ready’ across the UK.
- Give local government a central role in delivering the RSF, including full devolution to combined authorities.
- Create a new ‘Opportunity Guarantee’ for young people: the government should ensure that every young person is either in education or work.

## COVID-19 and Social Mobility Impact Brief: Graduate recruitment and access to the workplace

Sutton Trust

Opportunities for young people to get experience of the workplace have been impacted considerably by the COVID-19 crisis. Many firms who previously offered internships or work experience placements have cancelled them, with just over three fifths (61 per cent) of employers surveyed cancelling some or all of their placements. Only about a third of firms continued all their usual placements either in person or online.

Recommendations include:

- The Government should put in place specific support for graduates, including incentivising employers to offer paid internships with graduate employers, to ensure that talent is harnessed. Tailored support for graduates could form part of the Government's recently announced Kickstart scheme.
- Government should ensure high quality careers advice, applicable to graduates and those entering professional careers, is available. This could be done through providing referrals to specialised recruitment agencies from job centres.
- Employers should work to keep the pipeline into their industry open, including where possible moving experiences online. Where internships, work experience placements or recruitment processes are moved online, employers should ensure they remain accessible, for example by providing tech equipment if needed.

## The Living Standards Audit 2020

Resolution Foundation

The economic effects of the coronavirus pandemic have hit household living standards hard. In particular, this crisis is first and foremost a labour market crisis, with big implications for the incomes of working families. So, it is important to assess both the state of the country going into the crisis – to properly contextualise its impacts – and where we find ourselves now.

The report's findings include:

- Unemployment increases over the rest of 2020-21 will mean large household income falls for many.
- Benefit policy may further pull the rug from under low-to-middle income households in April 2021. Support for private renters is expected to be reduced next April, (though the Government has not yet specified a firm plan). An average reduction of £700 in housing allowances for two-bedroom properties is estimated, for example, if Local Housing Allowances become unmoored again from actual local housing costs. And Council Tax Support is also set to be reduced, as a £150 a year tax reduction for poorer working-age households in England expires.

## Data and the Future of Work

Common Wealth

During the pandemic, work is where inequalities are exposed and amplified, between those who have the ability to shelter in place, and those who have no choice but to put their lives on the line; between those who have the security blanket of a permanent contract and pension, and those who have no insulation against economic downturns. Our workplaces are also where new technologies are trialled and inequalities are laid bare – but also where power is built and exercised, where progress can be

made and where vested interests can be challenged. So it seems appropriate that, in sketching a path to a better technological future, we start here, with work.

Policy recommendations include:

- Guarantee a minimum income for all through a comprehensive social security system and an ambitious universal basic services agenda
- A new public infrastructure company should be tasked with rolling out a nationwide full fibre network by 2030.
- A publicly owned cloud service option should be examined, operating as an alternative to existing providers with an emphasis on data security and the ethical use of information.

### **Making Work Secure: Unlocking poverty and building a stronger economy**

Joseph Rowntree Foundation

There is reason to be concerned with the current scale and nature of insecurity facing workers in the UK. First, the costs of insecurity are falling on those least able to bear them. Second, having a significant number of workers in insecure roles limits the productivity of the UK economy. Delivering security should not be put on hold until the economy has recovered from COVID-19.

The Government should consider:

- Bringing forward their employment bill, and also go further by giving the right to notice of work schedules, compensation for cancelled work, and an extension of sick pay to low earners.
- Ensuring that upcoming reforms in the social care workforce strategy deliver the security workers deserve and quality of care people expect.
- Improving the social security system's interaction with less secure work: Universal Credit must be able to handle fluctuating earnings in a way that is both helpful and fair for claimants.

### **The Time of Your Life: Time use in London and the UK over the past 40 years**

Resolution Foundation and Trust for London

A policy debate which centres narrowly on reducing hours of paid work to increase leisure is one that is strongly informed by the experience of higher-income males over the past forty years – a group whose paid work hours have stayed relatively long throughout this period. While calls for a four-day week may sound attractive, and chime with what many say they would like in an ideal world, they often ignore the reality of those in lower-income households for whom more, not fewer, hours are the top priority. And while more time at leisure may be desirable, the past shows that in couples at least, it is men rather than women who tend to get first dibs on free time.

Potential future policy changes include:

- Revisiting the Working Time Regulations, given that 19 per cent of men and 7 per cent of women work more than 48 hours in a typical week.
- New regulations to give employees the right to a two-week minimum notice period for shifts; to contracts that fairly reflect their hours; and to compensation for work cancelled at the last minute.
- More generous use-it-or-lose-it maternity and paternity leave schemes.

## Finding Opportunities in Uncertainty

Nesta

Through identifying sources of friction that people commonly face in navigating the job market throughout their careers, the aim of the report is to inform the development of more intelligent data-driven services and policies that reduce employment and skills mismatch.

Recommendations include:

- Government, education providers, employers and job search platforms need to work together to generate, open up and share relevant information about jobs and skills.
- Providers of job search tools and careers guidance should use common triggers and touchpoints for career navigation to target workers facing uncertainty and make it easy for them to find the information and support they need.

## The COVID Shift

Institute for Public Policy Research

We're now nearing a pivotal moment in which a new chapter of working time practices could be opened. This moment of innovation could be used to plan, test and implement new working time models. The coronavirus pandemic severely endangers the livelihoods of many workers in manufacturing sectors and related industries; and supporting businesses and workers through this will be critical to prevent long-term unemployment and hardship. But the crisis can also serve as an opportunity to learn and build a better work environment in the future.

Recommendations include:

- The UK government should extend the flexible furlough scheme to facilitate short-time working while the economy is subdued and until a recovery has been achieved.
- Introduce a new bank holiday in recognition of the contribution of key workers through the pandemic.
- During short-time working, businesses and the UK government should support workers to use spare hours to take up training opportunities.

## COVID-19 and Social mobility impact brief: Early years

Sutton Trust

The report looks at how children, parents and providers have been impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and explores how government can lessen the impact of the crisis both now and in the future to ensure all children and families, no matter their background, can access the benefits of high quality early education and care services. The evidence for this report comes from three sources: A YouGov survey of the parents of 2-4-year olds, two Early Years Alliance surveys of providers, and a case study of providers in Birmingham.

Recommendations include:

- The Government should urgently implement a package of support for the early years sector in line with the support offered to schools and which recognises the importance of the early years on child development and long-term life chances. This would equate to around £88m and could be spent on a mix of targeted and universal support, such as transition funding and increasing the Early Years Pupil Premium.

- A reinvigorated system of community-based family support through children’s centres that provide integrated early education, childcare, health and family support services is needed, especially in the poorest areas.

## When Furlough has to Stop: Next steps to avert long-term unemployment

Learning & Work Institute and Reform

The longer someone is out of work, the harder it is to get back into the labour market, and the greater the likelihood of scarring effects on their career prospects. Higher unemployment is linked to slower economic growth. A comprehensive package of support must be available the moment that workers receive redundancy notices, and a clear and ambitious offer should be made to those furloughed workers in sectors facing the greatest risk of job losses. In both cases, reskilling for career switches must form a central plank of that support.

Proposals to Government include:

- Implement a Universal Support Offer for all furloughed workers, those at risk of redundancy and workers in the retail and hospitality sectors. This should include online advice and one-to-one support, delivered through different channels in order to fit with people’s lives and maximise take-up.
- Rapidly increase employment support through an Into Work Service and a minimum 10,000 increase in the number of Jobcentre Plus work coaches.
- Allow firms to use a proportion of their apprenticeship levy to support wages, with an equivalent grant for SMEs.

## Beyond the Bursary: Workforce supply

Royal College of Nursing

We entered the COVID-19 pandemic with almost 40,000 nursing vacancies in the NHS in England alone; which does not reflect additional vacancies in the independent sector, social care and public health, where many services are also publicly funded. It must be Government’s responsibility to ensure a sufficient supply of nurses. The current workforce shortage is the result of successive governments’ underinvestment in workforce supply.

To address the current shortage – and to futureproof – the Government must:

- Produce a workforce strategy for the long-term supply and growth of the health and social care workforce.
- Develop a cross-agency and cross-stakeholder mandated collection of nursing student data.
- Introduce legislation which provides clear roles, responsibilities and accountability for workforce planning and supply, at all layers of decision making throughout the health and care system across England.

## ■ ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Communities vs. Coronavirus: The rise of Mutual Aid

New Local Government Network

The public response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been a source of much-needed hope. Thousands of spontaneous, voluntary Mutual Aid groups have emerged to support the most vulnerable people in our society. They are supplying food and medicine, connecting with those who are lonely, and

organising community resources. In many cases these groups have been able to help people far more rapidly and flexibly than traditional public services.

This report argues that the Mutual Aid phenomenon is a powerful demonstration of the potential for community power in the UK. Yet for community collaboration to outlast this crisis and make our places more resilient in future, lessons must be learnt. National government must resolve to empower localities and give people the free time they need to be better neighbours. Councils, meanwhile, must recognise the crucial role they can play and the make-or-break power they often wield over community groups.

## **Power in our Hands: An inquiry into place-based funding in the Big Local programme**

Local Trust

Historically, area-based initiatives have not been delivered in a way that allows community capacity to flourish. These have been government initiatives, with specific aims, that are more constrained than an independent funder, who can afford to be more embracing of the risk involved in giving up power to the community.

There is strong evidence, through Big Local and other area-based initiatives, that place-based funding is more likely to build community capacity if enough time is invested in developing people's confidence and optimism to take advantage of that opportunity. Particularly at the beginning, there is a need for specific support to help areas get started, but throughout the programme obstacles are common and areas experience unanticipated challenges, so having the time to make mistakes, encounter obstacles and recover would seem to be a key success factor.

## **Reform of the Centre of Government**

Institute for Government

The civil service is in a period of considerable flux. The government has major plans for reform, and senior civil servants, including high profile figures like Sir Mark Sedwill and Sir Philip Rutnam have recently announced their departures in acrimonious circumstances. This short paper from the Institute for Government has a series of recommendations on what reforms which could be made to the 'government machine' would have the most positive impact. These recommendations include things such as improving performance measurement and reducing the excessive turnover of staff in government departments.

## **Whole of Government Response to COVID-19**

Public Accounts Committee

Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, government has sprung into action across an enormous range of areas, initiative initiatives worth over £120 billion. This is, in and of itself, impressive, and testament to the possibilities of state power. However, it remains the case that we weren't in a great position to begin this work when the pandemic began, with no specific plans on how we might deal with the economic impacts of a pandemic in place ahead of time. Furthermore, there have been problems with internal government coordination in working to counter coronavirus, with this report concluding that "we would have expected the Cabinet Office and the Treasury to have a better grip of the overall government response".

With the end of the Brexit transition period looming, the need for a deal to be struck between the UK and the EU is now pressing. Achieving this will require significant compromise on both sides. In order to achieve a satisfactory outcome, this report recommends the following actions:

- Giving negotiations on both sides flexibility to explore creative and technical compromises on key issues.
- That the goalposts should be somewhat shifted – with the goal of coming up with an ‘in principle’ deal to be concluded by the Autumn, rather than a fully-fledged treaty.
- The agreement of a time limited implementation period to follow that, to work out the details of, and to ratify, the ‘in principle’ agreement.