

# Spring Briefing Paper

## Webb Memorial Trust

Conducted by Edge Hill University  
on behalf of Webb Memorial Trust

Dr Katy Goldstraw  
Spring 2016



UNIVERSITY OF  
**BATH**



Glasgow  
Council  
for the  
Voluntary  
Sector



Newcastle Council  
for Voluntary Service



**The Pioneer Group**  
*People. Housing. Community.*



## COMPLETED Literature Review

---

We have produced an extensive literature review that considers the impact that civil society has had in reducing poverty and inequality in recent decades. The review uses Food Poverty as the lens through which to examine this. This extensive literature review contributes to the wider research into concepts of a Good Society being conducted by I4P.

This literature review is now available on the Edge Hill website and is free to download [edgehill.ac.uk/i4p/i4p-webb-memorial-trust](http://edgehill.ac.uk/i4p/i4p-webb-memorial-trust)

## Fairness Commissions Interviews : Follow up Study

---

We conducted semi-structured interviews with Fairness Commissions across England, in the Autumn of 2015 as part of a follow up study to the 2014 Reports led by Paul Bunyan at Edge Hill for the Webb Memorial Trust (available to download from [edgehill.ac.uk/i4p/i4p-webb-memorial-trust](http://edgehill.ac.uk/i4p/i4p-webb-memorial-trust)). This follow up research confirmed the diversity of the Fairness Commissions approaches which had been signalled in the 2014 reports. From this diversity, we have also identified the need for a more detailed, evidence based evaluation of the work of the Fairness Commissions over a longer time frame. Overall we found that the recommendations suggested in the 2014 Agency in Austerity Report, have been broadly followed. Yet it is unclear especially in the case of the Living Wage, to what extent the work of the Fairness Commissions has impacted on the establishment of Living Wage policies within Local Councils. Here, our research reinforced the case for evidence based evaluation regarding the work of Fairness Commission

**Online Survey:** As part of our work with Fairness Commissions we have also created an online survey and are asking for responses from Commissioners to this survey. This is a closed survey, to be analysed using a likert scale. We intend to publish our detailed findings from this in the Summer.

### House of Commons:

**SAVE THE DATE !** We will be inviting representatives from Fairness Commissions, to the House of Commons on 28th June 2016. This event will share preliminary findings from our research, asking Fairness Commissions to share their reflections on these findings. The report will be influenced by these reflections and include Fairness Commission feedback. So please save the date more detailed information to follow.

## Conferences: Report Backs

---

### 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2016 *Meeting of Minds: What might a Good Society Look Like?*

This was a joint event coordinated by I4P and CLES, held in central Manchester. The meeting of minds was attended by an invited group representing public, private and civil society. Participants were asked to give consideration to what is required of a good society; and how sectors collaborate to tackle poverty, inequality and respond to public service reform. Key Note speakers were Andrew Lightfoot, Strategic Director Public Service Reform Greater Manchester Combined Authority and Alison Page, Chief Executive of Salford CVS. The event was held in central Manchester. The analysis of this conference will form part of our final report, however here are some examples of the responses to the pre-prepared reflections that participants shared:

#### *Snippets from pre-prepared Reflections. Considerations - What do we need to do to tackle poverty?*

*In seeking to tackle poverty, I would endeavor to establish inclusive, trusting relationships where people and organisations are encouraged to work collaboratively in their local communities. Many urban high streets have lived with decline in recent years. Central to those communities are empty shops which stand as places where new life could be generated through the sharing of common tasks. I believe it is essential to take grass-roots approaches to community building which embrace a wider participation. In really listening to the experts who live with poverty, resource could then be re-directed and support provided within communities where neighbors will work together.*

*As a starting point I think there needs to be an agreed definition of what poverty actually means. This could be a “negative” definition of what absolute or relative poverty means. Or a “positive” definition of what people need in income terms to live a good & satisfying life. The latter could draw on work by Joseph Rowntree Foundation or the Living Wage campaign. That is because if we don’t have a shared understanding of what Poverty is how can we design interventions & align our resources to tackle it? I don’t want to expend too much effort defining poverty. Let’s develop a rough & ready definition which is the starting point for our intervention.*

---

*Its about delivery, providing practical support in partnership . As important as evidence is to debunk the mythologies surrounding inequality we need to deliver some changes however small they may seem.*

*We need to change the politics and the discourse around poverty away from blaming the victim. Poverty is largely connected with structural inequality which is not reducible to the agency of the poor. In recent months we have seen the Labour Party move from acquiescing to the proposed reduction of tax credits to successful opposition. Many other organisations successfully challenged the government narrative around tax credits. What are the lessons from this?*

*Poverty exists on many levels: financial, material, emotional, social, relational, spiritual. Families with 'nothing' but who manage strong bonds, emotional and social capital, resilience. This is not to romanticise but to value what they offer. Families in the same financial situation but with less social, emotional and relational capital struggle and are less resilient. What makes the difference? We need to consider how do you encourage the development of all forms of capital whilst recognising that perceptions can be class / culturally biased. We cant impose 'our' solutions – this could become benevolent oppression.*

## Focus groups across the UK with civil society groups

We are conducting Focus Groups across the UK. The aim of the focus groups is to gather academic and practitioner considerations of a Good Society, to share what is being done by different sectors in terms of poverty alleviation and inequality and to focus on what more can be done. Each event centres on reinforcing the need for collaborative action between local state, civil society and business. Focus groups will be held in Glasgow, Belfast, Newcastle, Birmingham Newport and Bath.

In conjunction with the focus groups we have also created an online reflection opportunity for those that cannot attend the focus groups where we are gathering a range of reflections on what a Good Society might look like. The discussions held during the focus groups and the online contributions will form part of our final report.

- **12<sup>th</sup> April: Birmingham**  
This event is in partnership with Pioneer Housing Group based in CastleVale.
- **10<sup>th</sup> May: Bath**  
This event is in partnership with Bath University
- **19<sup>th</sup> May: Newcastle**  
This event is in partnership with Newcastle CVS.
- **23<sup>th</sup> May: Newport**  
This event is in partnership with the University of South Wales and Newport Fairness Commission
- **9<sup>th</sup> June: Belfast**  
This event is in partnership with the Ulster University, Institute for Research in Social Sciences (IRiSS).
- **1<sup>st</sup> September: Glasgow**  
This event is in partnership with Glasgow Caledonian University and Glasgow CVS.

## Next Steps: Spring /Summer

We will analyse responses from Fairness Commissions, conferences and focus groups. We intend to have preliminary findings to present to Fairness Commissions at the House of Commons 28th June. We will then include Fairness Commission feedback on these findings into our final report.

## The Webb Memorial Trust

The Webb Memorial Trust has pursued the intellectual legacy of Beatrice Webb (1858–1943), who, together with her husband Sydney (1859–1947), embarked on a vigorous programme of social reform. Beatrice Webb had a plan of what a good society free from poverty would look like. It took 30 years for her views to be accepted, but they became the basis for Britain's welfare state, and in the 30 years following the Second World War, British society made good progress on poverty as a result.

Since 1944, the Webb Memorial Trust has worked to advance education and learning with respect to the history and problems of government and social policy. Initially delivered via debates and discussions at Beatrice Webb House in Surrey, in 1987 the Trust refocused efforts to concentrate on funding research and conferences that aim to provide practical solutions to poverty and inequality. Never has this work been more important. Tough economic conditions and changes to the welfare state mean more people are living in, or are at risk of, poverty than they have been for the last 20 years.

To find out how the Webb Memorial Trust aims to tackle poverty and inequality in the UK, and to learn more about the achievements of Beatrice Webb, visit [www.webbmemorialtrust.org.uk](http://www.webbmemorialtrust.org.uk)

## Institute for Public Policy and Professional Practice (I4P)

I4P is Edge Hill University's cross-disciplinary research and knowledge exchange initiative established in 2013. The Institute is committed to exploring the opportunities for cross sector collaboration and co-operation and to draw on the experience of practitioners as well as academic researchers to inform new ways of working and learning.

E: [I4P@edgehill.ac.uk](mailto:I4P@edgehill.ac.uk)

W: [edgehill.ac.uk/i4p](http://edgehill.ac.uk/i4p)

T: [twitter.com/I4PEHU](https://twitter.com/I4PEHU)

**Edge Hill**  
**University**

**I4P**  
Institute for  
Public Policy and  
Professional Practice

**Webb Memorial Trust**