



## Social Mobility

### QSD on 29 January 2020

On 29 January 2020, Baroness Tyler of Enfield (Liberal Democrat) is to “ask Her Majesty’s Government how they plan to respond to the ten steps to improve social mobility contained in the Sutton Trust’s *Mobility Manifesto*, published in November 2019, and the recommendations of the Social Mobility Commission’s 2019 *State of the Nation* report”.

#### Summary

In April 2019, the Social Mobility Commission published its [State of the Nation 2018–19](#) report. It found that social mobility had “stagnated” over the last four years at “virtually all stages from birth to work”. It made several recommendations including:

- The 30-hour childcare offer should be extended by lowering the lower income limit of eligibility.
- The Government should commission a review into whether [pupil premium funding](#) is effectively targeted at supporting disadvantaged students.
- The Government should introduce a student premium for disadvantaged students aged 16–19.
- UCAS, the Office for Students, and universities should develop a simple system which displays all financial support (bursaries, scholarships and ad-hoc funds) available to undergraduates alongside the eligibility criteria.
- Universities should make greater use of contextualised offers: the applicant’s background is considered as part of the admissions process.
- The Government should provide concentrated investment in skills, jobs and infrastructure in areas of low social mobility and low pay.
- The Government should “lead the way in being model employers” by becoming [accredited voluntary living wage employers](#).

Theresa May’s Conservative Government welcomed the report. It stated that social mobility was a “top priority across government” and it had taken “great strides to improve it”. In June 2019, the Government announced that it had asked the commission to launch a £2 million research and evidence fund to identify and spread best practice.

In November 2019, ahead of the 2019 general election, the Sutton Trust published its [mobility manifesto](#). It set out a series of policies “designed to address issues affecting low levels of mobility”

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and “widen access” to education and employment opportunities. It contained ten “top” recommendations:

- The government should review early education provision and eligibility for 30 hours of free childcare.
- State school admissions should ensure a “better social mix” across the system with consideration given to ballots and priority for disadvantaged students.
- Independent schools should be “opened up” on a voluntary basis to pupils from all backgrounds.
- The government should establish a fund to support young people with high academic potential in state schools, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds.
- State schools should develop essential life skills in their students with time allocated for their development through the curriculum and extracurricular activities.
- A focus on increasing degree and higher-level apprenticeships.
- Contextual admissions should be used by more highly-selective universities to open up access to students from less privileged backgrounds.
- Post Qualification Applications (PQA) to universities should be implemented to allow young people to make a choice based on their actual rather than predicted grades.
- Maintenance grants for students should be restored.
- The government should ban unpaid internships, ensuring that after four weeks interns are always paid the minimum wage, or preferably the living wage.

It called on the next government to put social mobility at the “heart of their agenda”.

In its 2019 general election manifesto, the Conservative Party said that a Conservative Government would “unite and level up, spreading opportunity across the whole United Kingdom”. The manifesto included commitments to invest in schools, further education and skills training, and in infrastructure.

Sarah Tudor | 22 January 2020

## Key Information

- Sutton Trust, [Mobility Manifesto 2019](#), November 2019

*Published ahead of the 2019 general election. It set out the trust's "top ten" policy recommendations for the new government to tackle social mobility.*

- Social Mobility Commission, [Social Mobility in Great Britain: State of the Nation 2018–19: Summary](#), April 2019

*Summary of the commission's key findings and recommendations.*

- Social Mobility Commission and Sutton Trust, [Elitist Britain 2019: Summary Report](#), 24 June 2019, pp 1–3

*Analysis of the educational background of business, political, media and public sector leaders in the UK. The report makes recommendations on how to improve social diversity through the education system and employment practices.*

- Social Mobility Commission, [Social Mobility Barometer: Public Attitudes to Social Mobility in the UK: 2019–20](#), January 2020, pp 4–5

*A survey of over 5,000 people from across the UK on attitudes to social mobility. The poll showed that nearly half of people (44%) say that where you end up in society is largely determined by your background.*

- House of Lords Social Mobility Committee, [Overlooked and Left Behind: Improving the Transition from School to Work for the Majority of Young People](#), 8 April 2016, HL paper 120 of session 2015–16, pp 4–5

*Report from an ad-hoc House of Lords select committee that was set up to consider social mobility in the transition from school to work. The committee found that the majority of young people are "significantly overlooked" in their transition to work by the education system and the focus on apprenticeships is not suitable for everyone. It recommended that the ages of 14–19 be recognised as a single key transition stage.*

- House of Commons Library, [Inequality and Social Mobility](#), 11 June 2019 pp 1–14; and [Income Inequality in the UK](#), 20 May 2019, p 3

*Briefings providing information on policy, trends and studies of inequality and social mobility and on trends in income inequality in the UK over the last 50 years respectively.*

- Institute for Fiscal Studies and Nuffield Foundation, [Inequalities in the Twenty-first Century: Introducing the IFS Deaton Review](#), May 2019, pp 4–15

*Report introduces the IFS Deaton Review of inequalities. It sets out background facts and questions for the five-year project. It looks at: patterns and trends; sources of inequality; and at policy.*

### **Parliamentary Debate, Statements and Questions**

- House of Commons, '[Written Question: Social Mobility](#)', 9 May 2019, 249233
- House of Commons, '[Written Question: Social Mobility](#)', 10 June 2019, 259284
- [Debate on 'Inequality and Social Mobility'](#), HC Hansard, 12 June 2019, cols 728–70
- House of Commons, '[Written Statement: Government Response to Opposition Day Debate: Inequality and Social Mobility](#)', 18 July 2019, HCWS1734

### **Further Information**

- House of Commons Library, [Social Mobility Index by Constituency SMIC](#), 15 October 2018
- House of Commons Library, [The Pupil Premium](#), 8 January 2020
- Resolution Foundation, [The Living Standards Outlook 2019](#), 20 February 2019