LEARNING PORTAL
THE STAFF COLLEGE

Cues for Change

October 2017

Social

No child to be left behind, says Andy Burnham

Writing in the *Independent*, Andy Burnham, Mayor of the **Greater Manchester Combined Authority**, pledges to pioneer a completely new approach to tackling child inequality. A third of the children starting school today – around 12,000 – will be without the basic language and social skills to start learning straight away, he says, and as a result will fall behind their classmates from day one. To ensure that in five years' time Greater Manchester exceeds the national average for the proportion of children reaching a "good level of development" at the end of reception, Burnham asserts, we will ask all public bodies in the region to sign a public pledge to make improving school-readiness a pre-eminent goal and to work together to achieving it.

The Independent

Serving the village

North Norfolk District Council is to buy a 380-year-old village shop, which has been serving customers since 1637, and lease it back to the village community association, to save it from closure.

Daily Mirror

School exclusions up 12%

Data obtained by the *Times Educational Supplement* shows that the number of children expelled from UK schools climbed 12% last year. Figures from 118 local councils showed 25 areas have seen a 50% rise in expulsions. Exclusions were up by more than 200% in **Redcar & Cleveland and Newcastle**, and by around 340% in **Slough**.

The Times

Economic

Poor families face £50-a-week cut in income

Analysis commissioned by the LGA suggests around 2m poor families will be more than £50 a week worse off by the end of the decade due to welfare cuts, rent rises and inflation. The report, by consultancy Policy in Practice, suggests that across Britain's 7m low-income households there will be an average loss of £40.62 a week by 2020 compared with the end of last year. The study also found that the introduction of the Government's flagship policy of universal credit will lead to an average income loss of £11.18 per week. Claire Kober, chair of the LGA's resources board, said these issues came as councils were "experiencing huge funding pressures and faces an overall funding gap of £5.8bn by 2020." She added that local authorities are particularly concerned by the potential rise in the number of households in temporary accommodation or at risk of homelessness. The DWP commented: "This report assumes that people won't make any attempt to improve their lives." The spokesperson added that welfare reforms incentivise work and universal credit "helps working people progress and earn more, so they can eventually stop claiming benefits altogether."

The Observer

Local welfare schemes struggling

A new study has revealed that the system of local authority-run welfare safety net schemes designed to provide support for vulnerable low-income families hit by unexpected financial crises and domestic emergencies has been significantly stripped down in England. Almost two-thirds of councils have either closed the "welfare assistance schemes" they introduced just four years ago, or offer only a threadbare service, according to the Centre for Responsible Credit. Localised welfare assistance replaced the nationally administered £300m-a-year social fund safety net four years ago, but came with a £120m annual funding cut.

The Guardian

Study reveals councils' budget concerns

A report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies has found that nine out of 10 councils reported that their "services were maintained" last year, despite concerns about the impact of reduced budgets. However, the study also revealed that most councils said that they will feel the effect of cuts in the future, from 2019 onwards. The most concerned local authorities are those running adult social care departments with responsibility for fast-growing numbers of vulnerable elderly people. The report was based on surveys of senior elected members and officials carried out by the *Local Government Information Unit* of 126 authorities and accountancy firm PwC of 84 councils. LGiU chief executive Jonathan Carr-West said: "Councils currently have little certainty as to how they will be funded beyond 2020. The impact of 100% business rate retention looks increasingly uncertain. For councils, who have been told in recent years that they should be investing in their local economy so that they will be able to fund themselves through business rates post-2020, the current lack of policy direction adds yet another layer of uncertainty and complexity to their financial planning. There is now an opportunity to have a rethink about how we broaden the local tax base to create a sustainable way of funding services in the long-term. More creative approaches to fiscal devolution were ruled out of the initial round of devolution talks: it's time to revisit them."

Daily Mail, Yorkshire Post

Government borrowing lowest for 10 years

The government borrowed £28.3bn between April and August, the ONS has said, the lowest figure for August since 2007. The public sector borrowed £5.7bn in the month of August, down £1.3bn from the same period last year, while net debt rose to £1.77tn at the end of August, up £151bn on last year, and equivalent to 88% of GDP. Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said: "Relatively modest public borrowing in August reflects punitive austerity, not a rebounding economy."

BBC News **Financial Times** **The Times**

Public sector pensions cost £1.8tn

The cost of public sector pensions has increased by 30% in the past year to over £1.8tn. The extra cost has been attributed to the drop in bond yields following the EU referendum - a lower yield on government bonds directly increases the cost of future pensions, prompting calls from experts for the government to be more honest about the additional pressures on its finances. John Ralfe, a pensions consultant said: "By not owning up to public sector pension liabilities, and the annual cost of new pension promises, we are passing on costs to our children and grandchildren."

The Sunday Times, Business, Page: 1

FCA urges action over household debt

Andrew Bailey, chief executive of the Financial Conduct Authority, has warned that the Government needs to step in to help tackle Britain's mountain of consumer debt. He voiced concerns about the sheer number of people who need loans to make ends meet, pinpointing gig economy workers as being in special need of credit to smooth their incomes. The debt charity StepChange said the percentage of its clients falling behind on payments went over 40% in the first half of 2017, while the average debt of the people it helps has risen to £14,367 in the first half of the year. The **Guardian** reports from the London borough of **Newham**, where residents are thought to be the most likely in the country to be overburdened with debt. Local Mayor Sir Robin Wales points to the Moneyworks debt advice office and a job exchange called Workplace that his council has introduced to help ease local problems.

The Guardian, Page: 1, 14 The Times, Page: 41

Sir Colin Campbell Building,
Triumph Road,
Nottingham, NG7 2TU

www.thestaffcollege.uk