Introduction

Information on UK social policy issues comes from a wide variety of sources. This guide organises them in terms of four general types of provider:

- academic;
- Government;
- foundations, Government-funded bodies, thinktanks and pressure groups;
- commercial.

Designed for both undergraduates doing small-scale research projects and assignments and their postgraduate counterparts engaged in more substantive investigations for essays and dissertations, it describes the range of materials offered by providers in each category.

Key Academic Sources

Social Policy Journals and Reviews

There are a number of ‘generic’ UK social policy journals offering articles across the spectrum of welfare issues from funding to the delivery of benefits and services. These include:

- Critical Social Policy
- Discover Society
- Global Social Policy
- Journal of Social Policy
- Oxford Review of Economic Policy
- Policy and Politics
- Policy Studies
- Public Money and Management
- Public Administration
- Public Policy and Administration
- Social Policy and Society
- Social Policy and Administration
- Social Policy Review
- The Political Quarterly
- Work, Employment, and Society

Others offer a more thematic coverage, such as:

- Ageing and Society
- British Journal of Criminology
- British Journal of Social Work
- Disability and Society
- Housing Studies
- Housing, Theory and Society
- Howard Journal of Criminal Justice
Many journals are now only/also accessible in electronic formats to registered subscribers. Check with your university or college library as to the licensed agreements it holds.

**Bibliographic Databases and Dictionaries**

**Bibliographic Databases**

The databases listed below provide a time-saving way of searching for relevant research material. They draw together and classify many thousands of social policy articles, reports and books, typically providing abstracts or summaries of each publication (although some also provide full text articles). Most require subscription, so again check with your university or college library as to whether it has access to these sites.

- **ASSIA (Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts):** A subscription database that provides abstracts covering areas such as: criminology, disability, education, health, housing, poverty and social services among other relevant areas ([http://www.proquest.com/products-services/ASSIA-Applied-Social-Sciences-Index-and-Abstracts.html](http://www.proquest.com/products-services/ASSIA-Applied-Social-Sciences-Index-and-Abstracts.html)).

- **British Library Social Welfare Portal:** A free access database containing articles and reports on: benefits; children and families; community development and regeneration; criminal justice; education; employment; health services; housing and homelessness; social exclusion and discrimination; and social services ([http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/](http://socialwelfare.bl.uk/)).

- **Care Knowledge:** A subscription database that provides news, summaries of policies and articles on social care and social work practice ([www.careknowledge.com/ck/home/](http://www.careknowledge.com/ck/home/)).

- **IBSS (International Bibliography of the Social Sciences):** A subscription database offering references to articles, books, reviews and selected chapters on a broad coverage of social policy topics ([www.proquest.com/libraries/academic/databases/ibss-set-c.html](http://www.proquest.com/libraries/academic/databases/ibss-set-c.html)).

- **Social Care Online:** A free access database provided by the Social Care Institute for Excellence. It contains references to articles, books, reports and legislation on all aspects of social care, social welfare and social policy ([www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk](http://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk)).

- **Social Policy and Practice:** A subscription database of abstracts (with links to full-text materials) covering: social policy; public health; social services; mental and community health ([www.spandp.net/](http://www.spandp.net/)).

**Dictionaries**

The **Blackwell Dictionary of Social Policy** is the major dictionary in this discipline; it is a sister volume to the **Companion** offering definitions of key terms and concepts. Routledge’s **Dictionary of Social Welfare** and the **Oxford Dictionary of Social Work and Social Care** are useful alternative sources. Some introductory texts also provide glossaries including the web entry on this site.
University-based Sources

Many UK universities and colleges have research centres undertaking investigations on different aspects of social policy and publishing their analyses on their websites in the form of ‘briefing notes’, ‘working papers’, ‘interim’ or ‘final reports’. The simplest way of checking what is available is to go to the home page of a university website and then search by ‘department’, for example, ‘applied social studies’, or subject, for example, ‘social policy’; this usually reveals the research centres or research groups operating and their repositories of research papers.

Examples:
The University of Bath (www.bath.ac.uk) has a Centre for the Analysis of Social Policy whose research focuses on ‘the governance, prioritisation and evaluation of policy responses to major social issues’, including poverty and income maintenance, work and wages, inequalities, crime and substance abuse, child well-being and ageing. It provides working papers as well as some full-text journal articles; it also documents books and reports published by its staff.

The University of Birmingham (www.birmingham.ac.uk) has a School of Social Policy with four research centres: household assets and savings management (CHASM); family potential, policy and practice; superdiversity (IRIS); and third sector (TSRC). They offer different types of publication from blogs, briefing and working papers to full-text journal articles and reports. In the case of the TSRC there is also an e-library with over 6000 links and downloads.

The University of Edinburgh (www.ed.ac.uk) has research groups in social policy working in the areas of: families, children and welfare; policy and governance; global public health; and work, economy and welfare. Each group lists its staff membership, current research and key recent publications.

The Department of Social Policy at the London School of Economics (www2.lse.ac.uk) has associated research centres in: the analysis of social exclusion (CASE), health and social care, and criminology as well as research groups on ageing, life and population health, education, families and children, and demography. They offer a range of different types of information including: blogs, briefing papers, discussion papers, research notes and research reports.

The University of York (www.york.ac.uk) has two social policy research centres: Social Policy East Asia eXchange (SPEAX) and the Social Policy Research Unit (SPRU). Both provide lists of staff publications and in the case of SPRU direct access to many of its reports on health and social care, social work and welfare and employment.

Collaborative University Sources

The UK Data Service (www.ukdataservice.ac.uk)
Established by the Economic and Social Research Council in 2012, the UK Data Service is looking to establish itself as the first port of call for data and related sources for UK social science researchers. You can access a wealth of material including: UK surveys, cross-national surveys, longitudinal studies, census data, business micro data, international micro data, materials from qualitative/mix methods research and administrative data collected by Government departments and agencies.

Centre for Population Change (www.cpc.ac.uk)
Based at the Universities of Southampton, Edinburgh, St Andrews, Strathclyde and Stirling, CPC focuses on the key drivers and implications of population change. It publishes: articles, briefing papers, presentations and working papers that are all accessible on the site.
• Economic and Social Research Council (www.esrc.ac.uk)
The Economic and Social Research Council is the largest funding body for academic research on economic and social issues. Social policy investigations can be found in several threads including: economy and business; health and well-being; public services; politics and governance; and international research. It publishes: research evidence briefings; impact case studies; and two magazines, Society Now, which discusses topical issues and is published three times a year, and Britain in ..., which provides an annual review of the research ESRC funds.

• History and Policy website (www.historyandpolicy.org)
This collaborative project involving historians at Cambridge, King’s College, London, and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine seeks to demonstrate the relevance of history to contemporary policymaking. It has published papers on: charities, volunteering and civil society; criminal justice; education; families and children; medicine and public health; the NHS and social care; pensions; and policing and emergency services.

• Third Sector Research Centre (www.birmingham.ac.uk/generic/tsrc/index.aspx)
The Centre was a joint venture between the Universities of Birmingham and Southampton with contributions from the Universities of Kent and Middlesex. Its aim was to develop an important resource for practitioners, policymakers and academics through both the examination of past evidence and the undertaking of new research on Third Sector policies and practices. It is currently seeking further funding but maintains the TSRC website whose publications include: briefing papers, working papers and reports which can be downloaded. It also hosts The Third Sector Knowledge Portal, an online library and web catalogue developed in partnership with the British Library.

Key UK Government Sources

Since the last edition of the Companion, there has been significant reorganisation of UK Government websites involving both changes to the range of information provided and web locations. This not only reflects the devolution of governance to the national administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland (see Part IV of the Companion) and the revision of English and Welsh local authority responsibilities, but also the Government’s aim of integrating its different sources of digital information.

UK Central Government Sources

• Gov.UK (www.gov.uk)
A key portal for accessing UK Government information on welfare matters. Publications: announcements; consultations; and publications and statistics from the 24 ministerial departments and over 300 agencies and other public bodies.

• House of Commons Briefing Papers (researchbriefings.parliament.uk)
This site supplies research briefings produced by the House of Commons Library staff for MPs and the public. Publications: summaries of legislation, contemporary evidence and debates on a variety of public issues including a range of welfare topics.

• Legislation.gov.uk (www.legislation.gov.uk)
Managed by The National Archives (see below), this site publishes all UK-wide legislation and also the specific Acts of the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments and the Northern Ireland Assembly. This is the first port of call for detailed information on current welfare legislation.

- The National Archives (www.nationalarchives.gov.uk)
  The National Archives are home to millions of historical documents created and collected by Government departments and major courts of law. Topics of investigation can be surveyed through key word searches and through the use of the ‘Discovery catalogue’. Among the relevant categories of information for social policy students are: health, well-being and care; people, community and housing; home affairs, public order justice and rights; and work, education and skills. The documents are accessible via the site (or links), and many are downloadable.

- Office of National Statistics (www.ons.gov.uk)
  The Office of National Statistics is the largest single statistical provider collecting, compiling and disseminating numerical information about the UK’s society and economy. Publications: among its numerous publications are: the decennial census; reports; surveys; statistical bulletins; digests; and trends analyses. It provides the evidence base for most Government policy decision-making and therefore publishes information on a wide variety of social policy topics.

- UK Government Department Sources

  Departments with UK-wide responsibilities:

    Formed from the merger of the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) and the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC), BEIS is responsible for the government’s industrial strategy, relationship with business, tackling climate change, ensuring secure energy and that the UK remains at the leading edge of science, research and innovation. Publications: consultation documents, guidance and research reports.

  - Department of Work and Pensions (www.dwp.gov.uk)
    The Department of Work and Pensions (including the Office for Disability) has responsibility for: benefits reform; state and occupational pensions reform; return to work strategies; tackling child poverty; child maintenance; disabilities; and the ageing society (NB social security and pensions are devolved to the Assembly in Northern Ireland, with benefit administration and payments overseen by its Department of Social Development). Publications: consultation documents; impact assessments; research reports; statistical bulletins; and monthly statistical summaries.

  - Home Office (www.homeoffice.gov.uk)
    The Home Office has responsibility for equalities (other than in Northern Ireland); crime; drugs and alcohol; and immigration (its policing responsibilities are limited to England and Wales, those for Scotland and Northern Ireland are devolved to the respective national administrations). Publications: occasional papers; research reports; and statistical bulletins. The Home Office also commissions and publishes the British Crime Survey, which is a key annual source of information on the prevalence and people’s perceptions of crime.

  - HM Treasury (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-treasury)
The Treasury is ‘the government’s economic and finance ministry, maintaining control over public spending, setting the direction of the UK’s economic policy and working to achieve strong and sustainable economic growth’. Publications: announcements; consultations; policy papers; and financial statistics.

- HM Revenue and Customs (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/hm-revenue-customs)
The HMRC is the UK authority for the administration and collection of most taxes and duties. Its realm of responsibilities has however been reduced with the establishment of devolved national Government. Whilst in England its remit covers all taxes and duties including: income tax, corporation tax, National Insurance and VAT; in Scotland, the Scottish Parliament sets and administers Scottish income tax, stamp duty land tax, landfill tax and aggregate duty; and the same is planned for the Welsh Government. Corporation tax is due to be devolved to Northern Ireland in 2018. HMRC currently pays and administers Child Benefit, the Child Trust Fund, Tax Credits and Universal Credits for the UK, and is expected to recover loans from English and Welsh students. It also checks that employers are paying both the national minimum and the national living wage. Publications: A–Z of UK taxes; technical manual of Child Benefit; and summaries of the requirements of Tax Credits and National Insurance.

- Office for Civil Society (www.civilsociety.co.uk)
Working within the Cabinet Office, the OCS is responsible for the operations of charities, social enterprises and voluntary organisations. Publications: blogs; benchmark statements; a charities index; model documents; surveys; and reports.

- Office for Budget Responsibility (www.budgetresponsibility.org.uk)
OBR was created ‘to examine and report on the sustainability of public finances’. Publications: economic and fiscal outlook statements; fiscal sustainability reports; welfare trends reports; monthly public finance releases (NB it also publishes economic and fiscal forecasts for the Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly).

- UK National Administration Sources

**England**

- Department for Communities and Local Government (www.communities.gov.uk)
This Department is responsible for local government; communities and neighbourhood; housing and the homeless; building and the environment; planning; regeneration; and the fire services. Publications: briefings; consultation documents; impact assessments; research and statistical reports. It conducts the *English Housing Survey*, which is an important source of information on: household composition; economic status; education; health; housing history and aspirations; rent and mortgage payments; and attitudes to the neighbourhood.

- Department for Education (www.education.gov.uk)
The Department for Education is responsible for education and children’s services in England and in July 2016 also became responsible for higher and further education policy, apprenticeships and wider skills in England (previously the responsibility of the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, BIS). Publications: bulletins; consultation documents; papers; research reports; and statistics. It commissions and publishes surveys including the *Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey* as well as a number of evaluative assessments of different educational strategies. The website also hosts the *Edubase* public portal that allows the search of educational establishments in England and Wales (from nurseries to colleges) by name, location or type.
• Department for Health (www.dh.gov.uk)
The Department for Health is responsible for the provision, strategies and standards of health and social care in England. Publications: booklets; consultation documents; leaflets; reports; surveys (including the Health Survey for England, GP Patient Survey and the NHS Staff Survey); and statistical bulletins.

The NHS now has its own information source, NHS Digital (www.digital.nhs.uk), previously the Health and Social Care Information Centre. Designed for ‘frontline decision-makers’, it provides data on: audits and performance; health and lifestyles; hospital care; mental health; primary care; screening; social care; and the NHS and social care workforce.

• Ministry of Justice (www.justice.gov.uk)
The Ministry is responsible for criminal law, sentencing policy, prisons, probation and parole in England and Wales (NB Scotland and Northern Ireland have their own legal systems but some UK-wide statistics are also published on this site). Publications: consultation papers; court statistics; guidance; impact assessments; legislation; policy reports; and reviews (most of the reports are stored on the National Archive website – see the address above).

Northern Ireland
• Northern Ireland Assembly (www.niassembly.gov.uk)
The NIA is the devolved legislature for Northern Ireland. Its responsibilities include: justice and policing; education; employment and skills; equality and diversity; housing; local government; and health and social care. Publications: briefing papers; circulars; consultation papers; leaflets; statistical reports; and strategy documents. Statistical information can be found on the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency site at: www.nisra.gov.uk.

Scotland
• Scottish Government (Riaghaltas na h-Alba) (www.gov.scot)
The responsibilities of the Scottish Government include: communities and housing; crime and social justice; economic development; education; equality and diversity; health and social care; local government; policing; and the setting and administration of some taxes. It commissions and conducts research in each of these areas. Publications: audits; briefings; consultations; reports; and surveys. ScotStat is the principal source of policy statistics and can be found as a field on the same site.

Wales
• Welsh Government (Llywodraeth Cymru) (www.gov.wales)
The Welsh Government has responsibility for: children and young people’s services; crime and social justice; education and lifelong learning; employment and economic development; equality and diversity; health and social care; housing; community and local government; and the setting and administration of some taxes. It collects its own data on these topics and/or disaggregates information from broader UK surveys. Publications: circulars; consultation papers; reports; surveys; and strategy statements. Statistics for Wales are available as a field on the same site.

Local Government Sources

Information on local government comes from a variety of sources.

• Local authorities in England and Wales provide information about the benefits and services they offer residents. This includes details on council tax and benefits; children and family services;
housing and planning; schools and education; environmental health; and social care. The
Government is also planning to roll out a programme of devolved responsibility for the
management and provision of healthcare to local authorities (see, for instance, the plans for
Greater Manchester (www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk). Check each local authority for specific
details on their current services and resources.

• Scottish local authorities, like their English and Welsh equivalents, largely provide information
for their residents about the range of services for which they are responsible. Services include:
education (school, adult and community); economic development; housing; social work and
community care; tackling poverty; and promoting social inclusion. Check each local authority for
their specific resources and services.

• Northern Ireland’s local councils do not carry out the same range of functions as those at a
similar administrative level in other parts of the UK. The 11 districts are responsible for local
economic and cultural development, leisure and community services, building control and waste
and recycling. Education, housing, health, social care and road building are managed by national
agencies.

An A–Z of county councils, borough and district councils, and unitary authorities for England,
Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales (with links) can be found at www.gov.uk.

• Local Government Association (www.local.gov.uk)
The Local Government Association addresses the issues facing English and Welsh local
authorities and their staff, including the impact of changes in central Government funding and
the reorganisation of service provision. Its work covers such topics as: children and young
people; the environment and housing; health, adult social care and ageing; local government
finance; and localism. Publications include media releases and reports.

• Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (www.cosla.gov.uk)
The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities has a similar role to the LGA (above). It seeks to be
the ‘voice for local government in Scotland’ and is committed to promoting local authorities as a
key tier of governance. Its coverage includes: community well-being and safety; education,
children and young people; health and well-being; and regeneration and sustainable
development. Publications include: media releases; newsletters; and consultations.

• Northern Ireland Local Government Association (www.nilga.org
The Northern Ireland Local Government Association represents the collective interests of
elected members in local councils and facilitates the development of the sector. It publishes
booklets, bulletins, newsletters and weekly updates.

• National Audit Office (www.nao.org.uk)
The NAO is a public corporation that works with local authorities in England and Wales (and their
partners) to improve services for local people through its audit, inspection and research
activities. It provides briefings, evaluative reports, press releases and statistics on a number of
local authority services.

• Audit-Scotland (wwwaudit-scotland.gov.uk)
Wales Audit Office (Swyddfa Archwilio Cymru) (www.wao.gov.uk)
Northern Ireland Audit Office (www.niauditoffice.gov.uk)
These independent offices undertake a similar role to the NAO (above) for their national administrations. They publish briefings and reports on the performance and finances of their local authorities.

- **New Local Government Network ([www.nlgn.org.uk](http://www.nlgn.org.uk))**
  An independent research body committed to promoting the decentralisation of power, enhancing local governance and empowering communities. It undertakes a range of sponsored research projects across the spectrum of funding and service issues publishing articles and news releases.

The Department for Communities and Local Government and the national administrations for Northern Ireland, Scotland, and Wales (web addresses above) will also carry detailed information and links for local governments on their respective sites.

- **Foundations, Government-funded bodies, thinktanks and pressure groups**

  An important feature of the UK social policy landscape is the range of foundations, Government-funded bodies, thinktanks and pressure groups undertaking their own investigations or commissioning research and publishing the outcomes with a view to shaping policy and influencing provision and practice either across the UK or in its constituent administrations.

- **Foundations**

  Foundations usually derive their income from endowments, which provides a tax-exempt income for funding research. The key foundations supporting social policy research are:

  - **The Nuffield Foundation ([www.nuffieldfoundation.org](http://www.nuffieldfoundation.org)),** which funds projects in areas such as: children and families; dementia; early years education; family justice; the financing of ageing; pensions; and refugee integration. Publications emanating from this research include: books, articles and survey reports.

  - **The Joseph Rowntree Foundation ([www.jrf.org.uk](http://www.jrf.org.uk))** funds policy research that seeks to both understand social problems and identify ways of overcoming them. Recent research support has been for projects on homelessness; poverty; social housing; income inequality and health; the empowerment of disadvantaged groups; and community and community engagement. The website provides blogs, briefings and reports of these projects.

  - **The King’s Fund ([www.kingsfund.org.uk](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk))** focuses on research in healthcare. Its mission is to understand how healthcare can be improved in order to shape policy and transform services. It undertakes and commissions research in a wide range of areas including: acute and primary care; funding and finance; governance, accountability and regulation; health inequalities; and quality of care. It produces blogs, press releases, briefings, articles and reports.

  - **The Building and Housing Foundation ([www.bshf.org.uk](http://www.bshf.org.uk))** sponsors and undertakes research on a broad range of UK and international projects. It has published reports on: housing benefits; the supply of new homes; provision for refugees, gypsies and travellers; surveys of empty properties and community land trusts.

- **Government-funded bodies**
• Citizens’ Advice (www.citizensadvice.org.uk) is a part-funded charity with responsibilities for consumer advice, education and advocacy. Among the social policy areas it covers are: benefits and tax advice; credit and debt; education; employment; equality, diversity and discrimination; health and social care; housing; criminal justice; and immigration and asylum matters. It publishes: blogs; fact sheets; impact analyses; and online advice.

• Institute of Health Equity (www.instituteofhealthequity.org) aims to tackle the social determinants of health inequities in the UK as well as contribute to similar research in Europe and globally. It publishes: news items; articles; projects; reports; and reviews.

• The Equality and Human Rights Commission (www.equalityhumanrights.com) has a statutory remit to monitor and promote human rights and equality across the nine ‘protected’ grounds of: age; disability; gender; race; religion and belief; pregnancy and maternity; marriage and civil partnership; sexual orientation; and gender reassignment. It commissions and undertakes UK-wide research, as well as specific investigations in England, Scotland and Wales. It publishes: blogs, briefing papers, news releases and research reports, and shares its remit with the Scottish Human Rights Commission (www.scottishhumanrights.com). There is also an Equality Commission for Northern Ireland (www.equalityni.org).

• UK Commission for Employment and Skills (www.gov.uk/government/organisations/uk-commission-for-employment-and-skills) is a publically funded, industry-led, body that offers guidance on skills and employment issues in the UK. It publishes: evidence reports; financial data; impact assessments; labour market projections; and skills surveys.

❖ Thinktanks

Social policy thinktanks are research institutes whose aims are to stimulate thought, promote debate and influence Government, the media and the general public in determining welfare policy and practice. Their work typically ranges from speculative pieces (articles, think-pieces and blogs) about welfare reform to analyses of key theoretical conceptions and evidence-based assessments. They are largely registered as charities or not-for-profit organisations, and are typically funded by donations, subscriptions and sponsorships (although the sources of funding in many instances are far from transparent). While most have no legal or formal affiliation with political parties, it is important to recognise that a number operate from ideological bases (linked either explicitly or, via shared vision and membership, with the Conservative, Labour, Liberal and other parties), and this strongly influences both what they identify as policy problems and what they propose as solutions.

• Adam Smith Institute (www.adamsmith.org)
  Perspective: a ‘libertarian’ thinktank linked to the right wing of the Conservative Party. It seeks to expand choice and competition in the delivery of key welfare services by extending the influence of markets and redesigning public services to make them more responsive to consumers.
  Coverage includes: benefits; criminal justice; education; healthcare; philosophy of welfare; and social care provision.
  Publications: articles; blogs; briefing papers; and reports.

• Bright Blue (www.brightblue.org.uk)
  Perspective: a thinktank operating within Conservative traditions and promoting the implementation of ‘liberal, progressive’ policies.
  Coverage includes: education and skills; employment; environment; families and social policy; immigration and integration; and poverty and welfare.
Publications: articles; books; reports; and the magazines *Centre Write* and *Progressive Conscience*.

- **Centre Forum** ([www.centreforum.org](http://www.centreforum.org))
  Perspective: describes itself as a ‘liberal think-tank’, and although its advisory board has members from all three major UK political parties, it is primarily a forum for developing Liberal Party policies. Its key message is the creation of social justice through greater equality of opportunity.
  Coverage includes: education; crime and social justice; family policy; health policy; social housing; and pensions.
  Publications: blogs; briefings; and reports.

- **Centre for Policy Studies** ([www.cps.org.uk](http://www.cps.org.uk))
  Perspective: free-market thinktank linked to the Conservative Party whose main social policy concerns involve the reduction in state welfare provision through the greater use of voluntary and commercial sector sources and the championing of greater personal responsibility.
  Coverage includes: benefits; criminal justice; education; family policy; healthcare; social services; and social work.
  Publications: articles; blogs; economic bulletins; and reports.

- **Centre for Crime and Justice Studies** ([www.crimeandjustice.org.uk](http://www.crimeandjustice.org.uk))
  Perspective: ‘independent and non-partisan’; its aim is to advance public understanding of crime, criminal justice and social harm.
  Coverage: criminal justice and social welfare systems; social harm; and the process of criminalisation.
  Publications: annual review *UK Justice Review*; bulletins; projects; a quarterly magazine (and archive) *Criminal Justice Matters*; and reports.

- **Centre for Social Justice** ([www.centreforsocialjustice.org](http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org))
  Perspective: ‘Independent’ thinktank seeking effective solutions to poverty in the UK.
  Coverage includes: child poverty; educational exclusion; families and family breakdown; and social exclusion in later life.
  Publications: policy reports.

- **Compass** ([www.compassonline.org.uk](http://www.compassonline.org.uk))
  Perspective: established to revitalise the democratic left; advocates policies designed to secure a more equal, democratic and sustainable society and, within this, to promote welfare policies that redress the inequalities relating to gender, race, childhood, ageing and disability. A source of influence in Labour Party policy debates.
  Coverage includes: ageing; disability; education; health; housing; philosophy of welfare; and poverty.
  Publications: briefings; reports; and think-pieces.

- **Demos** ([www.demos.co.uk](http://www.demos.co.uk))
  Perspective: describes itself as a ‘cross-party’ thinktank that ‘aim[s] to create an open resource of knowledge and learning that operates beyond traditional party politics’.
  Coverage includes: citizenship and integration; education and skills; the environment; health and social care; housing and communities; and welfare and pensions.
  Publications: blogs and reports.

- **Equality Trust** ([www.equalitytrust.org.uk](http://www.equalitytrust.org.uk))
Perspective: launched in 2009, its aim is to improve the quality of life by reducing economic inequalities.
Coverage: business and the economy; community; health and well-being; power and privilege; tax; and social security.
Publications: articles; blogs; briefings; and reports.

- **Fabian Society** ([www.fabians.org.uk](http://www.fabians.org.uk))
  Perspective: affiliated to the Labour Party, the Society's social welfare programme looks to explore the democratic-left welfare reforms that will create a more just and more egalitarian society.
  Coverage: political economy; education; fiscal policy; health; housing; and poverty.
  Publications: articles; blogs; pamphlets; policy reports; and the quarterly journal, *Fabian Review*.

- **Institute of Economic Affairs** ([www.iea.org.uk](http://www.iea.org.uk))
  Perspective: sees its mission as the dissemination of free-market thinking. In social-policy terms, this involves: the reduction of taxes and deregulation; the minimisation of state welfare funding and provision; the promotion of commercial and voluntary sector services; and support for greater personal responsibility.
  Coverage includes: ageing; criminal justice; education; employment; fiscal policy; health and social care; pensions; and poverty.
  Publications: blogs; books; briefings; discussion papers; and reports. The Institute also publishes a journal, *Economic Affairs*.

- **Institute for Fiscal Studies** ([www.ifs.org.uk](http://www.ifs.org.uk))
  Perspective: describes its aim as to inform ‘public debate on economics in order to promote the development of effective fiscal policy’.
  Coverage: ‘from tax and benefits to education policy [and] from labour supply to corporate taxation’.
  Publications: briefing notes; journal articles; observations; press releases; reports; and working papers. It also publishes the journal *Fiscal Studies*.

- **Institute for Public Policy Research/IPPR Scotland** ([www.ippr.org](http://www.ippr.org))
  Perspective: left-leaning thinktank committed to combating inequality; empowering citizens; promoting social responsibility; and developing a progressive approach to welfare funding and reforms.
  Coverage includes: children and families; crime and justice; economy; health and social care; housing; immigration; jobs and skills; tax; and spending.
  Publications: blogs; research summaries; and reports.

- **National Centre for Social Research** ([www.natcen.ac.uk](http://www.natcen.ac.uk))
  Perspective: describes itself as 'Britain’s leading independent research institute’. It undertakes research for public-sector bodies and commercial organisations.
  Coverage includes: children and young people; communities; crime and justice; equality and diversity; families; health and well-being; housing; income and work; and schools, education and training.
  Publications: abstracts; findings; and full research reports.

- **National Council for Voluntary Organisations** ([www.ncvo.org.uk](http://www.ncvo.org.uk))
  Perspective: an umbrella organisation that ‘champions the voluntary sector and volunteering because they are essential for a better society’.
Coverage: a wide range of voluntary sector issues including: funding; governance and regulation; assessing the impact of legislation on both the vulnerable and voluntary organisations; training; and volunteering.
Publications: blogs; campaign documents; impact analyses; reports; and statistics.

See also the national organisations: the Scottish Council for Voluntary Action (www.scvo.org.uk) and the Wales Council for Voluntary Action (www.wcva.org.uk).

- **New Economic Foundation (www.neweconomics.org.uk)**
  Perspective: left-leaning thinktank that seeks a new economy based on social justice, environmental sustainability and collective well-being. Within this, its approach to social policy looks for the development of a welfare system that is fair and equitable between people, generations and countries.
  Coverage includes: community policy; education; employment; housing; poverty and well-being.
  Publications: blogs and reports.

- **Policy Exchange (www.policyexchange.org.uk)**
  Perspective: particularly influential in current Conservative politics. It links free-market thinking with the promotion of philanthropy, voluntary action and ‘local’ solutions to social policy questions. State-driven welfare is seen to have created perverse incentives, undermined the social fabric of society and failed to tackle the underlying causes of many social problems.
  Coverage includes: crime and justice; childcare service; education; family policy; health; housing; pensions; and poverty.
  Publications: articles; press releases; and reports.

- **Resolution Foundation (www.resolutionfoundation.org)**
  Perspective: it describes itself as a ‘non-partisan … think-tank that works to improve the living standards of those in Britain on low to middle incomes’.
  Coverage includes: childcare and families; debt and savings; housing; welfare and tax reform; work; and security.
  Publications: blogs and reports.

- **The Sutton Trust (www.suttontrust.com)**
  Perspective: to ‘improve social mobility through education’, using its research to influence Government education policy and expenditure.
  Coverage: early years to higher education.
  Publications: articles; blogs; factsheets; newsletter; press releases; and research reports.

Further thinktanks with left-leaning sentiments and policy agendas include: the Fawcett Society (www.fawcett society.org.uk); the Radical Statistics Group (www.radstats.org.uk); and The Smith Institute (www.smith-institute.org.uk). Among their counterparts with right-wing political sentiments are: Civitas (www.civitas.org.uk); Politeia (www.politeia.co.uk); Reform (www.reform.co.uk); ResPublica (www.respublica.org.uk); and the Social Market Foundation (www.smf.co.uk).

Thinktanks focusing on issues in particular countries include: for Scotland, the David Hume Institute (www.davidhumeinstitute.com), Reform Scotland (www.reformscotland.com), the Centre for Scottish Public Policy (www.cspp.org.uk) and the Scotland Institute (www.scotlandinstitute.com); for Wales, the Bevan Foundation/Sefydliaid Bevan (www.bevanfoundation.org); the Institute of Welsh Affairs/Syfeddliad Materion Cymraeg (www.iwa.wales) and the Public Policy Institute for Wales (www.ppiw.org.uk).
Pressure Groups

Like thinktanks, pressure groups also try to actively influence Governmental agendas and legislation; they however employ a broader range of methods that includes: lobbying, campaigning and direct political action, as well as evidence-based policy assessments. Those groups concerned directly or indirectly with social policy issues can vary in quite substantial ways but are classified here in terms of their breadth of concerns. On a sliding scale, they range from ‘major sectional agencies’ at one extreme, through ‘promotional or cause groups’ to ‘single issue groups’ at the other. Illustrations of the sectional agencies include the TUC and individual trade unions, business employer organisations (e.g., the Confederation of British Industry) and representative professional groups (e.g., the Bar Association). Their list of welfare interests depend, to some degree, on the impact they have on their members, but they only ever form part of the work of these national organisations. At the other extreme are the ‘single issue’ pressure groups, often consisting of a loose alliance of individuals formed in response to a particular welfare issue and continuing to exist only while it remains. An example is Tax Uncut, which was formed to expose corporate tax avoidance and maintains that if these sums were paid into Government coffers, there would be less/no need to make cuts to the welfare system. It engages in direct action organised through its website. In between these two extremes are a host of ‘promotional or cause groups’, who, typically, have long-standing interests in raising the profile of particular welfare ‘user’ groups in order to achieve better benefits, living conditions, legal protection and care. Well-known examples of this latter grouping are Age UK, Child Poverty Action Group, Disability Rights, Shelter and Mind.

While all three types of pressure group can supply useful research data, primary consideration is given here to the ‘promotional and cause groups’, on the grounds that they can provide valuable insights and detailed case studies of user groups and user-group assessments of service provision. A sample of the most helpful for student researchers is provided below with information on their aims and publications. As with thinktanks, given the political agendas of pressure groups, great care has to be taken in the interpretation of the data they produce.

- Age UK/Age Cymru/Age Northern Ireland, Age Scotland (www.ageuk.org.uk)
  Aim: to improve the living standards of those in later life through information and advice, campaigns, products, training and research.
  Publications: factsheets; information guides; and reports.

- Carers UK (www.carersuk.org)
  Aim: to support people providing care for a partner, family member or friend by giving advice and information, offering support and campaigning to make life better for carers.
  Publications: newsletters; parliamentary consultation papers; policy briefings; and a statistical digest ‘Facts about Carers’.

- The Children’s Society (www.childrenssociety.org.uk)
  Aim: to help vulnerable and disadvantaged young people. This includes: safeguarding children in care and young runaways, providing a voice for disabled children, helping young refugees to rebuild their lives and providing relief for young carers.
  Publications: blogs; parliamentary consultation papers; newsletters; and press releases.

  Aim: to end child and family poverty in the UK through research, campaigning, publications and training.
Publications: articles; blogs; information guides; policy briefings; poverty statistics; reports; and welfare rights briefings.

- **Disability Rights UK** ([www.disabilityrightsuk.org](http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org))
  Aim: an alliance of disabled people working for improved benefits, independent living and equal participation.
  Publications: briefings; consultations; handbooks; reports; and submissions to Parliament and Commons’ working groups.

- **Learning Disability England** ([www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk](http://www.learningdisabilityengland.org.uk)), **Learning Disability Alliance Scotland** ([www.ldascotland.org](http://www.ldascotland.org)), **Learning Disability Wales** ([www.ldw.org.uk](http://www.ldw.org.uk)).
  Aims: to campaign for a society that treats people with learning disabilities fairly and inclusively and on issues that matter to them.
  Publications: campaign literature; surveys; news; opinions; press releases; and research reports.

- **Mind** ([www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk))
  Aim: to promote good mental health for all while ensuring that people who experience mental distress are treated fairly, positively and with respect.
  Publications: booklets; guides; a magazine (*Open Mind*); and reports.

- **Mencap/Mencap Cymru/Mencap Northern Ireland** ([www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk))
  Aim: to change laws, challenge prejudice and support people with a learning disability in living the lives they choose.
  Publications: advice leaflets; blogs; campaign literature; press releases; and research reports.

- **National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders** ([www.nacro.org.uk](http://www.nacro.org.uk))
  Aim: to reduce crime by changing lives, through crime prevention, working with offenders and resettlement projects.
  Publications: briefing papers; consultation responses; practical guides; and reports.

- **Shelter England/Shelter Scotland** ([www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk))
  Aim: to alleviate the distress caused by homelessness and bad housing both by helping those with housing needs and by campaigning for change to end the housing crisis.
  Publications: guides; online training; and books.

- **Taxpayers Alliance** ([www.taxpayersalliance.com](http://www.taxpayersalliance.com))
  Aim: dedicated to reforming (and where possible reducing) taxes, cutting Government spending and protecting taxpayers.
  Publications: blogs; press releases; and research reports.

### Commercial Sources

There are three main providers of information and analyses on UK social policy issues among commercial organisations: the mass media (newspapers, television channels and magazines), market research firms and financial services companies.

- **Mass Media**
- **National newspapers**
These vary quite markedly in the space that they devote to commenting on social-policy issues. Some, such as The Guardian (www.guardian.co.uk), The Daily Telegraph (www.telegraph.co.uk), The Times (www.thetimes.co.uk), The Independent (www.independent.co.uk) and The Financial Times (www.ft.com) – and their weekend equivalents – tend to give quite detailed analyses of welfare legislation and policy changes, while others, such as The Sun (www.thesun.co.uk), The Daily Star (www.dailystar.co.uk) and The Daily Mirror (www.mirror.co.uk), offer more summary information. It is also important to be aware of the political leanings of each newspaper and thus conscious of the way in which welfare matters are reported. Most university and college libraries carry some daily newspapers, and all are available (most in edited versions) online, although The Times and Financial Times can currently only be accessed through subscriptions.

- Television channels
  TV channels show a similar variation in the quality of information and analysis of issues. The key channels in terms of UK social policy matters are the BBC (www.bbc.co.uk) and Sky News (news.sky.com) – both offer assessments of a range of contemporary health, social care, children’s services and benefits policies, and provide supporting articles on their websites.

- Magazines
  Several weekly and monthly political, cultural and economic magazines devote space to welfare benefits and care issues. New Statesman (www.newstatesman.co.uk) and Prospect (www.prospectmagazine.co.uk) are left-leaning publications whose articles are largely available on subscription, but some are available free and printable from their website. The Economist (www.economist.com) and The Spectator (www.spectator.co.uk) are right-leaning subscription magazines that provide synopses of their articles on their websites.

  In addition to these ‘generalist’ publications, there are also a range of journals with more specialist content. Community Care (www.communitycare.co.uk) is a subscription magazine focusing on social care. It publishes articles, news items, forum comments and blog posts on a variety of services for children, adults and elders. Health Service Journal (www.hsj.co.uk) is a subscription source of information about all aspects of the NHS, while ThirdSector (www.thirdsector.co.uk) is a weekly subscription magazine that focuses on the not-for-profit world.

- Market Research

  Because of the outsourcing of some public-sector investigations, market research companies offer another useful source of social-policy data and analysis. Tns-bmrb (www.tns-bmrb.co.uk) is a leading agency that conducts survey research on behalf of Government departments and organisations in the third sector. Its work includes studies of: children and young people; crime and social justice; education; and healthcare. It provides synopses of its research reports on its website as well as links to the full reports when they are publically available. Ipsos Mori (www.ipsos-mori.com) has a ‘Social Research Institute’ section, which undertakes research on behalf of Government departments, local authorities, NHS trusts and police forces.

- Company Research

  There are a number of companies that, in the course of their working practices, undertake and publish research on social-policy areas. While it should not be forgotten that it is business interests that drive their investigations, they frequently produce incisive analyses particularly around the areas of funding and service configurations. The following three examples give an indication of what is available.
• KPMG (www.kpmg.com) is an international firm providing auditing, advisory and tax services. Its policy-relevant research includes assessments of local government, health and social-care reforms, and analyses of the impact of regulatory and economic changes on pension yields. It publishes: newsletters; reports; surveys; and videocasts.

• PricewaterhouseCoopers (www.pwc.co.uk) is also an international auditing and financial services firm, which, as part of its remit, undertakes research to enhance its clients’ strategic development and decision-making. It has ‘public sector research centre’ and ‘health research institute’ fields on its website that have produced reports on: ageing; the funding of long-term care; charging for public services; and pensions, among other recently published items.

• Willis Towers Watson (www.willistowerswatson.com) is a human-resource management and professional-services company that offers advice to commercial and public-sector organisations on issues such as: employee benefits; rewards; risk; and capital management. It publishes case studies, technical papers and reports on occupational benefits, healthcare, pensions, pensions reform and retirement.