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Social Policy Digest

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Reference to items in previous Digests is indicated as follows: (24:3/95, 1.1) = *Journal of Social Policy*, vol. 24, part 3, Digest no. 95, paragraph 1.1. This method of referencing started in vol. 25, part 1.
In the NOTES at the end of the Digest:
– no place of publication is given for any book, journal etc.;
– no date of publication is given, other than for press releases, journals, press articles etc.;
– no address is given for publications from government departments or associated bodies (such as Next Steps Agencies), commercial publishers or academic institutions;
– addresses are given for publications from think tanks, voluntary organisations etc., but only for the first publication from the organisation which appears in the notes; if another publication is listed in a subsequent note, the publisher's address is not repeated.

1. *Social security and income maintenance*
1.1 The United Nations says the UK has the third worst poverty in the developed world[1] (28:2/110, 1.1). New research investigates the relationship between income, wealth and the lifecycle.[2] Area-based policies are often time-limited, and most people suffering deprivation do not live in the most deprived areas, according to a study[3] (28:4/112, 1.1; 28:1/109, 1.1). A think tank

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claims mutual societies could cut spending without reducing social provision.[4] Working groups in Northern Ireland will promote social inclusion under the new targeting social need initiative.[5] Funding for 'community champions', to be mentors for individuals and support community groups, was announced.[6] A new publication enables people in poverty to give their own views.[7]

1.2 Four pilot areas for the 'single work-focused gateway' (ONE), with compulsory interviews for most working-aged people claiming most benefits, were launched;[8] but Commons Committees warned of compulsion causing 'mistrust and alarm'[9] (28:3/111, 1.2; 28:2/110, 1.2). The Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill, introducing ONE and changing pensions and benefits for disabled and bereaved people, had a third reading;[10] but Labour Party opposition made ministers announce a national debate[11] (28:4/112, 1.2; 28:3/111, 1.2) (see **1.8**). A report discusses positive policies for non-retired people without paid work.[12]

1.3 In February 1999, there were 3.82 million income support claimants (means-tested jobseeker's allowance (JSA) claimants shown separately)[13] – a fall of 86,000 over the year (28:4/112, 1.3; 28:3/111, 1.3). In February 1999, there were 788,000 recipients of family credit, a fall of around 2,000 over the quarter[14] (28:4/112, 1.3; 28:2/110, 1.3). The 1998 abstract of social security statistics was published.[15] Gross social fund expenditure for 1998–99 was £588 million (including £403 million in loans)[16] (28:4/112, 1.3; 28:1/109, 1.3). A new quarterly bulletin analyses receipt of key benefits by working-aged people.[17]

1.4 Over half a million workers are still losing money because of the new national insurance computer system;[18] a Public Accounts Committee report was critical[19] (28:4/112, 1.4; 28:3/111, 1.4). In a qualitative study, lone parents welcomed the prototype integrated service for claiming benefits[20] (27:4/108, 1.6; 27:3/107, 1.4). Responsibility for benefit appeals passed to the Secretary of State from the Independent Tribunal Service; the new system will be introduced in stages[21] (28:1/109, 1.4; 27:1/105, 1.4). The government abandoned plans for magnetic-strip payment cards for cashing benefit.[22]

1.5 Nearly eleven million people were getting a state pension at 31 March.[23] Two reports comment on the pension reform proposals[24] (28:4/112, 1.5; 28:3/111, 1.5). The government consulted on minimum standards for stakeholder pensions;[25] but insurance companies criticised the planned maximum annual charge.[26] Pension funds attacked plans to make trustees disclose attitudes to ethical investment.[27] Another consultation paper says employers without occupational schemes should give employees access to stakeholder pensions;[28] a third discusses clearing arrangements.[29] An advisory group suggests self-employed people should come within the state second pension.[30]

1.6 Research shows that for the poorest fifth, spending on toys, children's clothing, shoes and fresh fruit was no higher in real terms in 1995–96 than 1968.[31] A study of minority ethnic families caring for severely disabled children found them even more disadvantaged than white families.[32] New analysis shows

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becoming a mother before age 23, and experience of child poverty, increase the risk of adverse outcomes in adulthood[33] (28:3/111, 1.1). The plight of the traditional family is deteriorating under New Labour, according to a think tank.[34]

1.7 A White Paper proposed child support reforms, including simplifying the formula, toughening sanctions against non-payers and disregarding £10 per week of maintenance from income support[35] (28:1/109, 1.6). The government plans to repeal retrospectively legislation requiring two-yearly reviews of child support assessments.[36] The CSA collected or arranged £660 million of maintenance in 1998/99.[37] But elsewhere in Europe, the trend is to help parents decide child maintenance themselves, according to research.[38]

1.8 Twelve disability charities resigned from the consortium created by the government to discuss benefit reform proposals[39] (28:1/109, 1.8). The growth in numbers on disability and long-term sickness benefits is due partly to more women leaving work because of ill-health.[40] Sixty-five Labour MPs voted against proposals to limit incapacity benefit entitlement in the Welfare Reform and Pensions Bill[41] (see **1.2**). A study examines how the reforms re-weight disability benefits.[42]

1.9 The Treasury Committee said the Inland Revenue is under strain, and proposed simplifying taxation.[43] Small businesses oppose moves to treat contract workers as employees for national insurance and tax.[44]

2. *Health*

2.1 The Health Act, abolishing fund-holding in primary care, and introducing a clinical excellence institute and a commission for health improvement, received Royal assent[45] (28:4/112, 2.1; 28:2/110, 2.2). A capital investment strategy for health and social services was published (see **5.1**)[46] (28:3/111, 2.1). The National Audit Office said the first privately-built National Health Service (NHS) hospital may not save public money, and a medical journal criticised the private finance initiative (PFI)[47] (27:3/107, 2.1; 27:1/105, 2.1). The government consulted on self-funded arrangements for regulating private healthcare.[48] A think tank urged more private funding and charging for health care[49] (27:3/107, 2.2; 27:2/106, 2.2).

2.2 'NHS direct', giving 24-hour telephone advice, is being extended,[50] primary care pilots increased,[51] and walk-in centres providing care by nurses developed[52] (28:2/110, 2.2; 27:4/108, 2.2). But doctors asked for reform to be slower[53] (28:4/112, 2.2; 28:2/110, 2.2).

2.3 The public health White Paper selects four targets to reduce deaths of people under 75 by 300,000 over ten years[54] (28:4/112, 2.3; 27:4/108, 2.5). The government announced 30 'trailblazer' Sure Start programmes, bringing together services for young children in disadvantaged areas[55] (28:4/112, 2.5; 28:3/111, 2.5). Health action zones will bid for 'innovation funding'[56] (28:2/110, 2.3; 27:4/108, 2.1). Health authority tables for England show self-assessed health as worst in mining and industrial areas (men) and inner London (women)[57] (28:4/112, 2.3).

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2.4 Waiting lists in England at the end of May were 1,096,100, a small rise on April[58] (28:4/112, 2.4; 28:3/111, 2.4). The government published clinical and performance indicators, beginning a national picture of quality of NHS care[59] (28:4/112, 2.1; 27:8:1/109, 2.6). Nearly 11 million new out-patients were seen in the year to March, a record.[60] Funding for research into participation by patients and public in decisions about health services was announced.[61] Complaints to the NHS ombudsman rose to a record 2,869 in 1998–99[62] (28:1/109, 2.6; 27:3/107, 2.2).

2.5 The number of hospital, public health medicine and community health service medical and dental staff in England grew by 24 per cent from 1988 to 68,460 in 1998[63] (28:2/110, 2.5; 27:1/105, 2.5). Some 950,000 people (765,000 whole-time equivalents) were employed in the 'non-medical workforce' (including nurses and health visitors) in NHS hospital and community health services in September 1998[64] (28:1/109, 2.5; 26:2/102, 2.3). Black and Asian doctors who qualified overseas are more likely to be charged with misconduct than British-trained colleagues, but an investigation finds no evidence of unfair discrimination.[65] Three new medical schools will cover deprived areas[66] (28:1./109, 2.5). New professional boards will regulate professions supplementary to medicine.[67] A taskforce report says all staff should have a say in how the NHS is run.[68] The government launched a new strategy for nursing, midwifery and health visiting, including increases in nurses' top pay to £40,000[69] (28:4/112, 2.5; 28:2/110, 2.5). The last of the £1.2 billion modernisation funding targets staff recruitment and development.[70]

2.6 A Social Exclusion Unit report sets a goal of halving the teenage pregnancy rate in ten years (see **4.3** and **12.3**)[71] (28:1/109, 1.1; 27:4/108, 1.1). A report on suicide and homicide by mentally ill people showed almost one in four suicides had been in contact with mental health services in the year before death[72] (27:3/107, 2.6). Another report says a fifth of children suffer psychological problems at any one time.[73]

2.7 Health authorities in England and Wales paid for 7,469,000 sight tests in the year to March[74] (28:4/112, 2.7; 27:3/107, 2.3). One in four people have private dental treatment, often because they cannot find an NHS dentist, according to a report[75] (28:4/112, 2.7; 27:2/106, 2.2). In 1998, 513 million NHS prescription items were dispensed, a 2.6 per cent increase on 1997 (85 per cent free)[76] (28:1/109, 2.3). Some 2.3 million vouchers were redeemed at opticians' in Great Britain during the first half of 1998–99 (13 per cent for spectacles priced within voucher value).[77]

3. *Education*

3.1 The government used the first tables of local education authority (LEA) expenditure to argue that some LEAs fail to pass on funding to schools[78] (28:3/111, 3.1; 28:2/110, 3.1). Capital budgets will be partially devolved to schools next year.[79] The first school built under PFI opens shortly.[80] Research shows higher government spending on education helps reduce income inequality.[81]

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3.2 Many 'early excellence centres' criticised the planned national curriculum for 3- and 4-year-olds[82] (27:3/107, 3.2). But the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority says consultation on new early learning goals revealed widespread support[83] (28:4/112, 3.1; 28:2/110, 3.3). In January, 58 per cent of 3- and 4-year-olds (722,000) were in maintained nursery and primary schools in England[84] (28:1/109, 3.2; 27:3/107, 3.2). Free nursery school places for 3-year-olds will increase from September[85] (28:3/111, 3.2; 26:4/104, 3.1). Research shows participation of 3- and 4-year-olds in nursery education in 1998 was highest in social classes I and II and lowest in IV and V.[86]

3.3 The government announced a revised national curriculum for schools in England from September 2000[87] (28:2/110, 3.3; 27:3/107, 3.3). But teachers complained of overload.[88] One report proposes more creative and cultural education in schools.[89] Another suggests too much homework could harm primary pupils[90] (28:3/111, 3.3; 28:2/110, 3.3). A government inquiry into test standards was criticised by academics and teachers.[91] Inspectors say primary education quality has risen[92] (28:4/112, 3.3; 28:1/109, 3.4). A Commons Committee suggested giving pupils more say in how schools are run,[93] and criticised the Chief Inspector of Schools[94] (28:2/110, 3.4; 27:4/108, 3.4). The government published a list of private companies and local authorities to take over failing LEAs,[95] and announced the first contract to run LEA services[96] (28:4/112, 3.6; 28:2/110, 3.4).

3.4 Newly-qualified teachers will have an induction year[97] (27:3/107, 3.4; 26:4/104, 3.5). Teaching vacancies fell from 2,359 to 2,244 in the year to January,[98] but demand for teacher training has fallen,[99] and some trainees will get 'golden hellos' to boost recruitment[100] (28:2/110, 3.4; 27:3/107, 3.4). Half of all teachers oppose plans for performance-related pay[101] (28:4/112, 3.4; 28:3/111, 3.4). Outstanding teachers were presented with awards.[102] The government proposed banning dismissed teachers from classroom working elsewhere[103] (27:2/106, 3.4). A working group report suggests flexibility for teachers seeking early retirement.[104]

3.5 Three per cent of pupils in schools in England have special educational needs statements.[105] Guidance was issued to local authorities on meeting the educational needs of children in care[106] (27:3/107, 5.2; 26:2/102, 5.3). Research shows nearly 6 per cent of children aged 8 to 16 miss breakfast.[107] Provisional figures for January show 11.8 per cent of pupils in maintained primary and 11.5 per cent in maintained secondary schools in England are from minority ethnic groups[108] (28:2/110, 3.1; 28:1/109, 3.5). There were 12,300 permanent exclusions from primary, secondary and special schools in England in 1997/98, 3 per cent lower than in 1996/97[109] (28:2/110, 3.6; 28:1/109, 3.6).

3.6 Selective state secondary schools have hardly any pupils from poor families.[110] Grant-maintained schools will get further transitional funding.[111] A millionaire is starting an independent school for able children regardless of parental income[112] (27:4/108, 3.8). A high court judge criticised the

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government for breaking election promises to children with assisted school places.[113] Parents lodged 77,000 appeals against non-admission of children to maintained primary and secondary schools in England for 1997/98, winning 20,300 of them[114] (28:2/100, 3.7; 27:2/106, 3.4).

3.7 The pilot areas to test educational maintenance allowances (EMAs) for 16- to 18-year-olds from low-income families were announced[115] (28:1/109, 1.6; 26:4/104, 1.2). At the end of 1998, 85.6 per cent of 16-year-olds in England were in education or training, an increase from 80.8 per cent in 1988; the proportion of 17- and 18-year-olds had also increased[116] (28:4/112, 3.8; 28:1/109, 3.8). A Social Exclusion Unit report on 16- to 18-year-olds not in education, training or employment suggested extending pilot EMAs to homeless and disabled young people[117] (28:3/111, 3.8; 28:1/109, 1.6).

3.8 A White Paper proposes a new framework for post-16 education, skills and lifelong learning (see **7.8**).[118] The Council for Industry and Higher Education says improving access requires changing funding and qualifications systems in further and higher education[119] (28:1/109, 3.9; 27:3/107, 3.9). Ministers 'named and shamed' six further education colleges after poor inspection reports[120] (28:3/111, 3.9; 28:2/110, 3.9). The Institute of Learning and Teaching will boost standards of higher education teaching.[121] Half all students choose a local university to reduce studying costs, according to a report.[122] An independent report recommends performance-related pay for universities.[123] A higher proportion of students from low-income families applied to university this year[124] (28:4/112, 3.8; 28:3/111, 3.9). Two in five adults took part in some learning over the past three years.[125] In November 1998, LEA adult education enrolments were 1.11 million, nearly 5 per cent more than in 1997.[126]

4. *Housing and environment*

4.1 The first national land use database results show what land could be recycled for housing[127] (28:1/109, 4.1; 27:4/108, 4.1). The Urban Task Force suggests higher density housing is needed to meet the target for new homes on brownfield sites.[128] Reanalysis of data supports earlier national estimates of housing need, but with strong regional divergence[129] (28:1/109, 4.1). Two publications relate low demand for social housing to needs for additional affordable housing,[130] and a third summarises the issues[131] (28:3/111, 4.3; 27:3/107, 4.1).

4.2 In June 1998, an estimated 1,850 people were sleeping rough in England on any night.[132] A pilot training and mentoring project for rough sleepers in London was announced.[133] Nearly two-thirds of homeless women live on the streets because of domestic violence, according to research.[134] Another study says over a third of homeless people have lost council or housing association tenancies.[135]

4.3 Consultation responses on 'best value' in local authority housing emphasised tenant/resident involvement[136] (28:3/111, 4.3; 26:4/104, 4.3). But a report casts doubt on residents' control of housing.[137] A think tank launched an

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inquiry into social housing with a public poll showing two-fifths think councils should stop providing it.[138] The Social Exclusion Unit's policy action team on housing management consulted on its report.[139] A study highlights experiences of developing local housing companies[140] (27:4/108, 4.3; 27:2/106, 4.1). The government is pursuing plans to remove rent rebates from the housing revenue account, and consulting on future subsidy arrangements[141] (28:3/111, 4.3; 28:2/110, 4.3). Two studies examine social housing provision and advice for asylum-seekers and refugees.[142] The revised code of guidance on council housing allocation was published[143] (28:3/111, 4.3; 27:3/107, 4.3). The government launched the framework for tenant participation compacts, with funding for start-up costs,[144] and published a good practice guide[145] (28:3/111, 4.3; 27:2/106, 4.3). The Social Exclusion Unit's report on teenage pregnancy recommends that 16- and 17-year-old mothers not living with parents/partners should be given supervised housing with support, not their own tenancy (see **2.6** and **12.3**)[146] (28:3/111, 4.3).

4.4 A report was published on councils' administration of housing benefit and council tax benefit.[147] Citizens Advice Bureaux says people under 25 are badly affected by housing benefit cuts[148] (28:2/110, 4.4; 28:1/109, 4.4). Research shows most local authorities approved of new discretionary powers to withhold payments to some landlords and claimants[149] (28:3/111, 4.5; 28:2/110, 4.4). Private landlords claim over 300,000 low-income tenants have been driven into social housing by benefit restrictions since 1996[150] (28:4/112, 4.4; 28:2/110, 4.4). In 1997/98, many local authorities spent little on discretionary exceptional hardship payments to help claimants whose housing benefit was restricted.[151] Research suggests many people receiving housing benefit for support services are overpaid or underpaid[152] (28:4/112, 4.4; 28:3/111, 4.4). A model charter was developed for supported housing organisations and residents.[153]

4.5 The 1997–98 survey of English housing shows nearly seven out of ten households were owner-occupiers[154] (27:4/108, 4.1; 27:1/105, 4.1). Home ownership has a detrimental effect on unemployment, according to research.[155] Consultation began on statutory regulation of mortgage advice and marketing[156] (28:4/112, 4.5). Five per cent fewer homes were repossessed by mortgage lenders in the first half of 1999 compared with the year before[157] (28:3/111, 4.5; 28:1/109, 4.5). Research shows the impact of repossession on families with children.[158]

4.6 Low housing demand in inner city areas is related to poverty and joblessness, not housing quality, according to a report.[159] In four projects, local residents in disadvantaged neighbourhoods wanted more priority for everyday concerns over 'big ideas'.[160] European and UK regeneration funding includes £1 billion under the Single Regeneration Budget (round 5)[161] (28:4/112, 4.6; 28:1/109, 4.6). Seven more areas joined the New Deal for Communities[162] (28:4/112, 4.6; 28:2/110, 4.6). Civil servants will exchange jobs with community workers and be seconded to disadvantaged areas.[163] The Countryside Agency was launched[164] (28:3/111, 4.6; 27:4/108, 4.7). A study

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found many people in rural communities leading isolated lives deprived of public services.[165] Proposed rights of way reforms include fines for landowners obstructing access[166] (28:4/112, 4.6; 27:4/108, 4.7).

4.7 A White Paper on sustainable development[167] and the first annual report of 'green ministers', responsible for integrating environmental concerns into policies, were published[168] (28:3/111, 4.6; 27:4/108, 4.7). The Water Industry Act received Royal assent;[169] disconnection of water for homes (and certain institutions) for non-payment is outlawed, and unmeasured charging can continue beyond 2000[170] (28:4/112, 4.7; 28:3/111, 4.7). Ofwat warns unmetered customers will pay more, to compensate for free meters.[171] A new home energy efficiency scheme was announced[172] (28:1/109, 4.7; 26:4/104, 4.7). The government abandoned the proposed flat fee on food retailers to finance the food safety agency[173] (28:3/111, 4.7; 27:1/105, 2.3).

5. *Personal social services*

5.1 Gross expenditure on social services in England increased by 8 per cent between 1996–97 and 1997–98.[174] The Chief Inspector of Social Services says 16 local authorities are being monitored because of poor performance or serious incidents.[175] A capital investment strategy for health and social services was published (see **2.1**).[176] From autumn, social services departments must make public their performance records[177] (28:3/111, 5.1; 27:3/107, 5.1).

5.2 A father was found guilty of assault for smacking his daughter.[178] A working group made detailed proposals to prevent unsuitable people working with children[179] (28:4/112, 5.2; 28:3/111, 5.2). At 31 March 1998, 53,300 children were looked after by local authorities, 4 per cent more than in 1997; 66 per cent were fostered[180] (28:2/110, 5.2; 28:1/109, 5.2). The House of Lords gave children ill-treated in care the right to sue local authorities.[181] A consultation paper proposes making local authorities give eligible 16- and 17-year-old care-leavers personal and financial support[182] (28:3/111, 5.2; 27:3/107, 5.2). The Adoption (Intercountry Aspects) Bill received Royal assent[183] (28:4/112, 5.2; 28:3/111, 5.2). The government launched national standards for foster care, and a code of practice on recruiting foster carers.[184] Performance indicators for adoption services include reducing the time children spend in care[185] (28:4/112, 5.2; 28:2/110, 5.2). A Social Services Inspectorate report on voluntary adoption agencies was favourable.[186]

5.3 The Health Committee endorsed the report of the Royal Commission on Long-term Care[187] (28:4/112, 5.3; 28:3/111, 5.3). But the government's response did not tackle funding.[188] The Court of Appeal decided the NHS can continue to pass responsibility for long-term nursing care to local authorities[189] (28:3/111, 2.6).

5.4 A report says people with learning disabilities are routinely teased and attacked.[190] Research showed many people with learning disabilities lead isolated and inactive lives,[191] and that implementation of direct payments often excludes people with learning difficulties[192] (28:4/112, 5.4; 28:3/111, 5.4).

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5.5 Children's hospices provide valued respite care, but are not monitored under the Children Act, according to a study.[193] Over 2.5 million contact hours of home help and home care were provided to around 446,000 households in England in 1998, with more households receiving intensive services[194] (27:4/108, 5.4; 27:2/106, 5.3). The government set out a framework for housing, health and social services for people needing long-term support[195] (27:2/106, 5.3; 26:2/102, 5.2). A new book describes caring in the words of carers and their families.[196]

5.6 One newspaper says North Lincolnshire spends most on council services for elderly people.[197] A report examines strategies of English local authorities helping older people remain independent[198] (28:1/109, 5.4; 27:1/105, 5.5).

6. *Law and the treatment of the offender*

6.1 The Human Rights Act 1998 will be implemented in October 2000[199] (28:4/112, 6.1; 28:3/111, 6.1). But the Scottish Parliament, and Welsh and Northern Ireland Assemblies, must act in accordance with it now.[200] One book proposes 'mainstreaming' human rights in government;[201] another suggests assessing policies for their impact on disadvantaged groups, including disabled people.[202] The Disability Rights Commission Act received Royal assent[203] (28:3/111, 7.5; 28:1/109, 7.5). The government launched a campaign tackling negative images of disabled people.[204] A report examines cases taken under the Disability Discrimination Act.[205]

6.2 The government wants magistrates to decide whether cases should go to jury trial[206] (28:2/110, 6.1; 28:1/109, 6.1). The number of police officers fell in the year to March, despite increased spending[207] (28:3/111, 6.1; 28:1/109, 6.1). In the year to April, record numbers died in police custody in England and Wales[208] (28:2/110, 6.3; 28:1/109, 6.2).

6.3 High security hospitals will be improved, following an inquiry into Ashworth's personality disorder unit[209] (28:3/111, 6.3; 26:4/104, 2.5). The government consulted on protecting the public from severe personality-disordered people presenting a high risk[210] (28:4/112, 6.3; 28:3/111, 6.3). About one in five men and two in five women prisoners had attempted suicide sometime in their lives, according to a survey[211] (28:3/111, 6.3; 28:1/109, 6.2). A report says reducing unnecessary use of prison would reverse the increase in suicides.[212] The 'worst prison inspection report in modern penal history' criticised managers and staff at Wormwood Scrubs[213] (28:4/112, 6.3; 27:4/108, 6.2). A review recommends more mothers keeping their babies with them in prison units[214] (28:4/112, 6.3; 28:3/111, 6.4).

6.4 The opening of another secure training centre for children was criticised;[215] but an inspection of Medway centre found improvements[216] (28:3/111, 6.4; 27:4/108, 6.3). An amendment to the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act – which received Royal assent[217] (28:3/111, 6.4) – means children's evidence in sex abuse cases will be pre-recorded on video.[218] Courts can remand 12- to 14-year-olds direct to local authority secure accommodation[219] (27:3/107, 6.3;

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26:1/101, 6.5). The average time taken to deal with persistent young offenders has fallen[220] (28:2/110, 6.4; 27:2/106, 6.3).

6.5 The Access to Justice Act received Royal assent[221] (28:4/112, 6.5; 28:3/111, 6.5). The government consulted on legal aid reform in Northern Ireland,[222] interim controls on court costs,[223] and enforcement in the civil courts.[224] Plans for a community legal service for England and Wales were announced[225] (28:1/109, 6.5). Unqualified advisors processing personal injury claims will be investigated.[226] A review of allocation fees in defended civil court cases was recommended[227] (27:4/108, 6.6; 27:1/105, 6.1). After backlogs in the Law Society's complaints handling system,[228] the government threatened to appoint an independent commissioner[229] (28:4/112, 6.5).

6.6 Three teenagers faced the first anti-social behaviour charges[230] (28:4/112, 6.6; 28:2/110, 4.3). A new body will promote closer working between prison and probation services, to reduce re-offending.[231] A report says many women prisoners could do community service instead.[232]

7. *Unemployment and the labour market*

7.1 The International Labour Office (ILO) unemployment rate for the UK was 6.2 per cent (1.8 million) for March to May; the June claimant count was 4.4 per cent (1.28 million)[233] (28:4/112, 7.1; 28:2/110, 7.1). But a report argues for more recognition of disproportionate job losses in major cities[234] (28:2/110, 7.1; 27:3/107, 7.1). Redundancies in the UK have remained virtually stable since 1996.[235] Research shows local schemes to combat unemployment helped some clients, but did not fundamentally change employment prospects for client groups.[236]

7.2 The Employment Relations Act, including proposals on union recognition, employee rights, working time and parental/family leave, received Royal assent[237] (28:4/112, 7.2; 28:3/111, 7.2). Unfair dismissal can now be claimed after one year's employment.[238] A comparative study suggests lower UK regulation is not assisting recruitment of less-qualified workers[239] (28:2/110, 7.2; 27:2/106, 7.2). Unions criticised moves to omit voluntary white-collar overtime from the 48-hour working time limit[240] (28:2/110, 7.2; 27:4/108, 7.7). Adoptive parents can claim parental leave.[241] The government says 66,000 new childcare places were created in England over the past year.[242] Union membership was 7.8 million at the end of 1997, the lowest since 1945;[243] but the TUC says union membership has stopped falling[244] (28:1/109, 7.2; 27:1/105, 7.9). In 1998, 282,000 working days were lost through labour disputes[245] (28:1/109, 7.2; 27:1/105, 7.9). The TUC launched a 'partners for progress' initiative, to break with militant unionism and 'macho' management.[246] The government consulted on regulations for temporary workers and private employment agencies[247] (27:3/107, 7.2; 26:1/101, 7.2). A survey shows just under 70 per cent of temporary workers are female.[248]

7.3 By the end of May, nearly 300,000 young people and 140,600 long-term unemployed people aged 25 or over had started on the New Deal[249] (28:4/112,

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7.3; 28:3/111, 7.3); in the first year, nearly 70,000 young people moved into 'sustained' jobs as a result (over 56,000 unsubsidised)[250] (28:4/112, 7.3). But a think tank says the New Deal fails to reach the most marginalised.[251] A report gives the views of 14- to 25-year-olds, who feel held back by poverty, and exploited when they get work[252] (28:2/110, 7.3). The government said a third refusal of a New Deal option should result in six months' benefit loss[253] (28:4/112, 7.3; 28:3/111, 7.3). Additional measures should improve the fourth month of the New Deal 'gateway'.[254] One in three employers say they provide no training for New Deal employees[255] (28:3/111, 7.3) A study of employment and training schemes for homeless young people was published.[256] Research examines the 'gateway', and 'additionality' under subsidised employment.[257] The government invited tenders to run employment zones, to help long-term unemployed people[258] (28:4/112, 7.3; 27:3/107, 7.3). To the end of April, 88 per cent of lone parents attending initial interviews agreed to join the New Deal;[259] evaluation showed around a fifth of lone parents contacted attended initial interviews[260] (28:4/112, 7.3; 28:3/111, 7.3). Pilot areas for the over-50s New Deal were announced.[261]

7.4 People on earnings top-up will get one six-month award after the pilot ends[262] (27:2/106, 7.7; 26:4/104, 7.3). Amendments to allow lone parents choice over the payment method for working families tax credit failed,[263] and the Tax Credits Act received Royal assent[264] (28:4/112, 7.4; 28:3/111, 7.4).

7.5 The better regulation task force says vetting job applicants for criminal records could make many unemployable[265] (27:2/106, 6.4; 26:2/102, 6.2). An advisory commission recommends against genetic screening for job applicants.[266] Personal advisers will work with insurance companies helping long-term sick and disabled people in work.[267] A study shows almost a third of men over 50 but under pension age have no paid work.[268] The voluntary code of practice on age diversity in employment[269] was criticised as toothless[270] (28:3/111, 7.5; 28:2/110, 7.5).

7.6 In February 1999, there were 1.33 million unemployed JSA claimants – a decrease of 69,000 over the year[271] (28:4/112, 7.6; 28:3/111, 7.6). ESF funding of £3 billion for Objective 3 projects was announced[272] (28:2/110, 7.3; 26:3/103, 7.3). Job-seekers can use the internet for job-search.[273]

7.7 Inland Revenue officials can pass on information about pay below the minimum wage[274] (28:4/112, 7.7; 28:3/111, 7.7). Annual average earnings topped £20,000 for the first time[275] (28:2/110, 7.7; 27:3/107, 7.7). The government ruled out direct intervention to curb excessive boardroom pay, but will encourage shareholder involvement in decisions.[276] A think tank says high rewards are better dealt with through tax than corporate governance changes.[277]

7.8 There were 1 per cent fewer young people in work-based training in England and Wales at the end of March than in 1998; for adults, reductions in length of training led to participant numbers falling more than starts[278] (28:4/112, 7.8; 28:3/111, 7.8). A report suggests individual learning accounts

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are welcomed for tackling training cost[279] (28:1/109, 7.8; 27:4/108, 3.9). The skills task force recommends more emphasis on apprenticeships.[280] Evaluation of national traineeships is positive.[281] The government published proposals for a Learning and Skills Council overseeing post-16 education and training (see **3.8**).[282] A Training Standards Council report on vocational training finds some 'dismally poor'[283] (28:2/110, 7.8; 28:1/109, 7.7). Regional development agencies received additional funding to boost skills.[284] A skills survey highlights continued shortages in areas of growing demand[285] (28:3/111, 7.8; 27:3/107, 7.8). Reasons for leaving youth training early (apart from getting a job) included earning insufficient money and dissatisfaction.[286]

8. *Race relations*

8.1 The government's response to the Commission for Racial Equality's (CRE's) review of the Race Relations Act suggests clarifying 'indirect discrimination'[287] (28:2/110, 8.1; 28:1/109, 8.1). The better regulation task force, in its review of anti-discrimination legislation, challenges businesses to improve voluntarily or face a legislative crackdown[288] (28:1/109, 8.1; 27:1/105, 8.1). The government response rules out major legal change, but says policy-making should take equality issues into account (see **11.1**).[289] Judges will receive equal treatment training.[290] Attitudes to black and Asian people in south-west England are 20 years behind the rest of the country, according to a study.[291] Press reports say the NHS accepted donor organs intended for white patients only.[292] A report proposes examining laws discriminating against gypsies and travellers.[293]

8.2 The government agreed to increase cash support under the Immigration and Asylum Bill to £10 weekly per person, and advance the target date for quick decisions on asylum applications for families with children.[294] In 1998, asylum applications to the UK increased by 13,500 to 46,000, with half applying in-country[295] (28:2/110, 8.2; 28:1/109, 8.2). The number of unaccompanied child refugees almost trebled last year, to 2,833.[296] After a Special Standing Committee, the Immigration and Asylum Bill had a third reading[297] (28:4/112, 8.2; 28:3/111, 8.2). The high court criticised the prosecution of many asylum-seekers for travelling with false documents.[298] The Legal Aid Board recommends a clampdown on fraudulent and incompetent immigration lawyers.[299] The habitual residence test, introduced to stop 'benefit tourism', will be replaced.[300] Unmarried partners will have to demonstrate shorter prior cohabitation, before a longer probationory period, before getting settlement[301] (27:2/106, 8.3; 27:1/105, 8.4). A concession outside immigration rules allows overseas spouses leaving partners because of domestic violence during the probationary period to remain[302] (28:1/109, 8.3; 27:2/106, 8.3). Post offices helped with passport delays[303] (28:4/112, 8.2).

8.3 Universities say only 65 per cent of black students were accepted on to degree/diploma courses, compared with 76 per cent of Asians and 78 per cent of white students.[304] Two charities said racism in schools contributes to disproportionate expulsions and suspensions of black pupils[305] (27:2/106, 8.5; 26:2/102, 8.4). Universities discriminate against ethnic minority academics in appointments and promotions, according to a study.[306] The government set a target of 7

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per cent ethnic minority recruitment for fire, police, probation and immigration[307] (28:2/110, 8.3; 27:3/107, 8.1). The CRE warned the Crown Prosecution Service it might launch a formal investigation.[308]

8.4 The police officer facing disciplinary charges about the Stephen Lawrence murder inquiry was cautioned for neglect of duty[309] (28:4/112, 8.4; 28:3/111, 8.4). A 'ministerial priority' aims to increase trust and confidence in policing amongst minority ethnic communities.[310] A report focuses on experiences of racist victimisation.[311] Some social landlords fail to evict tenants who racially harass neighbours, according to a study.[312]

9. *The voluntary sector*
9.1 Increased funding for the voluntary sector aims to increase effectiveness and develop regional networks[313] (28:3/111, 9.1). A guide helps companies estimate the value of their community contributions[314] (27:2/106, 9.2). Research evaluates local development agencies (which support other local voluntary bodies).[315] A survey of London health authorities' relationships with voluntary bodies found under 3 per cent of funding ring-fenced for black and minority ethnic communities.[316]

9.2 The government announced new millennium volunteer projects, and invited second round bids[317] (28:3/111, 9.2; 27:2/106, 9.1). Research finds significant 'social capital' in Britain, but a decline in trust in politicians and other people.[318]

9.3 The Charities Aid Foundation published one guide on fundraising for education,[319] and a series on financial management for charities[320] (27:2/106, 9.1; 26:2/102, 9.2). New figures show public donations to charities rising nearly ten per cent between 1997 and 1998[321] (28:3/111, 9.3; 27:3/107, 9.2). A survey shows almost one in four say they give nothing to charities because they cannot afford to.[322] In public attitudes surveys, over three in four disagree that the government should do less for the needy by encouraging charities to do more.[323] National Lottery Charities Board research will map funding given to voluntary/community groups tackling poverty and deprivation.[324] A report examines how trusts can help meet the needs of lesbians and gay men.[325]

10. *Government*
10.1 The government published its 1998–99 annual report[326] (28:1/109, 10.1), and plans to modernise government.[327] The House of Lords voted to allow 92 hereditary peers to remain until second stage reforms[328] (28:4/112, 10.1; 28:3/111, 10.1). The government plans to extend powers to change primary legislation using draft orders.[329] The third wave of results from the 'people's panel' was published[330] (28:3/111, 10.2; 28:2/110, 10.4). The government agreed to changes after its draft Freedom of Information Bill[331] was criticised for being insufficiently radical;[332] but ministerial discretion is still central[333] (28:2/110, 10.2; 27:3/107, 10.1). Measures were announced to increase the numbers of ethnic minorities, women and disabled people in the civil service, especially senior grades[334] (28:4/112, 8.3; 28:3/111, 8.3).

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10.2 The European elections, the first UK-wide poll involving proportional voting, saw a low turnout[335] (27:4/108, 10.1). No referendum on electoral reform for Westminster elections will be held before the general election[336] (28:2/110, 10.1; 27:3/107, 10.1). A working party proposed pilot schemes to modernise voting[337] (28:2/110, 10.1; 27:3/107, 10.2). Government proposals would make political party funding more transparent and control election spending[338] (28:2/110, 10.2; 27:2/106, 10.1).

10.3 The Good Friday peace accord in Northern Ireland appeared increasingly at risk[339] (28:3/111, 10.3; 28:1/109, 10.3). The Northern Ireland Bill, intended to maintain the peace process, had a third reading;[340] but the agreement will be reviewed.[341] Election results in Scotland and Wales meant Labour had to discuss coalition.[342] The Welsh Assembly and Scottish Parliament were opened,[343] and powers transferred[344] (28:1/109, 10.3; 27:4/108, 10.1). But some MPs argued other areas also deserved separate status.[345] Regional chambers were created, to support regional development agencies[346] (28:4/112, 10.3; 28:3/111, 10.3). Three English regions gained Objective 1 status for EU funding[347] (28:1/109, 1.1). Regional development agencies will get £50 million to help budding entrepreneurs.[348]

10.4 The Greater London Authority Bill had a third reading[349] (28:3/111, 10.3; 28:2/110, 10.3). Local elections had low turnouts[350] (28:1/109, 10.5). Central and local government agreed on how to deal with substandard services.[351] The Local Government Act, replacing compulsory competitive tendering with best value, and universal capping with reserve powers, received Royal assent[352] (28:3/111, 10.4; 28:2/110, 10.4). Research shows the majority of councillors are still white, male and middle-aged.[353] Researchers simulated local elections under five alternative electoral systems to first-past-the-post.[354]

10.5 The government rejected most recommendations from a Commons Committee to give local authorities more control over their finances.[355] English local authorities have collected 95.6 per cent of council tax for 1998/99[356] (28:1/109, 10.2; 26:3/103, 10.3). Reform of council tax benefit in isolation would not work, according to a report.[357]

11. *Gender*

11.1 The government ruled out major legal change in its response to Equal Opportunities Commission proposals for changes to sex equality legislation and the report on anti-discrimination legislation from the better regulation task force (see **8.1**)[358] (28:3/111, 11.1; 28:1/109, 11.1). But it consulted on shifting the balance of proof from workers to employers in alleged discrimination cases.[359] The Women's Unit is producing guidelines for policy-makers on considering women's needs[360] (28:3/111, 11.1; 28:2/110, 11.1). The Women's National Commission's new chair was appointed by open competition[361] (28:1/109, 11.1; 27:4/108, 11.1). More top civil service posts were filled through open competition last year, report the Civil Service Commissioners, with women representing 36 per cent of successful candidates (19 per cent in 1995–96)[362] (28:4/112, 11.1; 28:1/109, 11.1). An updated plan for increasing participation

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of women and other under-represented groups in public life was published[363] (27:4/108, 10.1; 27:2/106, 11.1).

11.2 Government research shows the gender pay gap begins before girls are 20[364] (28:4/112, 11.2). Self-employed women earn 61 per cent less than men (compared to an average 25 per cent).[365] An inquiry says universities risk legal action from women lecturers getting less pay and promotion.[366] Official figures show women gain twice as much as men from tax and benefit changes since May 1997.[367] Mothers in rural areas are put off seeking paid work by social disapproval, according to research.[368]

11.3 Evaluation showed a domestic violence crisis intervention service made a positive difference to victims,[369] and targeted police action can reduce repeat violence[370] (28:3/111, 11.3; 27:4/108, 11.4). The first court dealing solely with domestic violence opened.[371] The government promised more funding to agencies tackling violence against women.[372] It published research showing rape convictions declining.[373]

11.4 Fathers of teenage children viewed providing a family income as central to 'fathering', according to a study.[374] Research shows young men are not sufficiently encouraged to remain involved with their children after separation[375] (27:4/108, 11.5; 27:3/107, 11.6). The government gave more funding to organisations working with fathers.[376] Most young men in a research project said they were poorly prepared at school for the workplace.[377] The TUC launched a campaign against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation,[378] and a charter for lesbians and gay men at work.[379] Citizens Advice Bureaux started their first advice service for gay and bisexual people.[380] The Court of Appeal ruled against a health authority for refusing treatment for transsexuals[381] (28:1/109, 11.5; 27:1/105, 11.5).

12. *Demography*

12.1 The number of parliamentary electors on UK electoral registers increased by 2 per cent between 1998 and 1999, to 44,388,885[382] (27:4/108, 12.1; 27:3/107, 12.1). The UK population in 2001 will include fewer children, an older working population and more people over pensionable age, according to 1996-based population projections[383] (27:3/107, 12.1; 27:2/106, 12.1). The government actuary says there will be more pensioners than children in the UK by 2008.[384] Key demographic statistics for local areas for 1997 covered the whole UK for the first time[385] (27:4/108, 12.1; 26:1/101, 12.1). Ethnic minorities made up 6.4 per cent of the GB population, an estimated 3.6 million, in 1997.[386]

12.2 Responses to the consultation document, *Supporting Families*, were published;[387] a briefing paper analyses the document[388] (28:3/111, 12.2; 27:2/106, 12.2). Research indicates cohabitation tends to be used as a trial run for marriage, not a long-term substitute.[389] An article in *Population Trends* examines cohabitation and marital histories.[390] The government decided not to implement Part II of the Family Law Act 1996 in 2000, because of 'disappointing' results

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for pilot information meetings for couples planning divorce; but pension splitting will go ahead[391] (27:3/107, 12.2; 26:1/101, 12.4).

12.3 In 1998, there were 635,901 live births in England and Wales, a decrease of 1 per cent on 1997[392] (28:3/111, 12.3; 28:1/109, 12.4). Current fertility means an average 1.73 children per woman, as in 1997.[393] The Social Exclusion Unit's report on teenage pregnancy suggests more advice for parents on sex education for their children (see **2.6** and **4.3**)[394] (28:3/111, 12.3; 28:2/110, 12.3). The government reaffirmed that human reproductive cloning cannot be carried out in the UK.[395] Provisional figures show 177,332 abortions on residents of England and Wales in 1998 – an increase of 4.2 per cent on 1997, but 11 per cent amongst under-20s[396] (28:3/111, 12.3; 28:2/110, 12.3).

12.4 A comprehensive document on people aged 50 and over was produced.[397] In 1998, 553,435 deaths were registered in England and Wales, a decrease of 0.8 per cent on 1997 (28:3/111, 12.4; 28:1/109, 12.5); the infant mortality rate decreased from 6 to 5.7 per cent, the lowest recorded[398] (28:1/109, 12.5; 27:1/105, 12.3). Life expectancy has increased for all social classes since 1972, but disguising increasing inequality[399] (27:2/106, 12.4; 26:3/103, 12.5). The first analysis of adult mortality rates using the new socio-economic classification shows similar ratios to those using the former system[400] (28:3/111, 12.1; 27:3/107, 12.1). Mortality levels in 1998 in England and Wales were highest in the North East and North West of England[401] (27:2/106, 12.4; 27:1/105, 12.3).

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