

Rebuilding Prosperity

UNIVERSAL BASIC SERVICES



Rebuilding prosperity for the 21st century requires new ways of thinking and acting and the kind of vision, commitment and courage that informed the national conversation in the 1940s. The Institute for Global Prosperity is launching the Rebuilding Prosperity Campaign calling on policy-makers from Town and City Halls to Whitehall and from National Assemblies to the Westminster Parliament to engage in a new conversation and to join our campaign for a radical new approach that will create shared prosperity across the country.

“A revolutionary moment in the world’s history is a time for revolutions, not for patching”

William Beveridge¹

Universal Basic Services

Universal Basis Services (UBS) are a suite of key public services that enable people to access economic opportunity and civic participation and enhance people’s capacity to respond to current and future challenges. In 1942, when fewer women worked, families were larger and work nearer to where people lived, it was determined that education and health were the key services that would enable people to participate socially and economically, and that they should be provided through a welfare state system.

Threadbare not broken

Today access to education and health remain critical, but other services are now equally relevant. Access to digital communications, transport, child and social care also determine an individual’s ability to flourish. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the inabilities of the welfare state, by revealing that it is an inadequate safety net for the realities of the 21st Century. The pandemic has also revealed and worsened stark inequalities in the UK: from access to digital services, housing, and affordable childcare, to education and health outcomes and highlighted that these cannot be effectively addressed by our existing welfare system.

Values not Evils

Rebuilding in the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic requires policymakers to be as bold and imaginative about the future that they want to build; as William Beveridge was when he wrote the Beveridge Report Rebuilding from the COVID-19 pandemic requires policy-makers of WWII. However, reimagining a safety net shaped to the lived experiences of the 21st Century needs to take a different perspective. Rather

than define and then solve ‘five evils’, a reformed welfare state should be based on the four key values that enable people to live flourishing lives: flexibility, trust, relationships and social solidarity.

Universal Basic Services for the 21st Century

A 21st century welfare system needs to acknowledge that health, education, employment and poverty are not experienced in isolation, but are intricately and inextricably linked. Such a system would give people access to the tools, skills and relationships they need to participate in our society and economy, by building a stable platform from which lives can flourish. New UBS would therefore include, access to digital communications, transport, child and social care as well as education and health, and it would revisit the issues of food and housing that Beveridge originally addressed.

Building back differently

To rebuild prosperity and build back better, policy-making must focus on lifting up whole communities by devolving power - not to another tier of Government - but down to local areas that can identify and create the assets infrastructure and services required to provide secure livelihoods. UBS prototypes carried out by the IGP and Camden Council have shown that extending and enhancing the quality of available public services are fundamental for improving people’s quality of life and prosperity.

Therefore, local authorities should begin to implement UBS prototypes across an array of policy areas to test and explore what a 21st century welfare state might look like. If we experiment by providing these services based on values of flexibility, trust, relationships and social solidarity, we can demonstrate a different way of securing people’s livelihoods and rebuild more prosperous, sustainable and resilient communities across the whole of the country.

¹The “Beveridge Report: Social Insurance and Allied Services (2 December 1942)

²IGP briefing: Rebuilding Prosperity: Secure Livelihoods