



18 December 2017

Dear CPF Members,

Thank you to the members across 136 constituencies who submitted responses to the policy discussion that the CPF held on the cost of living in the spring of this year. This was a broad-ranging and, therefore, difficult paper to discuss, but it was clearly worthwhile and some excellent ideas emerged.

I'm conscious we've been waiting for a substantive response from Ministers, so please accept my apologies for the delay. I wanted to ensure that Ministers across several government departments actually engaged with the many great suggestions made by CPF members.

I am pleased to send you detailed responses from my ministerial colleagues in the Department for Education and Department for Communities and Local Government. If I am able to secure any additional responses from Ministers in due course, I will of course forward these to you too.

As I stated in my end-of-year letter, No.10 is replacing the Prime Minister's Policy Board with a new set of Policy Task Forces in key areas like Housing, Education, Environment and Social Justice. As Chair of the CPF, I look forward to continuing as your champion amongst Ministers and MPs, working with the newly elected Conservative Parliamentary Backbench Policy Chairs to ensure the CPF provides a strong voice to the Conservative grassroots at the heart of the Party in Government.

With very best wishes for a Happy Christmas and New Year break.

Yours,

George Freeman MP
Chairman, the Conservative Policy Forum



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18 December 2017

Dear George,

Once again, I find myself grateful for, and indebted to, the CPF for the excellent recommendations which have been forthcoming in their recent piece of work on living standards.

I was struck by how so many of the ideas went beyond home ownership, the traditional domain of Conservative Party policy, and recognised that we must fight on multiple fronts if we are to fix our broken housing market. More and more people, including families as well as young people, now rent their home and we must ensure that our policies deliver for them, as well as those who wish to own their own home.

Whether people rent or buy the most important thing we can do, is to get more homes built, and I am grateful for your ideas as to how we can get more capital deployed into house building. Many of these ideas, like your proposals on stamp duty, need to be discussed with my counterparts in the Treasury, but this document gives me an excellent basis to have precisely those discussions.

The suggestion to encourage large pensions or investment institutions to invest

more in housing for rent is I think an important area of policy for further development. The stable income stream offered by rental properties is a natural fit and my department is looking at ways in which it can unlock such investment to support new housing.

I was also struck by your ideas on affordable housing. We have already committed more than £7 billion into this up to 2021, but I agree there is more we can do which doesn't have a price tag attached, and I am grateful for your thoughts in that regard. In particular I was struck by the idea that we can do more with empty local authority assets, and will give more thought to that in the coming weeks.

Proposals which represent a fairer deal for renters, particularly in terms of tenancy length, also featured and appeal to me. We know that security of tenure is important to so many people in the private rented sector, particularly those with young families, and these ideas are welcome. We have already taken some steps to encourage landlords to offer longer tenancies to those who want and need them, and I will look closely at what further can be done to give this additional security.

I agree that we also, as your paper suggests, need to do more to help those people growing older who then want to downsize. That's why in the consultation I recently launched on assessing local housing need it includes the proposal that local planning authorities should identify and plan for the needs of older people.

The issue of land-banking by developers was also raised. Our recent White Paper contained various ideas for how we can get sites built out quicker, and some of these align with ideas contained within that paper. But there are also ideas contained here which move the story on somewhat, and I will give this due consideration. It is vital that we do as much as we can to ensure that planning permissions, turn into actual houses, rather than being seen as a speculative investment which may never be built out.

Finally, there were some interesting arguments made about where responsibility for planning should sit, especially given that upper-tier authorities often have responsibility for the associated infrastructure to go alongside developments. We are currently consulting on proposals for all local authorities to produce a 'statement of common ground', which will make joint working much more prevalent. I hope your members would support that ambition, and would encourage them to respond to our consultation.

Beyond that, I remain grateful for your ideas, energy and creativity when it comes to helping me fix our broken housing market.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid', with a small comma at the end.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP



2017-0046510POSoS

Rt Hon Justine Greening MP
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George Freeman MP
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Your ref: 2674638

17 December 2017

Dear *George*,

Thank you for your email of 15 September, enclosing a summary of the submissions received in response to the Conservative Policy Forum's (CPF) *Cost of Living* paper.

I am more determined than ever that everyone, no matter who they are or where they come from, has access to world-class education and the chance to go as far as their talent and hard work will take them.

I appreciate and welcome the points and suggestions made in the paper - many of which mirror our key priorities, and I thought it would be helpful to set out some of my department's initiatives across them.

STEM, ICT and Computer Coding

I note from your discussion paper that almost one-in-four groups called for more educational emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects, Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and Computer Coding.

As outlined in the Government's industrial strategy, we are committed to improving STEM skills. The UK's long-term future is dependent on excellent technology skills, and we recognise we must continue to make interventions to improve these skills in our young people and adults.

I agree that to increase the pipeline into critical STEM industries we must emphasise STEM subjects and provide our young people with high-quality STEM teaching, to give them the platform to progress through to further and higher education. The new computing curriculum emphasises the hard elements of computer science. It focuses on teaching the basics of programming and other key skills.

In November 2015, we announced the ICT GCSE and AS/A level would not be re-developed, and a new computer science GCSE was introduced for first teaching from September 2016. It requires students to understand mathematical principles and concepts like data representation, Boolean logic and different data types. The reformed A level concentrates more on programming, algorithms and problem solving.

We are working to increase the number of people studying STEM subjects at university. Whilst we have considered incentives, we believe providing students with better information about the outcomes they can expect will help to support them make the right decisions. For example, my department has recently started publishing the Longitudinal Education Outcomes. It uses information from HM Revenue and Customs and the Department for Work and Pensions to report on the employment outcomes of university graduates in England 1, 3 and 5 years after graduation.

We are also encouraging and supporting those taking other routes in to STEM careers so that we have exceptional people working across all areas and levels within STEM industries. My department is providing £13 million of capital investment to support the establishment of the National College for Digital skills. Over the next five years, the college will train up to 5,000 students in higher level skills for a broad range of digital careers, such as software and database developers, user experience designers and technology entrepreneurs. In addition, the Institute of Coding initiative aims to create and implement solutions that develop and grow digital skills at level 6 and 7 to meet the current and future needs of the industry.

We recognise more needs to be done to strengthen and grow higher level technical skills provision in STEM subjects across the country. The CPF paper proposes a greater use of purpose-built trade-orientated Technology Colleges. My department has already committed to similar initiatives called the Institutes of Technology (IoTs). These are part of our ambitious reforms to technical education. Applicants will be able to bid into a £170 million Capital Fund to establish institutions that:

- Provide higher level technical skills with a focus on subjects like STEM at levels 4 and 5, extending to level 6 plus;
- Anticipate future workplace skills needs and effectively leverage research and innovation bases, both in the provider base and industry; and
- Strengthen routes into higher levels of technical education and directly into employment.

IoTs will comprise innovative collaborations between further education and higher education providers. Employers will be at the heart of their leadership, governance and the design and delivery of curriculum. The IoT can be created by drawing together the assets of existing providers to form a distinct and prestigious entity or, if appropriate, can be a new build institution.

The challenge to meet the needs of STEM industries cannot just be tackled by adding highly skilled new entrants to the workforce. With the nature of industry changing constantly, and new industries emerging over time, we are providing opportunities for adults to gain the skills and knowledge necessary to adapt.

There is full funding for adults in England to access a range of literacy and numeracy courses up to GCSE level. In 2015/16 we funded 557,400 adults to participate in maths courses up to level 2. We recently announced that this entitlement will be extended to also cover basic digital skills training, and will confirm details in due course.

Apprenticeships and T-levels

I share the respondents' views on greater promotion of apprenticeships, and closer partnerships with employers and schools.

Apprenticeships are a key part of creating a stronger and fairer economy. They are being reformed precisely to address skills shortages and stimulate economic growth given our critical need for technical and professional skilled workers, particularly in sectors such as STEM and digital.

Employer engagement is central to the development of apprenticeships, and we have established the Institute for Apprenticeships. It puts employers at the heart of decision-making processes, supporting the quality of new apprenticeship standards which are being developed by employers themselves.

We are keen to promote apprenticeships to young people as a valuable route to a career. The first phase of the *Get In Go Far* campaign supported our commitment to create 3 million quality apprenticeships by 2020. Launched to inspire more young people to take on an apprenticeship, and more employers to offer them, the 2016/17 the campaign fuelled 120,000 applications for apprenticeship places. In 2017/18, our communications activities will build on these successes, whilst supporting the Government's social mobility agenda, and working to boost the country's skills.

We have also established the annual National Apprenticeship Week each March. It celebrates apprenticeships across all industries and all levels. Employers and apprentices from across England come together to demonstrate the many benefits apprenticeships bring. This year, it encouraged more individuals to choose an apprenticeship as a ladder of opportunity to a great career, and employers to take on apprentices.

Lifelong Learning / National Adult Skills and Education Programme

I agree there is a need for more lifelong learning and a clear programme of work to help deliver it, to enable people of all ages and circumstances to upskill and re-skill throughout their working lives in response to the changes in the labour market.

The Industrial Strategy Green Paper, *Building our Industrial Strategy*, published in January, highlighted some of the barriers adults face when learning new skills, and your paper alludes to a few of them. They include affordability and perception of affordability, a lack of flexible training that fits around people's commitments, and a lack of awareness about the opportunities and benefits of learning.

To help overcome these barriers, the Spring Budget 2017 allocated £40 million to fund pilots over the next two years, to test ambitious new approaches to lifelong learning. As part of this pilot programme, we will gather evidence about what works in breaking down the key barriers faced by adults to re-entering learning.

My department is working closely with employers and providers to ensure career learning policies are beneficial for business and the economy, as well as for individuals. This includes making certain employers can support their workforce to train and upskill.

We have also committed to establishing Skills Advisory Panels across England, to help support local areas identify and respond to their changing skills needs, including how best to respond to the changing technological landscape of the labour market.

Careers Advice Services

I welcome the CPF's recognition of the importance of careers education, information advice and guidance, in enabling young people to achieve their full potential, and to ensuring we have the expertise our economy and workforce need in the future. I recognise there is plenty of room for improvement of careers advice in schools. My department intends to address this imminently through a comprehensive careers strategy, with a clear focus on social mobility. This strategy will seek to make sure young people have meaningful encounters with the world of work.

Assisted Places / Selection and Streaming

The paper makes reference to a proposition that the Government should support a scheme to fund, or part-fund, places at independent schools. A similar proposal was made by the Independent Schools Council in its response to the *Schools that Work for Everyone* consultation, to provide 10,000 places in fee-paying schools if the Government co-funded these places with the amount it would have cost to educate those children in the state sector.

My department recognises this as a positive offer from the independent sector, and would supplement the already significant contribution the independent sector makes by offering bursaries to families from lower income backgrounds. While we appreciate the offer, however, we have to make certain the Government's limited resources are channelled to improving our state schools, to the benefit of all the children in them, rather than co-funding places in independent schools, which would only benefit those children fortunate enough to be selected. Consequently, our work with the independent sector is focussed on establishing ways in which they can work in partnership with state schools, with projects to help them improve their performance across the board.

The independent sector is engaging constructively with my department on collaboration projects, covering a wide range of activities, including curriculum support, teacher professional development, sharing of facilities and resources, extra-curricular character building activities, sports, music and theatre - to name a few.

Some of the respondents to the CPF's paper also suggested selection and streaming should take place in all schools so that students receive education and training more appropriate to their skills and abilities. While I agree with the ends, I do not think that widespread selection and streaming, where children are grouped not by their ability in individual subjects, but their overall academic ability, is the way to achieve this.

Teachers Standards

I read with interest the suggestions in your paper regarding raising teacher training programmes, teacher standards and Continuous Professional Development (CPD). We have a set of standards and content frameworks in place designed to accommodate the multiplicity of things that teachers have to learn about, and much of this work is relatively newly established.

It is for Initial Teacher Training (ITT) providers to use their professional judgement to determine the specific content and structure of courses, however, they must be designed so teacher trainees can demonstrate they meet all of the *Teachers' Standards* guidance at the appropriate level.

We understand the desire to improve technical skills, and are happy for ITT and CPD providers to address this in their offer if they wish. We do not, however, propose to mandate this, and are not minded to further revise our relatively recently established frameworks.

To be awarded Qualified Teacher Status, trainees must satisfy the Teachers' Standards, which include a requirement that they take responsibility for improving teaching through appropriate professional development, responding to advice and feedback from colleagues. A framework of core content for ITT, published in July 2016, recommends providers encourage trainees to develop a commitment to their CPD and to know how to access professional development opportunities.

My department is committed to supporting the on-going development of teachers' skills, and my officials are always considering the impact and implementation of the framework. The *Standard for Teachers' Professional Development*, published in July 2016, and the Teaching and Leadership Innovation Fund, for example, support superior professional development for teachers and school leaders, particularly in the parts of the country that need it most. Increasing access to first-class professional development is a key theme of our forthcoming consultation on strengthening qualified teacher status and improving career progression. This will contain a number of proposals to help continue the creation of structures and frameworks that enable the profession to lead and continue to improve the professional development offer.

The Chartered College of Teaching, which opened to members in January 2017, is the independent professional body for teachers. Through it, the teaching profession will drive its own improvements in practice. This includes via a termly peer-reviewed journal, an online knowledge platform and access to over 2,000 journals and e-books via an education resource database. The college is also creating a diverse community of teachers who can access, share and debate best practice in the classroom beyond school boundaries through face-to-face events, online platforms and regional and local networks. We are providing funding of up to £5 million over four years to help with its initial set-up. In the long-term it will be sustained by membership fees.

Turning to the recommendation that industrial action by teachers should be abolished and replaced with mandatory 'Independent Industrial Tribunals', I am clear that industrial action in schools benefits no one. It damages pupils' education, causes unnecessary disruption for parents and undermines the public respect which teachers deserve.

I do not, however, intend to pursue the proposed changes at this stage as national strike action by teachers is rare. The last time co-ordinated strike action took place in July 2016, 88 per cent of schools remained open, or partially open, demonstrating the commitment of teachers and their strong desire not to disrupt the education of children.

Since then, the Trade Union Act 2016 has introduced higher ballot thresholds for industrial action across important public services, including state-funded education for 5 to 16 year olds. This ensures strikes can only go ahead as a result of a clear and positive democratic mandate from union members. In addition, Ministers and my department officials meet regularly with the schools workforce unions, with a view to resolving disputes without the need for industrial action. I do not, therefore, consider that further legislation restricting strike action by teachers, is presently required.

With regard to the recommendation on teacher contracts, it is employers, rather than my department, who are responsible for teacher contracts and their content. We introduced new *Teachers' Standards* linked to appraisal and capability procedures, to help schools address underperformance and improve teaching standards. More information is available online at: tinyurl.com/y7wsnlam.

It is clear that everybody who has contributed to your policy paper has aims squarely in line with the Government's Plan for Britain. They want to build a country that works for everyone and I hope you find the details of the work my department is doing to work towards these very same goals useful.

Thank you for writing on this important matter.

*Best wishes,
Justine*

RT HON JUSTINE GREENING MP