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Notes on Contributors

Pete Alcock is Professor of Social Policy and Administration at the University of Birmingham and Director of the ESRC Third Sector Research Centre. He has been teaching and researching in social policy for over thirty years. He has written widely on social policy, the voluntary sector, social security, poverty and social exclusion, and anti-poverty policy.

Hilary Arksey is a consultant and freelance researcher. Her main research interests lie in the area of community care, particularly informal or family caregiving. She has both published extensively in this area and undertaken studies for governmental and other agencies.

Rob Baggott is Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Health Policy Research Unit at De Montfort University, Leicester. He is the author of many publications on health policy. His research interests include health care reform, public health, and patient and public involvement.

Marian Barnes is Professor of Social Policy in the School of Applied Social Science at the University of Brighton. Her main areas of research include: user involvement and user movements, public participation, citizenship and new forms of democratic practice, policy and practice interfaces, mental health, older people, carers, and care ethics. She has written widely in these areas and has undertaken participative research with service users and carers.

Saul Becker is Head of the School of Sociology and Social Policy and Professor of Social Policy and Social Care at The University of Nottingham. His main research interests include informal family care (particularly children who are carers – ‘young carers’), vulnerable children and their families, and research methodology in social policy. He has published extensively in these areas.

Fran Bennett is Senior Research Fellow (half time) in the Department of Social Policy and Intervention at the University of Oxford. Her interests include social security policy, gender issues, and poverty, income distribution, and participation. She is also an independent consultant, writing on social policy issues for the UK government, European Commission, NGOs, and others.

Alice Bloch is Professor of Sociology at City University London where she teaches in the areas of migration, forced migration, race and ethnicity, and research methods. Her research interests are in the areas of migration, forced migration, and asylum policy.

Catherine Bochel is a principal lecturer in Policy Studies in the School of Social Sciences at the University of Lincoln. Her research interests include participation, the policy process and local government, on which she has published widely. She teaches on a range of policy-related courses.
Hugh Bochel is Professor of Public Policy at the University of Lincoln where his teaching includes the impact of ideology on social policy, social difference, and understanding and analysing the policy process. His wide-ranging research interests across social and public policy come together around concerns with the policy process and the politics of welfare.

Edward Brunsdon is Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Social Policy and CHASM at the University of Birmingham. His research and publication interests include: pension policy and asset management, occupational welfare, and human resource management.

Michael Cahill is Reader in Social Policy at the University of Brighton. He is the author and editor of a number of books on social policy and the environment and has written on new approaches to the study of social policy. His most recent work has been on transport and social policy.

Claire Callender is Professor of Higher Education Policy both at Birkbeck and the Institute of Education, University of London. Her research has focused on issues about student funding and finances in higher education and she has published widely on these topics. Her research has informed the deliberations of government-commissioned inquiries into student funding.

John Clarke is a professor of Social Policy in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University. His research and writing has explored questions of welfare reform, both in the United Kingdom and internationally. He has written extensively about the impact of managerialism and consumerism on the transformation of welfare states and public services more generally. He has a continuing interest in the role of ideas, knowledge, and discourses in the politics of welfare reform.

Jochen Clasen is Professor of Comparative Social Policy in the School of Social and Political Science at The University of Edinburgh where his teaching centres on European social policy and the political economy of the welfare state. He has researched and written widely in the areas of social security, labour market policy, and cross-national analysis of welfare states, particularly across European countries.

Bob Coles is Senior Lecturer in Social Policy at The University of York. He has a long-standing interest in youth policy and developed a degree specializing in children and young people at York. He helped establish youth policy as a sub-area within social policy and developed links between policy, research, and practice. His research has focused on vulnerable young people.

Guy Daly is Professor and Dean, Faculty of Education, Health and Sciences at the University of Derby. His areas of research include local governance, social care, and housing policy, including research for DWP, ODPM, local authorities, and health service organizations.

Howard Davis is Director of The Local Government Centre, Warwick Business School, at The University of Warwick. He has long experience of advising on and/or evaluating local government and local public services including projects on ageing society/later life and on governance, performance, innovation, and inspection.

Alan Deacon is Professor Emeritus of Social Policy at the University of Leeds. He has written widely on welfare reform in Britain and the United States, and was a member of the ESRC Research Group on Care, Values, and the Future of Welfare.

Hartley Dean is Professor of Social Policy at the London School of Economics. Before his academic career he had worked as a welfare rights worker in one of London’s most deprived multicultural neighbourhoods. His principal research interests stem from concerns with poverty and social justice.

Peter Dwyer is Professor of Social Policy at the University of Salford. His main research and teaching interests are in social citizenship and international migration and welfare. Key
themes explored in this work include, the changing mix of welfare provision, conditionality, and membership. He has published a wide range of books and articles on these issues.

Nick Ellison is Professor of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. Research and teaching interests include welfare politics, welfare state change, and the impact of ‘globalization’.

Jane Falkingham is Professor of Demography and International Social Policy and Director of the ESRC Centre for Population Change at the University of Southampton. Her research interests include demographic change and its implications for well-being, poverty, and health and span both developed and developing countries, with a particular focus on Central Asia and the United Kingdom.

Tony Fitzpatrick is a reader in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Nottingham. He has published many books and articles dealing with the relevance to social policy of new technologies, environmentalism, and social democracy, among other social and political theories.

David Gladstone is currently Honorary Visiting Fellow in the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol. An historian by training, his teaching and research interests are in aspects of, and the interrelationship between, British social policy past and present. He has authored and edited several books, collections of documentary sources, and book series.

Jon Glasby is Professor of Health and Social Care and Director of the University of Birmingham’s Health Services Management Centre (HSMC). A qualified social worker by background, he leads a national programme of research, consultancy and teaching to support more effective inter-agency working between social care and the NHS.

Caroline Glendinning is Professor of Social Policy in the Social Policy Research Unit, University of York and Associate Director of the School for Social Care Research. Her research interests are in adult social care, informal care, and comparative long-term care policies. She has published widely in these and other areas.

Howard Glennerster is Professor Emeritus of Social Policy at The London School of Economics and a Fellow of the British Academy. He has specialized in research on the finance and economics of social policy and its post-war history. He has made a special study of social policy in the United States where he spent several sabbatical periods at American Universities. He has published widely on the history and finance of the British welfare state.

Jackie Gulland is Lecturer in Sociology in the School of Applied Social Science at the University of Stirling. Her research and teaching interests include socio-legal studies, citizens’ disputes with the state, social security policy, ageing, and disability. Before entering academia, she worked in the voluntary and local authority sector as a welfare rights adviser and trainer.

Linda Hantrais is Emeritus Professor in the European Social Policy in the Department of Politics, History and International Relations at Loughborough University. She has served on a number of European committees as expert adviser. Her main research interests are in international comparative research theory, methodology and practice, with particular reference to socio-economic change and social and family policy in European countries.

Bernard Harris is Professor of the History of Social Policy at the University of Southampton. In addition to the history of social policy, he has also conducted research into different aspects of the history of health, height, morbidity, and mortality and has edited book series in the history of medicine and the relationship between gender and well-being.

Tina Haux is a senior research officer in the Institute for Social and Economic Research at the University of Essex. Her research interests include family policy, lone parents, welfare-to-work, comparative social policy, policy design, and microsimulation.
Michael Hill is Emeritus Professor of Social Policy of Newcastle University and a Visiting Professor in the Personal Social Services Research Unit at The London School of Economics. His research interests range from policy-making, public policy processes and current developments in welfare benefits and services to comparative social policy, on all of which he has published widely.

John Hills is Professor of Social Policy and Director of the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at The London School of Economics. His research interests include the distribution of income and wealth, the distributional effects of public policies, pensions and social security more generally, housing finance and the impact of social policies across the life cycle. He has written on the evolution of social policies and their impacts in different phases over the past three decades and on inequality.

Chris Holden is Senior Lecturer in International Social Policy in the Department of Social Policy and Social Work at The University of York and Honorary Lecturer in Global Health at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. He has published widely on the relationships between the global economy, international trade, transnational corporations and health and social policy.

Shona Hunter is RCUK Academic Fellow in Governance in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. Her research and teaching interests span a range of critical social policy. She is particularly interested in the reproduction of white masculinities and femininities in welfare arrangements.

Rana Jawad is Lecturer in Social Policy in the Department of Social and Policy Sciences at the University of Bath. Her main research and teaching interests are the role of religion in social policy and social policy in Middle Eastern Societies. She has a special interest in social policy in the Arab countries and Islamic welfare on which she has published widely.

Jeremy Kendall is Senior Lecturer in Social Policy in the School of Social Policy, Sociology and Social Research at the University of Kent. His research and teaching interests include the social policy process; social care, especially on older people; civil society and the third sector, especially theory and policy, international comparisons, and the role of the European Union. He has published a wide range of books and articles on these areas.

Patricia Kennett is Reader in Comparative Policy Studies, Head of the Centre for Urban and Public Policy Research and Co-ordinator of the research programme on Comparative and International Policy Analysis in the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol. Her research and teaching interests include international comparative social policy, with a particular focus on Europe and East Asia, governance, citizenship and social policy, global political economy and public policy, and cities, housing and social change.

Hilary Land is Emeritus Professor of Social Policy in the School for Policy Studies at the University of Bristol. She has had a long-standing interest in family policies using both historical and comparative perspectives as well as in feminist theories and social policy. She is currently studying changes in how responsibilities for both child-care and elder-care are shared between the generations as well as between men and women.

Ruth Lister is Emeritus Professor of Social Policy in the Department of Social Sciences at Loughborough University and a member of the House of Lords. Her main research interests are poverty, citizenship, and gender.

Stephen McKay is Professor of Social Research at the University of Birmingham and Director of their ESRC Doctoral Training Centre. He conducts research on poverty, inequality, family change, and the effects of social security policies. Much of his research involves quantitative analysis of large-scale datasets.

Suzi Macpherson is Research Manager with the Equality and Human Rights Commission.
Her interests focus on equality and social justice, particularly the relationship between socio-economic inequality and identity inequality critical interests. Her chapter has been written in a personal capacity.

Kirk Mann is a senior lecturer in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. His research interests are in: the relationship between social divisions and welfare, including occupational and fiscal welfare; and policies aimed at activating older people, retirement rights and pensions on all of which he has published widely.

Nick Manning is Professor of Social Policy and Sociology, and Director of the Institute of Mental Health at The University of Nottingham. His recent research interests include unemployment, poverty, ethnicity and health in Russia and Eastern Europe, and medical sociology and mental health policy. He has written books on health care, social problems, and comparative social policy.

Gabrielle Mastin is currently undertaking a PhD in the School of Sociology and Social Policy at the University of Leeds. Her research explores care services for older people and their role as users in setting service provisions.

Margaret May is Honorary Research Fellow in the School of Social Policy and CHASM at the University of Birmingham. Her research interests include employment policy, occupational welfare, human resource and welfare service management, and comparative social policy.

Jane Millar is Professor of Social Policy at the University of Bath and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research. Her research interests include social security and tax credits, family policy and the policy implications of family change, poverty and social exclusion, gender and social policy, and international comparative research.

David Mullins is Professor of Housing Policy at the University of Birmingham’s School of Social Policy, leading research on service delivery for the ESRC Third Sector Research Centre. He has published widely on UK housing policy, specializing in the role of housing associations, including the first evaluation of stock transfers from local authorities.

Alan Murie is Emeritus Professor of Urban and Regional Studies at the University of Birmingham, and has been a leading contributor to housing research and policy debates for more than twenty years. His research interests include the privatization of public housing, the residualization of social rented housing, differences within the home ownership sector, and changing demand for housing in the United Kingdom.

Tim Newburn is Professor of Criminology and Social Policy at The London School of Economics where he teaches sociology and criminology to undergraduate and postgraduate students. His major areas of research interest concern policing and security, youth justice, and comparative criminal justice and penal policy.

Robert M. Page is Reader in Democratic Socialism and Social Policy in the School of Social Policy at the University of Birmingham. His main current research interest is in the political history of the British welfare state since 1940.

Richard Parry is Reader in Social Policy in the School of Social and Political Studies at The University of Edinburgh where he teaches on Scottish, UK, and European social policy and on public policy and management. His major research projects have been on the role of the Treasury in social policy, the impact of devolution on the civil service throughout the United Kingdom, and a cross-national comparison of public sector employment.

Ruth Patrick is a postgraduate research student at the University of Leeds. Her research interests include welfare-to-work, disability, citizenship theory, and qualitative longitudinal methods. She is currently conducting research into the lived experiences of welfare reform.

Lucinda Platt is Professor of Sociology at the Institute of Education, University of London and Director of the Millennium Cohort Study. She has published widely in the areas of ethnic
inequality and child poverty, and is particularly interested in longitudinal analytical approaches. She also leads the ethnicity strand of Understanding Society: the UK Household Longitudinal Study.

**Martin Powell** is Professor of Health and Social Policy in the Health Services Management Centre at the University of Birmingham. His main research interests and publications are in the areas of historical and geographical aspects of social policy, health policy, new social democracy, partnerships, decentralization, and equality.

**Mark Priestley** is Professor of Disability Policy and Director of the Centre for Disability Studies (University of Leeds) and Scientific Director of the Academic Network of European Disability experts (ANED). He teaches disability studies and has published extensively in the disability policy field. His current research focuses mainly on disability policies in the European Union and its member states.

**Carol Propper** is Professor of Economics at Imperial College and Professor of the Economics of Public Policy at the University of Bristol. She is also a founding member of CMPO, Bristol University and Research Associate at the CEPR. Her research interests include the use of market and financial incentives to enhance quality, productivity, and innovation in health care and the long-term impact of children’s health on later life outcomes.

**Tess Ridge** is a senior lecturer of Social Policy at the University of Bath. Her main research interests and publications are in childhood poverty and social exclusion, especially from the perspectives of children themselves. She also has a keen interest in the role of policy, especially welfare and economic support, in the lives of children and families.

**Karen Rowlingson** is Professor of Social Policy at the University of Birmingham and also Director of the Centre on Household Assets and Savings Management (CHASM). Her research interests lie in the financial security of individuals, families, and households including: assets and asset-based welfare; poverty, wealth and inequality; social security policy; financial capability, inclusion and education.

**Rob Sykes** is Principal Lecturer in Politics in the Department of Psychology, Sociology and Politics at Sheffield Hallam University. He teaches courses on public policy, globalization, and international politics and society both in the United Kingdom and in Hong Kong. He has published in the areas of globalization and social policy, and European studies.

**Peter Taylor-Gooby** is Professor of Social Policy at the University of Kent. He chairs the British Academy’s New Paradigms in Public Policy programmes and directed the ESRC Social Contexts and Responses to Risk and Economic Beliefs and Behaviour and the EU Welfare Reform and the Management of Societal Change programmes. He has published widely on theoretical approaches, cross-national comparative issues and social attitude research.

**Athina Vlachantoni** is Lecturer in Gerontology in the Centre for Research on Ageing at the University of Southampton. Her research interests combine the areas of ageing, gender, and social policy.

**Anne West** is Professor of Education Policy in the Department of Social Policy at The London School of Economics and Political Science. She is also Director of the Education Research Group. Her research focuses on education policy, in particular market-oriented reforms in schools and their impact on equity, financing education and accountability. She has published many articles in the field of education policy.

**Noel Whiteside** is Professor of Comparative Public Policy at The University of Warwick where she teaches historical perspectives on developments in British and European welfare. Her recent research has focused on urban public services in late nineteenth century European cities and on the current crisis and Europe’s pension systems (Her most recent books cover the pension crisis in Britain and European employment policy.)
Sharon Wright is Lecturer in Social Policy at the University of Stirling. Her interests include poverty in the context of inequality and wealth, social security and governance. Her recent research focuses on in-depth studies of welfare reform and the implementation of employment services, comparing the United Kingdom with other European countries and Australia.

Nicola Yeates is Senior Lecturer in the Department of Social Policy and Criminology at The Open University. She has researched and extensively published on global social policy, care migration and social protection, and has worked with the International Social Security Association, the World Bank, UNICEF, UNRISD, and UNESCO.
Acknowledgements

As editors we are very grateful for the work put into this volume by the contributors. The *Companion* first set out to produce a collection of chapters written by some of the most distinguished teachers and lecturers in social policy in the United Kingdom, and in this fourth edition we have followed this with an expanded range of contributions. We asked all our contributors to write in as accessible a way as possible, while introducing complex issues in a short space. Authors in social policy are no different from other authors, however; some write sharply and clearly, others are more difficult to follow and pack difficult ideas together. This collection reflects the range of styles of writing and the array of ideological and political positions that students of social policy are likely to encounter. All the chapters, of course, also only provide a short summary of a wide range of issues and information in their area. The aim therefore is to encourage readers to investigate further and read more widely.

We were successful in persuading our authors to contribute to the *Companion* because of its long-standing links with the Social Policy Association (SPA) – the professional association for academics in Social Policy (see Appendix). While we, as editors, made the difficult and contentious decisions about what should be left out, what should be included, and who should be asked to write, the SPA’s support was again highly valuable. We should also like to thank Justin Vaughan and Ben Thatcher at Wiley-Blackwell for their support in the production of this new edition, and the anonymous reviewers of the proposals for revision who all gave us such helpful advice. We hope that what we have produced is worthy of all this support and will continue to be of value to the social policy community as a whole. Any shortcomings in the collection as a whole are, however, our responsibility.

Pete Alcock, Margaret May, and Sharon Wright
Introduction

Pete Alcock, Margaret May, and Sharon Wright

This Student’s Companion to Social Policy is a resource book that will be of practical use to students of social policy throughout their undergraduate or postgraduate study of the subject. It aims to acquaint students with the study of social policy by covering all the main themes and issues likely to be included in any curriculum in the United Kingdom, and indeed in many other countries. Readers are introduced to current theoretical and ideological debates, historical developments, service areas, key policy issues, and the broader international context. Each chapter includes a short guide to further sources, which points to some of the literature that pursues the issues addressed in the chapter in more depth and also alerts readers to major web-based sources. The Companion will be of value to students studying social policy on its own, as part of another undergraduate or postgraduate programme (for instance, sociology, politics, applied social science, or management studies), or as part of a professional course in a related field (for instance, social and care work, nursing and health studies, public and voluntary sector management, or criminology).

This fourth edition of the Companion has been much expanded and updated from the previous editions. A section covering the evolution of social policy in the United Kingdom from the nineteenth to the early twenty-first century has been included. New chapters have also been added to take account of recent developments and debates and changing political and economic configurations, and existing authors have updated their contributions. In some cases previous authors have been replaced with others leading in research and teaching in those areas.

As in the last edition we have asked contributors to provide readers with a short bullet point summary of key points at the beginning of each chapter and to conclude with some brief speculation on emerging issues. To provide further support for readers the fourth edition also includes end of chapter review questions and is accompanied by a new dedicated web site www.wiley.com/go/alcock. This provides a range of supplementary resources designed to facilitate further reading and reflection and enable students to make the most of the text and their study of social policy. These include:

- Internet links to web sites referred to in each chapter.
- Guides with internet links to key UK governmental, international, and other useful resources.
- Help sheets and case studies.
- Guidance on managing the main forms of assignments in social policy including examples from the end of chapter questions.
- Careers advice.
- A glossary.
The glossary is based on and links to *The Blackwell Dictionary of Social Policy*. This is a sister volume to the *Companion*, offering short definitions of all key terms and concepts and longer discussion of major items and, as with previous editions, we hope that readers will be able to use the two together.

There has also been a change in the editors for this edition. Karen Rowlingson has taken on other responsibilities since the third edition was produced and has been replaced as third editor by Sharon Wright. The current editors and the publishers would like to thank Karen for all her work on the previous edition. We are pleased that Sharon has been able to join us, and her role has meant that the editorial process has been able to remain much the same for this latest edition.

All the contributors to this book, both old and new, are scholars and teachers in the forefront of social policy studies in the United Kingdom. They were selected on the basis that their expertise in their particular areas would provide readers with an authoritative introduction to a range of thinking and scholarship. As the book has been prepared as a handbook and guide, rather than as a single text that focuses on one or two main themes, not all readers will necessarily want to read it from cover to cover. Indeed, most readers are likely to use it as a source of reference for consultation; and so the chapters have been written so that they can be read in any order, separately, or in groups.

- Part I introduces students to the concepts and approaches that underpin the study of social policy – and its (inter) relationship with other disciplines. These include a brief history of the development of the subject and the ways in which it is studied and researched, together with discussion of a number of the key concepts which students are likely to encounter in their studies.
- Part II provides readers with a guide to the theoretical and ideological context of social policy. Readers are introduced to the central themes and perspectives that provide the intellectual foundations to debates about the focus and aims of the subject.
- Part III surveys key themes and issues in the historical development of social policy in the United Kingdom including consideration of nineteenth century welfare arrangements, the growth of state welfare in the first half of the twentieth century and the policies of recent Conservative and Labour administrations.
- Part IV explores the social, political, and economic context in which policies are developed and implemented, including key issues such as demographic change, the economic context, the role of religion, social divisions, family structures, and political processes.
- Part V focuses on the provision and delivery of social policies. The different providers of welfare are examined by looking at the five main sectors of welfare – state, commercial, occupational, voluntary, and informal – setting these in the context of a brief examination of the ways in which welfare is financed and how citizens are able to secure access to it.
- Part VI provides a discussion of different dimensions of the governance of welfare, including management and delivery and the role of users in determining welfare policy. The different geographical organization of welfare within the United Kingdom is explained, as well as the role of supranational agencies, including in particular the European Union.
- Part VII comprises chapters that examine the key areas of welfare service provision, with each providing up-to-date summaries of policy developments, planning, and current debates.
- Part VIII focuses on the provision of services to particular social groups, and analyses the extent to which these groups are advantaged or disadvantaged by different aspects of policy provision.
- Part IX explores the international context of social policy. There is an introductory chapter on key issues in comparative analysis, followed by a number of chapters summarizing the differing policy experiences of different groups of nations across the world.
PART I

Concepts and Approaches
1
The Subject of Social Policy

Pete Alcock

Overview

- Social policy is an academic subject which both overlaps with cognate subjects and has a discrete disciplinary base.
- It has changed its name from ‘social administration’ to ‘social policy’ to reflect a broadening concern with the theory as well as the practice of welfare.
- The welfare reforms in the United Kingdom in the period following the Second World War were critically important in establishing the policy context for subsequent policy development.
- Social policy analysts adopt a range of different theoretical perspectives, leading to differing conclusions about the viability and desirability of different policy measures.
- Much social policy has been developed by national governments, but policy also has local and supranational dimensions.

What Do We Study?

The study of social policy is one of the academic social sciences. It is different from other areas of social science such as sociology, economics, and politics, however, because it is based upon a distinct empirical focus – support for the well-being of citizens provided through social action. In fact the term ‘social policy’ is not only used to refer to academic study, it is also used to refer to the social actions taken by policy-makers in the real world. So social policy refers both to the activity of policy-making to promote well-being and to the academic study of such actions.

In doing this, social policy draws on the methods used and the understanding developed across the social sciences. Thus, although on the one hand we can see social policy as a discrete
The Development of Social Policy

The development of social policy as a distinctive element of policy planning in the United Kingdom can be traced back over 100 years to the end of the nineteenth century. Its history is closely linked to the development of the Fabian Society and to the influence of Fabian politics on policy development in Britain. The Fabian Society was established in 1884 and was strongly influenced by the work of Sidney Webb, a civil servant who later became a Labour MP. The Fabians developed critical analysis of the social and economic problems found in late nineteenth-century British capitalism and campaigned for the introduction of social protection through the state to combat these. Fabian politics were closely linked to the establishment and growth of the Labour Party in Britain, which Webb and others saw as the political vehicle through which policy innovation and reform could be achieved. The early development of Fabian social policy thinking also drew on new research evidence emerging from some of the earliest empirical studies of social problems in the country by people like Booth and Rowntree, whose research revealed that the extent and depth of poverty in Britain at the end of the nineteenth century was both serious and widespread. This challenged conservative political assumptions that economic markets could meet the welfare needs of all and the Fabians used it to argue that policy intervention through the state was needed to provide those forms of support and protection which markets could not.

In fact, of course, it was some time before the Labour Party did achieve political power in Britain, and important reforms were introduced before this by the Liberal governments of the early twentieth century. The context for these reforms was influenced significantly by a review of the Poor Laws, the mainstay of nineteenth-century welfare policy, by a Royal Commission established in 1905. The work of the commission was an important step in the development of debate about social policy reform in Britain, in part because the commissioners themselves could not agree on the right way forward and so produced two separate reports:

- a Minority Report, which was largely the work of Beatrice Webb, married academic discipline, which is studied and developed in its own right; on the other we can recognize that it is also an interdisciplinary field, drawing on and developing links with other cognate disciplines at every stage and overlapping at times with these in terms of both empirical foci and methods of analysis. To put this another way, the boundaries between social policy and other social science subjects are porous, and shifting; students and practitioners of social policy may also be working within or alongside these other areas or co-operating closely with others who do.

Thus students studying social policy may well find themselves in the same departments, or on the same degree programmes, as others studying different subjects such as sociology or they may be studying social policy as part of professional education and training, for instance in social work. This variety and collaboration are to be welcomed, and students on these different courses will learn much from each other through learning together; but this does not mean that social policy can be subsumed within sociology or social work. Similarly, those engaged in social policy research often work alongside others such as economists or statisticians; but the focus of their concern is distinct – on investigating the development or delivery of policy.

The later chapters in this book explore in more detail some of the key concepts and perspectives which have underpinned the study of social policy, the major issues which inform policy development, and the important areas of policy practice. Much analysis of social policy focuses on the policies and practices of national government. Within the United Kingdom, however, the devolution of policy-making and the local development and administration of significant aspects of welfare provision are of major significance, as discussed in Part VI. In Part IX the book also explores the international context of policy development and the importance of comparative analysis and global trends to any understanding of social policy in the one country. Here, however, we will focus on the development of social policy as an academic subject in the United Kingdom, for it has a particularly interesting history, involving even a change of name from social administration to social policy.
The Subject of Social Policy

In 1950 they appointed Richard Titmuss as the first Professor of Social Administration in the United Kingdom, and during the twenty-three years before he died he became a leading figure in the academic study of social policy throughout the developed world. Titmuss’s major contributions to the development of the study of social policy have now been collected together in a single volume (see Guide to further sources), and his writing remains at the centre of academic debates about theory and practice today. Some of the contributors to this Companion come from the LSE’s current Department of Social Policy; but the study of social policy has now extended much further than this. Over the past fifty years social policy teaching and research has spread to most other universities in Britain, and has been taken up more widely in schools and colleges too. There are also major research centres in a number of universities, and other independent agencies and think-tanks providing specialist research and consultancy in particular fields or from different perspectives.

What is more, as we shall see shortly, this wider development of teaching and research has promoted debate and controversy over the aims and methods of study and over the direction of, and priorities for, research and policy reform—and this has provided a challenge to the Fabianism which dominated debate within social policy until the 1970s.

Much of the early teaching of social policy was geared to the training of social workers and others to act as providers within existing welfare services—it was focused upon how to administer welfare, rather than upon what welfare should be administered. Much of the early research work concentrated on measuring poverty and other social problems in order to provide evidence of the need for policy intervention—it was focused upon measurement of social need, rather than upon definitions of need or debate about the appropriateness of seeking to respond to it.

These broader questions became much more important as social policy expanded and developed in the latter quarter of the twentieth century. However, in the middle of the century such questions seemed to a large extent to be answered by the introduction of a ‘welfare state’ by the Labour government of 1945–51. At this stage the debate

Both reports stressed the need for policy reform to improve welfare provision; but, while the minority Fabian report saw the public provision of state services as the means of achieving this, the majority COS report envisaged a continuing central role for voluntary and philanthropic activity. This debate about the balance between state and non-state provision of welfare continued to influence the development of social policy throughout the rest of the twentieth century, as the chapters in Part V of this book reveal; and the concern to secure the appropriate mix between public and voluntary provision remains a key element in social policy planning.

What is particularly significant for our purposes about the policy debate between the Webbs and the Bosanquets, however, is that this did not only influence the development of social policy reform, but extended also into the study and evaluation of policy as it developed. Despite their political differences both the Webbs and the Bosanquets were concerned to promote the study of social policy as well as the development of welfare reform. This took concrete form with the establishment, by the Webbs, of the London School of Economics (LSE) and the incorporation within it of the COS’s School of Sociology to form a new Department of Social Sciences and Administration in 1912. This was the first, and most important, base for the study of social policy. Its first new lecturer was Clement Attlee (later prime minister in the reforming Labour government after the Second World War). Later members included Beveridge (architect of the modern social security system), Tawney (who developed theoretical analysis of poverty and inequality), and T. H. Marshall (whose idea of ‘social citizenship’ has been used by many as a theoretical basis for understanding the development of social policy in modern society).

The LSE has continued since then to provide a leading base for the study and evaluation of social policy. In 1950 they appointed Richard Titmuss as the first Professor of Social Administration in the United Kingdom, and during the twenty-three years before he died he became a leading figure in the academic study of social policy throughout the developed world. Titmuss’s major contributions to the development of the study of social policy have now been collected together in a single volume (see Guide to further sources), and his writing remains at the centre of academic debates about theory and practice today. Some of the contributors to this Companion come from the LSE’s current Department of Social Policy; but the study of social policy has now extended much further than this. Over the past fifty years social policy teaching and research has spread to most other universities in Britain, and has been taken up more widely in schools and colleges too. There are also major research centres in a number of universities, and other independent agencies and think-tanks providing specialist research and consultancy in particular fields or from different perspectives.

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about the direction of reform appeared to have been won conclusively by the Fabian supporters of state welfare, and the focus of academic study upon the training of state welfare workers and the empirical measurement of new welfare needs appeared to have been established as the orthodoxy for all.

The Welfare State and the Welfare Consensus

The creation of what has come to be called the welfare state in the years immediately following the Second World War remains the major development in social policy in the United Kingdom and is central to the study of it, although in fact the depiction of these reforms as a ‘welfare state’ is a controversial and contested one. It begs questions about what we mean by this and why these particular reforms should be seen as achieving it; and these questions are matters of significant debate and disagreement. Nevertheless, the post-war welfare state thesis has been widely promulgated – and for important and obvious reasons.

Part of the reason for the electoral success of the Labour government in 1945 was its manifesto commitment to introduce state provision to meet major welfare needs and to do this on a comprehensive basis, replacing the piecemeal and partial provision which had been developed in the earlier part of the century. This message had been prefigured in Beveridge’s famous report on the need for comprehensive social security reform, published in 1942 and included in Labour’s manifesto promises. Beveridge had written about the Five Giant Social Evils which had undermined British society before the war: ignorance, disease, idleness, squalor, and want. He argued that it was in the interests of all citizens to remove these evils from British society, and it was the duty of the state, as the representative body of all citizens, to act to do this.

In the years following the war, comprehensive state provision to combat each was introduced:

- state commitment to securing full employment, to combat idleness;
- public housing for all citizens to rent, to combat squalor; and
- national insurance benefits for all in need, to combat want.

All of these required the development of major state services for citizens and they resulted in a major extension of state responsibility – and state expenditure. Many of the reforms were enacted by the post-war Labour government; but despite their Fabian roots they were not supported only by Labour. Indeed, the state education plans had been introduced by a Conservative member of the wartime coalition government (R. A. Butler) in 1944, and the Conservative governments of the 1950s supported the spirit of the reforms and maintained their basic structure. This cross-party consensus on state welfare was so strong that it even acquired an acronym – Butskellism – comprised of the names of the Labour Chancellor (Gaitskell) and his Conservative successor (Butler).

For Fabian social policy, therefore, the post-war welfare state could be seen as the culmination of academic and political influence on government, after which analysis and debate focused more on the problems of how to administer and improve existing state welfare than on the question of whether these were appropriate mechanisms for the social promotion of well-being. However, this narrow Fabian focus within post-war social policy did not last for long. It was soon under challenge from other perspectives which queried both the success and the desirability of state welfare.

Theoretical Pluralism

From the 1970s onwards the focus of the study and analysis of social policy began to move beyond the narrow confines of Fabian welfare statism. This was symbolized most dramatically by a change (at the annual conference of the academic association in 1987) in the name of the subject from social administration to social policy, primarily because it was felt that administration was associated too closely with a focus upon analysis of the operation of existing welfare
The development of extensive state welfare services is incompatible with the maintenance of a successful market economy, and that this problem will get worse as welfare expands to meet more and more social needs. For them the desirability of state welfare itself is called into question.

New social movements
The failings and limitations of state welfare also came under challenge in the late twentieth century from perspectives outside the traditional Left/Right political spectrum. Most significant here was the challenge by feminism to the unequal treatment of men and women in the development and delivery of welfare services. As feminists point out, the provision of welfare is 'gendered'. Others have also challenged traditional analysis of state welfare to address a wider range of social divisions and social issues in analysing social policy. Anti-racists have pointed out that welfare services can be discriminatory and exclusive; disability campaigners have suggested that the needs of certain social groups can be systematically ignored; and environmentalists have argued that existing service provision is predicated upon forms of economic development which cannot be sustained.

The new pragmatism
The new radical voices which began to influence social policy towards the end of the twentieth century have widely varying, and sometimes mutually conflicting, implications. They challenged state welfare and the orthodoxy of Fabianism, but they were also critical of the New Left and the New Right. At the beginning of the twenty-first century these differing perspectives have resulted in a theoretical pluralism which has not only transformed academic study but has also shifted the focus of policy-making itself. The Labour governments at the beginning of the new century openly eschewed the policy programmes of the Fabian Left and the New Right, and appealed instead to a 'Third Way' for social policy combining private and public provision in a 'mixed economy' of welfare rather than a welfare state. They also argued that rather than policy being determined by theoretical or ideological preferences, it should be based on empirical evidence of
the impact of policy measures – captured in the phrase ‘what counts is what works’. The more pragmatic approach to policy development has also been embraced to some extent by the new coalition government, itself a product of political compromise; so there has been something of a return to pragmatism, rather than principle, across the theory and politics of welfare.

Emerging Issues: The Future of Social Policy

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, therefore, social policy has developed from its Fabian roots at the LSE and its support for the welfare state reforms of the early post-war years to embrace a wide range of diverse – and conflicting – theoretical debates about both the value and the success of public welfare provision and a wider conceptualization of the policy context as the product of local and global action as well as national politics. Social policy is now characterized by theoretical and geographical pluralism. It is also characterized by ‘welfare pluralism’: the recognition that state provision is only one feature of a broader mixture of differing forms and levels of welfare service – captured by the notion of a shift from the welfare state to the welfare mix. What is more, future policy direction will continue to change as will the focus of analysis and debate in academic social policy:

- There will be further moves away from state-based public services, to embrace partnerships between the state and other providers of welfare and a focus on the role of the state as a contractor, a subsidizer, or a regulator of the actions of others
- There will be further moves away from the ‘provider culture’ focus on who delivers welfare services, towards a greater emphasis upon analysis of the access to services for citizens and the transfer of power to service users through mechanisms such as personal budgets and co-production
- There will be further moves beyond the analysis of policy-making within the nation state to embrace also the importance of global forces and global actors in shaping social policy development, and to address the impact of devolution of policy-making and trends towards greater localism in the development and delivery of welfare services.

All these, and other developments, are discussed in the later chapters of this Companion.

Guide to Further Sources

There are no textbooks dealing with the history and development of the discipline of social policy, but M. Bulmer, J. Lewis and D. Piachaud (eds), *The Goals of Social Policy* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), is an interesting review and history of the work of the leading department at the London School of Economics (LSE).

The major work of Titmuss, undoubtedly the founding father of the subject, is now gathered together, with commentaries, in P. Alcock, H. Glennerster, A. Oakley and A. Sinfield (eds), *Welfare and Wellbeing* (Bristol: Policy Press, 2001).

More recently, however, a number of authors have sought to provide introductory guides to the discipline. The most well established is M. Hill and Z. Irving, *Understanding Social Policy* (8th edn, Oxford: Blackwell, 2009), which provides a service-based review of welfare policy. P. Alcock, *Social Policy in Britain* (3rd edn, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2003), takes a broader approach covering also key questions of structure, context and issues. The 4th edition is due in 2012.


The Policy Press publishes a major series of textbooks on social policy in their *Understanding Welfare* series, edited by Saul Becker.

Review Questions

1. What is the difference between social policy and social administration?

2. To what extent did the Majority and Minority reports of the 1905 Royal Commission offer different visions for the development of social policy in the twentieth century?

3. What was Butskellism, and how did it shape post war policy development in Britain?

4. To what extent did the New Left and the New Right agree that the 'welfare state' had failed?

5. What is welfare pluralism, and how accurately does it describe current social policy planning?

Visit the book companion site at www.wiley.com/go/alcock to make use of the resources designed to accompany the textbook. There you will find chapter-specific guides to further resources, including governmental, international, think-tank, pressure groups, and relevant journals sources. You will also find a glossary based on The Blackwell Dictionary of Social Policy, help sheets, and case studies, guidance on managing assignments in social policy and career advice.
Social policy is a research-informed and research-orientated academic subject. Research methods and approaches, and research evidence, form an essential part of the foundation on which the subject’s knowledge and practice base is built. Students of social policy need to have a good understanding of the wide range of approaches and methods in social policy research, including how to read critically and make judgements about the quality of published research and how to conduct their own investigations. Social policy draws from the full range of social science research approaches, quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods, and research designs, with established procedures for how to review the existing literature, and for collecting and analysing data, within an ethical framework. There is no universally superior research design or research method – they are only as good as their suitability to the research question(s) being asked.