

A job and a home: launch of the new Public Service Agreement on socially excluded adults

Transcript of remarks by
the Rt. Hon. Ed Miliband MP

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I just wanted to say a few quick things.

First of all I would like to thank all of you who have been involved in the development of the Public Service Agreement on Social Exclusion. I really want to thank our team because they have done a fantastic job in working at it over a long period of time. What I know from talking to them and from talking to some of you, is that this could never have happened without the engagement and involvement of all of you. It has been a long process. I was just talking to some people from Warwick Business School who were involved in some of the work that we are doing and they were a great advert for the Social Exclusion Task Force: they said that when they were promised to be called back, the call always came and they have had good engagement. So if I could just start by thanking you for your involvement.

The second thing is just to say something about the background to this, as far as I see it.

If you think about the last ten years, we have made progress in a whole number of areas – I won't give you the list – but the approach has been what we called in the Treasury, when Gus O'Donnell and I were there, progressive universalism. That is, universal services, but progressive because the most goes to those who need it most.

But I suppose what we have learned even more over the last 10 years, although we knew some of this at the beginning, is that even where you target services at

the disadvantaged, some people are going to fall through the net. Our Public Services Agreement speaks to that, focussing on care leavers, ex-offenders, those with learning disabilities, and those with mental health issues, and looking at their employment and housing situation. Yes, universal services in their own silos are very important; yes, there is a targeted element to a lot of those things and Sure Start is one example; but on top of that, you need an extra focus on disadvantage and on targeting disadvantage.

And I think what is important about the PSA is that again, it reflects the lessons that we see in relation to targets and objectives over the last ten years, which is that it needs to be cross-government. And this is owned, not just by the Cabinet Office, but by departments across Whitehall.

The next three years will test out what ownership means, but I think it is important to say that it is not just people ticking a box, it is also people reflecting on their objectives for their own departments.

In a sign of its significance, it is one of only thirty the Public Service Agreements. It is one of the top 30 priorities of the Government, when you have got the whole range of domestic and foreign policy.

So that is, in a way, the good news.

I think the challenging news is that we are under no illusions that we have got to this point, having agreed our objective, but now is the really hard part: actually delivering it and really making a difference.

I was talking to someone earlier about the process that local government is going through whereby they have to get from 198 indicators, all of which are important, down to 35. My first pitch to you who are outside Government is please join us in working to get local authorities to make this one of the 35 that they choose as a priority. We need local authorities to sign up to this being a priority for them.

The good thing about this is that we know the local authorities where this needs to be a priority because of the work we have done with people in this room. Because of the work we have done within Government, we know where we need to make progress with particular local authorities. And that is why we will be going round the country talking to local authorities and targeting those in particular where we are behind. But again, we need your support. We want to share that information with you and work with you as we do that.

I know – and I'm very much a latecomer to this process – but I know from having talked to Naomi and the task force how important the advisory group has been. We want to carry that conversation on. This is not going to be a process which ends now and we then retreat into our shells and come back in three years and

say we've either met the objectives or we haven't met the objectives. We want this to be an ongoing process and we will devise ways of making that happen.

The only other thing I would say is that this is just part of what the Social Exclusion Task Force is doing. It is a very important part but I think there are lots of incredibly exciting things going on in the task force:

A big one, looking forward, we can see social exclusion as embedded in a wider context of the life chances of people across our society, particularly at the bottom of our society;

Their work on the Families At Risk Review, some of which people here will have been involved in;

And they are continuing work on some of the knotty problems that our society faces.

We want to carry on working with you not just in this area, but across the piece.

The final thing to say is thank you very much for your involvement and, as I say, now the hard part begins. Let's make the PSA happen.

Thank you very much.