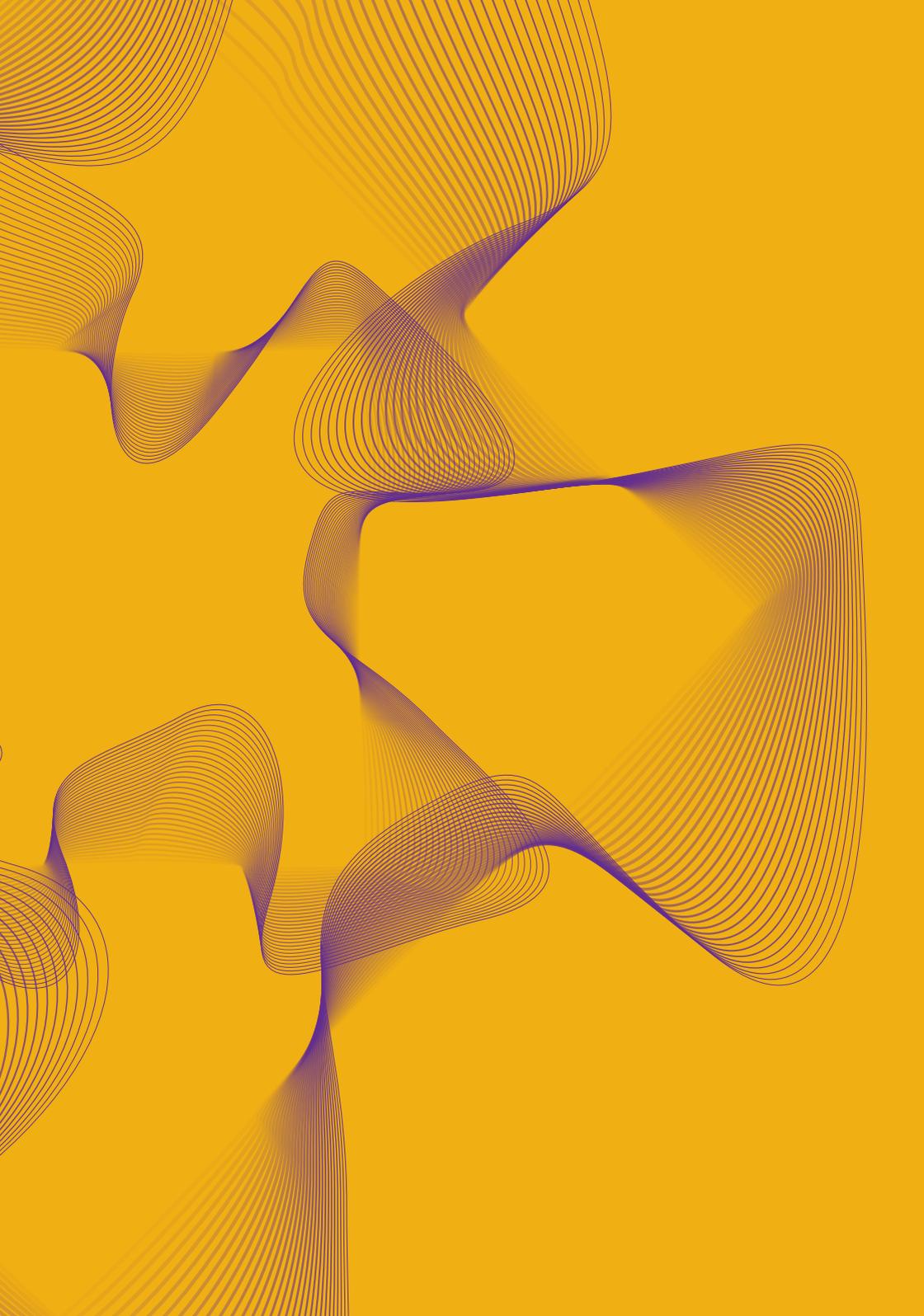


Disposable fashion –  
an environmental  
problem



# Policy Idol 2019

*The finalists' entries*



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**BETHANY ELDER & SIFAN ZHENG**  
***TACKLING PERIOD POVERTY IN THE UK***

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THE  
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# Policy Idol 2019

#policyidol

E·S·R·C  
ECONOMIC  
& SOCIAL  
RESEARCH  
COUNCIL





# Preface

Policy Idol at King's College London is a showcase for innovative thinking, addressing the challenges of today and the future. 2019 was the fifth year of the policy pitching competition, and as ever our students shared their inspiring, practical and imaginative ideas to solving key societal issues. Their enthusiasm and determination to make the world a better place was truly infectious.

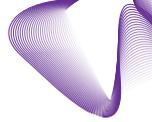
Each competitor first pitches their policy idea in just three minutes to a panel of high-profile judges from the worlds of academia, media and industry in a series of heats. The pitches with the most potential, go through to the final. Each finalist receives bespoke training in policy communications and a mentor from the Policy Institute to give them guidance on strengthening the analysis of their idea. A subject area specialist from across King's community also gives tailored advice on their chosen topic.



The standard of the pitches was extremely high and competition was tough, so congratulations are due to all those who made it to the final.

Hosted by BBC Home Editor Mark Easton, the grand final is held in front of a live audience and is the focal point of the competition. This year our talented finalists pitched to a panel of prestigious judges, including Dame Louise Casey, Chair of the Institute of Global Homelessness, Bobby Duffy, Director of the Policy Institute, Bronwen Maddox, Director of the Institute for Government, Trevor Phillips, former Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission and Lord David Willetts, Chair of the Resolution Foundation and former Minister for Universities and Science. Former Home Secretary, Charles Clarke, presented the awards to the finalists.

The standard of the pitches was extremely high and competition was tough, so congratulations are due to all those who made it to the final. Particular praise must go to Cristina Zheng Ji, who was the overall winner of Policy Idol 2019 for her pitch to make the fashion industry more sustainable through traffic-light labelling.



Alongside the overall winner, standout performances picked up runner-up prizes, including Ratidzo Chinyuku who won the pitch with the most substance for her proposal to scrap Home Office fees for child dependents. Robert Adderley, presenting a policy to install telematics in cars, won pitch with the most style. The audience also got to select their favourite, choosing a community renewable energy project pitched by Florian Eblenkamp, Aura Rivera and Matias Vergara Herrera.

You can read these policy proposals, as well as those from the other finalists, in this publication. The finalists of Policy Idol 2019 really were the pick of the crop from some of the best entries we've had in the competition yet. Throughout every stage of Policy Idol 2019, the quality of ideas and enthusiasm of pitchers have been a delight to see. Every single policy pitch our students came up with has been uplifting and inspiring, and the passion and rigour that they brought to the task fills me with confidence that the next generation will be well-equipped to take on the societal challenges of the future.

I hope you enjoy reading these ideas as much as I enjoyed judging them.

Professor Bobby Duffy, Director of the Policy Institute,  
King's College London

# THE POLICY INSTITUTE

*Solving society's challenges  
with evidence and expertise*

♥ *Developing*



## **Cristina Zheng Ji**

---

*Raising awareness of the  
environmental impact of clothes  
production*

Be aware  
of  
What you Wear

Christina  
Zheng



**Overall winner  
Policy Idol 2019**



## Raising awareness of the environmental impact of clothes production

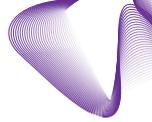
The fashion industry has become the second most polluting industry in the world after oil production.<sup>1</sup> It contributes to around 10 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions<sup>2</sup> due to its extensive supply chains and energy intensive production, which is higher than the aviation and shipping industries combined.<sup>3</sup> Disposable fashion is also growing fast. As the middle classes in developing countries expand, the desire to stay ahead of the latest trends on the catwalk grows, further exacerbating the situation.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, people are becoming more and more aware of the importance of sustainability and altering their consumer choices accordingly. And yet, information about the environmental impact of clothes is still not easily available.

For instance, when it comes to buying a pair of jeans, consumers can make choices on the brand, price and style. But what if we, as consumers, also wish to consider the environmental impact of producing different items of clothing? How do we know which is the greener choice?

We need more information – a nudge in the right direction to help make better decisions. A successful example of nudging is the familiar traffic light labelling system, which provides nutritional information in food at a glance. Red is a warning to avoid consumption, yellow gives a pass – although it would be best to moderate intake, and green signals “go for it!”.

My policy idea is to raise awareness of the impact of clothes on the planet by creating a labelling system highlighting the environmental costs. The fashion industry could borrow the colour code from the food industry: red for the highest environmental risk through to green for the lowest, and apply it to four categories of impact: water use, energy use, biodegradability and recyclability.



So how would this work in practice? Growing just one kilo of cotton needed to make a brand-new pair of jeans requires around 100,000 litres of water (equivalent to what an individual would drink over 10 years).<sup>5</sup> We would mark this red on the label. Growing cotton also uses a lot of pesticides causing high water pollution,<sup>6</sup> hence again red – unless you choose organic cotton. Depending on the dye used, cotton is biodegradable, therefore some jeans would score green on decomposing. If manufacturers also offered to recycle the jeans afterwards then this would score green. Finally, jeans could score yellow or green on energy use if the energy used in production came from renewable sources. Adding this convenient and easy to read labelling system to the tags of our clothes would make their environmental impact more visible and accessible to everybody.

Clearly, this is a subject for further discussion. My proposal makes use of a successful strategy from the food industry and could be an important first step in finding solutions that make green choices more convenient and easier for consumers.

Being more aware of our choices empowers us as consumers, and this brings many benefits. Consumers are becoming increasingly more aware<sup>7</sup> of supply chain practices in the fashion industry, which implies that a change in our purchasing behaviour can translate into a change in the manufacturer's behaviour.<sup>8</sup> The take-make-dispose model leads to an economic value loss of over \$500 billion per year.<sup>9</sup> As rising numbers of people are interested in more sustainable solutions,<sup>10</sup> moving towards green initiatives would not only serve as an opportunity for differentiation (and so offering a commercial advantage) for those fashion companies who embrace it, it would also allow the industry as a whole to benefit as it takes on a more environmentally responsible light.

More transparent information means that those who already want to make a sustainable choice will be able to do so. For those with less awareness of green issues, this labelling system could nudge them towards choosing the more



sustainable option, for example, when undecided between two pairs of jeans.

Providing environmental information on our clothing labels could ultimately lead to society rethinking and reducing the overconsumption of clothing, and this would be one of the greatest benefits of the scheme to our planet.

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# #policyidol





## **Ratidzo Chinyuku**

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*Scrap Home Office fees for child dependents*



CUT  
CHILD  
FEES

Ratidzo  
Chinyuku



26



**Runner-up (substance)**



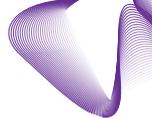
## Scrap Home Office fees for child dependents

Immigration costs the Home Office around £1.75 billion per annum, approximately half of which is recovered through application fees and charges for the services they provide. A typical application for Indefinite Leave to Remain (ILR) costs £2,349 per individual. Costs are said to be governed by the “expenditure of the previous years”<sup>1</sup> and are “set above the cost of delivery, to reflect the value of the product”.<sup>2</sup> By the Home Office’s own estimations, a typical application attains an average processing fee of £327, which means that these applications currently boast profits exceeding 500 per cent. Although the classifications differ, the UK charges significantly higher fees and pathways to settlement when compared to other EU member states.<sup>3</sup>

For an average family of two parents and two child dependents, an application for ILR costs £9,556. This value increases significantly when legal counsel is taken into consideration. Assuming that the average household has a disposable income of £28,000 per annum,<sup>4</sup> the route to settlement is unattainable for many migrant families, which means that many parents choose to omit their children when it comes to formalising immigration statuses.

The Home Office fee waiver for human rights-based applications can help dependents who are either destitute or at risk of becoming destitute.<sup>5</sup> However, applicants for ILR are not eligible under this policy, meaning there is no viable assistance for parents unable to afford to pay for their children. This means child dependents grow up as “irregular” migrants, raising considerable difficulties for them at a later stage in life, in addition to the societal problems caused.

Undocumented migrants pose a significant political and social challenge. The personal impact for undocumented dependents results in a loss of identity and belonging and restrictions around accessing tertiary education in addition to some public resources and confinement to an informal or illegal economy. The wider societal implications are felt



in the labour market, where sectors which face recruitment challenges are unable to make use of migrants' skills. They're also felt in the economy where the informal economy results in tax losses to the exchequer. Finally, they impact society in general where a disconnected "shadow" population evolves, undermining social cohesion.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that civilised governments cannot turn a blind eye to this population, particularly where child dependents who, due to no fault of their own, find themselves without formalised immigration status in a country they thought was their home.

Although objective policies will struggle to feasibly minimise this impact on a large scale, some changes could be made to improve the situation. For example, this could include reducing the number of future irregular immigrants by cutting Home Office fees for child dependents.

This policy has the potential to be cost-neutral. Firstly, the loss of formal revenue as detailed above in the cost to the economy, negates the purported benefit derived from applicant fees. Additionally, barring talented individuals to accessing higher education and subsequently high skilled employment, contributes to a loss of productivity and benefit for local communities, meaning that irregular immigration must be compensated through public expenditure, rather than making the best use of talent. Thus, by statistical analysis, we can predict that this policy would help up to 20,000 child dependents, benefitting both the individuals themselves and society as a whole.

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- Baroness... , Chair and Science...

Along with the judges, you will...

...and the...

...and the...



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## **Robert Adderley**

---

*The road to safer highways:  
telematics in every vehicle*



# 5

People die every day  
on Britain's Roads



# Runner-up (style)



## The road to safer highways: telematics in every vehicle

Britain pays an intolerably high price for its unsafe roads. Every year 1,800 people are killed, 28,000 seriously injured<sup>1</sup> and £20 billion lost to vehicle accidents.<sup>2</sup>

But, as a country, we seem to have all but resigned ourselves to this terrible cost. When five people died in a horrific terror attack on Westminster in 2017, we were shocked and appalled. And yet, we forget that the same number die every single day in road accidents.

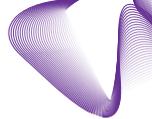
This complacency is costing lives. Before 2010, we saw deaths fall year after year;<sup>3</sup> but this decade of progress has shuddered to a complete halt, and we need radical ideas to move us forward.

My proposal is to make the installation of telematics devices mandatory in all new vehicles. These devices (often called “black boxes”) contain a GPS tracker and an accelerometer. This means that they can record every aspect of your driving behaviour, from how you turn corners, to your braking and fuel efficiency.

They are particularly good at spotting bad habits like speeding and reckless driving – exactly the sort of behaviour that could result in you losing control of your vehicle,<sup>4</sup> which is the number one contributing factor in fatal crashes.<sup>5</sup>

Telematics devices can prevent these crashes by alerting drivers to their bad habits and encouraging better behaviour – and drivers do listen! Research undertaken by the European Commission has shown that companies which fit telematics to their fleets record up to 30 per cent less crashes than those that don’t, meaning the benefits outweigh the costs nearly 20 times over.<sup>6</sup>

So, why should the government make the installation of these devices mandatory? First of all, whilst some insurers



are already offering telematics – few motorists have taken up the offer. Only about one million<sup>7</sup> of Britain's 31 million<sup>8</sup> cars have them installed; a dire uptake rate of only three per cent. Secondly, by making the scheme government-run we can achieve so much more than if we leave it to the private sector.

Telematics boxes could detect impairments or even age-related deterioration in the performance of older drivers. They could also be configured to automatically alert the emergency services when they detect a serious crash.

The government could also benefit. Telematics boxes would be a valuable source of hard evidence for crash investigators. Anonymised data from all the boxes could be collected and analysed centrally to reveal exactly how our roads are being used.

This could provide enormous insights. Problems with new cars could be identified remotely; near-misses that would otherwise go unrecorded would be logged, and transport officials would gain detailed insights into dangerous roads and junctions.

Of course, this aspect of the policy raises important privacy concerns. Can citizens trust the government to keep information about their activities safe? I would allay these concerns by making the following observations:

First, implementing this policy would require the passage of new primary legislation through parliament. The Act could proscribe using the data for punitive purposes or to identify individuals and could set up powerful oversight bodies, which would monitor how the data is used and punish government agencies for any infringements.

Second, it should be pointed out that the state already knows where you've driven. Every time you drive past one of Britain's 11,000 Automatic Number Plate Recognition Cameras,<sup>9</sup> your activity is logged and kept on a database for up to two years.



Finally, it's important to bear in mind that the public has accepted much more intrusive programmes in the past. Despite Snowden's revelations, only a quarter of people believe that efforts to protect national security undermine personal privacy.<sup>10</sup>

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**Policy  
Idol  
2019**





**Florian Eblenkamp,  
Aura Rivera Arías &  
Matías Vergara Herrera**

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*Communergy: Decentralising  
renewable energy production*





**Winners**  
**Audience Prize**



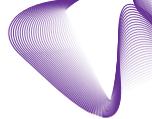
## Communergy: Decentralising renewable energy production

Climate Change is arguably one of the greatest challenges of our times. This has been recognised by policymakers and citizens alike, resulting in an internationally agreed goal of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees by 2100, as set out in the Paris Agreement. But achieving this will require drastic measures. The United Nations Independent Panel on Climate Change report from 2018 states that the world economy must be decarbonised by 2050 to achieve this goal.<sup>1</sup> This ambitious task seems even more unfeasible, considering that global CO<sup>2</sup> emissions were the highest ever recorded in 2018, despite years of technological advances and political promises to facilitate transition to a carbon neutral world.<sup>2</sup>

Individuals are aware of the problems caused by climate change. Surveys have shown that concern about the existence, causes and consequences of global warming is equally distributed amongst all age groups in the UK.<sup>3</sup> Despite this, action taken by individuals is not going to produce a meaningful contribution to the fight on climate change in enough time. A more structured approach is required to facilitate decarbonisation.

During the last decade, 25 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions came from electricity and heat production.<sup>4</sup> The energy sector is therefore crucial in the fight against climate change and provides the starting point for this proposed policy. To find a solution we need to understand energy production models. Energy systems are separated into sub-sectors, such as distribution and generation, with the latter being generally highly centralised<sup>5</sup> and mainly derived from fossil fuels.<sup>6</sup>

To change the current energy production model in one go would not be economically or technically feasible. Rather a gradual move towards renewable smaller sub-systems would be a more manageable way of making the



transition to decarbonised energy production a reality. Our policy would enable this kind of transition by promoting community-based energy generation,<sup>7</sup> which we would call Communergy. It would enable increased energy generation from renewable sources whilst also promoting local engagement with the environment and cutting down fossil fuel consumption.

Since renewable energy production usually requires high levels of up-front capital expenditure, communities would need to have access to low-cost capital.<sup>8</sup> One way to provide this is through the green bond market. Green bonds are fixed income securities issued to finance investments with environmental or climate-related benefits.<sup>9</sup> In recent years, there has been a rapid growth in this area and municipal bonds have become a key part.<sup>10</sup>

In order to access this market, communities would need help developing their own energy projects, which is why Communergy would provide expertise from universities and energy agencies on technical issues to guarantee that the proposals put forward by communities were economically, socially and environmentally feasible. The projects with good potential would be signed off by experts, giving communities the green light to go ahead and seek financial resources. The government would provide financial back-up for the schemes.

Communergy is a coordinated state effort to make sure that those communities who want – and can – produce their own renewable energy, have the necessary technical and financial aid to contribute to the urgent fight against climate change.

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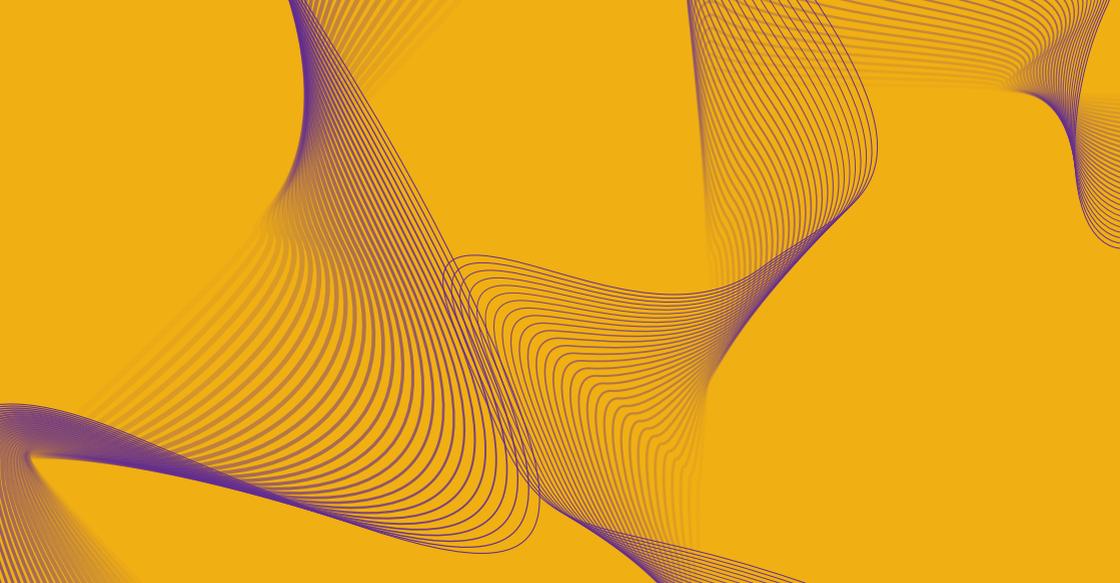
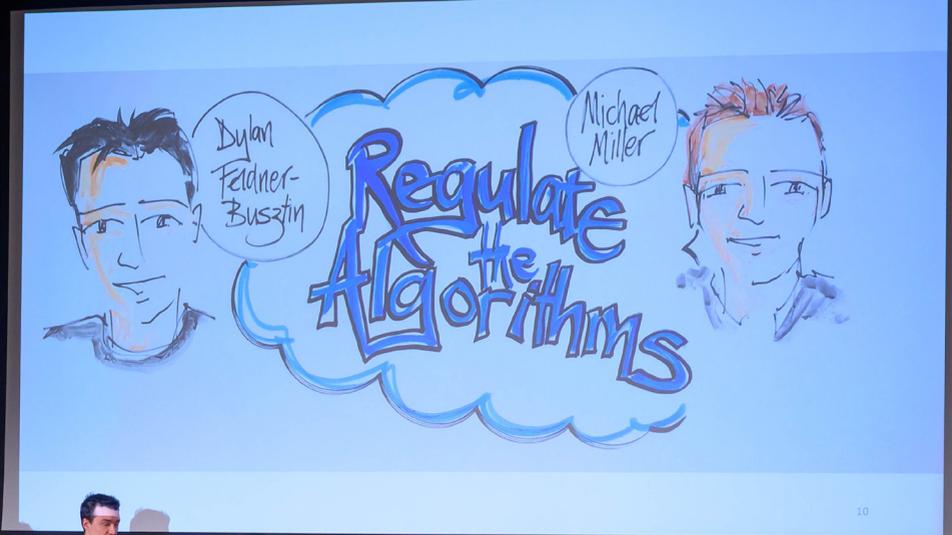


## **Dylan Feldner–Busztin & Michael Miller**

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*Guiding the evolution of intelligence:  
government policy for the beneficial  
use of AI*





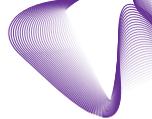


## Guiding the evolution of intelligence: Government policy for the beneficial use of AI

Artificial Intelligence (AI) represents the greatest but also the most dangerous opportunity in human history. The mission of Google DeepMind is “solving intelligence and then using that to solve everything else”.<sup>1</sup> Once we have “solved intelligence”, every other conceivable problem we are facing as individuals, governments and as a species becomes substantially easier. This lends AI a certain economic and scientific inevitability; as Andrew Ng states, “AI is the new electricity” and like electricity, no company or country can hope to compete if they don’t have it.<sup>2</sup> Halting the advance would be tantamount to a willing continuation of the suffering of billions, but such rewards rarely come without considerable risk, and within this paradigm it is imperative that we address how AI is controlled.

Many researchers, lawmakers, scientists and ethicists have recognised the insidious danger that unregulated proliferation of artificially intelligent systems pose to the modern world.<sup>3</sup> To date, little has been done to directly address this in UK policy. Current policymaking in this area comprises the AI Sector Deal, an initiative designed to promote AI development across academic institutions and technology companies.<sup>4</sup> This is done mostly through the allocation of £1 billion for research and organisational restructuring, which will likely return billions of pounds to the UK economy. However, we believe that these reforms need to be accompanied by a governance framework to ensure the safe and trustworthy development of AI.

An AI race now complements the global arms race – whoever is at the forefront of developing AI could become the dominant superpower. Many nations are competing in this race, likely ignoring what has been advocated by safety engineering, including through cutting corners, rash judgements, botched experiments and moral ambiguity. It is imperative that the UK and other countries lead by example



and globally promote AI development in tandem with AI safety research.

AI development could for example learn from initiatives such as the Apollo moon missions.<sup>5</sup> The safety and survival of the astronauts embarking on the mission were at the forefront of the development process. Teams were constantly reminded that the brightest and best astronauts would be effectively strapped to an explosion and sent up into space to a destination where no one could physically help them. This meant that the principles of safety engineering were followed throughout the development of the technology.

In stark contrast, when it comes to AI we have witnessed full-scale security breaches, such as the Cambridge Analytica scandal,<sup>6</sup> which highlights the inability of governments to troubleshoot or anticipate the dangers that technology poses. Learning on a mistake-first basis may work with inventions such as motorised vehicles, but this is an inappropriate strategy for technologies that form the fabric of an information economy. It cannot be overemphasised how insidious it is to build the future of our societies on technologies with no safety engineering, value-alignment, contingency foresight or legal culpability. Such technologies can fall into the hands of “digital gangsters”, as the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport has previously called Facebook and other technology corporates.

To combat the risks, we propose a body of Chartered Ethical Technologists to facilitate the incorporation of safety engineering principles and social responsibility as a central aspect of the AI Sector Deal. This body would bring together AI developers, safety researchers, social scientists, policymakers, legal experts and others into an evolving network to refine these ideas, implement regulation and ensure the mutual interest of the industry and public. This is very much a meta-solution to this difficult problem, as the issue is too complex to solve with one simple implementation. Therefore, such a body will likely need to function within a long-term framework and adapt to

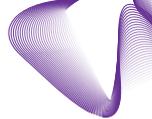


an ever accelerating, technology-driven economy and an increasingly complex geopolitical situation.

It is anticipated that many existing institutions and initiatives such as the Ethical Machine,<sup>7</sup> Google DeepMind,<sup>8</sup> Asilomar Principles<sup>9</sup> and chartered legal bodies would be receptive to this kind of umbrella organisation, which brings together earlier disparate attempts at finding a solution. Similarly, there are currently schemes leading the way in terms of providing qualifications for ethical technologists which could help to establish a Chartered Body, such as the UKRI CDT Safe and Trusted Artificial Intelligence PhD programme, hosted by King's College London and Imperial College London,<sup>10</sup> and the 80,000 Hours, Effective Altruism and Future of Humanity Institute nexus at Oxford University.<sup>11</sup> This body of Chartered Ethical Technologists would be instrumental in engendering professionalism, social responsibility and providing guidance for all working in AI.

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# Emilie Gachon & Emilie Steinmark

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*A better system for parental leave*

# A financially viable policy that fights the gender pay gap

## 7%

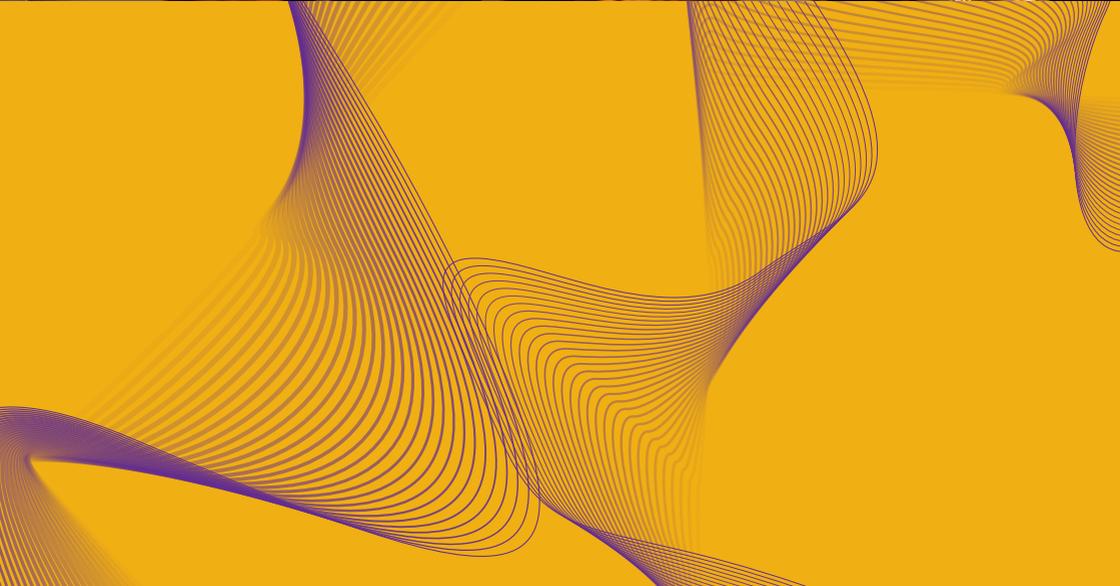
increase in  
mum's earnings  
long-term per  
month dad takes  
of leave

## £6K

potential savings  
in child-care costs  
by caring for child  
another 6 months

Source: Institute of Labor Market Policy Evaluation, 2010 / "Closing the Gender Gap: Act Now" report, OECD, 2012

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## A better system for parental leave

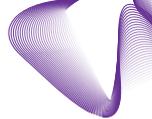
Parental leave in the UK is old-fashioned and disproportionate. The amount of benefit parents receive is amongst the lowest in the OECD,<sup>1</sup> and lower-income parents have even further unequal access to paid leave.<sup>2</sup> A complete overhaul is desperately needed.

Currently mothers are only entitled to six weeks leave at 90 per cent of pay. The remaining weeks are either compensated well below the living wage at £145 a week for 33 weeks or not at all for 13 weeks. Fathers have it even worse, being entitled to only two weeks at £145. An attempt was made to modernise the system in 2015 with the introduction of Shared Statutory Parental Pay, which gave parents 37 weeks to share between them, but due to the meagre amount received, it doesn't make financial sense for many families. Uptake is estimated to be as low as two per cent.<sup>3</sup>

As it is only mothers who receive properly paid leave, so they end up being the parent responsible for most of the child-rearing in the family, not only in the first year but throughout parenthood. Consequently, women face an average drop of 20 per cent in long-term earnings when they become parents, whilst it doesn't really affect men.<sup>4</sup> And it gets worse the more children you have – with a 10 per cent cut to a mother's salary every time she has a child. This is a main contributor to the gender pay gap which in the UK is still at 19 per cent.<sup>5</sup>

We suggest a new parental leave system that gives families real choice over how to raise their children. It would be financially beneficial for both parents and society. It would provide parents with four months of use-it-or-lose-it leave at 90 per cent pay each, plus an additional four months to share between them.

The first beneficiaries would be the children. By extending the time that parents can afford to go on leave, it gives mothers and fathers the choice to stay home longer with



their children. This is important for health reasons, as mothers could then breastfeed for the recommended six months,<sup>6</sup> but it also comes with educational benefits, as research has shown that giving fathers longer leave results in children performing better in cognitive tests<sup>7</sup> and then later, in improved school performance.<sup>8</sup>

This policy would be a game-changer for fathers. The choice to spend time with your baby, investing in your family should not just be reserved for the most well-off. There is evidence to suggest longer paternity leave could help to prevent family breakdowns – Swedish couples are 30 per cent less likely to separate if the father takes leave,<sup>9</sup> if they do separate, fathers stay more involved with their children.<sup>10</sup>

Finally, this policy is financially viable for families and tackles the gender pay gap. Per month of leave that fathers take, Swedish data suggests that mothers' long-term earnings increase by 6.7 per cent,<sup>11</sup> combatting the baby penalty. Danish evidence shows that this contributes to an overall increase in household income.<sup>12</sup> On top of this, there are upfront savings of £6,000-8,000 in childcare costs.<sup>13</sup>

This policy would benefit society as a whole – a 2012 OECD report found that if UK women returned to work at the same rate as men, GDP could rise by 10 per cent by 2030.<sup>14</sup> Former Managing Director and Chairwoman of the IMF, Christine Lagarde, echoed this during a statement when she shared that helping women return to work after becoming mothers could boost the economy.<sup>15</sup> Long paternity leave could lead to more equal child-rearing, helping to make this a reality for mothers.

Naturally, this policy will require some initial investment. If British fathers took their paternity leave at the same rate as Swedish fathers (just under 30 per cent) this policy would cost £3.8 billion (assuming everyone is eligible). However, evidence suggests the uptake would be gradual<sup>16</sup> and the actual figure is likely to be much lower.



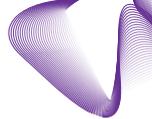
There are a range of options for financing this system – both Labour and the Liberal Democrats have suggested changes to the income tax system, or corporation tax, either of which would more than cover the costs.<sup>17,18</sup>

Importantly, as women start returning to work in higher numbers and parents can share child-rearing responsibilities, the bill would shrink as the extra tax revenue begins to compensate.

We think this would be a great opportunity for the UK to lead the way on modern, fit-for-purpose family policy, not just in Europe but globally. The evidence is there, it's time we followed it.

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## **Paul-Enguerrand Fady**

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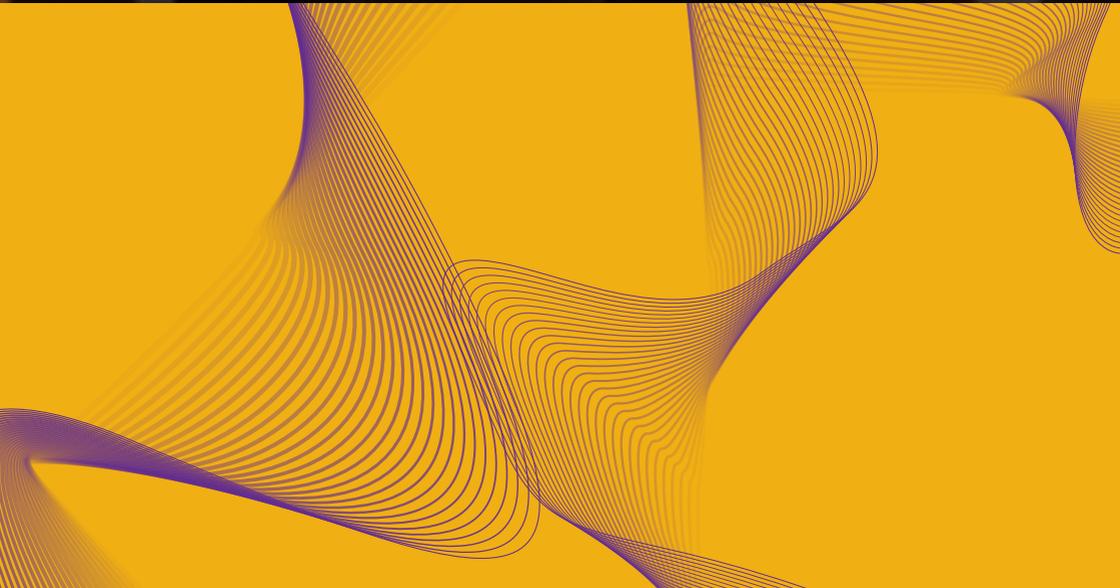
*The case against  
antimicrobial soap*



# Policy Idol 2019

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## The case against antimicrobial soap

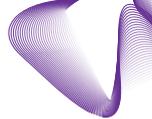
Almost immediately after Alexander Fleming won the Nobel Prize for his discovery of penicillin, he used a *New York Times* interview to share his concerns that penicillin could be misused, such that the bacteria it was supposed to kill would become “resistant” to treatment.<sup>1</sup>

His fears were well-founded. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a ubiquitous and lethal reality, which leads to untreatable infections by so-called “superbugs”. These resistant infections are responsible for killing some 700,000 people per year – the vast majority of whom are children.<sup>2</sup> This figure is set to rise to ten million deaths per year by 2050; in addition the cumulative GDP loss worldwide from AMR will amount to more than 100 trillion US dollars.<sup>3</sup>

The primary driver of AMR is the misuse of antimicrobial products. This occurs in many aspects of our lives, most notably agriculture which is responsible for 80 per cent of antimicrobial compound consumption worldwide.<sup>4</sup> Clinical misuse from suboptimal prescribing practices, in other words overprescribing by medical professionals, is also a major contributor to the development of AMR.<sup>5</sup>

Usually, controlling these two uses of antimicrobials is considered the be-all and end-all of antimicrobial stewardship – ie responsible use of these compounds. However, we now have high-quality evidence from a number of sources, including Public Health England’s National Infection Service, showing that exposing bacteria to the kinds of antimicrobials (antiseptics) found in hand gels and soaps, can actually lead to this bacteria acquiring resistance to unrelated antibiotics used clinically.<sup>6-8</sup> This is known as “cross-resistance.”

It’s a terrifying prospect. In the wake of the 2009 Swine Flu outbreak, we revelled in the sense of safety projected by antiseptic hand gel distributors. We now know that continuous exposure to certain antiseptics, with the exception of ethanol, leads to cross-resistance in bacteria.



This means that we've all been unwittingly contributing to the rapid rise in AMR for years.

Antiseptic-laden products such as soaps and hand washes are sold freely to the public. But there is no public health advantage to adding antimicrobials to soap – if you can chase away an animal intruding on your lawn, why shoot it dead before doing so? The same logic applies to bacteria – why add a compound which kills them when the product already physically removes them from a surface? Public education campaigns should reflect this and have national prominence.

My policy package would include a series of regulatory and educational measures to eliminate or mitigate the contribution of consumer antimicrobial products to the increase in AMR. These include:

**Banning the sale of non-ethanol-based hand washes to the public.**

All products including those with minute concentrations of antimicrobials would be banned. Ethanol does not drive cross-resistance to antibiotics so would provide a safe alternative.

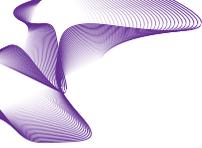
**Ban the over-the-counter and commercial sale of antibacterial soaps entirely.**

These exacerbate the scale of antimicrobial resistance while not serving any real purpose.

**Repurpose handwash distributors in non-clinical public spaces to use only ethanol-based products.**

**Promote proper hand hygiene and antimicrobial stewardship much more extensively to the public, highlighting the damages of misusing antimicrobials.**

Current global policy surrounding this issue verges on non-existent. There has been almost no concrete action taken anywhere in the world to eliminate antimicrobials from



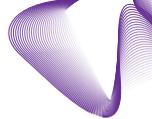
consumer products aside from food; one exception being the US Food and Drug Administration banning a few antiseptics based on public perception of toxicity.<sup>9</sup> This was an isolated decision, based on public fears of “toxic chemicals” rather than on a sound understanding of antibiotic cross-resistance. This is a huge opportunity for the UK to enact policies and lead the way to good antimicrobial stewardship.

The fact that this discovery is only recent goes part of the way towards explaining why nothing has yet been done; public apathy and a dearth of scientists in policymaking goes the rest of the way. The public are indifferent, and policymakers do not engage with scientific issues in the way they do with socio-political issues. This reflects our current political climate which looks for quick-fix, short-term solutions to issues that have high public appeal. The tragic irony is that the biggest socio-political issues are, in fact, scientific, including climate change, air pollution and indeed AMR.

It has been said that 2019 will be the year we all have an acquaintance with a resistant infection.<sup>10</sup> Will the UK Government and policymakers position themselves and the country as leaders in this field, engage proactively, and act now? Or will 2029 be the year we all lose an acquaintance to such an infection?

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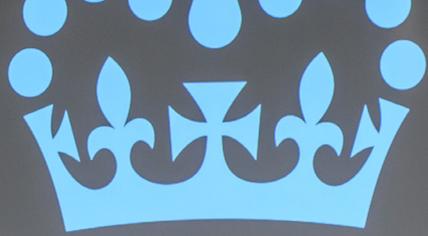


# Daphne Friedrich

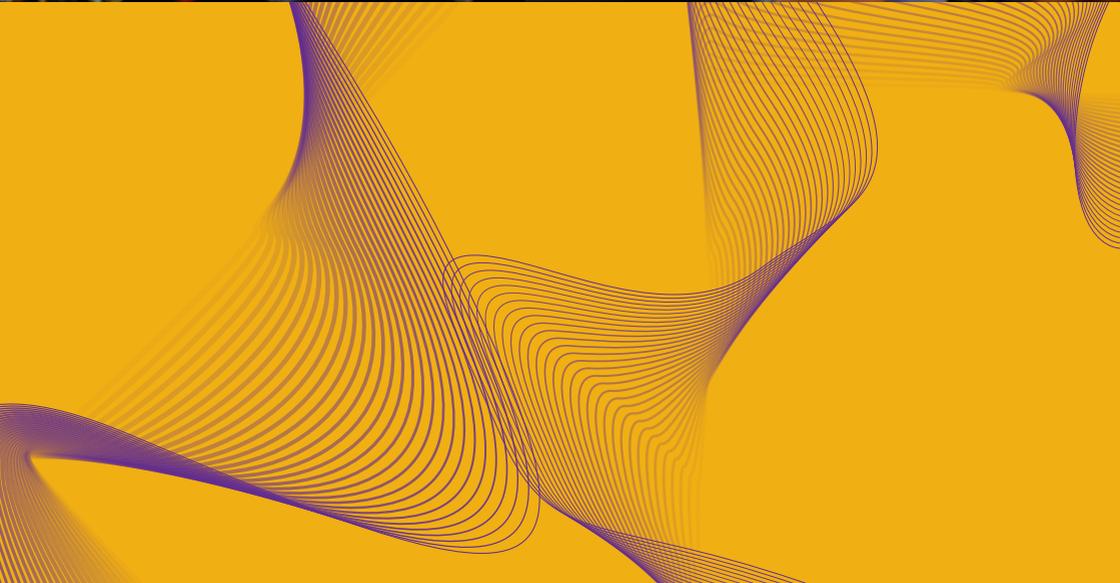
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*Tackling the digital divide*





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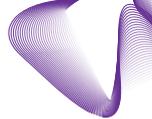
## Tackling the digital divide

The “digital divide” is the gap between those who have access to modern information and communication technology, such as the internet, and those who don’t.<sup>1</sup> As many as eight million people in the UK do not use the internet and 90 per cent of them suffer from other kinds of economic or social disadvantages.<sup>2</sup> They are more likely to be in the lowest income bracket and/or be disabled with long-standing health conditions.<sup>3</sup> Since many day-to-day activities such as communication, banking, shopping and government services are moving to online platforms, the digital divide could further aggravate existing inequalities.<sup>4</sup>

The internet has the potential to bring about positive change to people’s lives. It can facilitate access to cheaper goods, better services, and specialised support for the elderly, incapacitated or lower-income individuals living in rural areas.<sup>5</sup> Thus, if individuals can seize the opportunities offered by the internet, it can play a role in reducing inequalities of access rather than widening existing gaps.

Notwithstanding the benefits of internet connectivity, the existing services available to people such as access to computers in local libraries and digital courses provided by community centres and charities, are not doing enough to bridge the gap.<sup>6</sup> While some make an informed choice to stay offline, many people hesitate for various reasons. They could be unaware of the benefits of the internet in their lives or worry that new technology is out of their comfort zone, so they prefer not to engage with it.<sup>7</sup>

To tackle this problem, we need to target the people currently excluded from the internet in a way that appeals to them. For example, the best way to engage especially, but not exclusively, older people is through positive experiences and winning conversations.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, a community-based volunteering scheme may help to connect existing local resources with excluded individuals.

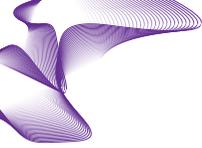


Local community centres are well-placed to provide the necessary infrastructure, organisation and coordination for volunteers. However, community centres may not be ideally placed to reach the excluded individuals. Instead, GP surgeries, hospital wards and discharge lounges are more promising points of contact for an initial approach, since for a variety of reasons digitally excluded individuals tend to be in poorer health than the average internet user.

Volunteers should be young individuals interested in working in the medical, care or social professions. Participating in such a programme would be attractive to volunteers as it would allow them to use modern technology and share their knowledge on basic skills, whilst interacting across generations, backgrounds and cultures. Elderly individuals would feel valued and included by the support they received. Moreover, intergenerational exchanges, if conducted reciprocally can further solidarity and social cohesion in the community, which may bridge more than just the digital division, especially in times of ever loosening family structures.<sup>9</sup>

To be a success, the project would need to be tested and refined with a pilot in a digitally deprived community. The scheme would focus on introducing individuals to the advantages of online connectivity through topics that are relevant to the target group. For example, elderly people tend to use the internet to keep in touch with family or to claim their pension.<sup>10</sup> Giving non-digital savvy individuals a positive experience of the internet could lead to increased confidence and a new openness to learning more.

Moreover, elderly and sick individuals often suffer from social isolation and exclusion. While online communities of people with similar conditions and concerns may not replace face-to-face interactions, they could nonetheless mitigate against feelings of loneliness and isolation,<sup>11</sup> which is even more important considering that people are living for longer than ever.<sup>12</sup>



Technological change drives progress. But many people have been left behind in the digital revolution, in the same way they have been left behind by society and policymakers. Digital and social exclusion can be battled together, reducing inequality and creating greater autonomy amongst vulnerable groups, thereby sustainably closing an important gap in our divided society.

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## **Hollie Hamblett & Eleanor Tack**

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*Tackle the NHS staff shortage with refugee doctors*





Eleanor Tack

# Addressing the health staff shortage

Hollie Hamblett



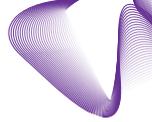


## Tackle the NHS staff shortage with refugee doctors

The NHS employs over a million staff and yet it is in crisis. According to the third annual NHS Workforce Trends Report, the number of employees is falling and the situation deteriorating. There are currently over 100,000 staff vacancies that the NHS is unable to fill, including a shortage of 10,000 doctors and 41,000 nurses, leaving more than one in 10 posts vacant. The hospitals are failing to cope with the ever-increasing demand. In 2016, an A&E department in Lancashire was forced to close due to staff shortages. The Royal College of Emergency Medicine said that “as a result of the forced closure, surrounding hospitals would come under even greater pressure, creating a domino effect”. These decisions are reflections of an NHS under enormous pressure.

Our policy would help fill the personnel gap with the medically trained refugees who are already based in the UK. There are currently over 600 qualified refugee doctors and hundreds of other refugee medical professionals currently known to the British Medical Association. Currently, they don't work for the NHS because they have not had the guidance and support needed to help them enter medical employment in the UK.

Various pilot schemes in London, Middlesbrough and Lincolnshire have been testing a new initiative to help relieve this acute staffing crisis with refugees. This scheme employs refugee junior doctors to “fill the gaps in the rota” instead of trusts relying on expensive agency staff. The example of Abdulsattar Al-Asadi, a refugee doctor who fled the civil war in Iraq in 2009, provides a successful case study. Arriving in the UK as a fully qualified doctor, Mr Al-Asadi had little idea about how to pursue his medical career given the ever-changing regulations for foreign doctors. He spent seven years in the fast food industry before discovering the Middlesbrough scheme. Once enrolled, it took Mr Al-Asadi only two years to qualify.



Training an individual to become a doctor in the UK can take up to seven years and costs nearly £300,000. With these pilot schemes, refugee doctors are typically qualifying in under two years at a cost of around £6,000-£10,000. This is a quick and cost-effective solution to a pressing issue.

Our policy proposal looks to expand on these pilot schemes, making them more effective in supporting medically trained professionals to transfer their qualifications. This would include three aspects:

First, we would suggest national implementation of the scheme. The programme would be run in all NHS Trusts and enrol all medically trained refugees, not just doctors. There are currently over 423 Trusts across England and over 106,000 full-time doctors in the NHS. If our policy was used, the 600 refugee doctors not currently working in the NHS would be enough to fully fill two Trusts.

Secondly, our policy would provide outreach and support. It is crucial to find refugees who are medically trained and support them in navigating the system. Mr Al-Asadi only discovered the scheme through an advertisement whilst taking local classes. The schemes should be more widely advertised, and we would implement an outreach programme to locate and contact additional refugees in the UK who are trained medical professionals.

Once they have been contacted, they also need support to navigate within and adapt to a new medical system. We would therefore enrol medical professionals who complete the required training onto a mentorship programme in which they can shadow an NHS worker to help them better adapt to the UK's medical culture.

Finally, our policy would address the funding for refugee medical professionals. These programmes would be funded through a student loan-like system. Meaning there would be no upfront cost for refugees, who would only begin to repay the costs once they were employed in the NHS.



Implementing this policy will not solve all the challenges facing the NHS, but it's a start. Why not make use of medically trained professionals already in the UK who are ready and willing to help?

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# POLICIES TO CHANGE OUR WORLD

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INVEST FROM BUSINESSES OPERATING IN OCCUPIED SPACES CHANGE AND EXTRACT

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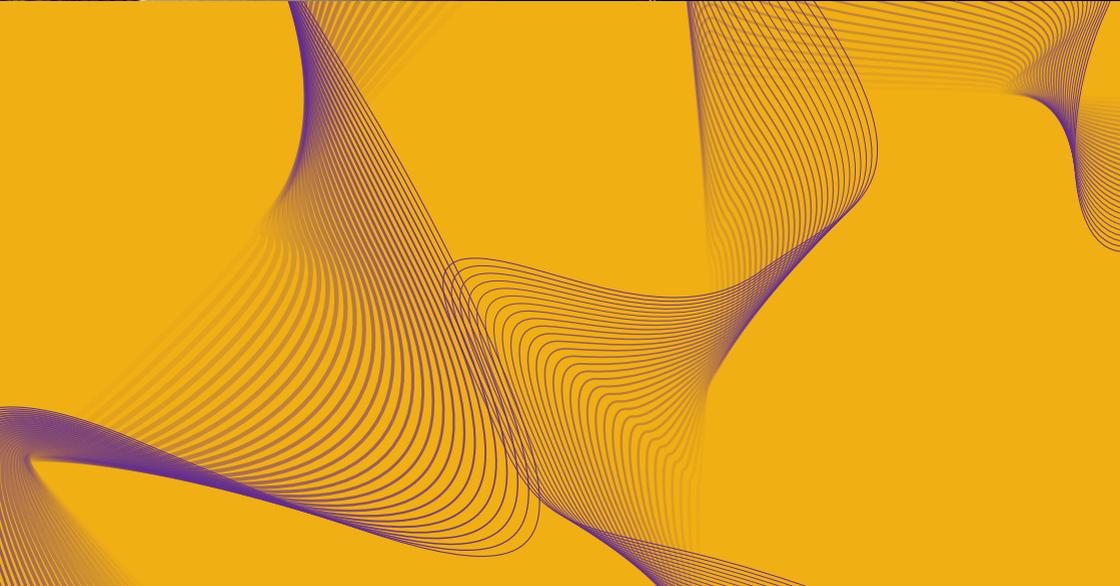


# **Bethany Elder & Sifan Zheng**

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*Tackling period poverty in the UK*







## Tackling period poverty in the UK

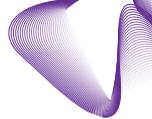
Period poverty refers to a lack of access to menstrual products as a result of financial constraints. Commonly attributed to the developing world, it has only recently been recognised as a problem many women in the UK are struggling to cope with.

Plan UK found that one in seven girls have struggled to afford sanitary products.<sup>1</sup> Studies have also shown that those affected are less likely to complete their GCSEs or A-Levels and are more likely to struggle to find employment.<sup>2</sup>

Research has also found that many women who struggle to afford sanitary products resort to using products for longer than is safe, or by using makeshift alternatives such as toilet paper or even newspaper.<sup>3</sup> This carries an increased risk of infection, as well as being ineffective at controlling bleeding. This results in girls missing school and women missing work due to their anxiety over not being able to contain their bleeding.

Through our scheme, individuals who are exempt from NHS prescription charges would be eligible to receive free sanitary products from NHS pharmacies and GP surgeries.<sup>4</sup> Our policy would extend to cover women with chronic gynaecological conditions that cause them to suffer from heavy periods, such as Endometriosis or Polycystic Ovary Syndrome.

Many girls and even women have a lack of education about their own bodies. Academies and free schools are not obliged to teach sexual and relationship education, and for a long time the mainstream curriculum has failed to provide meaningful content regarding women's health.<sup>5,6</sup> In fact, studies have found that more than a third of school girls said they had to educate themselves on how periods work.<sup>7</sup> With each pack, we would also include advice booklets on managing periods and accompanying health problems. This would advise women about period-related symptoms



and when to seek help from a GP if they have abnormal symptoms.

We would aim to trial the scheme in Easington, Kerrier, Clacton-on-Sea, Tower Hamlets, Middlesbrough and Liverpool as a first step. These areas contain some of the most deprived neighbourhoods in England, but also have different population densities and health infrastructures.<sup>8</sup> Implementation would be handled by local Clinical Commissioning Groups, who are experts in the needs of their local area and would monitor the uptake and awareness of the scheme.

The scheme would run as a card-based opt-in principle, where those eligible apply for a free card, which they present at a pharmacy to collect their free sanitary products. An estimated 5.5 million women would be eligible, including 2.3 million women aged 20-55 who live in absolute poverty before housing costs, and 3.2 million girls aged 10-19.<sup>9,10</sup>

If we look at similar card-based opt-in schemes from the past, such as the C card scheme (which provided free condoms to young people aged 13-25), the uptake was around six per cent with a total direct cost of £15.08 per user per year.<sup>11</sup> Using this model, our scheme would cost £4.98 million a year and help over 330,000 women. However, we hope that our policy would be less expensive, as the cost of sanitary products is generally lower than condoms.

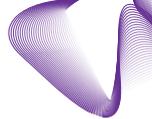
We believe our scheme would have economic benefits. For each workday missed, it costs an average of £82.86.<sup>12</sup> Women who use our scheme would be less likely to miss work when menstruating. Whilst period poverty could be argued to be a symptom of deprivation, rather than a direct cause, the monthly financial burden of menstruation carried by these women could be alleviated, freeing up more of their budget to spend on other needs. Girls and young women who use our scheme would therefore likely have better employment prospects and less school absences.



Access to sanitary products prevents healthcare complications from using makeshift solutions, such as the potential for increased risk of infections and mental health problems. We also hope that through the advice provided alongside the products, we can empower women to know more about their bodies. Promotion of this scheme will destigmatise a sensitive topic and raise greater awareness of the problem in society.

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**Bobby Duffy**, Professor of Public Policy and Director of the Policy Institute, King's College London;

**Bronwen Maddox**, Director of the Institute for Government;

**Trevor Phillips**, former Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission;

**David Willetts**, President of the Advisory Council and Intergenerational Centre, Resolution Foundation and former Minister for Universities and Science.

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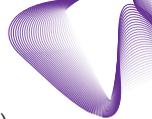
### Heat judges

**Mary Baginsky**, Head of Research at the Children's Workforce Development Council;

**Rosie Campbell**, Professor of Politics and Director of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership King's College London;

**Charles Clarke**, Former Home Secretary;

**Catherine Connolly**, founder of economicsense and former civil servant;



**Jonathan Grant**, Vice-President/Vice-Principal (Service) and Professor of Public Policy, King's College London;

**Kriti Kapila**, Academic Director of the International School for Government;

**Jill Manthorpe**, Professor of Social Work and Director of the NIHR Health & Social Care Workforce Research Unit, King's College London;

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# Policy Idol

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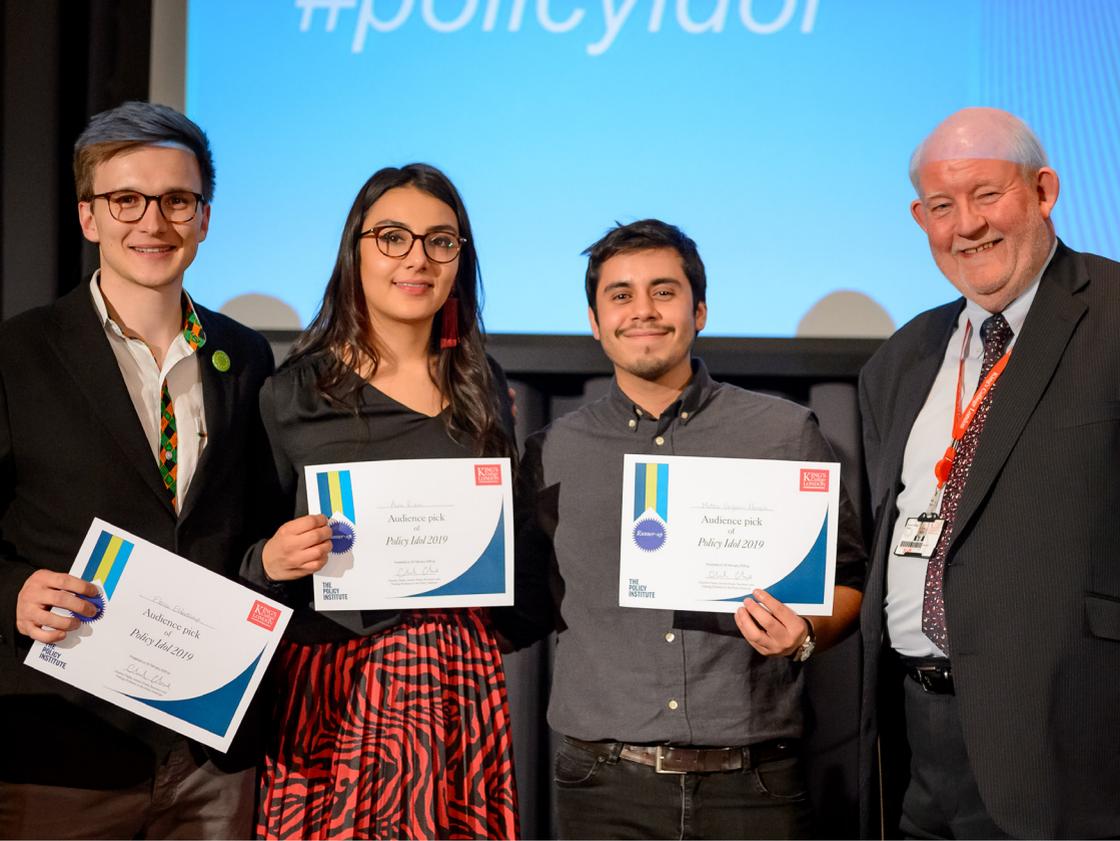
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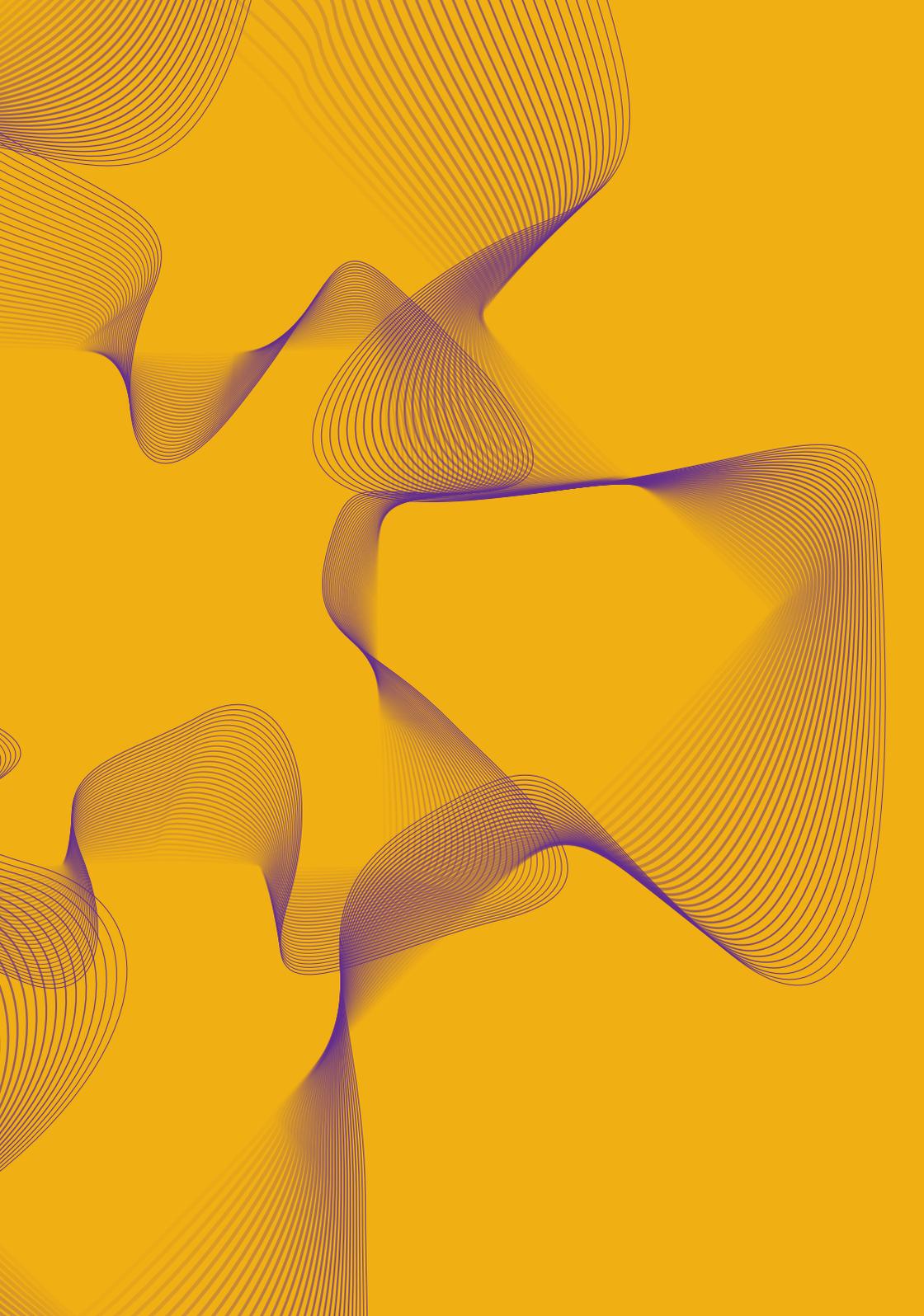
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