

Poverty tsar: shirking fathers should lose their benefits

Adapted from the following Guardian article by Patrick Wintour

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2010/jun/28/poverty-tsar-shirking-fathers-lose-benefits>

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"I believe we have been obsessed with getting young mothers back to work, irrespective of what they think. Britain must end its obsession with getting young single mothers into work, and focus on young, unemployed fathers whose role as the family breadwinner has had to be taken over by the taxpayer, Frank Field, David Camerons poverty adviser, has said.

Line 1
Line 2
Line 3
Line 4
Line 5
Line 6
Line 7

Field claimed many of these young, unemployed fathers will not accept offers of work for less than £300 a week _____ they feel it is not worth their while. He suggest that men who refuse to take up a government offer of work should have their benefit removed altogether, a far tougher sanction than they face under the current benefits regime.

Line 8
Line 9
Line 10
Line 11
Line 12
Line 13
Line 14

Field, the Labour MP who was commissioned by the government to carry out a review of poverty, said, "The reason why we have so many single mums is because we have so many single dads who cannot fulfil what most single mothers want from their partners, and the children from their fathers."

Line 15
Line 16
Line 17
Line 18
Line 19
Line 20

Ministers this week signalled a crackdown on incapacity benefit, with plans to reduce the benefit levels of claimants who are found capable of doing some work. There are also plans to cut the housing benefit budget. The work and pensions secretary, Iain Duncan Smith, has spoken of encouraging people to leave "under-occupied" council homes and move into smaller properties.

Line 21
Line 22
Line 23
Line 24
Line 25
Line 26
Line 27

Field's remarks underline the extent to which he believes the causes of social imobility lie not just not in material poverty, but also in character, child rearing and the loss of work for unskilled, working-class men.

Line 28
Line 29
Line 30
Line 31

He said the debate about poverty has "largely ignored the agenda of working class women".

Line 32
Line 33

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Questions 1 – 10 are based on the text: “Poverty tsar

1. There is a **spelling mistake** on:
 - A Line 1
 - B Line 12
 - C Line 29
 - D Line 33

2. What **punctuation** is missing on Line 6:
 - A Full-stop
 - B Apostrophe
 - C Comma
 - D Speech marks

3. The word **irrespective** on Line 2 means:
 - A Depending
 - B Regardless
 - C Because
 - D Disobeying

4. There is a **grammatical** error on:
 - A Line 8
 - B Line 9
 - C Line 10
 - D Line 11

5. The **main purpose** of this text is to:
 - A Inform the reader about Frank Field's ideas about poverty reduction.
 - B Persuade the reader that single father's should be targeted.
 - C Entertain the reader.
 - D Criticise working class men.

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6. The tone of this text could **best** be described as:
- A Patronising.
 - B Light-hearted.
 - C Serious.
 - D Sarcastic.
7. **According to the article**, Frank Field believes that:
- A Single mothers would like to work more than they do.
 - B People are often poor because men don't take enough responsibility.
 - C The taxpayer has had to fund single mums who don't work enough.
 - D Men should not get paid more than £300 per week.
8. The **main point** of paragraph 4 (beginning on Line 21) is to:
- A Inform the reader of which claimants deserve benefits.
 - B Explain how council houses will be rented out more fairly.
 - C Persuade the reader that too many people get benefits.
 - D Outline some of the benefit cuts that the government plans.
9. The **best word** to fill the gap on Line 10 is:
- A Since
 - B Although
 - C But
 - D So
10. Frank Field **suggests** that single mums are:
- A Unemployed and poor
 - B Ignored and unsupported.
 - C Dependent and lazy.
 - D Independent and greedy.

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Now complete these exercises:

- 1 **Summarise** the text in 4 sentences (try to include all the important points)
- 2 What is **your opinion** about the issues raised in the text? Use quotations from the text in your answer.
- 3 Write a **persuasive letter** to your MP giving your opinion on this subject.
- 4 What do these words from the text mean? Look them up in your dictionary and then put each one into a sentence which shows what it means:

Shirking

Sanction

Crackdown

Regime

Agenda

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Answers and original text

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Welfare debate should shift from obsession with single mothers, says Labour MP Frank Field



Frank Field: 'I believe we have been obsessed with getting young mothers back to work, - irrespective of what they think.'

Britain must end its obsession with getting young single mothers into work, and focus on young, unemployed fathers whose role as the family breadwinner has had to be taken over by the taxpayer, Frank Field, David Cameron's poverty adviser, has said.

Field claimed many of these young, unemployed fathers will not accept offers of work for less than £300 a week since they feel it is not worth their while. He suggests that men who refuse to take up a government offer of work should have their benefit removed altogether, a far tougher sanction than they face under the current benefits regime.

Field, the Labour MP who was commissioned by the government to carry out a review of poverty, said: "The reason why we have so many single mums is because we have so many single dads who cannot fulfil what most single mothers want from their partners, and the children from their fathers."

Ministers this week signalled a crackdown on incapacity benefit, with plans to reduce the benefit levels of claimants who are found capable of doing some work. There are also plans to cut the housing benefit budget. The work and pensions secretary, Iain Duncan Smith, has spoken of encouraging people to leave "under-occupied" council homes and move into smaller properties.

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Field's remarks underline the extent to which he believes the causes of social immobility lie not just not in material poverty, but also in character, child rearing and the loss of work for unskilled, working-class men.

He said the debate about poverty has "largely ignored the agenda of working class women".

He explained: "For a large section of what used to be the core of the Labour vote – working class women – what they say they most want is a husband or partner in work which allows them their private domain of the family in which they can not only nurture but take on work when they think it is right, for their children, to do so."

The Tories are to require single mothers with children aged five or over to make themselves ready for work.

Field said, "I believe we have been obsessed with getting young mothers back to work, irrespective of what they think and whether we think it is best for their children to do so," he said.

He hoped his poverty review would take out from the shadows "the unmarried father who is often young, unemployed and often unemployable and who is unskilled, and the way society has changed has made him redundant.

"The position he once held as breadwinner has been taken over by taxpayers. If they ever dare think about it, they are entering into an abyss of a life on benefit, trying to make ends meet with petty crime and drug dealing."

Field also called on the government to reinstate some version of Labour's jobs fund that guaranteed work for the unemployed. He said: "We need a reserve army of jobs for those who are desperate to get a job, who are drowning in their inability to do so." He added that for those who have no intention of working, and who refuse a temporary public sector job, "there is no benefit whatsoever".

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Q1 – C

Q2 – B

Q3 – B

Q4 – C

Q5 – A

Q6 – C

Q7 – B

Q8 – D

Q9 – A

Q10 – B