

HSMC hosts welfare reform think tank

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The department recently hosted a two-day think tank on the future of welfare reform with a small but high profile invited audience of leading policy makers, managers, practitioners, policy analysts and researchers. The Think Tank, a collaboration between the University's **College of Social Sciences** (<http://www.about.bham.ac.uk/colleges/socialsciences/index.shtml>) and the **Centre for Welfare Reform** (<http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org/>), considered the current 'transformation' of the welfare state based on the concepts of personalisation and self-directed support, and likely future developments, given the current financial and political context, and ongoing debates about reduced state expenditure and potential government shrinkage.

In addition to the networks formed during the two days, a series of outputs are proposed including a proposed article for the national media, a short final report, written in the form of a manifesto for future welfare reform, a range of academic papers and the potential for future research proposals.

To date, the University of Birmingham has been a leading player in the personalisation agenda with key contributions including: the publication of textbooks on direct payments and personal budgets; the national evaluation of direct payments; providing policy advice to Downing Street, the Cabinet Office and the Department of Health; and briefing members of the House of Lords, the BBC and the Guardian on the implications of personal health budgets.

The Centre for Welfare Reform is an independent research and development network, whose aim is to transform the current welfare state so that it supports citizenship, family and community. The Centre was established by Simon Duffy, a key figure in the development of the personalisation agenda, in October 2009 and will be officially launched in Spring 2010.