

Extreme Inequality: Our National Shame



Wednesday, 8 November, 2017

This week there has been a slew of news stories that are both depressing and outrageous. Alongside the ongoing revelations in the [Paradise Papers](#) we have reports of record demand for [food banks](#) and surging levels of [homelessness](#). To see these stories as entirely unrelated requires not only great mental gymnastics but also a cold heart.

If the vast funds that the rich are stashing offshore were properly taxed in the UK we could make our welfare state more generous (including [Universal Credit](#) which is clearly failing at the moment) and build a great many homes that are desperately needed. And if some of these hidden funds were made available to UK businesses, then they could employ more people at a decent [Living Wage](#) (or above) on proper contracts. This would ease demands on the social security system and boost our general level of physical and mental health which is so badly affected by the stresses of poverty pay and precarious employment.

It may yet be that Universal Credit can be fixed, that the minimum wage will be increased and that the commendable aims of the [Homelessness Reduction Act](#), passed this year, will bear fruit. We may also see our government (and others) take further measures to deal with tax dodging in the wake of the Paradise Papers, but to make progress will take real political will to face down powerful vested interests. It will also require addressing the underlying cause of all these problems, namely, the great economic inequality that so disfigures the UK. We will not get to a much fairer distribution of income and wealth by simply enacting this policy here and that policy there. We need an over-arching Inequality Reduction Strategy placed at the heart of government that works across all departments. We need nothing less than a national mission to renew and revive the UK based on substantially reducing the material differences that plague us. Only this way can we move from the socially dysfunctional mess we're in now towards a harmonious society where everyone can flourish to their full potential. Then, rather than being ashamed of our society, we could be proud instead. Wouldn't that be nice?

**Bill Kerry - Supporters & Local Groups Manager
Equality Trust**