

## **International Seminar on Social Policies (ISSP) 2017 International Perspectives on Current Issues in Family Policy**

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**Title:**

HOW IS ADDRESSING THE WELFARE STATE SYSTEMA THE SOCIAL CHANGES?

So, the nature of the problems has changed but how is the welfare state addressing these social challenges?

From an economic standpoint, it seems incredibly difficult to maintain the current welfare state. Since the mid-1980s there have been a number of important policy reforms which have attempted to adapt social policies to these changes. In effect, we are spreading the responsibility for social protection among governments, citizens and the private sector in order to save money and make the system more efficient. Some authors, such as Neil Gilbert have described this development as: from the welfare state to the enabling state. This change is reflected in several welfare reforms that would examine the demanding costs of social benefits as well as adapt them to the needs of the twenty first century.

Yet at the same time, what is causing these changes to our current welfare model? What is pushing relationships to replace bureaucracy as the core of this system? And in so doing, transforming the traditional welfare model into a relational welfare model, where the critical resources of the system would be, of course, relationships.

The welfare state was designed by Beveridge within the framework of the industrialised society and mirrored the principles, values and beliefs of that society. However, today we are not living in the industrialised age. As you may well know academics like to label things, and some authors have labeled today's era as the information society, knowledge society, networked society or even, age of connectedness whatever. So as the question should be: Is the current welfare model covering all the current needs of this new era?

The contemporaries of William Beveridge, who was the architect of the first welfare state and the author of the Beveridge Report, transmitted an idea of an impersonal and bureaucrat system. According to this report the welfare state was developed across the country, across the colonies, across Europe, across the United States of America, and it had this huge impact on the way that welfare states were designed around the globe. The cultures, the bureaucracies, the institutions — they are global, and they've come to be seen as common sense. And I think it's really important to say that in the 20th century, these institutions were successful. They led to longer lifespans, the eradication of mass disease, mass housing, and near-universal education. But at the same time, Beveridge sowed the seeds of today's challenges. At the end of his life, in 1948, Beveridge wrote another report wherein he confessed to having made a dreadful mistake. He had left people and their communities out. And this omission, he said, led to see people, and people starting to see themselves, within the categories of the bureaucracies and the institutions. And human relationships were already withering. Beveridge had little faith in

the so-called average emotional man. Consequently, it's no coincidence that social workers who run and work in the institutions that are supposed to support users and families don't talk about relationships, because relationships are expressly left out of this welfare model that was drawn up in Britain and exported around the world.

The Beveridge models are all about institutions with finite resources, anonymously managing access. On the front line, we can see, again and again, how up to 80 percent of the resources is spent shutting people out. So professionals have to manage these increasingly complex forms

of administration that are basically about stopping people from accessing the service or managing the queue.

We have to address all the current social problems with a collective relational challenge, and it can't be addressed by a traditional bureaucratic response. Today, we need to bring people and their communities back into the heart of the way we design new systems and new services, in an approach that Cottam (2015) calls "Relational Welfare." We need to leave behind these old, transactional, unsuitable, outdated models, and we need to adopt instead the shared collective relational responses that can support families that can address an issue like loneliness, that can support people by putting them back to work as well as improving their skills for this daunting, modern labor market, that can address the challenges of education, of health care, and so many other problems we are facing in today's society.

It is all about relationships. Relationships are the critical resource we have. It is all about relationships. Relationships are the critical resource we have. Thank you.

Key words: social protection; longevity; Relational welfare