



Together  
for Social  
Security

# How to grow support for a decent social security system

The messaging that works

- **Our social security system should be there for all of us**, especially when we need it most.
- **But its value has been drowned out** by negative 'welfare' narratives.
- **This guide presents evidence-based messaging** that reconnects people with our social security system and grows support for it.

# This guide is brought to you by Together for Social Security

Together for Social Security is a project bringing organisations together around shared messaging which boosts support for social security.

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**Funder:** Joseph Rowntree Foundation

The theory of change underpinning this work is that change happens when lots of different groups and individuals start saying the same thing.

We can change hearts, minds and systems when we coordinate and cut through with shared messaging.

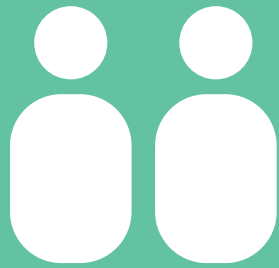


More on the Together for Social Security project and why messaging matters is [here](#) or scan the QR code

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# How we developed the messaging



Two initial  
focus groups



Three rounds of a  
message testing survey,  
reaching more than 7,000  
participants in total



Concluding focus group  
with people with lived  
experience



Conducted late  
2025/early 2026

Message testing was kindly supported by:

**Independent Age, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, The Methodist Church and Turn2Us**



More on the message testing is [here](#)

# This messaging increased support for social security by up to 10%

“

*“For many of us, it feels like our economy simply isn’t working - costs keep rising and there’s not enough coming in to cover them. It’s no wonder so many feel overlooked by politicians.”*

“

*“It’s time for governments to rebuild trust by making decisions for our country as a whole.”*

“

*“It’s time for politicians to invest in a better future for everyone.”*

“

*“Regaining people’s trust means investing in a better future. It means making sure work pays, bills are manageable and our social security system is there for all of us, especially when we need it most.”*

“

*“Our country’s future prosperity depends on more people having a decent chance now. It relies on more children having a good start in life, and being able to reach their potential.”*



# Why this messaging works

01.

## We empathise with how people are feeling



This ensures we engage and feel relevant to people. Connecting this to the need for change boosts support for governments to prioritise and invest in a decent social security system. Positive action is positioned as a way to rebuild trust.

02.

## We connect investing in a decent system right now, with a better future



When we connect now with later we boost support for funding a decent social security system. People who hear this message feel more collective, and more personally motivated.

03.

## We talk about the positive role our social security system could and should be playing

People mainly hear negative stories about our social security system. We need to keep reminding our audiences why it exists and the role it should be playing. We need to offer an ambitious vision - a clear sense of what good looks and feels like. When critiquing the system talk about the positive role social security could and should be playing, not just current problems.



04.

## We avoid overloading poverty stats, or inadvertently othering people



Poverty stats don't automatically connect with people, including those experiencing poverty. A stat can be powerful when we bring it to life as part of a compelling story. But talking about people as if they are merely statistics and saying things like 'lifting people out of poverty' can inadvertently dehumanise people. Most people who are experiencing poverty don't think about themselves as being 'in poverty'.



# The messaging complements talking about the positive role our social security system could and should be playing

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We need to remind people why our social security system exists and the role it should be playing, using phrases like:



*"We need our social security system when so many people are struggling to make ends meet, or if we become unwell or disabled, or we're caring for a loved one."*



*"Our social security system, like our NHS, should be there for us all, especially those who need it most and when we need it most."*



*"Our social security system was set up so everyone can get support when they need it."*



An example of how this might work in an interview is [here](#)

# If talking about inequality in wealth



**For organisations that want to talk about inequality in wealth and power,** the following wording was impactful:



***“Many of us in the UK feel overlooked by those in power. We’re struggling with rising costs and not enough money coming in to cover them, while governments make decisions to protect those who are already extremely wealthy. Our government should be making decisions that support our society as a whole. Everything they do should help make sure more people can thrive.”***

This worked because it connects inequalities in wealth and power to people’s feelings and experiences. It makes audiences more likely to support redistribution, and to vote with these issues in mind.



More detail is [here](#)

# Would you like further information or support on using the messaging?

Together for Social Security

Contact the Together for Social Security Coordinator - [Michael.Orton@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:Michael.Orton@warwick.ac.uk)

## Some organisations are already embedding the messaging in their comms



*"We are looking forward to using this messaging in our comms to demonstrate the importance of our human right to social security."*



*"All of us who believe in the country's shared social security system should continue to say so boldly. Together, we can challenge harmful rhetoric."*



*"We're proud to be part of Together for Social Security and this new research will be really useful in framing our messaging to speak up for older people in financial hardship."*



*"We need a social security system, founded in dignity and compassion. This research offers us invaluable insights into how we can work with others to effectively advocate for such a system."*



*"Getting the messaging right on social security is as important as ever, with millions still living in poverty and without the essentials. This research will be vital in helping us communicate in the most effective ways."*



*"This messaging guide is an important tool for us to speak effectively and truthfully about the social security system and those of us who rely on it."*



*"A compassionate and adequate social security system is vital to ending the need for food banks. By working together and using this messaging we can build support for change."*



*"Everyone benefits when we have an effective social security system. By adopting this guide, we can work together to strengthen support and ensure the system is there for all of us."*



More information is [here](#)