

# TAXJUSTICE.UK

## Movement, narrative and power: A strategy for achieving tax justice in the UK

2019-2021

Tax Justice UK (TJ-UK) is a campaigning organisation. Our vision is that everyone in the UK should benefit from a fairer and more effective tax system. This strategy sets out our plans for what we will do over the next three years to help achieve this.

### **What's the problem?**

Tax is a basic building block of our communities, but the UK's tax system is not fit for purpose. There are three elements to this problem: we're not raising enough tax, the tax system isn't progressive enough and individuals and companies are still able to dodge their obligations.

Firstly, we are simply not raising enough to support increasing demands on public services. On [current trends](#) by 2023 the UK will be spending less in real terms than in 2011, despite 13 years of projected economic growth. We know there is [public support](#) for better public services funded by higher taxes, and that a [majority of the public](#) feels that the economy does not work for them.

Secondly, the tax system isn't progressive enough. Ideally the wealthy should be paying a higher share of their income in tax than the poor, but [according to the Resolution Foundation](#) this isn't the case. Entrenched interests use their political muscle to keep the tax system unequal. In the UK wealth inequality is almost double income inequality. This cements disadvantage, stifles social mobility and undermines the life chances of those who do not have access to significant financial resources.

Thirdly, there are high levels of tax avoidance and evasion. This undermines public trust in the tax system. While there has been some progress on tackling tax evasion and avoidance since the financial crisis, there are still big gaps in the government's approach.

Too often discussions of tax reform are viewed by politicians as toxic. This is despite the fact that many experts and commentators agree on what policy reforms are needed,

not only to address public spending challenges and inequality, but also to fix a tax system that is overly complex and open to abuse.

### **Our vision: what we want the world to look like**

*Tax Justice UK wants everyone in the UK to benefit from a sustainable, fair and effective tax system.*

**Sustainable:** We want a cultural change with the public supporting higher levels of public spending, in part paid for through more progressive taxes

**Fair:** We want to see a much more progressive tax system in which those with greater wealth pay a fairer proportion of tax.

**Effective:** We want to see the tax system reformed so that individuals and companies pay the right amount of tax.

### **Our purpose: the role we play in making change**

TJ-UK will help to build the political momentum necessary to achieve a fairer tax system. There are already think tanks such as the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Resolution Foundation and the Institute for Public Policy Research producing tax research and policy proposals. What is missing is an organisation that can take this work and create the political momentum in which tax reform becomes a realistic possibility. TJ-UK is a non-partisan bridge builder, working with everyone who shares our vision for a fairer and more effective tax system, and working to convince those who don't.

### **Our story to date**

TJ-UK was incubated by the global Tax Justice Network (TJN) and since May 2017 we have been an independent organisation. Our focus is on the UK, whereas TJN's role is global. We are backed by a broader movement of groups that care about tax justice, including Oxfam, Christian Aid, the Equality Trust and Jubilee Debt Campaign, as well as tax experts, academics and think tanks. We call upon a panel of advisors with expertise across government, tax, law and academia.

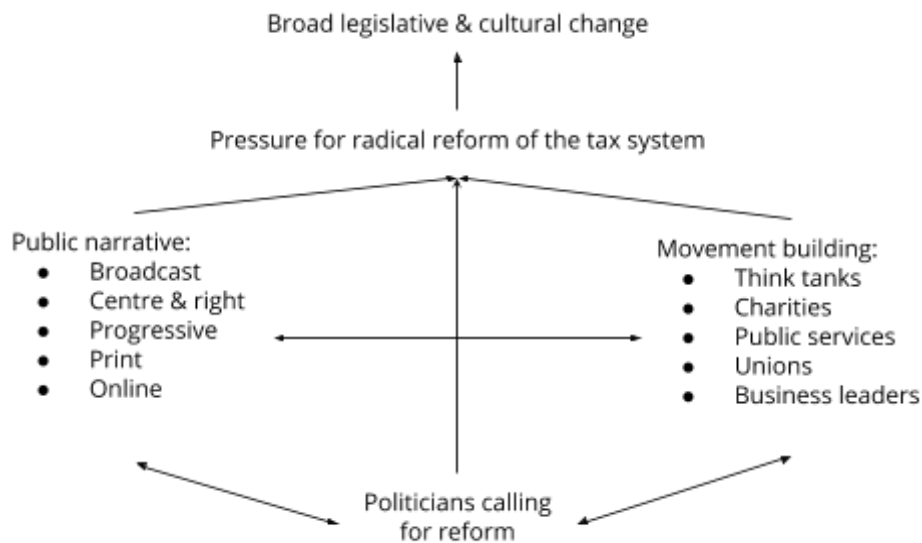
We have already built profile and credibility, as well as putting in place the organisational structures necessary for future success. In under two years, we have:

- Highlighted how inheritance tax reliefs overwhelmingly go to the very wealthy in a [report](#) that was picked up by the [Office for Budget Responsibility](#).
- Built a strong brand as a commentator on tax issues with over 35 pieces of coverage in 2018 including in the Times, the Sun, Sky, and the BBC.
- Developed partnerships with campaigners, tax professionals, think tanks and academics that form the start of a movement for a better tax system.
- Started to engage in policy debates including through publishing a [report](#) into how to use taxes on wealth to fund the NHS.
- Developed relationships with people connected to the main political parties.

## Our theory of change: how we think change happens

Our approach is threefold.

1. Firstly we will help to build a broad movement of groups and credible voices to back radical reforms to the tax system.
2. Secondly we will help shape a public narrative about what a fairer tax system looks like.
3. Thirdly, we will work with politicians to build support for the wide-ranging reform that is needed, while also looking for opportunities for short term wins.



## What we will be doing in 2019-2021

During the period of this strategy TJ-UK will focus its proactive work on campaigning for greater taxes on wealth. There is a growing chorus of people arguing that we need to tax wealth and capital better. Conservatives, including Nick Timothy and David Willetts, have argued in favour of greater taxes on wealth. This is matched on the left by Rachel Reeves and the Fabians. Economists, including at the OECD, the IFS and the Financial Times have backed these calls. What is missing from this debate is an organisation that can build a political campaign around the principle of taxing wealth better. TJ-UK is well positioned to do this.

TJ-UK will take a pragmatic approach on what specific policy area to campaign on. We will try a few different issues under the wealth tax banner and see what gets traction with other organisations, the media and politicians. This will allow us to be nimble and reactive to external opportunities. We will ideally focus on one policy issue at a time.

Our work during this period will have three strands:

1. Movement building
2. Public narrative
3. Persuading decision-makers

### *1. Movement building:*

We will bring a radical campaigning edge to the tax reform agenda whilst seeking to complement the work of other organisations working in this field. TJ-UK wants to see a range of groups speaking out on tax justice issues in line with our agenda. At the same time we don't have the capacity to create, or service, a formal UK tax coalition.

Outcome: There is significant pressure for progressive tax reform catalysed by TJ-UK.

We will:

- Build relationships with other organisations and actors who care about, or have potential to care, about tax justice, with a particular focus on wealth taxation.
- Map out further organisations to collaborate with covering the sectors and issues we are looking at e.g. housing, local government, land ownership and wealth/inequality.
- Identify opportunities for engaging in joint campaigns with other organisations when this fits with our priorities, plans and strategic approach.
- Collaborate with civil society groups who support public service providers by contributing to the debate about how to fund better services.
- Maintain relationships with tax experts, professionals, academics and think tanks to provide policy inspiration and quality control.
- Build links to groups in other countries working for progressive taxation to share ideas and approaches.
- We will amplify areas of alignment with economists, business leaders and centre-right groups.

Our assumptions include:

- We can successfully mobilise a broad enough coalition of groups that will help to shift the political dynamic around tax.
- The necessary research and policy development has largely been carried out and what is needed is a group that brings a campaigning edge.
- We can work through groups that have a broader public appeal so that we don't have to develop a direct public campaigning focus at first.

### *2. Public narrative:*

Tax needs an image makeover. Too often tax is talked about as a "burden" that should be lowered. We aim to promote its positive role in helping to build the foundations of a flourishing society. TJ-UK will use media, social media and public speaking opportunities to build a story about the need for a fairer tax system and use this to influence policy makers. We will make radical reform reasonable and necessary.

Outcome: There is significant media coverage of the importance of a sustainable tax system, including the need for progressive tax reform.

We will:

- Hold regular meetings with key journalists, editors and producers across the ideological spectrum.
- Conduct light-touch research to support media engagement and narrative promotion.
- Work with journalists and other organisations to add a human face to these stories.

- Respond in the media to key tax moments throughout the year including the budget, spring statement and government statistical releases.
- Develop a progressive narrative on tax e.g. connecting tax to real challenges in people's lives and challenging anti-tax narratives.

Our assumptions include:

- That changing the media narrative on tax will change what politicians believe is politically possible.
- That the media is sufficiently interested, open and willing to amplify our messages.
- That we can move away from the current media focus on tax avoidance and evasion to talk about why broader reform is needed.

### *3. Persuading decision-makers:*

In 2019-21 we will start to build support for tax policy reform among politicians, with a particular focus on building momentum for better taxes on wealth. We will target individual politicians to speak out in favour of our agenda, and seek to influence the policy programme of major UK parties. While building support for radical reform, we will look for opportunities along the way for short term wins. For our work on wealth taxation, these might include adding extra bands to council tax and reforming inheritance tax reliefs.

Outcome: There is a shift in the position of at least one political party to support our tax reform agenda.

We will:

- Identify a list of potential tax reform political champions and engage them.
- Respond to government and opposition policy consultations.
- Provide input into party policy and manifestos.
- Collaborate with lawmakers through working with committees and APPGs.

Our assumptions include:

- There is political appetite to discuss tax reform over the next three years, when Brexit is likely to continue to dominate politics.
- We can branch out beyond our natural allies on the centre-left.
- That there is political space to work on council tax and inheritance tax reform.

### *4. Organisational development*

TJ-UK is a lean organisation and over the next three years we plan to grow in a sustainable way. Funding permitting, we are looking to add another staff member, focused on public affairs. Beyond that potential further staff members include a research and policy lead, finance and fundraising support and a campaigns assistant.

Currently the bulk of TJ-UK's income comes from grants from charitable foundations, with a small number of donations from members of the public. During 2019-21, we hope to get support from new foundations, while at the same time consolidate relationships with existing funders through renewal applications and donor management.

Outcome: TJ-UK is on a strong organisational footing, with the resources, support and policies in place to deliver its strategic objectives.

Our assumptions include:

- We continue to find organisations and individuals willing to fund our work.
- TJ-UK can create an organisational culture that allows us to attract and retain excellent staff members.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

TJ-UK will convene regular meetings to review monitoring and evaluation data for each activity area, to present successes and failures, discuss lessons learned, and identify and implement action points. The board will play a key role in assessing the effectiveness of TJ-UK's strategy and will provide on-going support to the team.

TJ-UK is working with an external strategy and evaluation consultant who is acting as a "critical friend". The team will have regular meetings (2-3 times a year) to review progress and refine our approach. We will collect and analyse a wide range of monitoring indicators to help us track our progress against our objectives. TJ-UK will assess progress against these indicators on a monthly basis.

### **Management and governance**

The Board of Directors sets the overall strategic direction for the organisation. The Board currently comprises Will Snell (Chair), Alan Buckle, Christine Oram, Jesse Griffiths, Toby Quantrill, George Turner and Sarah-Jayne Clifton.

Day-to-day operations of the organisation are delegated to the Executive Director, under an agreed terms of reference. The work of TJ-UK is supported by a group of voluntary technical advisers who provide expert input to the development of our policy platform.