

Why We Need Dignitism: A New Approach to Politics

Britain is not broken—despite what populist movements like Reform UK might claim. We remain one of the wealthiest countries, with strong institutions, an education system, health services, and a stable economy.

And yet, something is deeply wrong.

Too many people are not happy. Depression, anxiety, and frustration are widespread and an “estimated 1 in 6 adults have experienced a 'common mental disorder' like depression or anxiety in the past week”ⁱ. A sense of progress is slipping away. Our quality of lifeⁱⁱ and life expectancyⁱⁱⁱ are declining. Inequality is rising, with the rich becoming richer, and nearly 16 million people in the UK are living in families in poverty including 5.2 million children (>1/3rd of all children) and 1.5 million are pension-age adults^{iv}.

We are not broken, but we are stuck. Blaming external forces—immigrants, “wokeism,” capitalism—won’t fix these issues. The deeper problem is that we have not had a **new political vision** for decades. Current ideologies fail to provide answers for the age of **AI**, **climate change**, and the **emotional stagnation** of modern life.

Brexit promised solutions but ultimately made many of our problems harder to solve. The lesson is clear: **blaming others doesn't work**. We need fresh ideas to build a better future.

We already have many political ideologies—liberalism, conservatism, socialism, nationalism—but none of them place what matters most at their core: **human dignity**. What we need is Dignitism: a **political framework** built on a moral commitment to enhancing the dignity of every individual.

Dignity (noun): "The state or quality of being worthy of honour or respect."
(Oxford University Press, OED Online)

Dignity is what makes us human. It distinguishes us from animals and from advanced artificial intelligence^v. Self-worth and self-respect are central to our will to live^{vi}. They are as essential as food, clean water, air, and shelter. As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms, dignity is the first human right^{vii}. Without dignity, we can exist—but we cannot truly live.

Shared dignity is the foundation of **social cohesion**, **personal development**, and **trust**. It is the root of happiness and the glue that holds society together.

This is not a new idea. Across cultures and philosophies¹, the value of dignity is recognized as a core principle of human existence. What's missing is a political approach that places dignity **first**.

Here, I'll explain Dignitism and how it can be translated into real-world policies. While no political party has yet embraced it fully, both **Labour** and the **Conservatives** should consider adopting it.

Dignitism can offer a new direction. It is **conservative** in its respect for **tradition**, **community**, and **human value**, but also **progressive** in its commitment to addressing indignity—whether through tackling poverty, discrimination, or environmental destruction. It could revitalize both major political parties.

ⁱ Baker & Kirk-Wade E Mental health statistics: prevalence, services and funding in England. House of Commons Library 2024. [SN06988.pdf](#) accessed 11.5.25

ⁱⁱ **Office for National Statistics**. *Measuring progress, well-being and beyond GDP in the UK: May 2024*. [Internet]. Newport (UK): ONS; 2024 May 9 [cited 2025 May 11]. Available from: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/bulletins/measuringprogresswellbeingandbeyondgdpintheuk/may2024>

ⁱⁱⁱ **Jefferies D**. What is happening to life expectancy in England? The King's Fund. 2024 Apr 10. Available from: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/long-reads/whats-happening-life-expectancy-england>

^{iv} **Oakley M**. Poverty rates now higher than at any other time in the 21st century. WPI Economics [Internet]. 2024 Nov [cited 2025 May 11]; Available from: <https://wpieconomics.com/poverty-rates-now-higher-than-at-any-other-time-in-the-21st-century/>

^v **Birch J**. *The Edge of Sentience: Risk and Precaution in Humans, Other Animals, and AI*. Oxford University Press; 2024. Available from: <https://academic.oup.com/book/57949>

^{vi} Batchelder, A. W., & Hagan, M. J. (2022). The Clinical Relevance of a Socioecological Conceptualization of Self-Worth. *Review of General Psychology*, 27(1), 62-79. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10892680221109201>

^{vii} **United Nations**. Universal Declaration of Human Rights [Internet]. New York: United Nations; 1948 [cited 2025 May 11]. Available from: <https://www.refworld.org/legal/resolution/unga/1948/en/11563>

¹ "Man is not merely a thing, a mere object of the senses, but, as a person, he is an end in himself, and this must be understood as the basis of his dignity." **Kant I**. *The Metaphysics of Morals* p 204. Translated by Mary Gregor. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 1996.