

Welfare reform in Russia: confusion, continuity and change

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This seminar charts the shifting nature of welfare provision in Russia since the late socialist period. It explains how distinctive features of the Soviet welfare state made it an inadequate safety net during the socio-economic upheavals of the 1990s. Welfare reform has however been a low government priority and only recently was an attempt made to restructure social security in the country. Controversial legislation in 2005 replaced most in-kind services with cash benefits, changed the official concept of disability and greatly increased prices for public services. These steps reflect a political desire to create a neoliberal, market-based welfare state. However, the reforms were poorly designed and implemented and have since been modified due to their public unpopularity. A discussion of these issues suggests that current social policy in Russia can be characterised as a chaotic mix of change and continuity.

Michael Rasell is a PhD student at the European Research Institute, University of Birmingham. His research looks at the impact of recent welfare reforms on well-being in Russia, using qualitative techniques to explore how people are adapting to the new policy structures and forms of assistance. Michael graduated from Oxford University and holds an MA from Central European University, Hungary. His work is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council.



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Room 25, SPRC Building G2, Western Campus, UNSW

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