

[Getting tough](#) ^[1]

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At last, Britain's Conservative Party is getting in touch with its masculine side. And doing very well as a result.

David Cameron spent a year turning his rather unpromising colleagues into something that more resembles a team, that seems engaged with the issues that affect ordinary people's lives, and that in part is almost human - or at least gives a convincing impression that it might be. Along the way he mightily irritated a number of Conservative supporters who picked up the message that health and education just needed more cash, louts should be loved, and tax cuts were right off the agenda.

None of it stopped the Conservative Party's drift eastward (or even east-southeast) in the opinion polls, but what a difference an election makes - even one which UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown bottled out of. Suddenly some real policies had to be produced. Particularly one or two that would induce Conservative supporters to get out and vote, rather than just stay home in disgust. Shadow Chancellor, George Osborne, picked a fairly innocuous one - that only millionaires should pay inheritance tax. And whoosh! Suddenly the opinion polls were going north-northeast.

It's happened again. The Conservatives are now seven points in front of the Labour government, thanks in great part to their latest policy promise - getting the scroungers off welfare.

It's a policy almost as feeble as the inheritance tax one: the idea is that only after two years would people be faced with the choice of doing community work or losing part of their social benefits. Under the plans we put forward in [Working Welfare](#) ^[3], benefit claimants would face *immediate* work requirements ? and if they did nothing, they would get nothing. Nonetheless, Conservative supporters (and quite a few others) are just fed up working hard and paying taxes when they see other perfectly able folk sitting around doing nothing on their money, so the Tory proposals have gone down well.

Some pundits say the Conservatives have to go back to being soft and cuddly so that they might woo over

LibDem supporters. But the new approach seems to be working perfectly well, thank you very much.

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