



United Kingdom

Tackling child poverty and promoting the social inclusion of children

A Study of National Policies

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Summary

- Child poverty is at the heart of the Government's social policy agenda
- Child poverty rose rapidly in the 1980s; the child poverty rate in the UK was one of the highest in Europe by 2000, and the UK now ranks 21st out of 30 countries.
- The Government's objective was to reduce child poverty by a quarter by 2004/5, which it narrowly failed to meet.
- In the last year (2005/6), there was an increase in child poverty.
- The risk of child poverty is much higher in single-parent families, large families, families from certain ethnic groups and workless families.
- But more than half of all poor children are in two-parent families; and
- 57 % of children living in poverty have a parent who is working.
- An index of child wellbeing ranked the UK 21st out of the 25 EU countries. The UK ranked last in the UNICEF wellbeing index.
- The Government's child poverty strategy has been to manage the economy to maximise employment and to increase earned incomes. This strategy has proved successful in reducing child poverty.
- Out-of-work incomes have also increased, but not enough to lift many children out of poverty.
- There is evidence that increased government expenditure on benefits and tax credits has benefited low-income families most and that the UK has improved its ranking through its efforts on behalf of families with children.
- Public expenditure on services, particularly health, education and childcare, has also increased, though there are questions as to how much of this extra spending has focused on children and child poverty.
- The Comprehensive Spending Review, reporting later in 2007, is likely to be tight, and it is now unlikely that the Government will succeed in its aim of halving child poverty by 2010 unless there are radical changes in policy.
- Constraints on the Government's ability to do this include the structural inequalities in British society and public attitudes towards people in poverty. Successfully addressing these two issues will require significant political will and leadership.

1. Child poverty and wellbeing in the United Kingdom

1.1 Introduction

Child poverty has been at the heart of the UK domestic agenda since 1999, when the Prime Minister Tony Blair announced “our historic aim, that ours is the first generation to end child poverty forever....It is a 20-year mission, but I believe it can be done.”

It is not entirely clear why the Prime Minister made that dramatic declaration, but at the time there was evidence that:

- Britain’s¹ child poverty rates had risen sharply in the 1980s and had not declined up to 1999;
- the child poverty rates had increased more in the UK than in most other industrialised countries;
- child poverty rates were comparatively higher in Britain than in most other OECD and EU countries; and
- inequality and high levels of child poverty were at the heart of many other problems facing children.

In this first section, this evidence will be reviewed in light of the most up-to-date time series and comparative data, though of course not all this information was available in 1999.

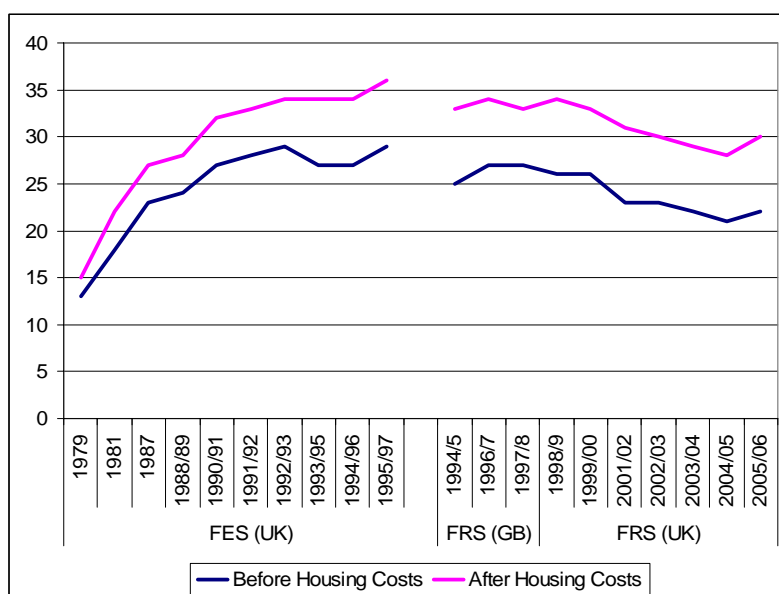
1.2 Trends in child poverty

Figure 1 presents child poverty rates from 1979 to 2005/6 (the latest year for which figures are available). These are derived from the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) series and use the relative poverty measure to monitor the effects of anti-poverty strategy. It can be seen that the child poverty rate more or less trebled during the 1980s, fluctuated during the 1990s and has fallen since 1998/9. In 1999, the Government set a target to reduce child poverty by 25 % by 2004/5, by 50 % by 2010 and to eradicate it altogether by 2020. Unfortunately, they missed the 2004/5 target: child poverty fell by 23 % before housing costs and by just 17 % after housing costs were considered.² The most recent data for 2005/6, published in March 2007, show a slight increase in child poverty.

¹ The main source of data on child poverty, the Family Resources Survey, has not included Northern Ireland until recently.

² Measures of income poverty to assess performance against the 2010 target will all use before housing costs.

Figure 1: Child poverty rates in Britain/UK 1979-2005/6. Percentage of children³ living in households with equivalent⁴ incomes less than 60 % of the median



Source: DWP (2007) Table H2

1.3 The comparative picture

Bradbury and Jantii (1999)⁵ used Luxembourg Income Study child poverty data between the mid-1980s and the mid-1990s to show that child poverty increased faster in the UK than in 12 other European countries. European Community Household Panel (ECHP) data also showed that until 2000, the UK had the highest child poverty rate in the EU 12, though it fell to the fifth highest in 2001. The latest Eurostat data are shown in Figure 2. Around 2003, the UK child poverty rate was 21st, equal with Bulgaria, Ireland and Romania.

Of course this is a comparison based on a relative threshold. When we show that the child poverty rate is higher in the UK than, say, Latvia, we are not really comparing like with like. The threshold of 60 % of the median is about €2 000 per year in Latvia compared with over €9 000 in the UK. There is also evidence from comparative analysis of the ECHP⁶ that the UK has a comparatively higher child poverty rate in terms of relative income than it does on subjective poverty measures, deprivation, persistent poverty and poverty gaps.

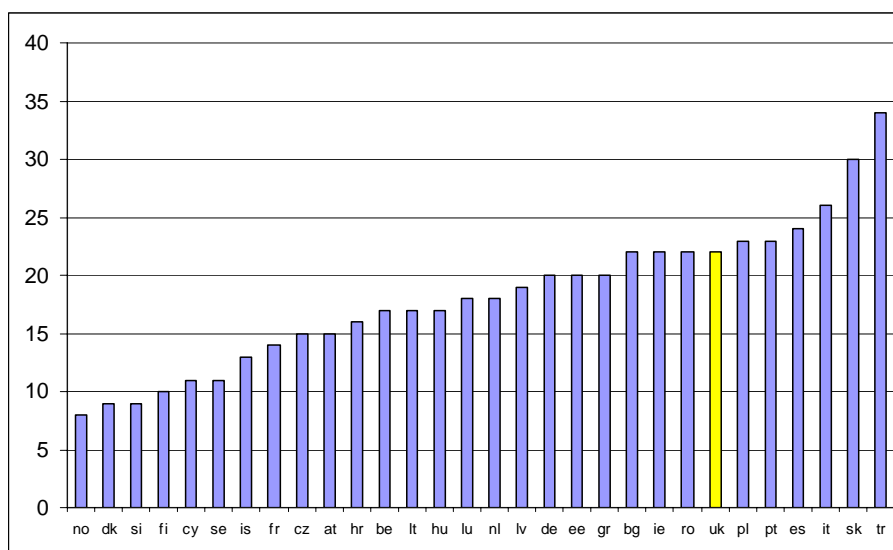
³ The definition of children is a little different to the EU under-17 definition. It is dependent children – i.e., children under 16, or aged 16-18 and in full-time education.

⁴ The Department for Work and Pensions has now adopted the modified OECD equivalence scale used by the EU, but this time series is based on the McClements scale, which produces very slightly lower child poverty estimates.

⁵ Bradbury, B and Jantii, M. (1999) "Child poverty across industrialised nations", Innocenti Occasional Papers Economic Policy Series 71, Florence: UNICEF.

⁶ Ritakallio, V-M. and Bradshaw, J. (2006) "Family poverty in the European Union", in Bradshaw, J. and Hatland, A. (eds.) *Social Policy, Family Change and Employment in Comparative Perspective*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Figure 2: Child poverty rate (<60 % median) 2003/4 (Eurostat 2007)



1.4 Child poverty risks and composition

The HBAI provides useful data on variations in the relative risks of child poverty in the UK. In 2005/6, the relative risk of a child being poor (after housing costs) was:

- 1.7 times if in a single-parent family;
- 2.5 times if in a single-parent family with the parent not in work;
- 2.6 times if in a couple family with no one working;
- 1.6 times if there were four or more children in the household;
- 2.2 times if in a Pakistani or Bangladeshi family; and
- 1.7 times if living in inner London.

The HBAI also provides important data on the composition of the population of poor children. Thus (after housing costs):

- 42 % of poor children live in a single-parent family, despite constituting only 25 % of all children;
- 33 % of all poor children live in a single-parent family where the mother is not working;
- 15 % of poor children live in couple families with no parent employed;
- However, 57 % of poor children have a parent in employment – they are poor both because they are relying on only one wage and because their earnings and the child benefit package are too low to lift them above the poverty threshold.

The link between poverty and ethnicity has recently been the focus of a spate of studies produced by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation.⁷ Platt⁸ found stark differences in poverty rates by ethnic group, with Bangladeshis, Pakistanis and Black Africans having the highest rates – over half of the children in these families are growing up in poverty. Educational qualifications, employment

⁷ Palmer, G. and Kenway, P. (2007) *Poverty among ethnic groups: How and why does it differ?*, York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation; Clark, K. and Drinkwater, S. (2007) *Ethnic minorities in the labour market: Dynamics and diversity*, Bristol: The Policy Press; Bagguley, P. and Hussain, Y. (2007) *The role of higher education in providing opportunities for South Asian women*, Bristol: The Policy Press; Salway, S. et al (2007) *Long-term ill-health, poverty and ethnicity*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

⁸ Platt, L. (2007) *Poverty and ethnicity in the UK*, Bristol: The Policy Press.

sector, labour market experience, discrimination, location, disability, ill health and family structure all contribute to explaining the differences.

Child poverty matters because there is a mass of evidence, reviewed recently in an HM Treasury document,⁹ that poor children have constrained lives, poorer health, less healthy diets, colder and more dilapidated housing conditions, higher risks of accidents and injuries, more physical abuse, less access to childcare and experience more bullying. They perform less well at school and their outcomes in terms of skills and employment opportunities are worse. Recent work using data from the 1980 birth cohort survey shows that disadvantages at 22 months continue to have an impact on employment and earnings right through to later life.¹⁰

1.5 Comparative evidence on child wellbeing

Probably the best source of comparative data on child wellbeing which compares UK children with the European Union is the 2007 study by Bradshaw, Hoelscher and Richardson.¹¹ This was based on existing data from internationally available series and sample surveys of children, and 51 indicators were combined into eight clusters covering:

- Material situation;
- Housing;
- Health;
- Subjective wellbeing;
- Education;
- Children's relationships;
- Civic participation; and
- Risk and safety

Figure 3 compares the ranking of different countries and shows that UK children rank fifth from bottom overall and in the bottom third of EU countries on child health, subjective wellbeing, children's relationships, material wellbeing and risk and safety. The UK comes in the middle third on education and civic participation and in the top third (remarkably, first) on housing and the environment. It is not a good result overall for the UK, which is one of the richest countries in the EU, to find itself grouped with some of the poorest countries, and the consistency of the picture is perhaps most troubling. When UNICEF published a similar analysis of OECD countries¹² with the UK at the bottom of the league table, it sparked a major media debate. The data in this index are not completely up to date, though the study is based on the most recent comparable data available. Child poverty has been falling in the UK and some other indicators have been moving in the right direction. It is also possible to argue about the fact that all indicators were given equal weight and to what degree they represent the full picture of child wellbeing. However, it is the first time that such data have been brought together, and many of the indicators are based on what

⁹ HM Treasury (2004) *Child Poverty Review*, London: The Stationery Office.

¹⁰ Feinstein, L. and Bynner, J. (2004) 'The importance of development trajectories in mid childhood: effects on adult outcomes in the UK 1970 Birth Cohort', *Child Development*, 75, 5.

¹¹ Bradshaw, J., Hoelscher, P. and Richardson, D. (2007) 'An index of child wellbeing in the European Union 25', *Journal of Social Indicators Research*, 80, 133-177.
<http://springerlink.metapress.com/content/f3642p2x00hn5h01/fulltext.pdf>

¹² Bradshaw, J. Hoelscher, P. and Richardson, D. (2007) 'Comparing child wellbeing in OECD countries: concepts and methods', IWP 2006-03. Florence:UNICEF.
http://www.unicef-icdc.org/publications/pdf/iwp2006_03_eng.pdf

children say about their lives. In short, it shows that much progress remains to be made by the UK.

Figure 3: Rank order of child wellbeing in the European Union.

Country	AVERAGE RANK	HEALTH	SUBJECTIVE WELLBEING	CHILDRENS RELATION-SHIPS	MATERIAL	RISK AND SAFETY	EDUCATION	CIVIC PARTICIPATION	HOUSING
Cyprus	4.6	5			1	2		1	14
Netherlands	5.1	2	1	5	10	5	6		7
Sweden	5.8	1	6	15	2	3	2	14	3
Denmark	6.5	3	9	10	6	15	3	4	2
Spain	8.9	13	3	9	8	1	15		13
Finland	9.8	7	12	17	3	7	4	18	10
Germany	10.0	10	7	12	12	12	9	10	8
Slovenia	10.4	15	8	3	4	18		13	12
Belgium	10.8	20	15	6	18	16	1	5	5
Ireland	12.4	19	5	8	19	20	7		9
Greece	12.5	25	4	11	17	8	16	2	17
Italy	12.5	16	11	4	15	6	19	11	18
Austria	12.6	21	2	16	7	19	17		6
Luxembourg	12.6	11	20	19	5	9	20		4
Hungary	12.9	22	10	7	14	14	12	3	21
Poland	12.9	6	19	13	23	11	5	6	20
France	13.0	14	13	14	11	10	14		15
Portugal	13.0	9	16	2	13	17	18	7	22
Malta	13.5	24	17	1	24	4			11
Czech Rep	14.1	4	14	22	9	21	10	17	16
UK	16.0	23	18	23	20	22	13	8	1
Slovak Rep	16.6	17	22		25	13	11	9	19
Latvia	17.5	18	21	18	16	23	8	12	24
Estonia	19.9	12	23	21	21	24		15	23
Lithuania	20.0	8	24	20	22	25		16	25

Source: Bradshaw, Hoelscher and Richardson, 2007.

2. Policies

2.1 Introduction

The issue of child poverty is a priority for domestic policy in the UK. The Government has set clear national targets to reduce child poverty over a 20-year period and these targets are owned jointly by HM Treasury and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). As well as the income poverty headline targets, other targets which have resonance with the child poverty and social inclusion agenda have been set for health, employment, education, social care and transport. The plans to achieve these goals are set out in the annual *Opportunity for All* report and other government reports produced periodically, and by each of the constituent countries of the UK in their own anti-poverty plans. Since 2006 there has also been an agreement between central and local governments to coordinate their strategy on child poverty (the Child Poverty Accord), which involves regular meetings and liaison; this is shown as an example of good practice in the national report on strategies for social protection and social inclusion.

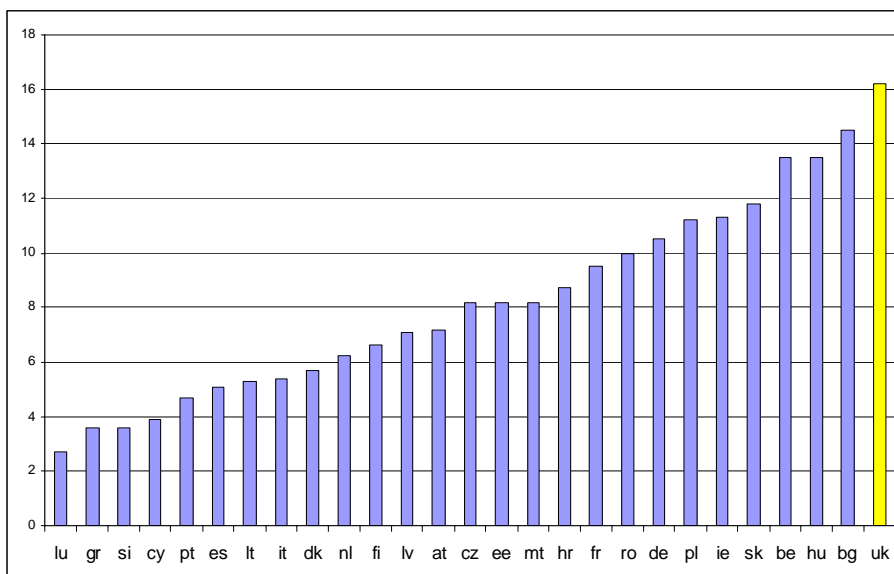
When the child poverty strategy was first articulated, it was in the context of the Government's proposal to provide "work for those who can, security for those who cannot". ('Security' is now often replaced by 'support') Policies are made up of a number of connected elements.

2.2 The employment strategy

The Government has sought to manage the economy to ensure that employment increases and that unemployment falls. This has undoubtedly succeeded. In successive National Action Plans (NAPs) reports, we have reported the success of the UK labour market. The latest statistics are not as good as they have been, but in November 2006-January 2007, the employment rate was 74.4 %, up over the last quarter and the year; ILO unemployment was 5.5 %, up over the year but down over the last quarter; the claimant count was 2.9 %, down over the last quarter and down over the year; labour market slack was 12.8 %, up over the quarter and the year.

However, despite these very good indicators, all is not well for families with children. The proportion of children living in workless households was 15.3 % in 2006, compared to 15.7 % in 2005 and 15.9 % in 2004, using national estimates. We also have the highest proportion of children living in workless families of any country in the European Union. Figure 4 presents the latest Eurostat data.

Figure 4: Percentage of children aged 0-17 living in workless households in 2006. (Eurostat 2007)



There are a number of reasons for this: much of the growth in employment has been concentrated in families with someone already in employment; there are still geographical areas with very high concentrations of unemployment relatively untouched by increases in labour demand. But the main reasons are that the UK has a large proportion of children living in single-parent families and the labour supply of single parents, while much improved in recent years (now about 57 %), is still comparatively low.

The Government has sought to support its general management of the economy to maximise employment with the New Deals, particularly the New Deal for Single parents: there is evidence that this has resulted in some single parents entering employment that otherwise might not have done so. The Government has also begun to invest heavily in childcare (see below). The other employment-based strategy has been to improve in-work incomes to 'make work pay'.

2.3 In-work incomes

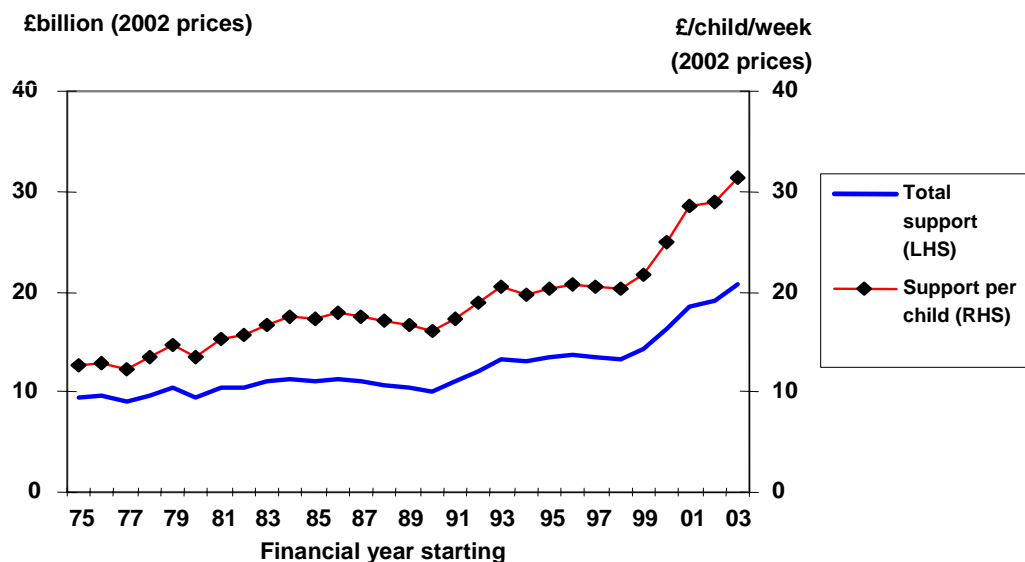
In-work incomes have improved considerably in real terms. The national minimum wage has increased faster than average earnings. Since 1999, Child Benefit has increased substantially in real terms for the first/eldest eligible child, and further increases were announced in the 2007 Budget. In addition, Working and Child Tax Credits have been introduced at higher levels than with the Working Families Tax Credit, and have increased in real terms, though the impact of this has been reduced because the improvements in line with earnings to the child element have been offset by the freezing of the level of earnings to the family element.

2.4 Out-of-work benefits

Jobless families with children have also benefited from improvements in Child Benefit and the child element of the Income Support/Child Tax Credit.

The increases to in-work and out-of-work benefits have been substantial. Figure 5 shows the sharp increase in public expenditure on the family tax and benefit package that has occurred, particularly since 1999.

Figure 5: UK tax and benefit support for children, 1975-2003

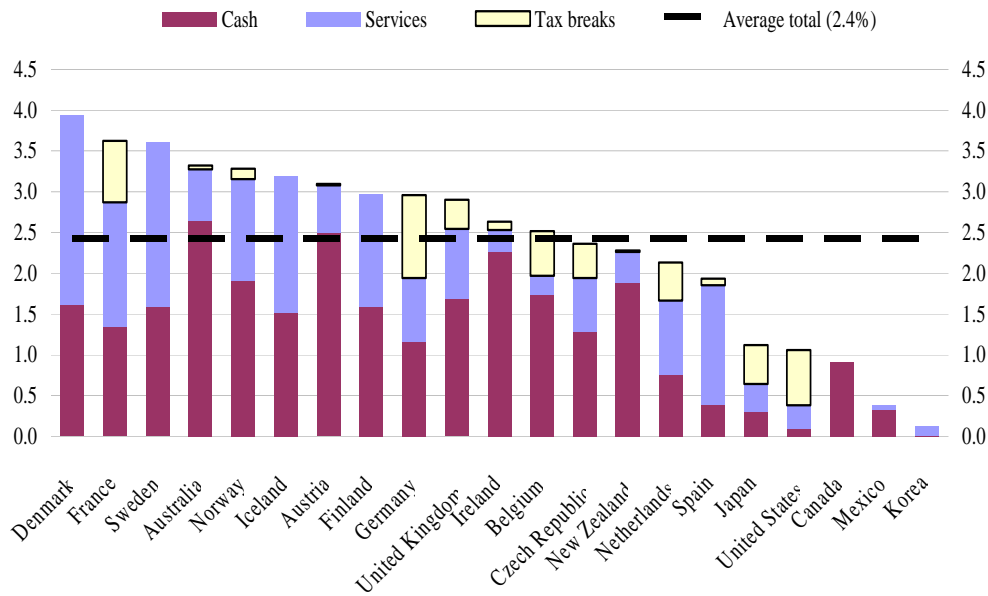


Source: *Can Child Poverty be Abolished? Promises and policies in the UK*, H. Sutherland: ASPC Sydney, 20 July 2005.

The latest OECD data in Figure 6 on expenditure on family benefits and services (which, unusually, takes account of tax expenditures) finds the UK in the middle of the international ranking on expenditure as a proportion of GDP, but slightly above average. This is almost certainly an improvement over previous years, though there is no consistent data series to show

it. Bradshaw,¹³ in a comparison of child benefit packages using model family methods in 15 countries as at January 2004, found the UK second in the league table after Austria, a considerable improvement on its position in July 2001 (Bradshaw and Finch 2002).¹⁴

Figure 6: Public spending on family benefits in cash, services and tax measures as a percentage of GDP, in 2003

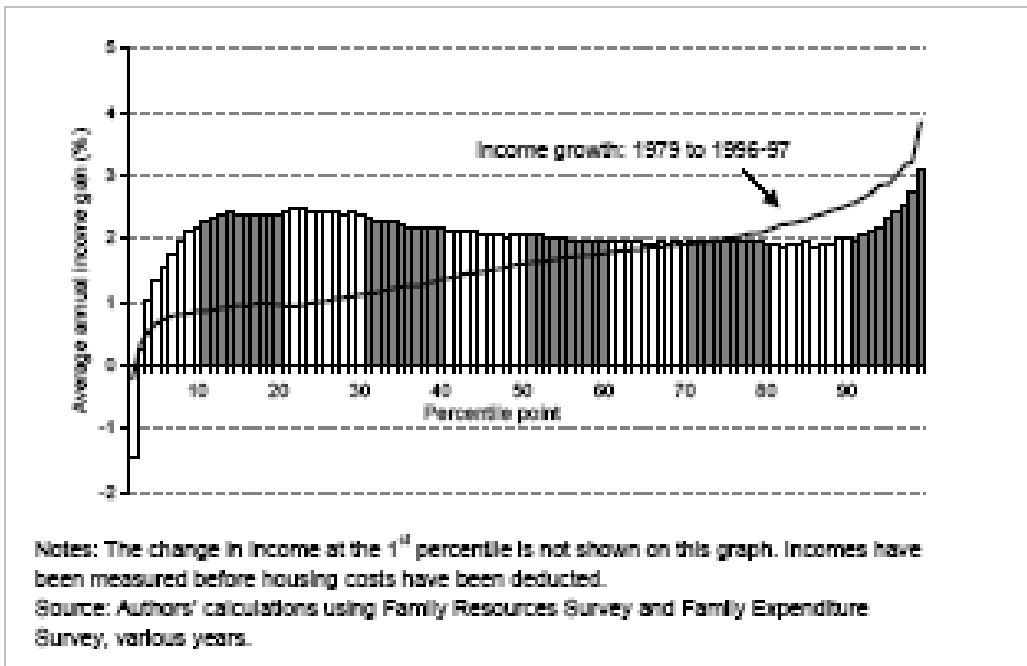


Source: OECD 2007¹⁵

This increase in spending has been broadly redistributive, concentrated on families at the bottom end of the income spectrum. The 2007 Budget Report (p. 107, para. 5.13) states that households with children will on average be £1 800 better off as a result of personal tax and benefit measures since 1997, whereas households with children in the poorest fifth of the population will be £4 000 better off. Figure 7 compares the income growth from 1996/97 to 2004/05 with the income growth from 1979 to 1996/97 – incomes have grown faster in the latter period for poorer families.

¹³ Bradshaw, J. (2006) 'Child benefit packages in 15 countries in 2004', in Lewis, J. (ed) *Children, changing families and welfare states*, Cheltenham: Edward Elgar. pp 69-89.
¹⁴ Bradshaw, J. and Finch, N. (2002) *A Comparison of Child Benefit Packages in 22 Countries*, DWP Research Report 174, Leeds: Corporate Document Services.
¹⁵ <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/45/46/37864391.pdf>

Figure 7 Income growth period 1996/97 to 2005/06 compared with period 1979 to 1996/97.

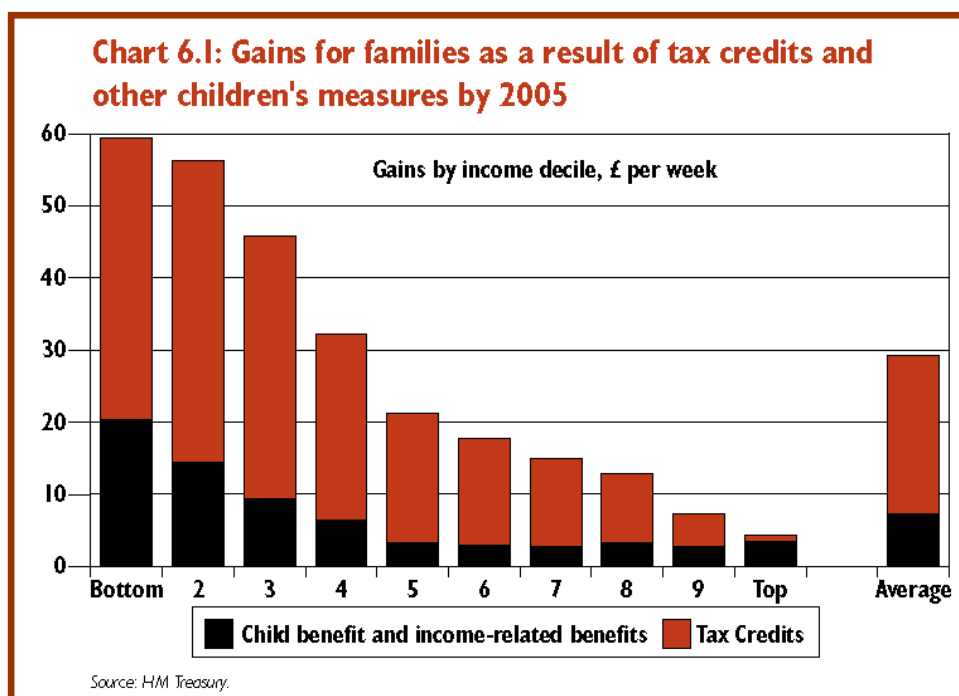


Source: Figure 7 Brewer et al (2007)¹⁶

Figure 8 shows how the increase in expenditure on children has been distributed by decile group: all deciles have experienced increases in their incomes, but the lower deciles have benefited most.

¹⁶ Brewer, M. et al (2007) Poverty and inequality in the UK: 2007 IFS Briefing note No. 73, London: IFS.

Figure 8: Gains for families as a result of tax credits and other children's measures by 2005.



Source: HM Treasury 2005¹⁷

2.5 Investment in services

The policies designed to improve employment and in-work and out-of-work incomes have been implemented alongside investments in services designed to help families with children. Public expenditure has been rising in real terms and as a proportion of GDP since 1999, to 42.7 % in 2005/6 (and an estimate of 43.1 % in 2006/7). Among the public services benefiting from this have been education, rising from 4.6 % of GDP in 1999 to 5.7 % in 2005/6, health (5.4 to 7.3 %) and transport (0.9 to 1.5 %).

There has been no recent appraisal of how this extra expenditure has benefited children -- particularly poor children. When Sefton¹⁸ undertook such an analysis of expenditure up to 2001 in England, there was evidence that it had become more 'pro-poor'. But he also found that most of the increased health expenditure was going into adult acute services and that while education expenditure was geared more towards poorer local education authorities, local school funding gave less weight to social needs than the central formula did. The 2003 Social Exclusion Unit report¹⁹ on transport expenditure concluded that most of the subsidies were going to middle- and upper-income groups in the form of expenditures on roads and railway subsidies, and that what was benefiting the poorest in bus subsidies was being spent on concessions for the elderly.

¹⁷ http://www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/media/A64/65/bud05_taxcredits_500.pdf

¹⁸ Sefton, T (2004) *A Fair Share of Welfare: Public spending on children in England*, CASEreport 25, London: Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, London School of Economics.

¹⁹ Social Exclusion Unit (2003) *Making the Connections: Transport and Social Exclusion*, London: Cabinet Office.

Since then, there has been recognition that the anti-poverty agenda needs to be incorporated into services, and central and local governments have formed a compact to that end (the Child Poverty Accord), with a partnership board holding regular meetings.

There have also been major developments in the provision of childcare services.²⁰ Following the first-ever national childcare strategy, published in 1998, the Government published a revised ten-year childcare strategy for England in 2004;²¹ similar developments have been under way in the other countries of the UK, though with some differences. Local authorities have new duties, and the number of childcare facilities has increased, particularly those offering out of school and early years full-time care. There is now one registered childcare facility for every three children under 8 (though the UK is still some distance from offering formal childcare services to cover all needs, and many low-income families in particular still use informal care). Free part-time nursery care has been made available to all three- and four-year-olds. To help cover formal childcare costs, tax credits are available for those on working tax credit, up to a ceiling - but these tax credits are not as effective as free provision or giving supply-side funding to childcare providers to reduce costs. Sure Start projects have provided various early years services, often including childcare, and are now to be expanded into children's centres, but these will receive less funding per centre. Some help has been provided through the offering of vouchers for some employees with childcare costs. A plan is in place to increase the skills of the childcare workforce, and the 2007 Budget announced free childcare places would be made available to up to 50 000 workless parents undertaking training to enable more of them to return to work.

But the childcare sector is still dominated by private and voluntary organisations, with parents having to meet a much higher proportion of costs than in many other European countries. The quality of the childcare workforce will take some time to improve. And it is not yet clear what resources will be made available in the Comprehensive Spending Review, due to report soon:

“The single most striking feature of countries that have achieved both high levels of employment and low levels of child poverty is the existence of universal childcare services. Unless adequate progress is made and sufficient funds committed to childcare, this could stand in the way of the Government achieving these other ambitions” (Daycare Trust 2007, p.3).

2.6 Appraisal of the strategy

Although these policies have reversed two decades of steady or rising child poverty, they have not been enough.

- Child poverty rates are still about double what they were in 1979;
- The Government failed to meet its target to reduce child poverty by a quarter by 2004/5; and
- In 2005/6, the latest year for which data are available, the number of children living in poverty increased again, by 100 000.

The government's poverty pledge was translated into income and material deprivation measures, and this has very much tended to be how poverty is gauged, rather than using measures of multidimensional poverty or social exclusion. In addition, it could be argued that apart from

²⁰ See Daycare Trust (2006) *Childcare Today: A progress report on the Government's ten year childcare strategy*, London: Daycare Trust.

²¹ HM Treasury, Department for Education and Skills, Department for Work and Pensions, Department of Trade and Industry (2004) *Choice for Parents, the Best Start for Children: A ten year strategy for childcare*, London: HMT, DfES, DWP, DTI.

measures to improve family incomes, policies are directed to the long-term, and so it is difficult to measure their success using the short-term indicators we have available.

The 'Every Child Matters' principles underlying the Government's approach towards children were drawn up in part as a result of the involvement of children and young people. Children also participated in discussions about the new measures of child poverty and there have been other events which have involved children and young people in debates about poverty issues and in discussions around the Children and Young People Review as part of the Comprehensive Spending Review. The 'Get Heard' exercise, supported by the DWP and the European Commission, involved widespread consultation about the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion with people with experience of poverty, including young people. However, Eurochild concludes that overall, "children and young people have not been involved in this process directly. They are represented only indirectly through involvement of organisations which represent people living in poverty".²²

The 'Every Child Matters' principles were drawn up in response to child protection issues. The Government does not tend to refer frequently to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, or to children's rights in general. A Children's Commissioner has now been appointed for England, in addition to the existing Commissioner in Wales. This appointment is increasing the profile of a children's rights perspective on policy, although the Commissioner's powers are relatively limited. The Government has still failed to ratify the revised European Social Charter, which gives economic and social rights the same status as the European Convention on Human Rights gives to civil and political rights, and is not disposed to defer to the Charter on Fundamental Rights, which does include children's rights to some extent. The Government's emphasis on responsibilities is thought by some to work against the application of a children's rights perspective, and is likely to affect children from poor backgrounds more.

It could also be argued that, despite the prominence of the Government's target, there could still be more emphasis on joined-up government in the strategy to end child poverty and social exclusion. It often seems easier to get more coherent cross-departmental action on procedural issues such as better regulation than on substantive policy issues such as this.

2.6.1 On employment

The government's target is an employment rate of 80 % of the working age population. Despite concerns about economic inactivity, the UK's employment rate is very high, already reaching EU targets for 2010 and with the highest employment rate in the G8. The Welfare Reform Green Paper²³ suggested that the Government wished to get one million incapacity benefit claimants, 300,000 single parents and one million older people into work, though the Welfare Reform Bill includes only measures for incapacity benefit claimants. Some commentators have suggested that this is too ambitious,²⁴ and we are not convinced that the Government can meet its employment targets.

²² Eurochild (2007) *Ending Child Poverty Within the EU?*, Brussels: AISBL, p. 91.

²³ Department for Work and Pensions (2006) *A New Deal for Welfare: Empowering people to work*, Cm 6859, London: The Stationery Office.

²⁴ Fothergill, S. and Wilson, I. (2006), *A Million off Incapacity Benefit: How achievable is the Government's target?*, Sheffield: Sheffield Hallam University.

The latest estimate of the lone parent employment rate is 57 % – up from 45 % in 1997, but with a long way still to go to 70 %. Research on the extension of work-focussed interviews for single parents shows no detectable change in exit rates from income support for new and repeat claimants, though there was a 2 % increase in exit rates for ongoing claimants after a year.²⁵ Overall, the New Deal for Single parents (NDLP) is well received.²⁶ But it may have selected for single parents most ready and willing to work: and getting other single parents into work may prove much more difficult. Already a smaller proportion of those attending mandatory work-focussed interviews agree to attend an initial voluntary NDLP interview. A study of work-focussed interviews found that the main barrier to work was childcare, but interrupted education, health problems and disabilities and childcare responsibilities could also be preventing single parents from working.²⁷ Single parents are aware of sanctions, and understand the principles.²⁸ A lobby group for single parents argues that to attach stricter work requirements to benefit for single parents is not a good way to achieve the 70 % target,²⁹ yet in its latest proposal (see below), the Government again proposes to increase conditionality on single parents, particularly on those with secondary school aged children

Another key issue is job exit rates. If single parents had the same rate as the rest of the population, the 70 % target could be met without greatly raising job entry rates.³⁰ This suggests a link with other policy agendas such as work quality, training/skills, and childcare.

2.6.2 On benefits/tax credits

In the 2007 Budget, the Chancellor announced increases in tax credits costing an extra £1 billion and claimed that this would lift another 200,000 children out of poverty. But these increases will not be in effect until April 2008. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's *Child Poverty Review* found that "the Government could meet its target of halving child poverty between 1998 and 2010 by spending an estimated £4 billion a year (0.3 % of GDP) more than currently planned on benefits and tax credit".³¹ The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's published reports also concluded that *not* ending child poverty itself has a significant cost.³²

Half of children in large families live in poverty, more than twice the percentage of children in single child families. The Chancellor's announcements in the last Budget on child benefits and tax credits also ignored the needs of large families which were the subject of two reports, one

²⁵ Knight, G. and Lissenburgh, S. (2005), *Evaluation of the Extension to Lone Parent Work Focused Interviews Eligibility: Administrative data analyses*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 237, Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

²⁶ See, for example, Holland, J. (2004), *Evaluation of the Extension to NDLP Eligibility*, W209, London: Department for Work and Pensions.

²⁷ Knight, G. and Thomas, A. (2006), *LPWFI and Review Meetings Administrative Data Analyses and Qualitative Evidence: Final report*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 315, Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

²⁸ Joyce, L. and Whiting, K. (2006), *Sanctions: Qualitative summary report on lone parent customers*, Working Paper 27, London: Department for Work and Pensions6.

²⁹ One Parent Families (2005), *Meeting the Target: How can the government achieve a 70 % employment rate for lone parents?*, London:OPF.

³⁰ Evans, M., Harkness, S. and Ortiz, R.A. (2004), *Lone Parents Cycling Between Work and Benefits*, Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 217, Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

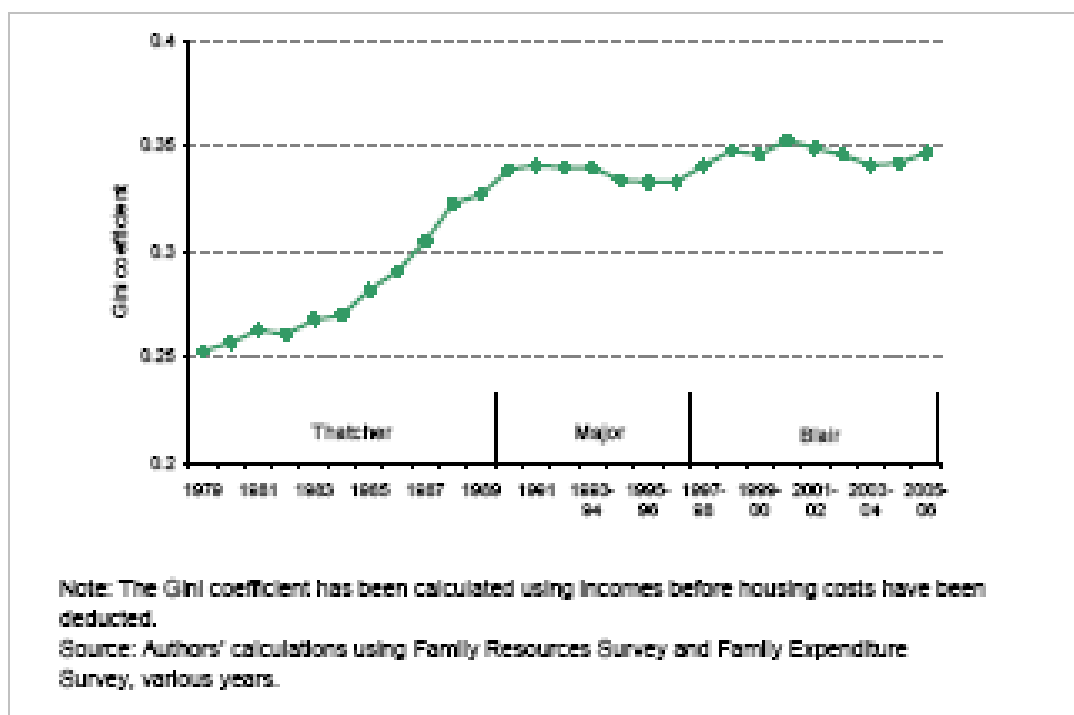
³¹ <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialpolicy/0366.asp>

³² Hirsch, D. (2006), *What Will it Take to End Child Poverty? Firing on all cylinders*, York: York Publishing Services Ltd. for Joseph Rowntree Foundation is the key document, with others also available from JRF: www.jrf.org.uk.

commissioned by the Government.³³ There is a growing consensus that financial support for families in the UK is out of line with that of many other countries because of its focus on the first child,³⁴ and that it should be reweighted to accommodate larger families. There is also a call for rebalancing support towards child benefits.³⁵

The whole of government policy since 1997 has failed to reduce inequality – the Gini coefficient in Figure 9 was higher in 2006/06 than it was when the Government came to power.

Figure 9: Inequality 1979-2005/06 (Gini coefficients)



Source: Figure 8 Brewer et al (2007)

The Government's strategy is probably the right one, but the effort has not yet been sufficient to meet the targets set. This can be illustrated in two ways. In Figure 10, based on Eurostat data, we show the child poverty rate before and after transfers (in this case, cash benefits). It can be seen that the UK starts with a pre-transfer child poverty rate only 19 % higher than in Sweden; but after transfers, the child poverty rate in the UK is 50 % higher than in Sweden. Sweden appears to make more effort; it spends more in making that effort, as we have seen in Figure 6; and the result is that its level of inequality is lower (.23 compared with .34 in the UK).

³³ Bradshaw, J., Finch, N., Mayhew, E., Ritakallio, V-M. and Skinner, C. (2006), *Child Poverty in Large Families*, York: York Publishing Services Ltd for Joseph Rowntree Foundation; and Iacovou, M. and Berthoud, R. (2006), *The Economic Position of Large Families*, DWP Research Report 358, Leeds: Corporate Document Services.

³⁴ Adam, S. and Brewer, M. (2004), *Supporting Families: The financial costs and benefits of children since 1975*, Bristol: The Policy Press for Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

³⁵ Bennett, F. with Dornan, P. (2006), *Child Benefit: Fit for the future*, London: Child Poverty Action Group.

Figure 10: Child poverty rate (<60 % median) pre- and post-benefits 2003 or 2004 (Eurostat 2007)

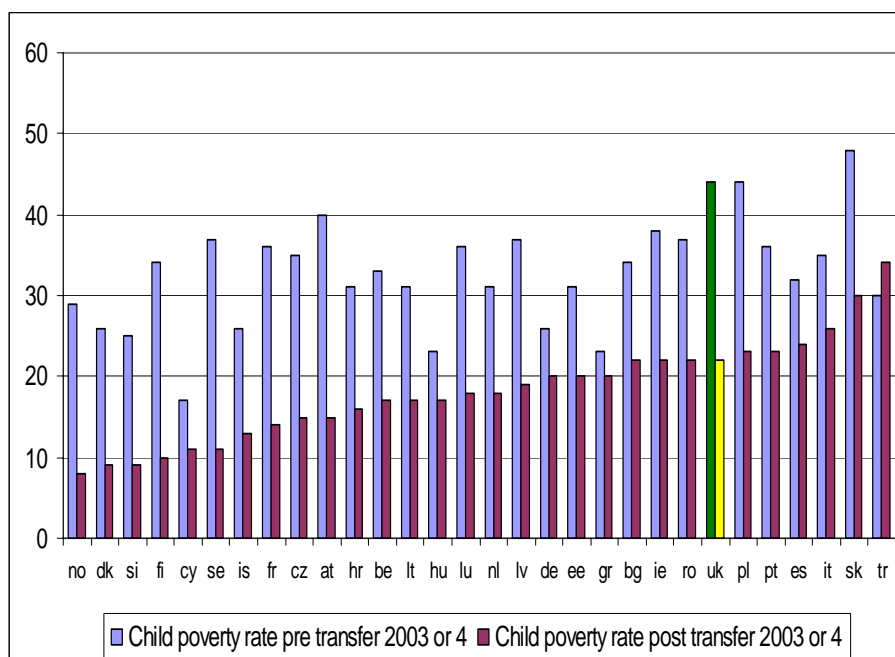
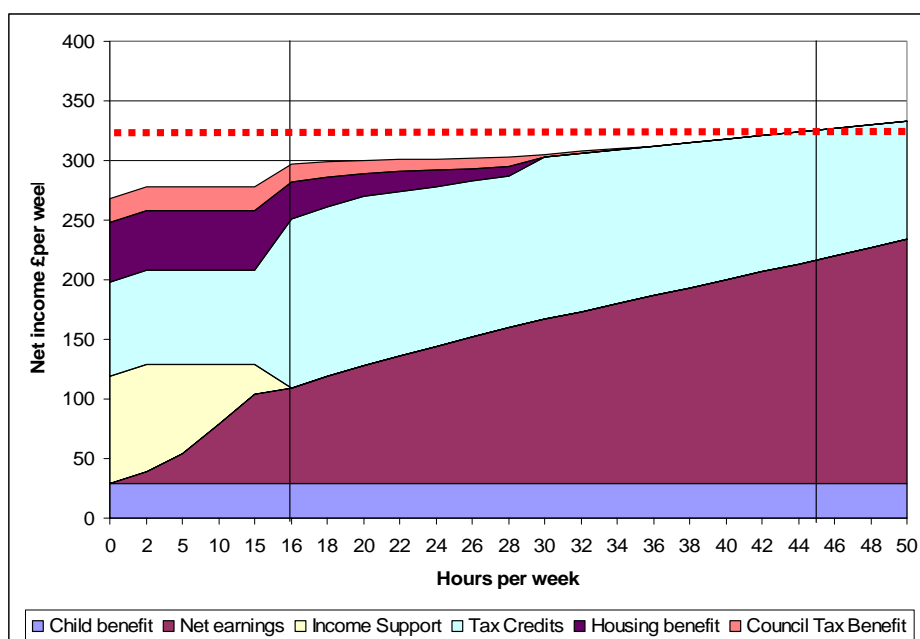


Figure 11 illustrates how the net disposable income for a couple with two children varies with the hours supplied at the minimum wage given the UK tax and benefit system. When this family is not earning and is dependent on out-of-work benefits, their net income is £268.01 per week before paying their housing costs. There is a gap of about £50 between their income and the poverty threshold. As the numbers of hours worked increases, that gap begins to close, but if the family has only one earner, it is not until this earner is working 45 hours per week for the minimum wage that the family's net income reaches the poverty threshold. This is why half of children in poverty have a parent in poverty. The minimum wage plus the in-work benefits are not sufficient to lift them out of poverty - unless they work more than full time or have a partner in employment.³⁶

³⁶ This might not be the case if partners were entitled to an income in their own right when not in employment; but in the predominantly means-tested benefits and tax credits system of the UK, in which maternity and parental leave is also only beginning to be improved towards continental European levels, this is often not the case.

Figure 11: Tax benefit model table situation after April 2006



Source: Authors' own calculations

2.6.3 On education

Two aspects of education policy may be seen as particularly important for child poverty: educational underachievement for social reasons (because of its implications for future life chances) and making education a socially inclusive experience (because of its implications for the childhood experience of children from lower-income families, and because of the impact on broader public attitudes of tackling prejudice from an early age).

Educational outcomes for lower-achieving children – a group likely to include many from low-income families - are improving, though slowly (*Opportunity for All*, 2006); and the Excellence in Cities programme has improved educational outcomes for secondary school pupils in disadvantaged areas.³⁷ But poor children are still significantly less likely to go to good schools, and this is essentially unaffected by the degree of 'choice'.³⁸ Two recent reports from London councils showed deprived and mobile pupils among those least likely to benefit from increased government spending on schooling; the Government has asked local authorities to review the effectiveness of the current funding formula in tackling deprivation. Some measures have been taken to help with education costs, but this is still a source of exclusion for many.

2.6.4 On health

A major focus of policy is narrowing health inequalities, including for children. But these have been amongst the most stubborn outcomes to change, and are in any case tackled largely

³⁷ Machin, S. *et al.* (2007), 'Resources and standards in urban schools', DP76, London: Centre for the Economics of Education, London School of Economics.

³⁸ Burgess, S. and Briggs, A. (2006), 'School Assignment, School Choice and Social Mobility', Working Paper 06/157, Bristol: Centre for Market and Public Organisation, University of Bristol.

through other areas of policy besides health services. An advisory body report has suggested that reducing health inequalities should be an objective for the whole of government.³⁹ There is debate about the relative importance of lifestyle versus environmental and other inequalities as causal factors. The Government has recently announced more funding for health promotion in deprived areas.

The social exclusion policy focus has been shifting on to 'hard-to-reach' families⁴⁰ (see below), following criticism that Sure Start children's centres did not always manage to reach the most disadvantaged. But a recent report describes a 'postcode lottery' of provision of health visitors who are most likely to be working with such families.⁴¹

2.6.5 On housing

The issues of housing and homelessness are seen as key to the deprivation aspect of the new child poverty measure. But in the first few years, Labour did not seem to give housing sufficient priority. More recently, homelessness has been dropping, and the government has announced a national scheme to reduce youth homelessness in conjunction with major charities. It has been trying to stop the use of shelters for families, though the numbers of families in temporary accommodation are still very high. There has been progress in ensuring more homes are 'decent', and before the recent price rises there had also been progress on poverty due to fuel costs. But Shelter argued in late 2006 that 1.6 million children (1 in 7) were growing up homeless or in substandard housing.

2.6.6. On care and protection

The child protection case behind 'Every Child Matters' also led to the creation of children's services departments combining education and children's social services. This appears to be working for the majority of children and young people in most local authorities, but for a significant minority, provision is still not good enough.⁴² The Social Care Inspectorate says much more must be done before all children reliant on social care get help to be safe and achieve their potential.⁴³ Over a hundred suggestions for new policies have been made by children and young people themselves.⁴⁴

There has recently been a policy focus on young people within and exiting the care system, but this has been questioned on the grounds that other young people who have had difficulties do worse on a range of outcomes.⁴⁵ Family organisations argue that targets for increased adoptions can lead to undue pressure on families in difficulty; Northern Ireland's review of children's services has a target for reductions in children taken into care. There is also some concern about the potentially socially stigmatising effect of early intervention, though many believe that early intervention is the only way to prevent significant lifetime inequalities from developing

³⁹ Council for Science and Technology (2006) *Health Impacts: A strategy across government*, London: Department for Trade and Industry.

⁴⁰ Social Exclusion Task Force (2007) *Families at Risk: Background on families with multiple disadvantages*, London: Cabinet Office.

⁴¹ Gimson, S. (2007) *Health Visitors: An endangered species*, London: National Family and Parenting Institute.

⁴² Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (2007) *Narrowing the Gap: The inspection of children's services*, HMI 070041, London: Ofsted.

⁴³ Commission for Social Care Inspection (2007) *Children's Services: CSCI Findings 2004-07*, London: CSCI.

⁴⁴ Children's Rights Director (2007) *Policy by Children*, London: Commission for Social Care Inspection

⁴⁵ Cameron, C. et al. (2007) *Using Health, Education, Housing and Other Services: A study of care leavers and young people in difficulty*, Research Report TCRU-01-07, London: Department for Education and Skills.

2.6.7 On sport/recreation and culture

The Department for Culture, Media and Sport has a public service agreement (PSA) target to increase the participation of 'priority groups' (aged 16 and under) in sport and cultural activities; but other than this and an aim of helping to reduce child obesity, its PSA targets do not appear to reflect a high priority on child poverty and social exclusion. Its target of significantly increasing the proportion of 5-16 year olds who take part in sporting activities at school – which has been met - could be seen in this way, but is not specifically couched in such terms. The Government has just announced increased funding specifically for disadvantaged children for sport, drama and music after school as part of its plan for 'extended schools'.

2.7 Next steps

2.7.1 Working for Children report

In March 2007 the DWP published *Working for Children* in response to reports it had previously commissioned: Lisa Harker's independent review of the child poverty strategy⁴⁶ and David Freud's review of the welfare to work strategy.⁴⁷ The document reaffirms the Government's belief that "work is the best route out of poverty for most parents and their children" (p.3). It quotes with approval Freud's recommendation that single parents with a child over 12 should be moved on to Jobseeker's Allowance or another benefit if they have caring or health problems. The 2007 Budget announced an extension – and, in London, an expansion - of the In-Work Credit for single parents of £40 per week (in London £60 per week). From April 2007, a Work-Related Activity Premium for single parents with older children on Income Support who are prepared to undertake work-related activity is also being piloted.

Child Support is to be reformed again following a review by Sir David Henshaw. The White Paper⁴⁸ announces that the Government will significantly increase the amount of maintenance that all parents with care responsibilities can keep before affecting the level of out-of-work benefits they receive, though this change will not occur until 2010-11, so it will not be contributing to meeting the 2010 child poverty target.

In order to help parents to stay in work and progress in employment, the report approves the recommendations of the Leitch Review of Skills,⁴⁹ which include screening for basic skills needs, help in addressing skills needs for those in and out of work, a new adult careers service and a new objective for skills and employment services focused on sustainable employment and progression. It is also hoped that the Employment Retention and Advancement demonstration (ERA) project, which provides adviser support and financial incentives for low-income workers to stay in work and take up training, will be put into action. Harker's report on child poverty strategy pointed out that, leaving aside the New Deal for Lone Parents, welfare to work programmes did not take account of whether a client was a parent or not. The DWP is now proposing to extend

⁴⁶ Harker, L. (2006) *Delivering on Child Poverty: What would it take?*, Cm 6951, London: The Stationery Office. Harker's brief was only to look at the Department for Work and Pensions' strategy to tackle child poverty, not the cross-departmental strategy across government.

⁴⁷ Freud, D. (2007) *Reducing Dependency, Increasing Opportunity; Options for the future of welfare to work*. An independent report to the Department for Work and Pensions, London: DWP.

⁴⁸ Department for Work and Pensions (2006), *A New System of Child Maintenance*, Cm 6979, London: The Stationery Office.

⁴⁹ HM Treasury, *Prosperity for All in a Global Economy: World class skills*, Leitch Review of Skills, London: The Stationery Office.

'New Deal Plus' to all single parents and couples in London receiving benefits, to focus 'Jobcentre Plus' on helping people with children, looking more carefully at the employment prospects of both partners in couples -- including asking about their childcare needs and offering childcare 'tasters' to parents -- and to direct the Partners Outreach pilots to Pakistani and Bangladeshi families.

2.7.2 Social exclusion

In September 2006, the Minister for the Cabinet Office and Social Exclusion published *Reaching Out: an Action Plan on Social Exclusion*. This focusses on the small groups of people whose needs are unique and complex, including 'hard-to-reach' families. It has five guiding principles:

- Better identification and early intervention;
- Identifying what works;
- Multi-agency cooperation;
- Personalisation, rights and responsibilities; and
- Supporting achievement and managing under-performance.

The measures proposed include:

- To implement Health-led parenting support demonstration projects from pre-birth to age 2;
- To work with midwives and health visitors to improve their skills in the treatment of children during their early years;
- A Green Paper on children in care to improve outcomes including budget-holding advocates;
- To revise teenage pregnancy strategy;
- To implement pilot programmes to tackle mental health disorders in childhood; and
- To improve available parenting support and training.

The policy focus on the most disadvantaged is continuing, with a policy review of families at greatest risk of social exclusion having just been announced. There has been some concern that such a focus may risk stigmatising these families, and ATD Fourth World, which works with multiply disadvantaged families, has produced a leaflet⁵⁰ suggesting that it is not so much that families like this are 'hard-to-reach', but that services need to take things at their pace, provide help in an unthreatening way and ensure that trust is built up. (The new 'parent support advisers' in schools in deprived areas are meant to support children and families who appear to need additional help could perform this role.⁵¹) Some have also suggested that the new focus risked sending a message that child poverty had been solved except for this 'hard core', but the latest child poverty figures make it difficult to support this interpretation.

2.7.3 Public Service Agreement targets

The Treasury has recently intimated that as a result of the latest Comprehensive Spending Review, due to report later in 2007, the PSA target outcomes will shrink from 500 to around 30. One of these targets will remain halving the relative child poverty rate by 2010, on the way to eradicating it by 2020. For each PSA the Government will publish a delivery agreement which will

⁵⁰ ATD Fourth World (2007) *Not Too Hard to Reach: Developing a tool to reach the most disadvantaged families*, London: ATD Fourth World.

⁵¹ HM Treasury and Department for Education and Skills (2005) *Support for Parents: The best start for children*, London: HMT and DfES.

detail a high-level strategy, delivery and accountability mechanisms and plans to engage users to improve public services. Importantly, the delivery agreement will not outline a comprehensive strategy for reaching the 2020 target. It is narrowly focussed on child poverty over the spending review period, how government departments will work together to achieve the 2010 target and how the Government will be held accountable for doing so. In addition, this delivery agreement will not provide additional information about resources.

2.7.4 Children and Young People Review

The Government has not repeated its child poverty review which reported several years ago, but it has set up a cross-cutting review of policies on children and young people with a greater scope than poverty and social exclusion issues for the current Comprehensive Spending Review. The interim report⁵² contained the recommendations of three sub-reviews which proposed a strategy for youth services, better support for disabled children and support for families caught in a cycle of low achievement with the poorest outcomes.

Outside this review, a Green Paper was published in March 2007⁵³ suggesting raising the compulsory age for participation in education and training to 18. In addition, the 2007 Budget announced 'activity agreements' for 16-17 year-olds not in education, employment or training and on severe hardship Jobseeker's Allowance in order to persuade them to 're-engage'.

2.7.5 'Insight research'

Government departments have been undergoing 'capability reviews'. A review of the DWP suggested that it needs to know more about its clients' preferences and behaviour in a more holistic sense. The DWP has responded by saying it will engage in 'insight research'. This may result in more participatory forms of research which reveal the priorities of those living on DWP benefits, including parents of children in poverty.

2.8 Concerns

Concerns about the child poverty strategy include a worry that children in severe poverty are not benefiting as much. Looking at individuals as a whole, not just children, Brewer et al (2007, p. 27)⁵⁴ say that though the changes are relatively small, in the past decade there has been a rise in the proportion of people in households living on under 40 % of median income, whereas the proportion of those living on incomes below higher fractions of median income has declined. They argue that whether this can be seen as a failure of government strategy is open to question: Due to government policy, the incomes of some of the poorest have failed to keep pace with those of the rest of society, but this largely involves those without children; on the other hand, there is some doubt about the accuracy of income figures at this level, particularly those of the self-employed, so it is difficult to know how important such trends are. There are serious concerns

⁵² HM Treasury and Department for Education and Skills (2007) *Policy Review of Children and Young People: A discussion paper*, London: HMT and DfES.

⁵³ Department for Education and Skills, Green Paper (2007), *Raising Expectations: Staying in education and training post-16*, Cm 7065, London: The Stationery Office.

⁵⁴ Brewer, M., Goodman, A., Muriel, A. and Sibieta, L. (2007) *Poverty and Inequality in Britain: 2007*, London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.

that government policy is not always consistent in the sense that some policy goals – such as the refusal to provide support to asylum seekers and family members whose claims have been rejected and whose rights of appeal have been exhausted – are given a higher priority than the goal of protecting all children against poverty and social exclusion.

The Opposition Conservatives have focused on family breakdown as a cause of child poverty, with policy proposals including a tax subsidy for marriage; this is often related to the view of some commentators that the tax credits/benefits system favours single-parent families. The idea of a tax subsidy for marriage has been much criticised. However, the latest figures cited in Brewer et al⁵⁵ show a rise in the percentage of children in two-parent families living in poverty, and the Government has already identified increasing the number of second earners in such families as a policy goal which it intends to pursue.

The proposals mentioned above in Harker's report should help to achieve this. However, there has been strong criticism of some of the proposals in Freud's report. This applies not only to his suggestion of more widespread involvement of private sector bodies in the delivery of 'welfare to work' policies but also to his proposal to increase conditionality on single parents by withdrawing the right to benefit without seeking work from those with children aged 11-12 or over. One Parent Families, for example,⁵⁶ argues that whilst it supports the Government's ambition to help more single parents into work, two thirds of single parents in this group are already employed and those who are not often have very good reasons for this, including health problems, having to care for a child with a disability, or a lack of adequate and affordable childcare. Although the UK is exceptional internationally, its single parents tend to be younger, have more children and fewer qualifications; they have to pay a higher percentage of childcare costs and they are more likely to be in poverty even when employed than in most other European countries.

Other policy suggestions in Harker's report may be less likely to be adopted by the Government than her proposals on second earners, i.e. selective increases in the value of some benefits for adults (p. 54) and her suggestion that increasing Child Benefit payments for second and subsequent children to the level for the first child would result in "nearly one-quarter of the children that need to be lifted out of poverty by 2010" escaping poverty (p. 62)⁵⁷. The Government's preference for less expensive, more targeted approaches means that some proposals may not be taken up despite the widespread public support they have attracted.

Harker notes that "the significant contribution of low earnings to high levels of child poverty in the UK", which she says "raises some fundamental questions" (p. 39). She highlights the undervaluation of work in the service sector primarily performed by women as well as the gender pay gap. In this way she links – as the Government tends not to do – issues of gender equity with the child poverty agenda. This could be expanded, for example, by observing the difficult funding situation for women trying to gain Level 3 qualifications to improve their pay.

Perhaps her most important comments, however, are more wide-ranging and challenging:

"[...] the major drivers of poverty – such as high levels of wage and wealth inequality – remain considerable impediments towards reaching the 2020 child poverty target, suggesting that far greater changes to the distribution of wealth, earnings and opportunities in society will be necessary before child poverty is finally eradicated" (p. 9).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ One Parent Families (2007) 'Lone parents and employment conditionality: key points', London: OPF.

⁵⁷ Harker, L. (2006) *Delivering on Child Poverty: What would it take?*, Cm 6951, London: The Stationery Office.

There is as yet no convincing evidence that the Government is willing to address inequalities in the UK in the way that many commentators believe is necessary to make real progress in eradicating child poverty in the long term.

3. Arrangements in place for monitoring the wellbeing of children

3.1 *Opportunity for All* reports

As well as announcing that child poverty would be eradicated by 2020, the Prime Minister promised that efforts would be made to monitor progress towards that goal. This took the form of the *Opportunity for All* reports, which have been produced every autumn since 1999. The reports contain detailed commentary on policy developments very similar to the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion reports and a set of indicators covering children and young people, people of working age, older people and communities. In the latest report (DWP 2006)⁵⁸ there were 24 indicators covering children and young people; they included absolute and relative income poverty, persistent poverty, health, education, housing and the circumstances of special groups. All the indicators are Public Service Agreement targets.

From baseline data (mostly from 1997), 15 indicators had improved; 4 had worsened; 3 had not changed and for 2 there was insufficient data. The indicators that had worsened were:

- Education gaps of looked-after children;
- Class differentials in infant mortality;
- Obesity rates of children aged 2-10; and
- Number of families living in temporary accommodations

In the most recent year for which figures were available, 8 indicators had improved, 1 had worsened, for 13 there was no change and for one there were no data. The 13 for which there was no change were:

- Children in workless households;
- Teenage conceptions;
- Key Stage 2 attainments;
- School attendance;
- Number of looked-after children who were not in education, employment or training;
- Stability in the lives of looked-after children;
- 16-18 year olds in education;
- Class differentials in infant mortality;
- Serious unintentional injuries;
- 11-15 year-olds smoking;
- Obesity rates of children aged 2-10;
- Re-registration on the child protection register; and
- Number of families living in temporary accommodation

⁵⁸ Department for Work and Pensions (2006), *Opportunity for All: Eighth Annual Report 2006: Strategy Document and Indicators Document*, London: The Stationery Office.

3.2 *Every Child Matters* goals

In addition to the *Opportunity for All* indicators, the Department for Education and Skills has the *Every Child Matters Child Outcomes Framework*, which has a set of targets and indicators based around five domains of child wellbeing:

- Economic wellbeing: having sufficient income and material comfort to be able to take advantage of opportunities;
- Being healthy: being in good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle;
- Staying safe: being protected from harm and neglect and growing up able to be independent;
- Enjoying and achieving: getting the most out of life and developing broad skills for adulthood;
- Making a positive contribution: developing the skills and attitudes needed to participate in and contribute positively to the society in which they live.

While these reflect government priorities and many of the targets are PSA targets, the *Outcomes Framework* has not yet been used to monitor child wellbeing on a systematic basis - and indeed some of the indicators cannot be quantified. There is some evidence that local authorities find the goal of economic wellbeing hardest to know how to influence.

3.3 Other data available


Save the Children has published two edited books⁵⁹ which review child wellbeing in the UK. The Association of Public Health Observatories⁶⁰ produced a special report on child health in England which also compared variation in health indicators in the English regions and between England and other EU countries.

There is a considerable body of research on children produced by a variety of agencies, and there is a fairly rich set of data on children in the UK. The Family Resources Survey is a good source of data on child income poverty, and now contains deprivation measures which will be used to inform a tertiary child deprivation measure that the Government intends to introduce in order to supplement the existing relative and absolute income measures. Meanwhile, there is the Family and Child Survey (FACS), which tracks a panel of families with children and which can be used to monitor aspects of their wellbeing over time. Table 1 is derived from the FACS survey and shows that on a number of indicators the wellbeing of families with children has improved over time.

⁵⁹ Bradshaw, J. (2002) *The Wellbeing of Children in the UK*, London: Save the Children; Bradshaw, J. and Mayhew, E. (2005) *The Wellbeing of Children in the UK* (2nd Edition), London: Save the Children.

⁶⁰ Association of Public Health Observatories (2007) *Indications of Public Health in the English Regions 5: Child health*.

Table 1: Material wellbeing: Families with children



	1999	2003
Proportion unable to afford selected items		
Cooked main meal every day	8	2
Weatherproof coat for each child	9	5
Toys and sports gear for children	24	10
Two pairs all weather shoes for each child	25	10
One week holiday, not with relatives	74	55
Financial stress		
Always run out of money before end of week	27	18
Not managing financially	35	18
Worried about money almost all the time	45	27

2005: H. Sutherland: *Can Child Poverty be Abolished? Promises and Policies in the UK*, ASPC Sydney 20th July 2005,

The FACS survey has begun to include young people in the sample; this will become a useful source of data to monitor young people over time. Meanwhile, the British Household Panel Survey has been interviewing young people aged 11-15 since 1994 – including collecting data on their happiness and self-esteem. Table 2 shows that the subjective wellbeing of young people does not seem to have changed over time.

Table 2: Subjective well-being. Mean scores over time.

<i>Wave</i>	<i>Happiness</i>		<i>Feeling (less) troubled</i>		<i>Self-esteem</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>S.D.</i>
4	23.8	4.0	4.5	1.3	9.6	2.3
5	23.6	4.3	4.7	1.2	10.3	2.6
6	24.0	4.2	4.7	1.2	10.3	2.5
7	24.2	4.0	4.8	1.3	10.7	2.5
8	24.1	4.0	4.8	1.2	10.8	2.5
9	24.2	3.9	4.8	1.2	10.9	2.7
10	23.9	4.1	4.7	1.3	10.7	2.6
11	23.9	4.3	4.8	1.2	10.9	2.6
12	24.0	4.2	N/A	N/A	10.1	2.0
13	24.1	4.0	N/A	N/A	10.2	2.5
Overall	24.0	4.1	4.8	1.2	10.5	2.5

Source: Antonia Keung Doctoral thesis University of York.

There are a youth cohort survey and periodic surveys of child health and child mental health associated with the English Health Surveys. There are also a number of birth cohort surveys of children which enrich our understanding of the relationship between childhood experiences and their adult outcomes. The latest of these – the Millennium Cohort Survey, based on a sample of about 17,000 children born in 2000 - is beginning to yield evidence on poverty and wellbeing.⁶¹

However, there is as yet no nationally representative sample survey of children of all ages. The main sources of information on children in the UK over time have in fact been international studies: the OECD PISA survey of 15-year-olds undertaken every three years and the Health Behaviour of School Children Survey of 11-, 13- and 15-year-olds undertaken every four years. Things may now be changing, however. The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has launched the Tellus 2 survey. This is to be an annual survey of a sample of 1,300 children aged 6, 8 and 10 years in each local authority who attend schools. It is to be integral to the Annual Performance Assessment and the findings will be used to test the outcomes in the Children and Young People’s Plan. The first survey is planned for July 2007 and it is intended that this will produce a representative national picture of child wellbeing.

The Children’s Society, one of the larger children’s charities, launched its *Good Childhood Inquiry* in 2006 and it is proposing to develop a school-based survey of the wellbeing of a large sample of children in England aged 10, 12 and 14 years. The start date of this survey was pushed back to September 2007, so as not to coincide or interfere with the DfES survey.

⁶¹ Bradshaw, J., Mayhew, E, Dex, S., Joshi, H. and Ward, K. (2005) ‘Socioeconomic origins of parents and child poverty’, in Dex, S. and Joshi, H. (eds) *Children of the 21st Century: From birth to nine months*, Bristol: The Policy Press, pp 71-108.

3.4 Conclusions

Children's charities such as the Children's Society, Barnardo's and Save the Children work with disadvantaged children and young people and publish reports on issues of direct relevance to child poverty and social exclusion; they can be seen as an element in civil society which holds governments accountable. In recent years, Save the Children has focused on the issue of severe and persistent child poverty.⁶² It is also a pioneer of methods to engage children and young people themselves in debates about the causes and consequences of poverty and what should be done about it. Smaller pressure groups such as the Child Poverty Action Group that focus on children/child poverty issues monitor the government's performance closely. These groups are complemented by research centres (particularly in recent years, the Institute for Fiscal Studies) which produce technical and highly professional analyses of data on income poverty from an independent perspective. There are now twice-yearly 'stakeholders' meetings' between DWP, HM Treasury and groups involved in work on child poverty at which issues of mutual concern are discussed.

However, the Chancellor has declared that the Government cannot go much further in tackling child poverty in the UK unless it is put under more pressure to do so; he compares this with the regular displays of demonstrable public concern over Third World debt and poverty. End Child Poverty (ECP), an alliance of non-governmental organisations concerned about child, was set up in part to try to achieve this. ECP therefore prioritises changing public attitudes (though would probably argue that the Government has more resources to do so). Recent evidence about such attitudes has shown how far there is to go.⁶³ The Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Oxfam are both engaged in programmes to explore and influence public attitudes towards poverty. There is a growing consensus that there is a need for more focus on efforts to change widespread ideas and beliefs about people living in poverty if a strategy against child poverty is to be successful and sustainable in the long-term.

⁶² Adelman, L., Middleton, S. and Ashworth, K. (2003) *Britain's Poorest Children: Severe and persistent poverty and social exclusion*, London: Save the Children.

⁶³ See, for example, Fabian Commission on Life Chances and Child Poverty (2005) *Life Chances: What does the public really think about poverty?*, London: Fabian Society.

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