



Ending child poverty: challenges and opportunities

Glasgow's Healthier Futures Forum 12
15th December 2011

www.cpag.org.uk/scotland

Ending child poverty

- Scale, extent and nature of child poverty in Scotland
- Impact of that poverty – why it matters
- What needs to be done?
 - at UK level
 - at Scotland and local level
- Challenges and Opportunities

Scale and nature of child poverty

- 250 000 (25%) children living in poverty
(2009/10)
- some children at particular risk
 - families affected by disability
 - one parent families
 - families without paid work
- affects families across Scotland, but concentration and nature varies



Impact of child poverty

- poverty damages health – poverty kills
 - health compromised from birth – average birth weight 200g lower
 - 2 ½ times more likely to have chronic illness as toddlers
 - 3 times more likely to suffer mental disorders
- poverty undermines learning
 - nine months behind by age three
 - gap widens as go through school
- poverty undermines life chances
 - More likely to be unemployed as adult
 - More likely to be the parents facing poverty in the future
- poverty damages childhoods
- poverty in Scotland may be “relative” but its impact on children is absolute
- Child poverty costs us all – est. £1.5billion a year



Impact of child poverty: beyond the statistics

Ann, 48

"I'll make sure that my son eats before I do. In the last fortnight before pay day I would say I skip meals maybe twice a week, just to make sure that he has enough"

Oxfam/IpsosMORI, Oct 2011

Mother, 30s

'The kids have had to give up so much because there's not been the money there. Couldn't afford the brownies and Cubs and swimming because of the petrol money... I dinnae have the fuel, I dinnae have the money.'

Poverty Alliance, EPIC project, 2011

Courtney, 9

"When I pick up my baby sister, she smells of mould."

"What I hate...is you feel that you want to be sick when you have visitors. I don't like having pals in my house, in case they bully me."

Poor Kids, www.truevisiontv.com, 2011



What needs to be done?

Context:

Nothing inevitable about this poverty

Not starting from scratch.....

- Real progress: since 1997 100 000 fewer children in poverty
- Policy worked: at UK and Scotland level
- Political consensus: UK Child Poverty Act 2010
- Scottish government: Solidarity target, poverty framework and new Child Poverty strategy



What needs to be done? Context cont.

.....but huge **challenges**

- progress had stalled even before recession/cuts
- Over £18billion welfare cuts, hitting poorest hardest
- IFS predict massive rise in child poverty
- Scotland: little evidence that spending decisions being proofed for impact on child poverty despite national anti-poverty frameworks.
- Explicit commitments on free school meals, nursery education and school clothing grants already scaled back.

What needs to be done?

What are the **opportunities**?

At UK level:

- Hold to account on 2010 Child Poverty Act
- Challenge cuts to benefits and tax credits
- Work together to:
 - challenge the myths that drive welfare policy
 - seek practical amendments to UK Welfare Reform Bill
 - present an alternative positive vision for welfare

Opportunities in Scotland?

- Use of new welfare powers to protect poorest families?
 - social fund and council tax benefit replacements
 - revisit criteria for passported benefits
 - access to advice and information
- Build on existing commitments
 - Extend early years nursery provision
 - Universal free school meals commitments
 - School clothing grant recommendations
- Preventative spend and early intervention
 - Need to prioritise spending and delivery that prevent child poverty
- Build on commitments to Scottish Living Wage
- Proposed legislation on children's rights and services

Conclusion

- Faltering economy and cuts must not be excuse for inaction.
- Fundamental choices to be made about kind of society we want
- Whatever level of growth and public spending need a fairer distribution
- Scotland and UK extraordinarily wealthy
- Need to ensure that wealth is used to end child poverty



**CHILD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP**
in SCOTLAND

www.cpag.org.uk/scotland