

Written evidence from the Essex Child and Family wellbeing Service (CPM0033)

How should child poverty be measured and defined? As a specialist community public health nurse (SCPHN)- School nurse working on the frontline with children who experience the effects of poverty every day first-hand. I believe that child poverty should be measured in real terms across all the domains incorporated in the framework assessment of children in need and families (DoH,2000). The framework suggests that all the following factors affect the child contribute towards it reaching its full potential as an adult. This holistic assessment provides professionals with a tool to measure the effects of the wider environment upon a child and could be used to define poverty and its effects. The following factors: Health, Learning, identity including self-esteem, self-image, behavioural development, emotional and social development, family history functioning and wellbeing, housing, employment and finances, social integration, educational and community resources, that are included in the framework may be a good way to define and measure poverty and its effects. This too would include Parenting capacity which includes basic care safety and protection, emotional warmth and stability and guidance and boundary setting for the child, which can be affected by poverty. It may also be possible to use a point scoring system for all the factors and perhaps use a scale of one to five for each domain. This could start with professionals applying the system during the Healthy Child (DOH, 2018) programme at mandated checks and during educational contacts. Poverty is complex and often intergenerational, and this may be a way to begin to redress it and work towards building a more equal society.

The impact of measures of child poverty changes in 2016? In school nursing we have seen a rise in children and families requiring intensive support, because parents cannot provide their children with basic care. Parents can often be working several jobs and are still unable to adequately clothe or feed their children. Often these parents appear to be paying large amounts of money to privately rent substandard accommodation. This appears to be increasing parental stress leading to heightened states of anxiety in both the parent and child and has become more evident during this Covid pandemic and the lock downs. Parents do not appear to have the time to spend with their children and do not appear able to adequately supervise them. Quite often this appears to result in costly child protection system and appears to be leading to increased domestic violence within the home. It may often lead to children becoming vulnerable to online child exploitation, as parents are too tired to adequately supervise the child. We appear to have seen an increase in rates of Child protection children over the last decade. It is frustrating as a professional supporting child on child protection plans, rather than having better infrastructure to support early intervention services and prevention in the early stages. There does not appear to be enough professionals to support children's services and commissioners do not appear to have adequate funds. This can be seen frustrating as our children are the future of our society.

Advantages and disadvantages of having set targets for reducing child poverty? It may be a way to begin to address the problem and provide the government with a measure to see how well it is doing. However, it is important that this complex problem is not seen as a box ticking exercise. If we want to truly see improvements for the lives of our children and future generations, we need to begin to work together as a country and invest in the future of all children in our country.

What has been the effect of removing from law the targets in place between 2010 and 2016? An observed increase in children and families struggling with poor housing lack of finances, poor health conditions, obesity, emotional and mental health conditions due to stress.

What is the impact of child poverty and how can it best be measured? Poor educational performance, illiteracy, poor health, poor diet, obesity, poor dental health, poor relationships and aspirations. Adverse childhood experience (ACE's), (Felitti,2017). This appears to lead to intergenerational poverty (Marmot, 2010).

What links can be established for children between financial hardship, educational under achievement, family breakdown and worklessness? ACEs, Child exploitation and gang involvement and criminality. Domestic violence, drug and alcohol addictions. Intergenerational child abuse and poor parenting.

How effectively does the DWP work with local authorities and with support agencies to reduce the numbers of children living in poverty and to mitigate poverty? In my working experience their appears to be a lot of bureaucracy which slows down the system and leads to unnecessary hardship and suffering for children and families. This can also be a barrier for professionals who are attempting to support these vulnerable children and families.

What would be the merits of a cross government child poverty strategy? How well has this worked in the past? I believe it would improve the lives of children and families and help to look at the best way they can be supported to achieve their full potential in life and contribute towards building a more equal and fairer society.

February 21