



Young people talking about poverty

Report of a consultation event organised for the Office of the Children's Commissioner

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London

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Breslin Public Policy Limited

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Foreword

Over a number of years my office has undertaken several pieces of work on child poverty. In each the views and experiences of children and young people living in deprived areas or in families who are struggling to get by have been at the heart of our work. Indeed their voice not only adds power and authenticity to the body of work and research on child poverty, but realises an important right that every child and young person has under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – the right to express his or her views, and to have those views heard and taken seriously (article 12).

In the second half of 2012 my office was approached by the Child Poverty Unit based in the Department for Education. Their request was that we help them meet children and young people and facilitate a discussion about what poverty meant to them and their peers. Those meetings organised by the Office of the Children’s Commissioner’s participation team, produced evidence that shaped the subsequent consultation document *Measuring Child Poverty*.

In order to provide our own child-centred submission to this consultation we decided to organise a further participation event and commissioned Breslin Public Policy to organise, in collaboration with my own team, an event for around 40 young people. These young people came from across England and represented a range of different circumstances and experiences. The Government’s Child Poverty Unit also attended the event and provided some support to enable it to take place.

The event was held in February 2012 and the process of organising it, the methodology used to collect evidence from children and young people, and the views they shared are all outlined in this report.

Undertaking work on an issue like poverty has to be done sensitively and with planned consideration. Of equal importance is that the evidence collected from children and young people is done in a rigorous way that enhances the quality of research and provides an accurate evidence base for recommending policy solutions. The work should also be rewarding to the children and young people who give their time and expertise.

The work my office has undertaken with Breslin Public Policy is an example of how these three aspirations can come together in a powerful way, and I hope that, as well as being an interesting read, this report proves to be a useful resource to help others work with children and young people.

Dr. Maggie Atkinson

Children’s Commissioner for England

Preface

The purpose of this report

This report seeks to capture and give expression to the issues raised by the children and young people who joined us for the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) Child Poverty Consultation Event held at Westminster Central Hall on Thursday 14th February 2013. Breslin Public Policy organized the event on behalf of the OCC. This report has been produced by Breslin on behalf of the OCC.

It includes a fuller analysis of the consultation than we were able to include in the earlier Interim Headlines report that was produced by Breslin in the immediate aftermath of the event. This document includes direct comment from the children and young people who participated in the event, and from the supporting adults who accompanied or worked with them on the day. It also includes diversity data and other material that was not available to us at the time of writing the earlier report. In the pages that follow, we will present an analysis and interpretation of this material and these contributions.

We offer the report with a series of Appendices that provide data and background on those involved and other information that may be of value to those charged with following up or responding to the findings captured here.

The event and this report were commissioned by OCC as part of its response to the Coalition Government's consultation on child poverty, which closed on 15th February 2013. Outcomes from the event informed the OCC response to this consultation, which was published as a separate document - *Office of the Children's Commissioner response to Measuring Child Poverty: a consultation on better measures of child poverty* - during February 2013. For ease of comparison, however, we do use the five dimensions of poverty used in that paper in our analysis here: (1) Income and money, (2) Expert support, (3) Education and employment, (4) Community and home life, and (5) Physical mobility and network access.

These dimensions are not offered as a *definition* of poverty but they are the themes that the children and young people emphasized in their discussions with us. For that reason, we urge policymakers to put them at the heart of their deliberations and their decision-making.

Tony Breslin
Kevin Harris
Mike Moores

Breslin Public Policy Limited
March 2013

About the Office of the Children's Commissioner

The Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) is a national organisation led by the Children's Commissioner for England, Dr Maggie Atkinson. The post of Children's Commissioner for England was established by the Children Act 2004. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins and frames all of our work.

The Children's Commissioner has a duty to promote the views and interests of all children in England, in particular those whose voices are least likely to be heard, to the people who make decisions about their lives. She also has a duty to speak on behalf of all children in the UK on non-devolved issues, including immigration (for the whole of the UK) and youth justice (for England and Wales). One of the Children's Commissioner's key functions is to encourage those organisations that provide services for children to always operate from the child's perspective.

Under the Children Act 2004, the Children's Commissioner is required both to publish what she finds from talking and listening to children and young people, and to draw national policymakers' and agencies' attention to the particular circumstances of a child or small group of children which should inform both policy and practice.

The Office of the Children's Commissioner has a statutory duty to highlight where it believes vulnerable children are not being treated appropriately in accordance with duties established under international and domestic legislation.

Our Vision

A society where children and young people's rights are realised, where their views shape decisions made about their lives and they respect the rights of others.

Our Mission

We will promote and protect the rights of children in England. We will do this by involving children and young people in our work and ensuring their voices are heard. We will use our statutory powers to undertake inquiries, and our position to engage, advise and influence those making decisions that affect children and young people.

www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk

About Breslin Public Policy Limited

Established in September 2010 by Tony Breslin, formerly Chief Executive at the leading independent education and participation charity the Citizenship Foundation, Breslin Public Policy Limited is a socially responsible for-profit business working with individuals and organisations - and specifically with policy-influencers, policymakers and practitioners – to maximise social impact.

Active across and knowledgeable in the fields of education and learning, youth participation, political engagement and corporate responsibility, Breslin Public Policy is committed to adding value – whether this is delivered through bringing new policy ideas to realization, sharpening policy in its development, enhancing practice at the point of implementation or by building the knowledge and skills base of stakeholders at each stage in the process.

Breslin Public Policy works with – and draws expertise from – the public, private and voluntary sectors, typically working at the interfaces between these sectors.

Current and recent clients include the British Olympic Foundation; the British Paralympic Association; Cambridge University Press; Character Scotland; Culture, Creativity and Education England; East Sussex County Council; Oasis Academy Enfield; the London Organising Committee for the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG); Keynote Educational; Navigation Learning; the Bridge Group; the Diana Award; the Office of the Children’s Commissioner; and V, the national youth volunteering service.

Breslin Public Policy focuses on collaboration and partnership, whether it is working with a new start-up, a charity or social enterprise, a long established national agency or a multi-national corporation. It views every assignment as an opportunity to share learning and to establish new relationships, balancing creativity and innovation with the delivery of agreed outputs and outcomes, on time, to specification and within budget.

www.breslinpublicpolicy.com

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the following organizations for their help in identifying potential participants and for supporting young people on the day:

- Asylum Welcome
- Barnardo's
- Bolton Woods Community Centre (Bradford)
- Cafcass
- East Sussex Children's Service
- Netherfield Primary School (Nottingham)
- Norfolk County Corporate Parenting
- NSPCC
- User Voice.
- Children with HIV and Aids (CHIVA)
- Liverpool Youth Service
- Merseyside Youth Association

We would also like to thank those officials who attended from the Child Poverty Unit:

- Frank Davies
- Philippa Davies
- Kate Jarman
- Mike Messum
- Ruth Shinoda
- Sheeja Viswambaran.

In addition, we would like to thank those attending from other locations, including:

- Dr. Maggie Atkinson: Children's Commissioner for England
- Alice Miles: Special Adviser to Michael Gove
- Sasha Salmon: Commission for Social Mobility and Child Poverty

The delivery of the event was supported by eight senior members of staff from the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) who acted as table-based discussion stewards and note takers throughout the day. Their observations are recorded throughout this report.

We are especially grateful to Shaila Sheikh for commissioning Breslin Public Policy Limited to undertake this work and to Shaila and her colleagues at the OCC for working so supportively with us on such an interesting and important assignment.

Finally, we are also grateful to Emilia Ciesla and her colleagues in the Parliament Education Service who organized the close of event tour of the Houses of Parliament and provided a range of learning and information materials for the children and young people to take away with them.

Introduction and methodology

Summary

The Child Poverty consultation event was staged at Central Hall Westminster on 14th February 2013 and involved 42 children and young people recruited from around England (Appendix 1). The children and young people were accompanied in most cases by representatives of their supporting organisations (Appendix 2). Two parents also attended, along with a number of senior government officials involved in policy formulation. Several senior staff from the Office of the Children's Commissioner (OCC) acted as table stewards on the day.

A number of exercises and discussions took place; taken together, these provided an open and inclusive context for the participants to share thoughts and experiences about poverty and its impact on their lives, and on the lives of others like them.

At the end of the programme the children and young people all took part in a guided tour of the Houses of Parliament, provided by the Parliament Education Service.

Recruitment

Recruitment began in November 2012 and was complicated by the double postponement of the event. The second scheduled date had to be abandoned because of bad weather, and some of the participants who had registered for that occasion were unable to commit to the revised date.

The recruitment process involved initial correspondence with a wide range of organisations, followed up by sustained telephone and email contact. In this way we ensured that all agencies understood the purpose of the event and were satisfied with the safeguarding measures, while recruiting a broad range of interests, backgrounds and abilities. It was made clear to the agency contacts that travel costs would be covered for the participants and for adults accompanying them. Risk assessments were carried out and sent to the agencies, together with clear directions to the venue. Catering and access needs were attended to in detail.

Participants came from a variety of social groups. They included, for example, asylum seekers, disabled young people, young people from a range of ethnic communities - two with traveller heritage, several with a variety of backgrounds in care, several with offending backgrounds, and one teenage father. The majority had little or no experience of consultation events.

In the end 42 children young people were recruited and 37 were able to attend. Five were let down by a taxi service on the day and could not get to London.

Programme

The timetable for the event was partly dictated by the likely arrival times of participants traveling furthest and partly by the timing of the parliamentary tour, which followed the formal event. This meant that the consultative programme took place between 1030 and 1530. All the participants were met at the entrance to the building and escorted to the room, which had been laid out cabaret style with round tables. As noted, an OCC 'steward' was present at each table.

The programme began with a welcome from the Children's Commissioner Maggie Atkinson, followed immediately by a warm-up exercise on the theme of 'what are you good at?' This was

designed to encourage the participants to feel positive about themselves while meeting others in the room.

They then settled down to a short talk about ‘People, power and politics’. This developed into a lively discussion about how policy gets made, and how to influence it. It was noticeable during the discussion that participants from across the age range were contributing and that children and young people of different ages were working well together.

After a short break, the children and young people worked in groups and then in plenary, considering their own personal experience of barriers and opportunities to fulfilling their potential.

After lunch, they worked on an exercise designed to bring out more detail of the experience of poverty by allowing them to fictionalise those experiences. Using pre-formatted workshop sheets (illustrated), at each table they invented and described a character of a given age, describing the individual’s family background and home.

Office of the Children’s Commissioner, January 2013

Name:	Age:	Family and family history:	The place where they live:
These are the skills, interests, fears, friendships that they have, and their education and health...	But the trouble is...	And this means that...	
	Crisis!		
	What happens to them...?		
	After 1 year		
	After 2 years		
	After 5 years		

children's commissioner

Breslin Social Impact

We employed the ‘carousel’ principle, whereby interest and content are enriched by passing ideas on to the next group: each group developed the character by describing their interests, skills, education, friendships and so on. These in turn were passed to the next group, who invented a crisis that faced the character (typically imagined as directly affecting a member of their family and impacting on the character indirectly), and described its implications. The final stage, when this crisis was passed to the next table, involved exploring what happened to the character over the next few years.

In plenary we heard the narratives of these fictional experiences and it was striking how much detail emerged. A considerable amount of content was concerned with support (available, inadequate, or absent); education; imprisonment; and opportunities for or barriers to work.

The final session was a plenary discussion focused around a panel of officials from the Child Poverty Unit and an official from the OCC, who offered some reflections and dealt with a range of comments and questions.

The material from all the sessions is being processed into a submission from the OCC to the Child Poverty Unit's consultation; and also into a more detailed report on the event. Appendix 2 summarises the policy concerns and proposals that the young people shared with the senior officials present in the final session. The section that follows summarises the key themes and shared messages that emerged in the course of the day.

Context: poverty and its measurement

The policy and research context for the 2012-2013 consultation on the measurement of child poverty is a complex one with significant public and academic debate on the issue.

The Child Poverty Act (HM Government 2010) called for a government strategy and the establishment of a Child Poverty Commission. The Act set targets for the government to meet by 2020 on four different measures of poverty:

- Relative low income;
- Absolute low income;
- Combined low income and material deprivation;
- Persistent low income.

The building blocks of the strategy were:

- The promotion and facilitation of the employment of parents or of the development of the skills of parents;
- The provision of financial support for children and parents;
- The provision of information, advice and assistance to parents and the promotion of parenting skills;
- Physical and mental health, education, childcare and social services;
- Housing, the built or natural environment and the promotion of social inclusion.

The resulting strategy (DWP and DfE, 2011) set out plans for tackling child poverty in the period 2011-2014. It emphasized “the belief that work, not welfare, is the best route out of poverty for those who are able to work”. It also amended the Act so as to establish the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, whose membership was announced in December 2012.

Child poverty statistics released in 2012 appeared to suggest that some 300,000 children were moved out of relative income poverty between 2009 and 2011. This was explained as being largely due to a fall in the median income nationally, not as a consequence of widely improved standards of living; thus illustrating the problem of assessing poverty through a relative measure.

Against this background and in the midst of considerable media interest, in November 2012 the Coalition Government introduced the consultation exercise that inspired the event from which this report arises. The consultation was concerned with exploring the potential of a new *multi-dimensional* measure that would take account of a range of factors other than income that might be said to contribute to child poverty (HM Government, 2012), for instance:

- Whether a child’s parents work or not;
- How stable their family structure is;
- How much debt a family has;
- Whether they live in poor housing;
- The skills and health of their parents.

One striking effect of this policy activity has been to stimulate research and comment, such that there have been a number of papers that contribute to debate on this theme. Relatively few have directly involved children and young people themselves, a reflection that suggests that, as a society, we have still some way to go in committed participation.

The existing measure of child poverty had previously been criticized from various quarters, for instance, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ, 2012). Arguing that “any strategy to tackle poverty should focus on the causes of deprivation, not the symptoms”, their influential paper called for a measure to stimulate policies that transform lives and proposed a range of income-related and non-income-related measures, as set out in the table below:

A summary of proposed indicators	
Income-related indicators	Non-income-related measures
1. Source of income	1. Poor parenting
2. Income vs. consumption	2. Unstable family structures
3. Ability to save	3. Workless households
	4. Poor educational attainment
	5. Addiction or substance abuse in the household
	6. Severe personal debt in the household
	7. Poor mental health
	8. Local factors
	9. Well-being measure

Source: CSJ 2012.

Other detailed analysis has sought to broaden the terms of the debate. A notable example is the work of Demos (Wood *et al*, 2012). Their report challenges the tendency to homogenise poverty, exploring the multiple ways in which poverty manifests itself in different households. The researchers provide a range of 20 indicators (listed below) – spanning health, housing, education, material deprivation and social networks – which are then used to categorise different forms of poverty. The Demos report is compelling in the way it brings together statistical and qualitative evidence to challenge existing stereotypes of households in poverty.

Previous work on multidimensional approaches to measuring child poverty is summarized in a submission from the Policy and Social Exclusion Study Team (Bradshaw, 2013), which is critical of the way earlier approaches are overlooked in the consultation paper. One well-publicized approach, which is ongoing is the *Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances* led by Frank Field MP (Field, 2010). The emphasis on ‘life chances’ is echoed in the current child poverty strategy.

The growing debate on the theme has also led to a number of associated statements challenging the ways in which poverty is portrayed in the media and in public life (see for example, McCarron, A. and L. Purcell, 2013; and Joint Public Issues Team, 2013).

Work has also been carried out using digital technologies to map the extent of child poverty (Rogers and Rigott, 2012).

For some years, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has led independent, academically rigorous work on poverty in the UK, with the purpose of informing and influencing policy. Their current programme includes a focus on child poverty (JRF, 2013a) that examines

- [Education and poverty](#): closing the attainment gap between richer and poorer children;
- [The future of the UK labour market](#): creating a labour market that delivers lower poverty and understanding the role of skills;
- [How ethnicity affects poverty](#): clarifying the relationship between the experience of poverty and ethnicity.

In a recent policy submission the Joseph Rowntree Foundation stressed the importance of childcare policy and registered a particular concern about improving the “quality, flexibility, sustainability and progression routes of the work that parents enter” (JRF, 2011). In their submission to the Coalition Government’s recent consultation on the measurement of poverty (JRF, 2013b) they call for the inclusion of three things:

- Factors *that increase the risk* of poverty;
- Measures of *children’s experience* of poverty;
- Measures of the *outcomes* for children in poverty.

JRF has a strong tradition in work on housing and place an informed emphasis on the part played by housing conditions in the experience of poverty.

- income
- material deprivation
- lifestyle deprivation
- bills
- access to a car
- heating
- employment
- subjective financial situation
- neighbourhood deprivation
- physical health
- mental health
- caring for a sick or disabled child
- highest qualification
- neighbourhood support
- family support
- participation
- politics
- household composition
- tenure
- overcrowding

Source: Wood *et al* 2012.

Key messages for policymakers

Towards the close of the event, young people, working in table groups of approximately six, were asked to identify three or so ‘policy priorities’ that they felt would improve the lives of young people, especially those living in poverty or in other challenging circumstances.

A full transcript of their priorities, as shared in the subsequent plenary discussion, is presented in Appendix 3. We have translated these into five key themes, the basis of which forms the structure of the Findings and Reflections discussion and our Conclusions and Recommendations later in this report.

The five themes are:

- Income and money
- Expert support and services
- Education and employment
- Community and home life
- Physical mobility and network access

By way of what might elsewhere be termed an ‘Executive Summary’, we offer the key messages from children and young people to policymakers on each of these themes below. Perhaps over and above all of these is one resounding point, which we shall paraphrase as: ‘listen to us; we know what it’s like’.

Income and money

Child poverty is multi-dimensional but money (or the lack of it) matters profoundly. In much of the debate about the multi-dimensional nature of child poverty and about the emergence of a “culture of poverty”, there is a tendency to attribute the persistence of poverty to non-monetary factors such as lifestyle or personal behaviour, especially in ‘tough’ times when the proportion of public expenditure devoted to ‘welfare’ is in the spotlight. In particular settings this may be fair and valid; in many, it is not. Either way, for children and young people the absence of money limits their ability to participate fully in their communities and in society more broadly. Without money, young people cannot afford to search for jobs beyond their immediate locality, cannot afford to remain in education or, when they do, cannot give their studies the attention required. Critically, in terms of the long-standing debate about measures of *absolute* and *relative* poverty, they cannot afford to engage in a range of activities that those living beyond poverty regard as normal.

Expert support and services

Children and young people need expert support and reliable access to appropriate services if they are to climb out of poverty. Too often, young people in poverty are asked to navigate their way through a plethora of different and disconnected agencies. Too often, those providing support appear insufficiently informed, trained, accessible or resourced to offer effective assistance. These issues have even greater impact when the young people have additional challenges, for instance if they have a disability, condition or illness to contend with, if they have not achieved (or are not achieving) well at school or if they are a recent migrant seeking to establish themselves in British

society or an ex-offender seeking to get back “on the right track” through access education, employment or training.

Education and employment

Children and young people in poverty are more likely to struggle in the education system and this affects their ability to subsequently access employment. Many of the children and young people that spoke to us talked about a school curriculum that lacked relevance, felt threatened by what they saw as an increasingly exclusive focus on examinations and on grades, and called for a stronger focus on skilled Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, both within mainstream schools and in ‘special’ schools. They also called for greater access to the kind of vocational training schemes and apprenticeships that might open up routes to employment. Educational reforms that focus on achievement and attainment, the need for which we do not challenge, must take account of those “left behind” and must recognize that children and young people in poverty are more likely to find themselves at the core of this group, whatever the success of welcome and sometimes overdue school improvement initiatives. Here, our participants did not lack aspirations and had a range of positive suggestions, in particular around curricula that might provide them not simply with knowledge but with skills, resilience and confidence.

Community and home life

Young people should not be blamed for the apparent shortcomings of their parents or held back because of the settings into which they are born or from which they emerge. The young people that spoke to us expressed frustration that too often the status *ascribed* to them was not their responsibility or of their making. Too often they felt defined by postcode or by their status as the daughters or sons of, for instance, migrants; too often, they feared that reforms targeted at their parents or their parents’ claimed lifestyle (for instance, benefits reforms) would impact on their wellbeing. Here, the OCC focus on assessing policy interventions through Child Impact Assessments is a welcome move and ought to be embraced by policymakers. One of the interesting things that emerged in our discussions with the children and young people focused on the differences between being ‘poor’ in a ‘poor’ area and being ‘poor’ in a ‘wealthy’ area. This ought to be further researched.

Physical mobility and network access

Access to, and the affordability of transport is a recurrent theme and is an absolute priority for children and young people living in poverty. For purposes of their own wellbeing and development, children and young people need to be able to maintain contact with their peers. They also need to be able to reach beyond their immediate communities and build new networks if they are to fulfill their potential, to develop *bridging* capital. Children and young people living in poverty are much less likely to have access to a car, for instance, to enable them to take part in after-school activities or visit friends, while their access to public transport is likely to be limited by where they live and by the costs of travel. here is an established literature about the differential distribution of cultural capital across different communities. This confirms that children and young people in poverty do not have access to the social, educational and employment networks that more advantaged young people benefit from. Any limitations on physical mobility are likely to accentuate this, while the lack of comment about social networking amongst those who spoke with us might suggest that elements of a digital divide remain.

Objectives

The consultation event that is the subject of this report took place against the backdrop of three specific drivers:

1. The Coalition Government's consultation on child poverty that closed on 15th February 2013;
2. The determination of the Office of the Children's Commissioner to give voice to young people experiencing poverty in this process and to renew this voice within its wider work;
3. A public debate about the definition and measurement of poverty itself, cast against the backdrop of a range of sub-debates about, for instance:
 - The persistence of a significant degree of child poverty, howsoever measured, in spite of a range of interventions and targets, nationally and internationally by various administrations over many years;
 - The role of the welfare state, and in particular, the benefits system, in either 'trapping' individuals in or 'freeing' individuals from poverty;
 - The future of child-focused benefits, notably child benefit;
 - The continued interest, especially in the popular press, of a dichotomy between the 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor.

As authors and hosts to the event, our objectives were and are more straightforward. We want to do three things:

1. Increase our knowledge, and that of those involved in making policy, of the *lived experience* of children and young people in poverty;
2. Place the perspective of children and young people living in poverty at the heart of the policymaking process by enabling them to exercise a stronger *voice* in this process;
3. Contribute to the creation of *better policy* outcomes for children and young people living in poverty - and children and young people more broadly - by providing and effectively disseminating evidence from the consultation event to policymakers, both within the formal consultation process cited above and beyond.

Of course, we would *like* to better inform the current public debate about the nature, causes and measurement of child poverty in the process. However, we will be satisfied with helping to establish a stronger, more equal and more respectful dialogue between children and young people living in poverty and those who make policy or inform policymaking that impacts - directly or indirectly and intentionally or otherwise - on their day-to-day lives.

Findings and reflections

Themes and shared messages: young people's experience of poverty

The young people at the consultation event engaged in a wide-range of discussions, discussions to which they brought a range of distinctive voices. As we have outlined earlier, we have identified five key themes on which they offer a range of shared messages. Taken together, these begin to capture and explain the nature of child poverty in the UK in the early 21st century. To recap, these shared messages are about:

- Income and money
- Expert support and services
- Education and employment
- Community and home life
- Physical mobility and network access

Each of these themes is explored in further detail below.

1. Income and money

Much of the current public debate about poverty revolves around whether poverty in the twenty-first century is a monetary phenomenon or not; this is a false dichotomy. The young people who spoke to us were clear that money is not the *only* issue but it remains, for them, an important issue, and a prevailing one:

“Living in poverty without much money, you are more vulnerable to discrimination, bullying, stigma, stereotyping”

Or, as another participant put it, every young person needs:

“...enough money to support yourself as a young person”

More of the young people focused on access to training and employment as a route to income rather than on, for instance, benefit levels, but they called also for fair wages for young people, some citing the ‘living’ wage over the statutory minimum, and were resentful of anything that smacked of exploitation, arguing that there needs to be:

“...a ‘living’ wage rather than just the Minimum Wage”

In practical terms, a lack of money limited their ability to participate in after-school or curriculum enrichment activities, to use public transport to access facilities, employment opportunities and friendship groups beyond their immediate locality and to participate in social activities with their more affluent friends on an equal footing:

“If you need something and your parents say they haven’t got enough (money), you worry about asking”

“...Those activities you have to pay for – school trips etc. – you cannot have (them); you are very limited about what you can do”

“You need money even to get a job, transport and a good suit for the interview”

These concerns about income and money, as we shall see below, run through the comments made by the young people and the professionals who work with them but were especially pertinent amongst care leavers:

“If you are in care, when you leave, you cannot afford to look after yourself”

This point was reiterated by one of the supportive adults who accompanied the young people to the consultation event and who works with young people in care and care leavers:

“One thing children and young people bring out is about leaving care – it can be really difficult if you are half way through your A levels – and suddenly you’re in a flat alone with £54 a week”

It is also worth recording the experience of those children and young people who have ‘fallen into’ poverty, perhaps because of family fracture or parental unemployment. One participant explained it thus:

“It makes me sad – the things we could have but can’t now - clothes and stuff”

In short, as one of the stewards recording the group discussions at the consultation event put it:

“The amount of money a child, young person and family has access to is really important. One young person talked about the impact that a lack of money has on children’s participation in social and extra curricular activities, ‘so you can afford things like computers and the internet’. Others were worried that some children were going without clothes, shoes, fuel and a heated home”

As we shall see later, in our discussion about education and employment, young people also see money, and the wage they are paid, as a statement about fairness. They need to be paid a ‘living wage’ to survive. They want to be paid one as a mark of social justice.

2. Expert support and services

The young people that spoke with us were clear about the need for support at particular points in their life journey (the transition from primary to secondary school and from secondary school to Further and Higher Education and/or to employment or training), on particular themes (health and well-being, bullying, course choices, employment routes) and at particular junctures (notably, leaving the care or youth justice systems).

Sometimes this support was available but often provision was patchy and subject to local authority cutbacks, especially for young people coping with bereavement, disability or learning difficulties, or those in or leaving care:

“Local authorities are reducing funding – for example for care leavers. People who have a mum and dad may get money but children in care can’t”

“When I was 14, I got some support. They used to come and ask me how I was doing. Now I’m 18, I’m like a ball that is kicked out of a field. Now I’m 18 I’m on my own; I’m in a house with others (but) no one comes to help”

“When you are 18 you get treated differently. It makes everything difficult - being over 18. I’m the same person”

A number of the supporting adults who had accompanied the children and young people to the consultation event were professionals working in the field and, perhaps unsurprisingly, were concerned about cuts in public funding, notably at local authority level:

“In (our area) – (there has been a) 68% cut in (the) youth service. So, with the services that remain, there’s a big issue about what is there and who knows about it. We’re trying to get information about what’s on offer to parents. But we hear young people saying ‘I just didn’t know about it’. Teachers say they’d love to help us but they just don’t have time”

“The squeeze on the public sector means we have to do more, with less time. That means I spend less time with young people, and that really affects attachment, which is the most important thing of all”

These professionals also questioned whether these cuts were leading to short-termism and a lack of strategic thinking:

“People come to me – they want to set up a panel or consultation, a quick fix, and I get fed up”

“...everything is very short term at the moment. But these kinds of children need support over a longer time period”

Children and young people picked up on this issue of the need for more ‘joined-up’ and longer-term support. They spoke about frequent changes in support workers, about the plethora of agencies to see and about quality of provision that was, at best, uncertain. Young people often doubted the expertise of those providing the support, whether the issue was careers advice, support in exiting the criminal justice system or special needs support in the classroom or beyond. This issue fed through to the policy priorities identified by the young people towards the close of the consultation event:

“Service providers must ensure that the ‘right people’ are available to support young people in various settings, for instance in providing Careers Guidance, housing advice or support for those who have offended”

In particular, the young people expressed concern about the inauthenticity of some of the support provided and contended that young people who had had similar experiences might feature more in the provision of this support: former young offenders and young people with disabilities for instance. In identifying their policy priorities, one of the groups of young people called for:

“...greater involvement of those with criminal records in work with young offenders and those at risk of offending”

One of the stewards recording the group discussions summarized the views expressed by the children and young people succinctly, noting that they needed:

“...support that is individualised, meets specific needs, (is provided at the)

right time (with the) right people, well trained and with good understanding”

This absence of *expert* support was all the more telling where regulatory regimes were onerous yet vital to navigate, as is the case with regard to young asylum seekers for instance:

“Without papers about your history, names etc. people cannot go to school, apply for jobs, get benefits; they are therefore disadvantaged for a long time because they come from somewhere different”

Of course, reducing the burden of these regulations would be a positive move but authentic, expert support is still likely to be required even for the lighter-touch, young people-friendly regulatory frameworks that ought to replace those currently in place.

3. Education and employment

Education

For a number of the young people involved, their experience of education served to compound their experience of poverty. Those in the care system, or about to leave it, felt especially strongly about this:

“If you are in care, the most important time in your schooling is immediately disturbed. You are studying for your A-levels at 18, (at the time) when you officially become an adult and you lose (your care) support. This is very stressful, people do not complete their education, and their chances are damaged”

Some of the children and young people argued that those from poorer backgrounds were likely to be stereotyped within and by those in the education system:

“You can be judged by the area you live in or by your past - you can get put in lower streams (at school)”

Many of those present called for a curriculum that was more accessible, relevant and practical, expressing the concern that the current curriculum reform agenda, with its focus on more traditional styles of examination, would confirm their exclusion and failure rather than build their inclusion and achievement. As one of the discussion stewards summarised:

“Children and young people were concerned about changes to the education system having a negative impact on the lives of those from poorer backgrounds”

Or, as the young people concluded, the reforms could:

“...pose a particular challenge to younger people from poorer backgrounds”

In terms of content, what might this ‘accessible, relevant and practical’ curriculum include? The young people called for four things in particular:

1. Dedicated support for those struggling with the traditional academic curriculum;
2. A stronger focus on vocational and work related learning;
3. A particular focus on personal safety, wellbeing and building resilience;
4. A more attentive approach to Special Educational Needs, whatever form these might take.

In terms of the traditional curriculum, the children and young people present recognized that:

“If you don’t have the grades or education - that stops you (getting a job)”

And called for:

“...more support for people with difficulties at GCSE. Let them do exams in isolation with support to help them because the (examination) hall can be rather daunting to these people”

Or, more radically, suggested that policymakers:

“...(instigate a) revamp (of) the education system to make it better for those who can’t do exams”

With regard to a stronger focus on practicality, those present spoke with a similar clarity arguing that young people living in challenging circumstances need:

“...a broader curriculum with more vocational options”

And:

“...access (to) work experience and work shadowing”

One of the stewards hosting the table discussions captured a similar point:

“The young people wanted more and better access to apprenticeships and vocational training and the chance to undertake meaningful work experience”

If there is legitimate concern about such an approach leading to a lower status work-related curriculum for those struggling with the traditional academic curriculum, the children and young people balanced this with inventive suggestions around relevance that might benefit all young learners, not simply those living in poverty. Here, their policy proposals (Appendix 3) were interesting. They argued that children and young people should have access to a curriculum that:

“...(enables them to) avoid (the) ‘big problems’ such as bullying, drugs and crime from an early age, and certainly in primary school, with the focus being on resistance and resilience”

“...(has) a stronger focus on education for personal safety”

With regard to bullying, one of the stewards elaborates on the discussions within her group:

“Bullying at school came up and the children and young people associated this with child poverty in many ways. Children told us that poor children get bullied because of the way they look and not having the “right” clothes. Children also told us that those who are bullied are less likely to go to school”

In this context, the relationship between bullying, achievement and attendance, and poverty is clearer, and the young people’s call for “resistance education”, as one group termed it understandable.

In addition to their comments about the core curriculum, the young people asked for stronger and more accessible curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular provision. As already noted,

young people in poverty are often less able, or feel less able, to access pay-to-participate school trips or after-school clubs and, as such, miss out on two counts:

- (1) the curricular or extra-curricular experience itself and any impact this might have on their educational attainment or on the discovery of new interests and the development of new skills
- (2) the opportunity to mix socially with other pupils or students in precisely the less formal learning environment in which they might prosper.

Certainly, the children and young people present saw the potential of this curriculum enrichment for those living in poverty, calling for financial support to enable:

“...young people from less affluent backgrounds to participate in curriculum enrichment extra-curricular activities, including after-school clubs and school trips, and to access work experience and work shadowing placements”

And arguing that:

“There should be dedicated after-school provision involving Careers Education and Guidance specialists and support workers”

The enthusiasm of these children and young people to access curriculum enrichment and extra-curricular activity such as this should be welcomed as a sign of their commitment to education and their suggestion that extra-curricular space is used to access various forms of the specialist support identified earlier as lacking is worthy of serious consideration. The charge often leveled at young people from less affluent backgrounds, especially when they display ‘challenging’ behaviour, is that they “don’t want to learn”. This didn’t seem to apply to the young people who spoke to us.

Their concern for strong Special Educational Needs (SEN) provision, and a better understanding of such needs, within and beyond the school environment, was also pronounced, with those present arguing passionately for:

“...better public understanding about the range of behaviours displayed by young people with Special Educational Needs (for instance, poor literacy skills), particular conditions (for instance, autism) or disabilities (for instance, some form of physical impairment)”

And:

“...better SEN training for teachers, whether they are SEN specialists or not”

The stewards hosting the group discussions captured this wide-ranging concern about the quality and availability of SEN provision for a variety of groups of young people in a range of ways:

“Education (for those with disabilities) is worse, either because they do not qualify to go to an SEN school or (because they) are lost in a mainstream school, or (because) teachers are not trained properly to cope with their needs”

“There needs to be more training for teachers in schools to understand young people (with Special Educational Needs). There also needs to be clearer criteria for those seeking access to an SEN school”

“Some children and young people thought that the government was not doing

enough to support children with learning difficulties. Children and young people wanted teachers to have a better understanding of disability so that children with additional needs (can) access the highest level of education possible”

“There are plenty of after-school clubs but these are not aimed at young people who may require additional support”

Throughout the consultation event the theme of education emerged again and again. Too often there was a sense that the provision being experienced by the those present was doing as much to keep them in poverty as to free them from it. One of the stewards hosting the table groups summed up the position of the children and young people succinctly:

“If you are poorer your school is worse; if you have a disability, you are not supported enough; if you live in a rural area with few schools, you do not have a choice of where to go”

Critically, the children and young people present recognized the complexity of the educational maze and had the self-awareness to realize that they often struggled to make their way through it. This perhaps informed a policy priority identified by one of the discussion groups in the closing plenary, the need for better support at key transition points:

“Transition arrangements that support young people, especially young people with disabilities or other particular needs, at key points need to be strengthened: moving from primary to secondary school, from secondary school to work, college or Higher Education”

This is all the more the case with young people living in poverty, as we shall see further when we explore the relationship between education and living conditions in our discussion of community and home life later in this section.

Employment

The young people were acutely aware of the importance of employment as a source of income and a means of personal development and fulfillment. They were also aware of the dearth of employment opportunities in the current economic climate, although given that most participants were of school age, they focused less on this than might have been expected in open discussion, perhaps because most of those present were still of school age. However, in Activity 4 (in which the young people focused on the creation of characters negotiating their way through poverty), loss of employment featured strongly in the tales created.

A particular focus of discussion, especially amongst one group of young people who had previously been convicted for offending behaviour and another group with a range of special needs including autism, was the real or perceived absence of genuine equality of opportunity featured largely and ought to concern policymakers:

“Policymakers and employers need to ensure that there are more employment opportunities for young people with criminal records”

“Care leavers do not get as good jobs (as non-care leavers). People leaving care can’t look after themselves as well...”

This concern for what might be more broadly framed as ‘fairness and justice’ also came through in discussions about exploitation and fair pay, as signalled in our earlier discussion of income and money. These young people felt that either they couldn’t access the labour market or, at least, that they couldn’t access it on the terms available to others, especially adults:

“There needs to be a ‘fair’ wage for young people: “a ‘living’ wage rather than just the Minimum Wage”

Or, as one of the stewards summarises:

“(The) children and young people wanted better access to employment. Children and young people said they wanted to be paid the same as adults and they needed higher wages to access an adequate standard of living”

All of the young people present were concerned about the limited number of employment opportunities available and the dearth of training opportunities, apprenticeships and so forth, a point that featured in the policy priorities that they identified towards the close of the day:

“There needs to be more apprenticeship and employment opportunities for all young people”

Finally, what has been described as a “culture of worklessness” came through in some of the personal biographies offered, especially in Activity 3, which focused on barriers and opportunities, and in comments in the discussion with the adults who had accompanied the young people to the consultation event. Some of the young people were growing up in neighbourhoods where unemployment had been the norm across generations, or as one adult rather sweepingly put it:

“Children in poverty don’t have aspirations in the first place – they get messages about youth unemployment, and they’re living in families that don’t work”

The children and young people acknowledged that this kind of experience *could* have this kind of impact on aspirations and had done so amongst some of their peers. They talked frequently about “dreams” and the risk or reality of having these “crushed”. As will be discussed later, though, strong aspirations and a sense of optimism were far more apparent amongst those participating than the more fatalistic outlook that we might have expected.

Of course, the willingness to engage in the consultation process (and, in a number of cases, to make long journeys to London to do so) may suggest a cohort predisposed to a positive outlook.

4. Community and home life

Community

Discussions about crime and about community and personal safety often revolved around the ‘double-whammy’ of negative peer group pressure (for instance, around the use of drugs or engagement in crime, including the carrying of weapons for the purpose of self-defence) and low trust in the police. Here, the children and young people present understood the reason for this attention from the police and, in the words of one of the discussion stewards told us that:

“...young people living in poverty were more likely to commit crime. This was associated with having little money, living in poorer areas and having limited

hopes and aspirations”

But they were modest in their aspirations. Again, as one of the discussion stewards summarized:

“Young people wanted to feel safe in their community and supported by the police”

Where there was distrust in the police, this was either because young people (especially when congregated in friendship groups) were viewed primarily as ‘suspects’, or because the police were seen as either unapproachable or unresponsive when approached for assistance in dealing with criminality and anti-social behaviour.

Discussions about community facilities focused on issues of availability and access. In due course we shall deal with issues relating to access to transport and to physical and virtual networks, both of which concern the issue of inter-community connectedness. Here, the issue is intra-community connectedness, which for our participants took one of two forms, dependent on where they found themselves living.

In poorer neighbourhoods the issue that emerged was one of traditional *environmental* poverty - a lack of facilities for young people specifically (open spaces, sports fields, youth clubs) and for the wider community (good quality housing, desirable shops, demonstrably ‘safer’ streets, lower crime rates). One young person spoke about being:

“...stuck in a rotating door - because of where you live, you are stuck with limited options and doing what other people do around the same area. (You) cannot break out”

Another reflected on the apparent reality that:

“If you grow up in a council estate, you think you will not push yourself. You will stay safe and not move on”

A third noted the impact of having to move home frequently on a young person’s ability to become established in a locality, perhaps as their parents seek employment or where adult relationships in the family are fluid:

“If you have moved around a lot, you can’t put your name down for things”

In wealthier neighbourhoods the issue was one of *relative* poverty - not being able to participate on an equal footing with other young people living locally. The comparative qualitative experience of children and young people who grow up in different contextual circumstances requires further investigation: poor/affluent, urban/rural, diverse/mono-cultural.

Home life

At the level of the home, young people focused in particular on the quality and quantity of the physical space that they had access to – the question of ‘a room of my own’ figured strongly, especially in terms of its perceived impact on educational engagement and attainment. As one of the discussion stewards summarized:

“Some children and young people talked about how over-crowdedness has a

negative impact on children's lives. Children and young people talked about needing 'your own room when at secondary school because you need space to study'"

Children and young people growing up in poverty are less likely to have access to their own room and to a space in which they can study, to have a wide range of books and similar resources in the home, and to be surrounded by the kind of cultural capital that the middle class child might take for granted. Here, the position of homeless young people is particularly acute.

In this context, the issues detailed in earlier sections that poorer children and young people have in accessing expert support, curriculum-enrichment activities and after-school and homework clubs should be of all the greater concern to policymakers. Ensuring that children and young people navigating their way through poverty have access to the reserves of cultural capital held by their more affluent peers is vital if the mantra of equal opportunities has meaning in such settings.

Much is made - in the public debate about child poverty - of the impact of different kinds of family structure. The children and young people at the consultation event did not raise this as an issue, although the matter of family instability or sudden changes to a family's form did feature in the narrative tales constructed in Activity 3. We conclude that it is an issue but not necessarily the singular or defining one that it is claimed to be.

Given the various impacts of poverty (notably on children and young people) detailed in this report, we should perhaps not be surprised that the families of those living in poverty are subject to greater upheaval, whether this results from poorer health, higher mortality, bad housing, employment migration, relationship instability, lifestyle 'choice' or a range of other factors beyond the scope of this exercise.

5. Physical mobility and network access

Physical mobility

Access to transport was a significant and recurring theme in the discussions and, given that most of the young people present were below the legal driving age and in full-time education, it is unsurprising that the focus was on public transport. There was extensive reflection on the cost of public transport and its availability, especially in rural areas. As one of the discussion stewards summarized:

"Transport was a theme that emerged consistently from talking to children and young people.... They wanted more accessible, affordable transport"

One participant (an active member of the UK Youth Parliament) was especially vocal on this issue in the closing plenary and hinted at a political solution that is doubtless beyond the remit of this report:

"Public transport needs to be available and, especially in cost terms, accessible to all young people, with provision being renationalized if this is necessary to achieve this"

There was also comment about the age of adulthood and, in this context, the point at which adult fares have to be paid:

“Consistency should exist as to when adult fares should be paid and when adult rights extended to young people”

Clearly, poor service provision and high fares restrict young people not just in terms of maintaining friendships with those who live further away but limit their school and college options (where ‘school bus’ provision is rare or expensive), their employment opportunities and, critically, their ability to search for work.

For young people living in poorer areas, on isolated estates and in rural settings this is likely to compound any sense of isolation that poverty brings and contributes to their entrapment in social settings that offer “no way out”. It is in such settings that fatalism thrives and in which “cultures of poverty” are likely to grow. As one participant put it:

“...if you grow up in a setting where all your friends just stay in bed, you’re more likely to do the same”.

Frequently, discussions about transport among the young people in a cohort such as this feature frequent reference to the high cost of car insurance for the young. Tellingly, these young people - living in poverty - made no such references. Owning a car, and having access to the independence that it can confer, was not on the radar.

Network access

It is well-established that social, community and professional networks have value, and young people with relatively powerful networks tend to find it easier to access support in time of need, expert advice, internships, employment and opportunities for personal development.

We expected that the young people at the event might have confirmed that “network poverty” was an issue for them. Apart from a number of references to friendship groups, and support for the greater use of peer-to-peer work, they did not do so.

This might be because an indicator of network poverty is ‘not knowing what you don’t know you need to know’: low levels of awareness of the power of networks could explain the lack of reference to the topic. It is also possible that the participants recognise the issue but may simply be unaware of the existence of useful networks. It could also be that the emergence of social networking online has provided them with greater access to a wider range of networks than might have been possible to earlier generations of children and young people in similar circumstances, and this is taken for granted.

Despite the absence of evidence, we regard this as a potentially significant topic in understanding young people’s experience of poverty. While the first explanation seems to be the most persuasive, there could be a mix of reasons that require further research.

What we do know is that the kind of personal networks used by their more affluent peers - those that derive from, for instance, attendance at good schools and time spent in Higher Education - are rarely open to those from poorer backgrounds.

We also sensed some reaction amongst those participating in the consultation event against the world presented through the lens of particular online social networks:

“Social networking promotes happy perfect lives, (with) designer labels, going out, new clothes; you can’t do this if you’re poor. I avoid Facebook”

This world of “happy, shiny people”, as the band REM termed these individuals twenty or so years ago, cuts little sway in the much tougher world of children and young people living in poverty.

Conclusions, recommendations and principles

Conclusions

Reading a report that strives to give voice to children and young people living in poverty ought to pose challenges to professionals and policymakers in the field. The very persistence and resilience of child poverty suggests that addressing the issues raised by the children and young people who spoke to us will require much more than quick fixes and one-size-fits-all policy 'solutions'. Poverty, as one of the young people at the event put it, is multi-layered, a series of doors in his metaphor:

“The more problems people have, the less likely they are to be supported out of poverty. It is like a series of doors. One door is being poor, another door is being autistic, another door is being a young carer, another door is living in a bad area etc. The more doors there are, the more keys are needed to open them and people don't care enough to make the effort to open them all”

Or perhaps some form of 'master key', as we shall contend in our recommendations below. Without this key, or a set of keys to these doors, the problem is that, in the words of another young person:

“You don't dream as much or aim as high. If you set a goal you need to be motivated to achieve that goal”

Or as a third young person puts it:

“...you don't dream as much – you don't bother to dream”

The children and young people that we worked with, though, did want to “dream, believe, achieve”, a perspective that their positive post event feedback confirmed. They were and remain aspirational but adamant that:

“Your past, your poverty, should not dictate your opportunities”

This is the challenge for policymakers - to find mechanisms to enable young people to scale these barriers. In this context, before offering our recommendations, we want to reassert the five key messages that we set out earlier in this report:

1. **Income and money:** *Child poverty is multi-dimensional but money (or the lack of it) matters profoundly.*
2. **Expert support and services:** *Children and young people need expert support and reliable access to appropriate services if they are to climb out of poverty.*
3. **Education and employment:** *Children and young people in poverty are more likely to struggle in the education system and this affects their ability to subsequently access employment.*
4. **Community and home life:** *Young people should not be blamed for the apparent shortcomings of their parents or held back because of the settings into which they are born or from which they emerge.*

5. **Physical mobility and network access:** *Access to, and the affordability of transport was a recurrent theme and is an absolute priority for children and young people living in poverty.*

One of our aspirations was to inform better policy outcomes for children and young people living in poverty. We believe that the acknowledgement of these messages from the children and young people who spoke to us by those involved in the policymaking process is a pre-requisite for such an outcome.

Recommendations

This report is replete with issues that should concern policymakers. For the purposes of brevity, and as a starting point, we confine ourselves to a single recommendation for each of our identified key themes:

1. **Income and money:** *across government, there needs to be a series of Children's Rights Impact Assessments focused on the financial burden on children and young people, arising from service access, participation in education and training and the securing of professional support. This might be an exercise that could be led by the Child Poverty Unit, the Commission for Social Mobility and Child Poverty and/or the Early Intervention Foundation or these organizations working in partnership with children and young people.*
2. **Expert support and services:** *Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) services for children and young people need to be better organized and coordinated across professions, services and organizations if children and young people living in poverty are to access the professional and informed support that they require to fulfill their potential, especially at points of transition in their lives. Policymakers ought to work with local authorities, other agencies and young people to explore how this might best be achieved.*
3. **Education and employment:** *there needs to be an immediate and informed assessment of the specific educational needs of children and young people living in poverty. This needs to be followed by curricular and extra-curricular reform that produces curricular options that are "more accessible, relevant and practical", and that builds the skills base, the resilience and the confidence of this group of children and young people. An advisory committee of educationalists and young people should be established to advise the Secretary of State for Education on the best options available in this regard, particularly with regard to the support of those with identified Special Educational Needs.*
4. **Community and home life:** *there needs to be a greater focus on pro-active out-reach and early intervention to support children and young people by all of the agencies and professionals that work with children and young people in, or at risk of falling into, poverty. The recently established Early Intervention Foundation and other specialist bodies might work with policymakers in establishing how this paradigm shift might best be achieved.*
5. **Physical mobility and network access:** *concessionary public transport ought to be an entitlement for children and young people. As a matter of urgency, policymakers should work with the public transport industry and with children and young people to work out how such an objective might be funded and operationalized on a consistent, sustainable*

national basis. A Social Return on Investment study of the social benefits of giving free public transport to young people in particular settings might help to demonstrate the value of such an intervention to those who remain sceptical about such a move.

Principles for working with children and young people in poverty

Too much of the research into the lives of children and young people and too many policy interventions that impact on the lives of children and young people fails to engage with them directly. This is especially the case with those living in poverty or those facing other challenges, notably those around discrimination on the grounds of class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, disability or learning difficulty. This leads to bad policy and disadvantages those who are already struggling with difficulties.

Against this backdrop, and bearing in mind the OCC's commitment to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), we offer the following three principles as our own touchstones for effective and ethical work in this area. Directly as a result of our work with the young people cited in this report, we believe that those involved in the shaping and making of policy should:

1. Have the confidence to engage with those children and young people too often cast aside as "hard to reach", and the belief that they will be a joy, not a chore, to work with;
2. Have a determination to listen to what the children and young people say, and a commitment to providing every conduit that they can to ensure that their voices are heard;
3. Demonstrate a willingness to act on their concerns and the empathy to understand that children and young people living in poverty are rarely in circumstances of their own making, and be prepared to work with them in resolving the challenges they face such that, in the words of one of our participants "young people are seen as part of the solution, not the problem".

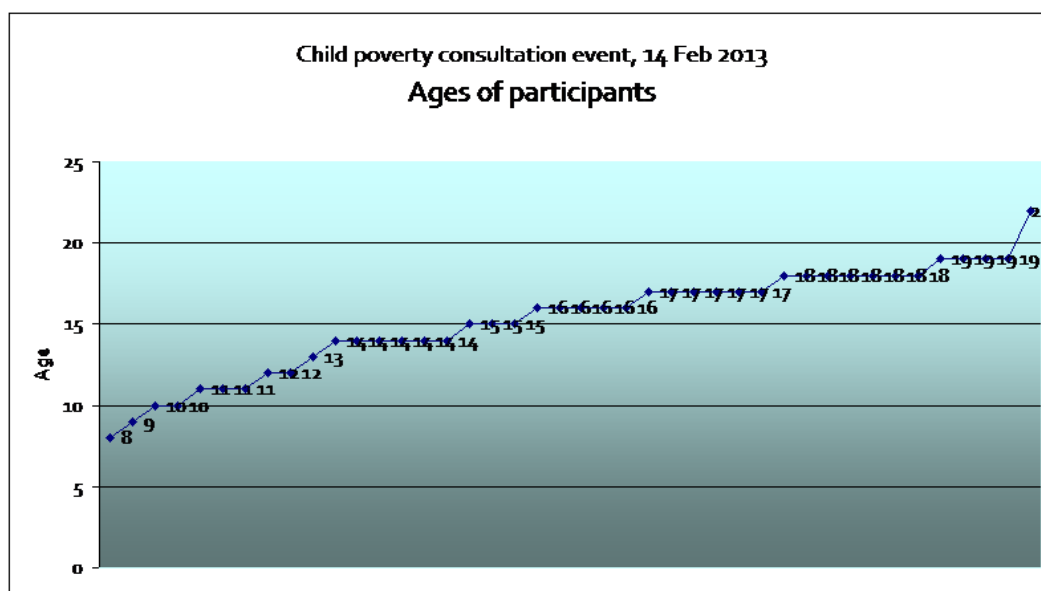
We are confident that the outcomes from this kind of principled child and young person-friendly approach to policymaking will produce interventions that are well informed, clearly justified and high in impact.

Appendix 1

Participants: numbers and diversity

Numbers participating

The attendance list included 42 participants with an age range between eight and 22 years. The chart below illustrates how the ages were distributed.



Diversity

Diversity monitoring information is available for 31 of the participants. Seventeen were female and fourteen male. Ethnic background was indicated by just fifteen of the respondents, as follows (categories with no returns are not listed here):

- Other White background 3
- White and Black Caribbean 1
- White and Black African 3
- Pakistani 2
- Bangladeshi 1
- Other Asian background 4
- Any other Black / African / Caribbean background 1

Seven respondents gave their religion as 'Christian', six Muslim, and one 'Other'. Seven indicated that they have a disability; five are in care or are care leavers; and a total of eight are young carers.

Geographical coverage

Participants came from Preston, Bradford, Leeds, Sheffield, Nottingham, Bristol, Hastings, and a number of points closer to London. Five young people were recruited to travel from Norfolk – some of them living in rural areas. Some of those from Norfolk had never been outside their county prior to the event and the fact that transport services let them down was an unhappy reminder of the sense of exclusion they experience. The map below illustrates the geographical coverage.



Appendix 2

Supporting organisations

Young people were recruited to the event with the help of the following organisations:

- Asylum Welcome
- Barnardo's
- Bolton Woods Community Centre (Bradford)
- Cafcass
- East Sussex Children's Service
- Netherfield Primary School (Nottingham)
- Norfolk County Corporate Parenting
- NSPCC
- User Voice.

Five young people from Norfolk were the victims of transport difficulties on the day and were unable to attend.

In addition to those listed above, the following organisations helped recruit young people for the scheduled January event that was postponed due to bad weather:

- CHIVA
- Liverpool Youth Service
- Merseyside Youth Association.

Appendix 3

Transcript of “Messages for Policymakers” plenary

Towards the close of the day, in the presence of many of the officials, including the team from the Child Poverty Unit, the children and young people - working in groups of approximately six - identified what they saw as their priorities for policymakers.

A transcript of these priorities, as presented in the plenary that followed the group discussions, is offered below.

Group 1

- Young people need to feel safe in their own community and that they are supported by the police
- There needs to be greater involvement of those with criminal records in work with young offenders and those at risk of offending
- Policymakers and employers need to ensure that there are more employment opportunities for young people with criminal records
- There needs to be more apprenticeship and employment opportunities for all young people
- There needs to be a ‘fair’ wage for young people: “a ‘living’ wage rather than just the Minimum Wage”.

Group 2

- Service providers must ensure that the ‘right people’ are available to support young people in various settings, for instance in providing Careers Guidance, housing advice or support for those who have offended.
- Every young person needs “enough money to support yourself as a young person”
- There should be a thorough review of regulations that impact on young people, for instance those relating to the leaving of care or the right to settle in the UK.

Group 3

- There needs to be more ‘living units’ for young people who are homeless or otherwise in housing need
- Transition arrangements that support young people, especially young people with disabilities or other particular needs, at key points need to be strengthened: moving from primary to secondary school, from secondary school to work, college or Higher Education
- There needs to be better public understanding about the range of behaviours displayed by young people with Special Educational Needs (for instance, poor literacy skills), particular conditions (for instance, Autism) or a disabilities (for instance, physical impairment)
- There needs to be better SEN training for teachers, whether they are SEN specialists or not.

Group 4

- There is a need to “...revamp the education system to make it better for those who can’t do exams”
- Children and young people need “a broader curriculum with more vocational options” and “a stronger focus on ‘education for personal safety’”
- There needs to be funding streams to enable young people from less affluent backgrounds to participate in curriculum enrichment extra-curricular activities, including after-school clubs and school trips, and to access work experience and work shadowing placements
- Policymakers and others in positions of authority must ensure that the voice of young people, in all kinds of settings, is better heard.

Group 5

- Public transport needs to be available and, especially in cost terms, accessible to all young people, with provision being “renationalized” if this is necessary to achieve this
- Consistency should exist as to when adult fares should be paid and when adult rights extended to young people
- Those from poor backgrounds who have gone on to achieve great things in various walks of life should be held up as role models to young people facing these challenges today
- The apparent return of ‘O’ level style exams and the recasting of ‘A’ Level in more traditional terms could reinforce social class inequalities and, therefore, “pose a particular challenge to younger people from poorer backgrounds”
- There should be dedicated after-school provision involving Careers Education and Guidance specialists and support workers
- There should be greater access to social housing in more affluent area and a greater focus on ‘mixed’ developments of private and social housing.

Group 6

- Young people should be taught to avoid (the) ‘big problems’ (such as drugs and crime) from an early age, and certainly in primary school, with the focus being on ‘resistance and resilience’
- There should be a deliberate focus on addressing cost of living rises that especially impact on young people, for instance in areas like transport, housing and food
- Across the age-range, much greater use should be made of ‘peer mediation’ in school and other children and young people focused settings and young people should take on greater responsibilities in these settings, for instance patrolling playgrounds.

Group 7

- Given the established links to educational attainment, special attention needs to be given to supporting those young people who do not have access to a quiet place to study at home, an area in which the proposed ‘bedroom tax’ was seen as posing potential difficulties

- Public transport needs to be less expensive and more accessible to young people, wherever they live
- Good local practice, in respect of supporting young people and especially young people in poverty, needs to be identified and shared nationally
- Children and young people need to be involved as “part of the solution, not the cause of the problem”, utilizing them as counselors, role models and peer mediators
- There needs to be a focus not just on money, but on network building and on cultural change.

Appendix 4

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