



Office of the
Deputy Prime Minister

Creating sustainable communities

The impact of government policy on social exclusion among children aged 0-13 and their families

A review of the literature
for the Social Exclusion Unit
in the Breaking the Cycle series

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Breaking the Cycle series

September 2004

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SUMMARY

The aim of this review was to draw together evidence to assess the overall impact of government policies and initiatives on children aged 0–13 and families in, or at risk of, social exclusion over the last ten years (concentrating on the period since 1997).

The review is one of four covering different age groups and different stages in the lifecycle. The cut-off age of 13 means that we did not deal with the majority of secondary schooling or any vocational issues, or with issues about employment which were more appropriately covered in other reviews. Except for a limited number of key publications emerging since then, the cut-off date for relevant publications was 31 December 2003. The focus of the review was England, although some policy measures and some sources and statistics cover a wider area within the UK, or the UK as a whole. In this summary, references have been omitted; but full references are available in the text.

The policy areas examined

Nine policy areas known to be associated with a risk of social exclusion for children of this age and their families were examined: poor living standards; poor living conditions; lack of access to quality early years provision; poor educational access and achievement; poor health; disabled children and children with special educational needs; vulnerable families, children in need and child protection; access to justice; and discrimination. The findings relating to each are summarized below. Outlines of policy aims and policy levers are given in the main body of the report.

In undertaking this review, three concepts informed our analyses:

- first, we assessed the extent to which government policies had resulted in tackling social exclusion *during* childhood, as well as looking at the longer-term impact of social exclusion on children's life chances;
- secondly, we used the concepts of risk and resiliency: how far has the government reduced the risks associated with social exclusion and how far has it, by making opportunities and encouraging children and their parents to take advantage of them, promoted resiliency and inclusion?
- thirdly, we considered several areas which are important in terms of rights and respect (such as access to legal services and discrimination), as these are also important elements of social inclusion.

The background

The starting point of this review was to ask what 'social exclusion' meant for this age group. To date, the defining characteristics of social exclusion have usually been adult-centred. But the government's commitment to listening to children and young people suggests a more child-centred perspective is possible. For a child, social exclusion in the present may be about not being able to 'fit in' or 'join in'. Research has started to explore social exclusion from a more child-centred angle.

The likelihood of social exclusion in childhood is influenced by risk factors in relation to the individual, the family, community and school and the wider social environment. The government is most likely to be able to affect this wider social environment. In addition, however, children are not

placid consumers but actors in their own right, who from an early age influence those around them; clues about contributory factors in helping children escape from social exclusion are emerging from research on resilience.

Tackling social exclusion in childhood is crucial in part because of its longer-term consequences. There are important continuities between disadvantages in childhood and a range of adverse outcomes in adulthood. Concern about these links is a major motivation behind the government's policies in this area. So getting it right in the early years is seen as crucial.

Government policies

The government's policies on social exclusion should be seen in the context of its ambitious target to end child poverty and its commitment to tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities. The government has invested heavily in this age group, with public spending per child growing by almost 20% in real terms between 1996–97 and 2001–02, and spending on children is likely to have become more 'pro-poor' since 1997. Its strategy to tackle social exclusion comprises prevention; reintegration of those already excluded; and delivery of minimum standards of services. A focus on children and young people was evident from the start.

Government policies for families and for children at risk are described first in the Green Paper *Supporting Families*, which noted that the state had a legitimate interest in ensuring that the next generation was given the best start in life and outlined how this might be done; a range of initiatives followed. Second, the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, following the Victoria Climbié Inquiry, recognized that child protection could not be separated from policies to improve children's lives as a whole, and is leading to radical reform of children's services. Major changes will take place after the Children Bill becomes law. In implementing these policies, the government has also made a commitment to listen to and involve parents and children.

Progress in tackling social exclusion

The conclusion from this review is that the government has made progress in all nine policy areas examined in terms of tackling social exclusion amongst children aged 0–13 and families. In particular:

- the numbers of children living in poverty have fallen, hardship has declined and improvements in family living standards have directly benefited children;
- the use of bed and breakfast for families has been reduced and more children are living in decent housing;
- more early years provision is now available, with almost all three and four year olds taking up part-time early education places, and child care is publicly recognised as a key service for children and for families;
- educational attainment has risen overall and some groups have made significant progress despite continuing high levels of disadvantage;
- health policies on specific issues (such as road fatalities) have shown clear gains and there is greater awareness of the centrality of health inequalities;
- disabled children have benefited from specific policies and there is a greater willingness to consult directly with disabled people, including children;

- more support is available to all parents and in particular vulnerable families.

No one policy area by itself can take the credit for the gains made. As the government recognized from the start, reducing social exclusion is about recognizing its multi-dimensional nature and therefore about producing joined-up solutions for joined-up problems. It is in the long term where the greatest gains are likely to be seen.

Reducing risks and promoting opportunities

But the legacy of the previous 20 years which the current government inherited, in terms of levels of poverty and polarization and the 'long tail' of educational under-achievement in particular, makes tackling social exclusion a long haul. Challenges still remain in reducing the risks associated with social exclusion for children and families, and in encouraging them to take advantage of the opportunities available. More specifically, there is still more that needs to be done in the following areas:

- a further impetus is needed to fulfil the government's longer-term objective to eliminate child poverty;
- further efforts need to be made to reduce the number of homeless households with children;
- more needs to be done to reduce the 'childcare gap' in disadvantaged neighbourhoods and barriers to accessing services, such as cost, lack of information, inflexibility and culturally inappropriate provision;
- further steps should be taken to increase the educational achievements of some ethnic minority groups, such as disadvantaged Black Caribbean and White groups, and to ensure that additional spending on education intended to help disadvantaged pupils reaches them;
- although programmes such as Sure Start are likely to be important in the longer term for child health (and other aspects of children's lives), we need to consider how to reduce persistent inequalities in child health such as low birthweight, which have an impact on life chances in the short and long term;
- we need to learn how to ensure that families with disabled children are lifted out of poverty;
- we need to know more about supporting families without 'negative impact' and stigma. We also need to find ways of responding to the needs of large numbers of children in need who are placing local social services under strain and how to promote better the life chances of children in care.

Ensuring rights and respect

Our review included access to justice and discrimination issues, as important elements in tackling social exclusion. We found that:

- the importance of access to justice and rights, and anti-discrimination measures, is now clearly recognized;

- although progress is being made in opening up access to justice, we need to ensure that parents are aware of services and that publicly funded legal assistance is accessible for those on low incomes in emergency situations;
- bullying in school and after school remains a major concern. Further initiatives are needed to tackle this behaviour, which causes so much misery for children and impacts on so many areas of their lives. Further steps also need to be taken to ensure that asylum-seeking children receive the same standard of care as those born in the UK.

Key messages about specific policy areas

Living standards

- Child poverty has fallen, to 3.6 million (some 28%) by 2002–03. Increases in employment (including via the New Deals) and in benefit/tax credit levels have been the main reasons. By 2001, the UK had improved its relative position within the European Union child poverty league.
- Severe hardship decreased significantly among working families after 1999, and was also reduced amongst out-of-work families. Improvements in families' incomes have been spent on their children.
- Financial support for children has increased, especially for low-income families, and in particular for younger children. Policies for lone parents seem to be working particularly well together as a package.
- There is a developing focus on sustainability of jobs and progression in work, as well as continuing concern about 'making work pay' policies.
- Security of income issues include stability as well as adequacy, and delivery mechanisms are important to low-income families. Groups of particular concern include some ethnic minority groups and large families.
- Some policies are too recent to have been fully evaluated and we may need more focus on the impact on children in future evaluations.
- The child poverty review will be an impetus to further policy development, to help sustain and further develop the strategy to tackle child poverty.

Living conditions

- Considerable progress has been made on reducing the numbers of families with children in bed and breakfast accommodation. But the overall number of homeless households with children has been steadily increasing in recent years.
- There has been progress in improving the physical condition of housing for households with children. Notwithstanding the known multiple risks of poor housing, there appears to be a lack of focus on children in housing policies.
- The number of fuel-poor vulnerable households, including those with children, has been sharply reduced. Further progress may be difficult without considerable additional funding. The fuel poverty strategy has been criticized for being poorly targeted, and needs better evaluation.

- Children (along with other specific groups) are largely 'invisible' within national strategies for neighbourhood renewal and for improving public spaces. This makes it hard to say whether strategies in these areas have been effective in tackling social exclusion among children. But there is clear evidence that initiatives focusing on public space (e.g. Home Zones) can benefit children as a whole – as well as evidence that this kind of initiative fits well with local community priorities.

Early years provision

- The National Childcare Strategy launched in 1997 demonstrates government commitment to increased provision of high quality early years services as promoting social investment in children and tackling child poverty through mothers' access to the labour market.
- There has been an expansion of integrated early years services targeted at disadvantaged areas, such as Sure Start Local Programmes and Children's Centres. These are major elements in the commitment to tackle social exclusion of children and families.
- There has been a major expansion in early education – free part-time places have been taken up by almost all four year olds and nearly 9 in 10 three year olds.
- There has also been a major expansion in child care – places for over 1.6 million children have been created since 1997. This means one childcare place for every five children under eight in 2003, compared to one place for every nine children in 1997.
- Working parents' demand for childcare is high; access, however, is variable. The 'childcare gap' in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods means that childcare is less available in the areas where it is most needed to help parents into work, although this may be narrowing nationally (but not in all areas). Problems with affordability (lack of free or cheap childcare) and appropriateness (lack of childcare at suitable times) are often given as reasons for parents not being able to take up paid employment.
- International evidence, for example from the US, supported by findings in the UK, suggests that high quality early years provision can have a positive impact on children's educational achievement and long-term development, but evidence is still to come for the youngest age group.
- Barriers for service users include cost, lack of information, inflexibility and culturally inappropriate provision. Sustainability is a key issue, particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Educational access and achievement

- There have been substantial gains in performance overall. However, the improvement appears to be stronger in the period up to 2000 or so. Part of this might be attributed to the rapid fall in unemployment over the same period.
- Some ethnic minority groups, for example Bangladeshi, appear to be making significant progress in performance, despite particularly high levels of disadvantage. However, other groups, for example disadvantaged pupils from Black Caribbean and White groups, seem to be making much less progress. Targeting behavioural problems can work, but highly disadvantaged pupils are subject to many external pressures that may lead to these patterns re-establishing themselves.

- Only post-2000 has educational expenditure at school level begun to rise sharply. Disadvantaged areas may have shared disproportionately in this increase, though some programmes tend to favour less disadvantaged areas. Higher levels of education, with correspondingly higher expenditure levels, tend to have disproportionately larger numbers of pupils from advantaged areas.
- There is a mass of different programmes with overlapping purposes and targets. Programmes attempting to raise educational performance for disadvantaged groups and reduce behavioural problems can be effective but require a high level of sustained investment over time.
- Assessing the specific effects of these initiatives is compounded by the complexity of overlapping programmes. It is also early days to measure their impact.

Health

- It is too early to evaluate the health impact of many of the government's initiatives on health for children.
- Single issue policies have shown the earliest short-term gains; but this may mask longer-term gains from more complex multi-agency strategies such as Sure Start.
- Government initiatives to increase school sport and physical education have proved promising, but those most at risk of social exclusion may be those least able to afford, or to travel to, out-of-school sports and leisure clubs.
- The reduction in child pedestrian casualties has been accompanied by an increase in the number of children travelling by car to school.
- The Healthy Schools Initiative, combined with increases in sport within schools, has so far been accompanied by promotion of healthy options rather than further regulation of foodstuffs sold in schools.
- There are persistent inequalities in child health that have their origins at birth, such as low birth weight and infant mortality, and these are proving difficult to turn around.

Disabled children and children with special educational needs

- There is a lack of data about the prevalence of childhood disability and the circumstances of disabled children; the main source of data remains the 1989 Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (OPCS) survey.
- A number of positive changes to benefits/tax credits have occurred since 1999. However, improving the take-up of benefits, especially disability living allowance, remains a challenge.
- There is a greater willingness to consult directly with disabled people – including children – and this is a positive trend.
- The single most important feature of the experience of families with disabled children remains poverty. Greater childcare costs and lower parental incomes are strongly associated with childhood disability.

- Extra benefits for families with more than one disabled child do not take into account the cumulative effects of care.
- While action on special educational needs has been considerable over the past decade, the inclusion of children with disabilities and/or special educational needs in all aspects of school life within mainstream schools continues to be an aspiration rather than a reality for many children.
- As well as benefiting from general childcare programmes, we can expect disabled children to experience positive results from broader strategies and legislation that take account of the needs of all disabled people.
- While a substantial number of economic, social and educational initiatives have either targeted or included disabled children in recent years, little hard information is available as to the extent of their impact; and, where such information is available, it is rarely underpinned by baseline data and measurable targets.

Vulnerable families, children in need, child protection

- Although the main evaluations of the major child initiatives are still to report, there is evidence that the Children's Fund and On Track have proved popular and are impacting on the lives of a large number of children and young people.
- Research has indicated the effectiveness of both early and later parent- and family-focused interventions for reducing criminal activity and antisocial behaviour. Education-focused projects may be more acceptable to parents.
- Family support services can suffer from 'negative impact' or stigma but generally agencies are making progress in engaging the 'hard to reach'.
- During one sample week in February 2003, 388,200 children in need received some sort of local authority provision. The majority of these children were referred because of child abuse and neglect. Responding to the needs of this large number of children is putting great strain on local authorities. Availability of family support programmes in the community may reduce the numbers of children in need.
- Progress is being made in improving outcomes for children who are looked after, but educationally these children still lag a long way behind children in the general population.

Access to justice

- Research has shown that lack of access to justice carries a significant risk of social exclusion. Some problems for children may have been avoided if their parents had had appropriate and earlier access to justice.
- A lack of understanding and confusion about the legal processes is seen in a study of families from different cultures involved in child protection cases in the courts. The complexity of the parents' lives also increased their difficulties in accessing help.
- The Community Legal Service (CLS) is the government's main expenditure programme for all civil legal and advice services for the public. The CLS focuses on those areas of law that affect people's everyday lives: housing, debt, employment, welfare benefits, community care, discrimination, immigration and mental health.

- An independent review of the CLS in 2004 noted that, although progress was being made in developing services, the CLS needed to clarify its role and strategy in tackling social exclusion; it needed to establish the extent to which advice and legal services contributed to the reduction of social exclusion; and then to translate this, through effective management systems, into local provision in a way that met the needs of service users.
- The House of Commons Constitutional Affairs Select Committee published a report on the adequacy of civil legal aid in July, which highlighted the difficulties of recruiting solicitors and barristers for legal aid work. A survey of Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) views on CLS partnerships showed that support from publicly funded legal services in emergency situations such as housing eviction or domestic violence may be becoming less accessible, especially to those on low incomes. They, too, were concerned about the decline in solicitors' practices offering legal aid work, the manageability of contracts and the sustainability of partnerships.

Discrimination

- For children, the daily reality of discrimination is represented by 'bullying' behaviour by their peers. Childline data has indicated that the most frequent problem that children rang Childline about was bullying.
- In a study of bullying in England in 2003, a fifth of pupils in Year 5 reported that they had been called racist names.
- Following national government initiatives, most schools now have an agreed anti-bullying policy which includes a definition of bullying, including racist, sexist and homophobic bullying, aims and objectives, procedures to follow and intervention techniques.
- Findings suggest that anti-bullying policies provide a useful starting point for tackling bullying but regular reviews of both policies and strategies are necessary, including examining the relationship with curriculum development, support and training for teachers and working in partnership with parents.
- Children are likely to reflect the views of their parents. Results from the Home Office 'Citizenship Survey' in 2002 suggest that perceptions of racism had increased marginally in the last five years.
- Immigration and asylum-seeking policy has the difficult task of regulating entry to and settlement in the United Kingdom. Figures from the Department for Education and Skills for looked after children for 2002–03 show that 2,400 unaccompanied children were being looked after at 31 March, and the 2003 children in need census notes 12,500 asylum-seeking children who were receiving a service.
- Some ethnic minority groups, particularly some Asian groups, have done well educationally and in their later careers. Asylum-seeker children can inspire their classmates and teachers because of the seriousness with which they treat education.
- The low level of attainment, particularly amongst Black Caribbean boys, is worrying. Many Black leaders maintain that institutional racism is the real problem. The Commission for Racial Equality also warned that 'peer pressure' had made a substantial contribution to the decline in Black achievement.

Looking to the future

Three possible areas are suggested as a framework for considering the next stage of government strategy to tackle social exclusion amongst children and families: increasing the dosage; filling the gaps; and new approaches.

In looking to the future, it is useful to summarise some of the cross-cutting messages from the review.

Cross-cutting messages from the review

- *The pattern of inequality has changed, with incomes for the large majority becoming more equal over the 1990s; but inequality still remains very high. In education, though overall achievement levels are rising, the gap for disadvantaged children remains large.*
- *There is a need for a bridge between children's services. This may be achieved by initiatives associated with the Children Bill.*
- *The 'hard to reach': the most disadvantaged, some ethnic minority groups, vulnerable families and looked after children may be missing out.*
- *Children need protection at times of transition, for example at times of change in employment and/or family status, and continuity of education when a family is homeless.*
- *Barriers prevent the take-up of opportunities, for example a lack of information.*
- *Some families benefit from more targeted help, for example from mentors and advisors.*
- *Children need to be kept at the centre of policies.*

Increasing the dosage

This means continuing in the current direction of policy, but with renewed vigour and determination.

Tackling child poverty must remain a priority. Care is needed to ensure that policies do not cause gaps to increase between those at risk of social exclusion and children generally. Up-rating benefits/tax credits and the national minimum wage to ensure that those on low incomes benefit from general increases in living standards will continue to be important; more than this is needed if relative poverty is to be further decreased.

Further measures are needed to tackle inequalities, particularly inequalities that have their origins at birth but may also affect the rest of the lifecourse, such as low birthweight.

Further steps to tackle discrimination on racial grounds, including bullying, are important, both in themselves and as a signal of government intent.

Finally, the quality and availability of national data on children could still be improved.

Filling the gaps

Bringing services together. The Children Bill will do much to bridge the gap between different services at local level and in particular the gap between vulnerable families and children in need of protection; but more is needed. Our findings suggest that there is a need throughout government to fully mainstream a strategy against social exclusion of children and families.

Reaching the hard to reach. Three broad groups of the 'hard to reach' have been identified: minority groups, for example members of ethnic minority groups, Travellers and asylum seekers; the overlooked, such as the learning disabled; and the service resistant, including the over-targeted or disaffected. A different perspective might see these groups as 'hard to hear' rather than 'hard to reach', and therefore might aspire to develop services which are 'easy to use'.

Increasing the take-up of opportunities. To increase the take-up of opportunities, we need to remove the barriers. Barriers may include lack of knowledge amongst parents about the relevant services and assistance and lack of knowledge about their children's education; services which are felt to be inappropriate, inaccessible and/or associated with stigma; cultural factors which may include, for example, not putting a premium on education for girls; and rational choice (for example, deciding not to use child care because it is too expensive).

Some parents and children need targeted help. Escape from social exclusion is particularly difficult for some parents and children who have been rendered depressed because of multi-faceted deprivation and disadvantage in their past and present lives. Mental health services may help; but other people may benefit from mentors and advisers, who not only give them support but also help them to develop new skills, competences and confidence.

New approaches

Learning to hear. Approaches that explore how 'excluded' people perceive their experiences and make decisions could be further explored.

More appropriate targets. We also need more appropriate measures of success for some groups, for whom (for example) returning to work or training can be too great a leap; they need an intermediate stage that confirms their progress.

Tackling stigma and building trust. A 'step change' in the delivery of services for such groups would prioritize the building of relationships of confidence and trust between providers and users.

Timing of interventions. Adopting a more 'child-centred' view implies that because the experience of social exclusion differs by age group, policies may need to be more nuanced as well. In particular, a preventative strategy needs to look further back than early childhood and ensure that single people and childless couples of childbearing age, including young pregnant women, have adequate resources to give their babies as healthy a start in life as possible.

Conclusion

Much of government policy is about creating a better future for children; we need to remove the barriers that stand in their way and give them the skills, competence and confidence to achieve their goals. Children can only do this with the support of their parents; so in addition, we need to support their parents in this endeavour.

CHAPTER 1: Introduction and background

1.1 Aims and methods

The aim of the review was to draw together existing literature and evidence and assess the overall impact of government policies and initiatives on children aged 0–13 and families in, or at risk of, social exclusion over the last ten years (concentrating in practice on the period since 1997). The cut-off age of 13 means that we did not deal with the majority of secondary schooling or any vocational issues, which were outside the age range we were considering. We focus on policies of more specific relevance to children and families, as this is one of four literature reviews being completed simultaneously, with the others covering young people, working-age adults and older people. This means that, for example, the impact of the New Deals is covered in more detail in the report on working-age adults, rather than in this review.

The review was undertaken largely between August 2003 and the end of 2003/beginning of 2004. Except for a limited number of key publications emerging since then, the cut-off date was 31 December 2003.

The literature was largely confined to UK sources, rather than including comparative studies. In our descriptions of policy measures and analysis of their impact, we have largely focused on England, as the Social Exclusion Unit's remit covers England only. Some policies, and some sources which we have drawn on, however – particularly those giving statistical information – refer to a wider geographical area within the UK, or to the UK as a whole.

Our approach was to look at nine areas known to be associated with a risk of social exclusion for children of this age and their families; and assess the extent to which government policies had made an impact in each area. (In doing so, we recognize that social exclusion is multi-faceted, and that many children and families affected by one of these problems may well be affected by several more. The government's 'joined-up' strategy is a determined attempt to deal with this complexity and interaction.) These areas of known risk were:

- poor living standards;
- poor living conditions;
- lack of access to quality early years provision;
- poor educational access and achievement;
- poor health;
- disabled children and children with special educational needs;
- vulnerable families: children in need; child protection;
- access to justice; and
- discrimination.

In the following chapters, each of these risk areas is examined in turn. In each, we briefly identify the risk; we outline government policy aims and policy levers; we explore the overall impact of government policies – the main positive benefits, while identifying those who may have benefited less; as well as gaps in knowledge and possible directions for the future. Each chapter ends with a short summary of the key messages from the findings. The final chapter of the report brings together the overall conclusions, reflects on the findings and proposes some possible directions for the future.

Three elements of our analysis may depart from more traditional perspectives on social exclusion as it affects children and families. First, we emphasize the importance of inclusion during childhood for its own sake, as well as for the sake of the child's longer-term future. Secondly, we use the concepts of risk and resiliency: how far has the government reduced the risks associated with social exclusion and how far has it, by making opportunities and encouraging children and their parents to take advantage of them, promoted resiliency and inclusion? And thirdly, we examine several areas which are important in terms of rights and respect (such as access to legal services and discrimination), as these are also important elements of social inclusion.

Details of the methodology are given in the Appendix. Key experts in each area guided the review and helped to identify relevant government reports and important material from the grey literature in addition to suggesting key words for bibliographic searches of published material. Each relevant paper/report/book was systematically recorded on a matrix and then policy summaries were made, also on a matrix. The summaries written here are the end process. Although key references are given in this report, these represent only a small proportion of all the literature reviewed.

The remainder of this chapter explores:

- the meaning of 'social exclusion' for this group (children and families);
- drivers and risk and protective factors for social exclusion; and
- the experience of social exclusion for children and families.

1.2 What is social exclusion for this group?

Social exclusion as a concept is open to different interpretations, and is still developing; but the defining characteristics identified have usually been predominantly adult-centred,¹ and particularly suited to those of working age. Research often focuses on identifying whether households with children are more likely to be socially excluded, and in which dimensions. This is valuable, and covers the 'families' aspect of this report. But the current government's commitment to listening to children and young people can give us a better idea of children's own experiences and priorities, which can inform our view of what social exclusion means for them.

Government views

The current government uses a pragmatic and flexible definition of social exclusion, highlighting multiple, interrelated aspects of disadvantage and the dynamic process of exclusion. It distinguishes between extreme forms of multiple deprivation, affecting only 1% or so of the relevant population; 'significant problems', which may affect some 1 in 10 of the age group; and the 'risk' of social exclusion, which can affect many more (e.g. the 1 in 3 children living in low-income households). It also identifies particular times when people may be vulnerable. In practice,

1 Ridge (2002).

2 See, for example, Social Exclusion Unit (2001).

social exclusion for children is often seen in terms of its longer-term consequences; for specific groups of children and especially young people, it may also be seen as involving problematic behaviour for society as a whole.

Adult-centred definitions of social exclusion

The Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion focused, in its recent analysis on the prevalence of social exclusion, on adults of working age, 'since somewhat different indicators would be needed to reflect the same dimensions of inclusion for children and those over pension age.'³ It examined consumption, production, political engagement and social interaction, and sees lack of participation in any one dimension as social exclusion. In the European Union, social exclusion is seen as linkages between low income, activity status and various indicators relating to means and perceptions of quality of life; but 'children get no special place in the Eurostat analysis – there are no specific indicators that are intended to capture exclusion among children'.⁴

Social exclusion as applied to children

'Politicians often refer to us children as being the future of Europe. But we are living right now. Our childhood is happening now and not in the future.'

(*'Build Children's Europe – Make Child Rights Real'*, statement from the Children's summit meeting, Gotenborg, Sweden, 13 June 2001)

In the mid 1990s, researchers began to identify, in co-operation with adults (largely mothers), 'socially perceived necessities' related to children.⁵ The Poverty and Social Exclusion survey developed this approach further, and then applied parents' judgments about necessities for children rather than the whole population's.⁶ This was described as being largely about poverty or multiple deprivation. However, some items defined as a necessity by a high proportion of parents (such as a hobby/leisure activity) could be seen as necessary for children's full social inclusion.

In a more recent study, Adelman *et al.*⁷ drew further on the Poverty and Social Exclusion survey to highlight social exclusion for children. Their aim was to test the connection between severe poverty and exclusion – whether severely poor children were more likely to experience different dimensions of social exclusion, including (lack of) social activities, access to services and citizenship, friendship and support, living in adequate housing/an adequate local area, and financial security. Social exclusion was measured from three perspectives: experiences affecting the whole household, experiences of parents likely to impact on the child, and children's own experiences. The researchers' desire to test out the link between poverty and social exclusion distinguishes this exercise from others.

The researchers try to disaggregate the experiences of children from those of their parents. They argue that this is not done by other studies such as the Families and Children Study (FACS) carried out for the government, which has developed a scale of hardship including many indicators of deprivation; a marked decline in hardship amongst families with children was measured in this way between 1999 and 2001.⁸

3 Hills *et al.* (eds.) (2002), p. 33.

4 Micklewright (2002).

5 Middleton *et al.* (1997).

6 Gordon *et al.* (2000).

7 Adelman *et al.* (2003).

8 See, for example, Vegeris and Perry (2003). See below for the findings of Adelman *et al.* (2003) on severe poverty and social exclusion amongst children.

Ridge⁹ argues that operationalizing social exclusion for children is problematic, because they are excluded from many areas seen as central to inclusion for adults:

'Social exclusion for children could signify much more than exclusion from society as conceived by adults. It may also mean exclusion from the norms and customs of children's society. In this respect, childhood needs to be seen as a social experience in itself, where the demands of participation and inclusion may be considerable, and likewise the costs of exclusion (Ridge and Millar)'

(Ridge, T. (2002), *Childhood Poverty and Social Exclusion: From a child's perspective*, The Policy Press, p. 6)

In her study, Ridge finds that 'fitting in' (not feeling different) and 'joining in' (being able to participate in social and other activities) are crucial for children. Micklewright¹⁰ also highlights the importance of considering social exclusion in relation to children, because this leads us to ask who is responsible for excluding children, including, possibly, parents, schools, employers and governments.

Added value of a child-centred view of social exclusion

Reexamining social exclusion through children's eyes means asking about the meaning of inclusion for children as children. For example, is education providing an inclusive experience for children now, as well as helping protect them against social exclusion as adults later?¹¹ What about (lack of) ability to participate, (lack of) respect from others, and discrimination?¹² Ridge argues that it is the social aspect of 'social exclusion' that is least developed and understood. But it is also crucial not to homogenise children – not to lose sight of differences between them in terms of age, disability, ethnic origins, gender, urban/rural background etc. 'There is no "universal" childhood but many "childhoods"'.¹³

Not just children but families too

The social exclusion of families as a whole must also be of concern. In part, this is because the vast majority of parents try to protect their children from the effects of poverty, deprivation and exclusion;¹⁴ it is likely, therefore, that parents' (especially mothers') own ability to participate will be lower than it is for single people and childless couples. In part, it is also because children who are excluded from family life are amongst the most socially excluded of all in a variety of different respects.¹⁵ In addition, the relative disadvantage of families with children overall in relation to society as a whole should not mean judging children's poverty/exclusion only by the standard of other children/families with children.¹⁶

9 Ridge (2002). Ridge's empirical work was conducted with 10–17 year olds whose families were on income support because they were lone parents or a two-parent family with someone who was disabled.

10 Micklewright (2002).

11 See, for example, Klasen (2001) compared with Sparkes (1999).

12 Ruxton and Bennett (2002).

13 Ridge (2002), p. 136.

14 This is demonstrated in, for example, Adelman *et al.* (2003).

15 See, for example, Social Exclusion Unit (2003a).

16 Micklewright (2002).

1.3 Drivers and risk and protective factors

Drivers of social exclusion

When thinking about who is affected and at risk of social exclusion, this can either be approached from a policy or a vulnerable group perspective; but the macro context is also important, as this will influence the numbers at risk. At the macro level, Bradshaw *et al.* in their literature review on the drivers of social exclusion¹⁷ noted the role of demographic changes, including an ageing population and the rise in lone parenthood; the role of the labour market, which dictates levels of unemployment; and the role of public policy in shifting the parameters. Bradshaw *et al.* then went on to consider the following drivers of social exclusion in more detail: low income; unemployment and low pay; poor educational access and achievement; poor health (physical/mental); and poor housing and neighbourhoods, as well as crime. For this review, we have taken a similar pragmatic approach, looking at the main risk areas as detailed earlier and the policies to combat these.

Risk factors

At the centre of the government's approach to tackling social exclusion has been the idea that we need 'joined-up' solutions to solve these 'joined-up' problems. Children's lives, their problems and their likelihood of social exclusion, are influenced by risk and protective factors in relation to the individual, their families, communities and schools and the wider social environment. Lowering the risk in one domain can impact on, or compensate for, problems in another. For example, the protective influence of educational attainments can dramatically alter the life chances of someone brought up in poverty.

There is a tendency to regard all risks as equal. Jackson, in researching the outcomes of a very vulnerable group – looked after children¹⁸ – argues that education should be given the highest priority, because there is clear evidence that educational success is the most potent protective factor and, conversely, educational failure carries the greatest risks. Bradshaw *et al.*, in their review of the drivers of social exclusion in a wider sense, put this rather less strongly, concluding that: 'On balance the evidence suggests that education can reduce social exclusion'.¹⁹ In this review, we argue that education is important in terms of its potential to provide an inclusive experience (or its opposite) in childhood, as well as in terms of its longer-term effects on life chances.

Others would argue, as seen in the extensive literature on parenting,²⁰ that parental style is at the heart of some of these differential outcomes. Lack of parental responsiveness, inconsistent discipline practices, the use of harsh punishments and lack of supervision are strongly associated with increasing rates of emotional and behavioural problems in children. For some children, behavioural problems can be an important precursor of social exclusion because of their 'chain' effects – for example, problems in school may lead to poor educational attainment and even exclusion from school, which in turn may lead to poor employment prospects. There are also strong links between behavioural problems and later conduct problems and delinquency.²¹

Protective factors

Much of government policy for children aged 0–13, such as Sure Start, the Children's Fund and On Track (among other initiatives), is in part directed at supporting parents in their parenting role, especially for those families most at risk of social exclusion. The lives of children can also be transformed dramatically by quality pre-school care, education and perhaps also after-school and

17 Bradshaw *et al.* (2004).

18 Jackson (2002).

19 Bradshaw *et al.* (2004).

20 Ward and Gardner (2000).

21 Rutter and Smith (eds.) (1995).

holiday clubs, as well as by reducing poverty and creating more favourable living environments.²² Helping children to overcome behavioural problems before they enter school may indirectly impact on other areas of a child's life and help some children and their families to escape the cycle of social exclusion.²³

Clues about contributory factors in helping children escape from social exclusion are emerging from research on resilience and 'agency'. Children are not placid consumers of resources but actors in their own right who, from an early age, powerfully influence those around them and the course of their future lives.²⁴ New research is showing that educational outcomes in children are related to the extent to which they feel they can exercise their own 'agency',^{25,26} or the extent to which they believe their actions (such as how hard they work in school) will influence how much control they have over their future. Although some of this research has come from the US, studies in the UK are replicating these findings.²⁷ Those advocating more focus on 'agency' are careful, however, to ensure that lack of 'agency' is not used to blame children/young people for their own social exclusion.

Discovering and exercising 'agency' could be thought of as an adolescent activity, but the results of the High/Scope Perry Pre-School study,²⁸ in which three year old children were taught to 'think what they wanted to do' and then 'review what they had done at the end of the morning', suggests that children can learn this much earlier. Schoon and Parsons, in the UK, have explored where these beliefs come from:

'The developing individual is embedded in an interconnected set of contexts, which either have a direct or indirect impact ... the formulation and realization of teenage aspirations involves negotiations with oneself, with others, and with the wider socio-historical context. ... [Future] development is influenced by both individual and contextual factors, including the overall socio-historical context that dictates opportunities and possibilities.'

(I. Schoon and S. Parsons (2002), 'Teenage aspirations for future careers and occupational outcomes', *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, April, Vol. 60(2), p. 281)

It is in the last domain cited in the quotation above, 'the overall socio-historical context', where public policy has a particular opportunity to influence 'agency' beliefs, by creating a social climate that children and young people feel gives them opportunities and possibilities that are within the scope of their efforts.

Research on resilience also shows us that a key to surviving adversity is a 'feeling of being in control'. It also supports some of the comments made earlier: risk factors are cumulative; if the 'chain' can be broken, most children can recover; transition points are threats but also opportunities; children only learn to cope through managed exposure to risk; acute stressors are (usually) less harmful than chronic ones; high self-esteem is important – but only part of the answer. Resilience in children is associated with strong social networks; involvement of males in childcare; positive school experiences; a sense of mastery; external mentoring and opportunities to exert agency.²⁹

22 Buchanan and Hudson (2002).

23 Buchanan (1996). Although this book focuses on child maltreatment, it takes a broad view, looking at socio-political factors including poverty, cultural factors and psychological and biological determinants. Many of these determinants are closely related to social exclusion.

24 Prout (1998).

25 Little *et al.* (2002).

26 Little (2002).

27 Schoon and Parsons (2002).

28 Schweinhart and Weikart (1993). This study reported that a generation later there was a \$7 return for every \$1 spent.

29 Newman (2002).

Ideas about the importance of ‘agency’ also link to earlier research by Seligman on ‘learned helplessness’.³⁰ The theory of learned helplessness is a model of human behaviour, explaining depression but also possibly linked to social exclusion. An early life of disadvantage – of poverty, discrimination, child abuse or domestic violence – perhaps with intergenerational patterns, may be associated with a deeply-held belief that nothing can change. The survey of the mental health of children in 1999 showed that some 10% of children had a mental disorder and that they were more likely to suffer from poor mental health if their parents were unemployed, and if their parents had few or no educational qualifications;³¹ a follow-up was carried out in 2001, and a further study is currently taking place. The implication for public policy is that some children and parents may need a helping hand to develop the confidence, skills and strategies to escape from social exclusion – but they may only be able to do this if structural factors are ‘permitting’.³²

1.4 The experience of social exclusion for children and families

Going without

The Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) sees *living in a low-income household* as a risk factor for social exclusion.³³ Research demonstrates that the source of household income, and who receives and manages it – not just its amount – are also likely to influence children’s well-being.³⁴ Gauging the relative importance of income compared to other factors in determining children’s experiences is hard; but raising family income may also raise parents’ expectations,³⁵ and is likely to result in additional spending benefiting children.³⁶

Income is important, therefore – though if the family is living on a low income, the vast majority of parents try to protect their children from the effects. But this is harder if they experience *persistent poverty*.³⁷ Recent research shows the negative impact of *transitions in employment and family status*.³⁸ Ridge³⁹ notes the impact of insecurity on children’s support and friendship networks, and their experience of education; and she finds that children in low-income families often have no completely secure and reliable source of income.

The Poverty and Social Exclusion survey indicated that 34% of British children go without at least one *item or activity deemed to be necessary* by the majority of parents, and nearly one-fifth go without two or more, because their parents cannot afford them; but children are most likely to lack items and activities needed for social participation.⁴⁰ Piachaud and Sutherland argue that ‘reduced consumption by children may affect children’s social isolation, but it is less important than reduced

30 Seligman (1980).

31 Meltzer *et al.* (2000).

32 Rutter (1974). Rutter suggested that parents needed ‘permitting circumstances’ or an absence from extreme deprivation in order to parent effectively.

33 Social Exclusion Unit (2001).

34 See, for example, Goode *et al.* (1998).

35 Unicef (2000).

36 Vegeris and Perry (2003).

37 Berthoud (2001).

38 Adelman *et al.* (2003).

39 Ridge (2002). Ridge’s own qualitative work was carried out with 10–17 year olds. She also analysed the findings of the British Household Panel Youth Survey data about 11–15 year olds.

40 Gordon *et al.* (2000). The deprivation threshold was extended to two or more items because so many families had no holiday. The size of the sample obviously has an effect on the statistical confidence limits. This was a stratified sample with a heavy weighting towards the bottom end of the income distribution.

investment in children which can have lifetime effects'.⁴¹ They do agree that separating these is not easy, however; and Ridge notes that some forms of consumption in practice have less tangible but important functions, for example in facilitating communication.⁴²

Difficulties 'fitting in' and 'joining in'

The first chapter above described how studies have examined social exclusion which affects households with children, and/or children specifically. Households with children were more likely to have restricted consumption of, or disconnection from, utilities in the Poverty and Social Exclusion survey, and were less likely to participate in social activities (though reasons included lack of time, not just lack of money).⁴³ Other aspects of the experience of social exclusion as defined in this study did not seem to affect those with children disproportionately.

But in new analysis looking specifically at children, Adelman *et al.*⁴⁴ found higher (not different) levels of *social exclusion amongst children* living in severe poverty (defined using a combination of income and deprivation). Such children were especially likely to be unable to participate in social activities, and more likely to lack access to local services and live in a poor quality neighbourhood.

Ridge, however, highlights 'exclusion within school' due to institutional processes compounding the social and material disadvantages faced by children from low-income families. Children miss out on social contact and different life experiences, and may not learn 'soft skills'. She also emphasises the importance of accessible and affordable transport for children and young people on a low income, as well as affordable leisure activities, to ensure that they can 'join in'. A 'reduced capacity to make and sustain adequate social relationships and social networks'⁴⁵ was clear, as well as a 'sharp awareness' that they 'might be seen as different and find themselves isolated and marginalized'.⁴⁶ Children may also 'self-exclude' – for example, by protecting their parents by not even asking them to finance some school activities.

Sparkes and Glennerster⁴⁷ emphasize the inter-relationship of different forms of exclusion. For example, some parents cannot access health services with their child because of bad transport links; the child then misses out on school. Taylor, Berthoud and Jenkins are studying the links between low income and a range of other kinds of disadvantage, to see whether these associations are becoming stronger or weaker.⁴⁸

In their own words

We have identified a tendency to focus on the impact of social exclusion on children as 'human becomings' rather than 'human beings'⁴⁹ – on outcomes in future adulthood, rather than on the experience of childhood – and have argued that a more child-centred view of social exclusion would focus more on exclusion from the world of childhood. Children's current experiences of social exclusion are vividly illustrated by some of the studies of children's views. In a large study of bullying in the UK,⁵⁰ over half of all British schoolchildren had been the target of bullies and some

41 Piachaud and Sutherland (2002), p. 154.

42 Ridge (2002).

43 Gordon *et al.* (2000).

44 Adelman *et al.* (2003).

45 Ridge (2002), p. 144.

46 Ridge (2002), p. 144.

47 Sparkes and Glennerster (2002).

48 Institute of Social and Economic Research (2004). This study is being carried out for the Social Exclusion Unit, but it is not just focusing on children and families.

49 Fawcett *et al.* (forthcoming) and Prout (2000), both cited in Lister (2004).

50 Katz *et al.* (2001). In addition, in Hughes and Lloyd (1996) 25% of boys and 30% of girls claimed that they had been bullied 'a lot' and only 20% of boys and 15% of girls said that they had no experience of being bullied.

young victims had contemplated or attempted suicide. As one young girl said, perhaps highlighting the day-to-day reality of social exclusion, 'I hated myself. I felt there must be something I'd done wrong or terrible for this to happen. I felt ashamed'.

Studies of young people who have been looked after⁵¹ are also powerful: 'When you say that you are in a children's home, people think you are a tramp or something'. Another girl complained, 'You say you are in care and lots of people feel sorry for you. I hate that feeling'. More common were views about exclusion from the social life of school: 'I've missed loads and loads of schooling ... I don't fit into normal school any more'. In a further study of 308 young people largely from ethnic minority groups in Bradford, following the recent disturbances,⁵² a young girl noted: 'You need help on how to get somewhere ... if you don't have the preferred marks'; while another added: 'I can't see the point, really, 'cos you know people who don't get the jobs they go for anyway'.

Longer-term consequences of social exclusion in childhood

However, whilst the importance of social exclusion for children's experience of childhood may have been under-emphasized, we do not underestimate its longer-term consequences, and it is these that in part underpin the government's concern about poverty and social exclusion for children.⁵³ Findings from longitudinal research show that there are important continuities between disadvantages in childhood and a range of adverse outcomes and social exclusion in adulthood; so getting it right in the early years is especially important.⁵⁴

However, understanding causation even in these studies is problematic.⁵⁵ Different factors may be important at different ages and for different outcomes.⁵⁶ There is a complex web of influences on child outcomes and, in addition, 'insight is lodged (or locked) within many [different] academic disciplines ...'.⁵⁷ Moreover, the originators of cohort studies could not anticipate the interests of future researchers, and so did not necessarily ask the most useful questions for our purposes.⁵⁸ However, despite its limitations, many believe that longitudinal evidence is the most reliable we have at present for telling us what happens to different groups of children with different experiences.

It is important to synthesize the results of these studies, to highlight the more pervasive and persistent relationships. For example, one study of data from the National Child Development Study (NCDS)⁵⁹ examined the factors that may be implicated in continuing patterns of social exclusion, vividly illustrating the *inter-connectedness of disadvantage* through the life-course. Another study based on the NCDS tried to separate out the effects of childhood experiences from the impact of the *starting points* in children's lives (such as their cognitive abilities or their parents' educational level).⁶⁰ Examining family disadvantage in terms of poverty, lone parenthood, paternal unemployment or being taken into care, and police contact/truancy ('delinquency') at age 16, the authors found that those with disadvantaged or 'delinquent' backgrounds fared badly in terms of earnings and employment as young adults. Education was important as a transmission mechanism, but typically accounted for under half the differences. 'Of the family-based measures of childhood

51 Buchanan (1995).

52 Katz *et al.* (2002).

53 See, for example, Persistent Poverty and Lifetime Inequality, CASEReport 5 and HM Treasury Occasional Paper no. 10, 1999, reporting on a workshop held in November 1998.

54 Buchanan and Hudson (2000).

55 Walker (2003).

56 Ermisch *et al.* (2001).

57 Walker (2003), p. 2.

58 Hobcraft (2002), p. 75.

59 Hobcraft (1999), p. 116.

60 Gregg *et al.* (1999) (based on National Child Development Study, 1958 cohort).

disadvantage, poverty was found to be by far the most important force linking childhood development with subsequent social and economic outcomes'.⁶¹ In addition, the children of parents who had themselves grown up in socially disadvantaged situations had lower cognitive ability on average when measured early on at school.

John Hobcraft⁶² has examined the factors that may be implicated in adult social exclusion, based on the National Child Development Study, with the aim of capturing influences at different periods of the life-course through to young adulthood (to age 33), in order to identify pervasive antecedents. He takes a pragmatic approach to 'precursors, markers, or components of social exclusion', and tries to 'avoid disciplinary silos' in the analysis of antecedents. The most pervasive childhood influences on adult disadvantage, net of intermediate experiences, are educational test scores, childhood poverty, frequent school absences, contact with the police and parental interest in education. Taken together, various child behaviour measures also matter. Hobcraft notes that 'one striking feature of this list ... is how few can be measured retrospectively'.⁶³ Women seem to be more vulnerable to childhood disadvantage, especially to certain features, than men.

Intervention in the early years may not be enough, and this is important when we consider parents in families living in social exclusion, as this review is intended to look at families as well as children aged 0–13. Hobcraft concludes that, even if adults seem to have escaped from childhood disadvantage, its legacy will mean that they continue to require protection from its effects; that there is a need to deal with multiple and interconnected disadvantages (social exclusion); and that a longer-term perspective is required that focuses on 'the ways in which cumulative or repeated disadvantage plays out through the lives of individuals, rather than focusing on entry and exits, and status, on one disadvantage at a time'.⁶⁴ In another version of this evidence, Hobcraft argues that it implies that 'policies to deal with disadvantage should not only attempt to shift people out of disadvantage at any time, but also place greater emphasis on maintaining the escape from social exclusion'.⁶⁵

In addition to Hobcraft's work, there is now a large literature from life history researchers around the world, who are using different longitudinal data sets but coming up with similar findings on factors that influence outcomes for children. The focus of many of these studies is more psychological, but most control for structural factors, such as poverty and education. At Oxford, for example, the Centre for Research into Parenting and Children, using the UK longitudinal data sets, is beginning to tease out some of the different factors in the child, family, school and community associated with child well-being. In doing this, researchers are also highlighting the relative strengths of the different factors. In most of these studies, family conflict and poor parental mental health are associated with poorer outcomes, while higher levels of parental involvement are associated with better educational, emotional and relational outcomes. In helping children escape from social exclusion, these studies are useful in focusing social policy.⁶⁶

61 Findings 389 (1999), Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

62 Hobcraft (forthcoming, 2004). The points noted here are from this paper unless otherwise specified.

63 Hobcraft (forthcoming, 2004), p. 8.

64 Hobcraft (forthcoming, 2004), p. 17.

65 Hobcraft (2003), p. 41.

66 Buchanan and Hudson (2000), but also papers from the Centre for Research into Parenting and Children: <http://www.apsoc.ox.ac.uk/parenting/Buchanan.htm>

This chapter has set out:

- the aims and methods of this study;
- the meaning of ‘social exclusion’ for this group (children and families);
- drivers and risk and protective factors for social exclusion; and
- the experience of social exclusion for children and families – in both the immediacy of childhood and the longer term.

It has also explained three elements of our analysis that we have argued are key to understanding social exclusion as it affects children and families and the impact of government policies: firstly, inclusion during childhood for its own sake; secondly, the concepts of risk and resiliency; and lastly, rights and respect. The next chapter examines the context in which relevant government policies operate.

CHAPTER 2: Overview of government policy

This chapter sets out the context in which government policies that impact on children and families in, or at risk of, social exclusion are operating. First, it looks at key elements of policy on families and children – general family policy, listening to children and the approach to children at risk. Then it examines the government’s overall strategy to tackle social exclusion and then homes in on its policies towards children and families experiencing social exclusion or at risk of doing so.

2.1 Family policy, policies for children at risk, listening, investment

‘Family life is the foundation on which our communities, our society and our country are built ... There is a widespread recognition that a new approach supporting the family is needed ... In almost everything government does, we can help families, neglect them, or even do them active harm. So it must be right for government to have a policy towards the family, to provide the best support we can.’

(Home Office (1998), *Supporting Families*, consultative document, pp. 1-2)

‘We are proposing here a range of measures to reform and improve children’s care – we want to maximize the opportunities open to them – to improve their life chances, to change the odds in their favour.’

(The Prime Minister (2003), foreword to the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*)

Family policy

Any strategy to combat social exclusion amongst children and families is enacted against the background of an overall family policy. The Children Act 1989, which was implemented in 1991, brought together legislation for children that had previously been scattered across the statute books. In legislating for how children should be treated under the law, it also laid the foundations of a family policy for England and Wales. Broadly speaking, this was that children’s interests were paramount; as far as possible, they should be brought up in families; when they were in ‘need’ or their health or development was under threat, they and their families should be given services; when at risk of significant harm, they should be protected; and when they were being looked after by the state, their well-being should be promoted.

With the arrival of the Labour government in 1997, there was a change in how this legislation was interpreted. Under the Conservatives, the focus was on individual and family responsibility, with minimal intervention from the state in supporting families.⁶⁷ The 1998 Green Paper, *Supporting Families*,⁶⁸ outlined the new approach. It was recognized that, with the rising number of divorces, more children being brought up in lone parent households, more child poverty, rising crime and drug abuse, the family was under stress. A modern family policy, it noted, needed to recognize the new realities of family change, but also needed to focus on clear principles: first, the child’s interest was paramount, and the state’s primary interest in family policy was to ensure that the next generation got the best possible start in life; second, children needed stability and security and,

67 Pascall (1999).

68 Home Office (1998).

although many lone parents raised their children well, marriage was the surest foundation for rearing children, and therefore should be promoted; and third, the government should offer support to all parents so that they could better support their children.

Five areas were outlined where it was felt government could make a difference:

- ensuring that all parents had access to the advice and support they needed;
- improving family prosperity, reducing child poverty and ensuring that the tax and benefits system acknowledges the cost of bringing up children;
- helping families with work/life balance so that they could spend more time with their children;
- strengthening marriage;
- tackling more serious family problems, including domestic violence and school-age pregnancy.

Children at risk

The huge raft of initiatives since 1998 outlined in this review link to these objectives. Perhaps the gap in *Supporting Families* was the lack of a clearly defined policy for protecting children. The death of Victoria Climbié and the detailed recommendations following the Laming⁶⁹ report led to the Green Paper, *Every Child Matters*.⁷⁰ It was recognized that child protection could not be separated from policies to improve children's lives as a whole. There was a need to focus on the universal services that every child used; on more targeted and specialist services for those with additional needs; and, finally, on compulsory action through parenting orders as a last resort where parents are unwilling to co-operate to deal with a child's antisocial behaviour, offending or truancy. Where children were not able to live with their families, the Adoption and Children Act 2002 was designed to increase the number of children who were adopted. In the Green Paper, there was a focus on early intervention and effective prevention; accountability and integration locally, regionally and nationally; the appointment of a new Minister for Children, Young People and Families; and workforce reform.

Following the Green Paper, the government has outlined an impressive programme of work set against a tight timetable: *Every Child Matters: Next steps*.⁷¹ The *Children Bill* (with Royal assent anticipated in November 2004) will create the legislative framework to reform children's services, in order to maximize opportunity and minimize risk for children and young people. There will be a new duty on agencies to co-operate among themselves and with other local partners. Pooled health, social care and educational budgets are encouraged, as well as information interchange. There will also be an integrated inspection framework and the creation of a Children's Commissioner for England.⁷²

Listening to children

In implementing these policies, the government has made a commitment to listening to children. An important initiative in 2001 was the publication of *Learning to Listen*,⁷³ which set out principles for children and young people's participation in the planning, delivery and evaluation of

69 Home Office (2003).

70 HM Treasury (2003b).

71 Department for Education and Skills (2004d).

72 Children Bill, Department for Education and Skills (2004), press release 4 March.

73 Children and Young People's Unit (2001).

government policies and services across government departments. Behind the action plans⁷⁴ was the idea that by actively involving children and young people in the planning and development of services, it would be real rather than presumed needs that would be addressed.

The government's investment in children

The government has invested heavily in children and their futures. In a recent analysis of public expenditure on children in England,⁷⁵ Sefton notes that the government spends about £5,000 per child on public services on average; and that since Labour came into power in 1997 (and especially since 1999-2000), there has been a substantial increase in expenditure on public services. 'Children appear to have benefited most from this increase in public expenditure',⁷⁶ with public spending per child growing by almost 20% in real terms between 1996-97 and 2001-02 – though he notes that this trend may now have changed, because the recent increase in health spending is more likely to benefit older people. More importantly, in view of our focus here, he also says that it is likely that spending on children has become more 'pro-poor' since 1997, with tax and benefit policies skewed towards lower-income families and changes to spending formulae giving a greater share of funding to poorer areas.

Much of this expenditure has been directed at the children (aged 0–13) who are the subject of this review. These are the citizens of tomorrow who will lay the foundations for the next generation. It is clear that one of the key drivers of the government's policies to tackle child poverty and social exclusion is, rightly, concern about the long-term consequences. As Hills points out, a concern about the longer term may in fact reinforce rather than detract from the case for action on short-term problems. A 'protective' strategy of boosting the incomes of families with children now can also be a 'preventive' strategy for the next generation, for example.⁷⁷

2.2 Government policies on social exclusion

Overall policies on social exclusion

The other main influence on the strategy to tackle social exclusion amongst children and families is the government's overall policies on social exclusion. However, its policies to tackle the causes and symptoms of social exclusion should also be seen in the context of its ambitious commitment to end child poverty in a generation and its overarching aims, including the promotion of equal opportunity and tackling discrimination.

The government's own strategy for tackling poverty and social exclusion is set out in its annual *Opportunity for All* reports.⁷⁸ The National Action Plan on Social Inclusion⁷⁹ describes how the UK government and devolved administrations try to tackle poverty and social exclusion, but also looks at the actions of other actors.

Both these documents look at poverty and social inclusion. Trying to separate out policies specifically addressing social exclusion is not easy. But looking in particular at the development of policies on social exclusion, and the setting up of the Social Exclusion Unit shortly after the new Labour government came into office in 1997, a focus on children and young people was evident

74 Published by government departments, following the initial document published in 2001.

75 Sefton (2004).

76 Sefton (2004), p. 1.

77 Hills (2002). John Hills usefully divides potential policies into prevention, promotion, protection and propulsion.

78 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a).

79 Department for Work and Pensions (2003c). The UK produces the NAPincl as a member state of the European Union, currently at two-yearly intervals.

early on. The first brief for the SEU's work included tackling truancy and school exclusions. The SEU was also asked to examine the problems of disadvantaged estates; this was the beginning of the neighbourhood renewal strategy. The government's approach to social exclusion (as opposed to poverty) was therefore initially focused largely on particular groups and areas.

More recently, the approach to social exclusion has been described as a three-part strategy, of *prevention* (reducing risks and compensating for their impact), *reintegration* of those who become excluded, and *delivering basic minimum standards of services* to all.⁸⁰ This could be seen as putting more of an onus on ensuring the effectiveness of government policies for everyone. The SEU is still asked to examine specific issues, and to tackle topics needing a more 'joined-up' approach.

Policies affecting social exclusion amongst children and families

The analysis of government policies below is based on an understanding of this three-part strategy. Policies to *prevent* social exclusion among children and families could be seen as encompassing action on worklessness, including policies on 'welfare to work' and 'making work pay'; investment in the early years, including Sure Start in particular; and the strategy on school exclusions and truancy. The government's tax and benefit changes have improved incomes for families with children in general and for low-income families with children in particular; and childcare policies contribute to reducing worklessness and to combating disadvantage from early childhood on.

Reintegration policies will often be targeted on adults, although many of these policies will also affect children in families headed by such adults. The New Deals can be seen in this category, and some analysis is made of these in this review (especially the New Deal for Lone Parents), in terms of their impact on families with children. Pupils excluded from school have been given more provision. The children of teenage parents will be affected by plans to bring these parents back into education, employment or training.

Basic minimum standards of services (public and private) also affect children and families – some in more obvious ways, such as the initiatives to improve educational standards in schools, or to end bed and breakfast for homeless families. The national minimum wage also affects many families with children, especially through its impact on women workers. But the key focus of this goal is to ensure minimum standards in deprived areas, rather than just improving average performance. Targeting deprived areas is an effective means of reaching poor children, as they are particularly concentrated in such areas – though many poor children are not reached by such initiatives, and there have been calls for universal provision of such new schemes as children's centres.

Our review also examines areas of policy that have traditionally not always been included in government descriptions of its strategy to tackle social exclusion – including, for example, policy on sport and the environment more generally; access to justice; family support services; and action on discrimination.⁸¹ We also look in more detail at some groups at particular risk, including disabled children and vulnerable children (children requiring protection, looked after children etc.); policy towards them may be more or less likely to lead to their inclusion. Any government also has competing priorities – as well as conflicting policy goals – some of which may be less compatible with policies to tackle social exclusion.

The chapters that follow, each covering one of the identified risk areas, describe in detail recent policies to tackle the causes and symptoms of social exclusion for children and families, and analyse their impact as recorded in the literature. As noted earlier, we are aware that it is somewhat artificial to divide these into separate policy areas; certainly as far as children and families are concerned, they will not be experienced as isolated issues but often as a multi-faceted experience.

80 Social Exclusion Unit (2001).

81 Some of these policies are, however, included in the National Action Plan on Social Inclusion (see above).

CHAPTER 3: Poor living standards

3.1 The risk of social exclusion⁸²

'This book ... shows that the adversities of some boys and girls can extend into almost every aspect of their health, their family circumstances, and their educational development; it shows the enormous inequalities of life for "disadvantaged" compared with "ordinary" children.'

(Wedge, P. and Prosser, H. (1973), *Born to Fail?*, Arrow Books in association With National Children's Bureau, reporting on National Child Development Study)

The links between child poverty, defined in terms of low income/living standards, and negative outcomes in the short and longer term – including physical, cognitive, behavioural and emotional – are well-known.⁸³ Physical outcomes include infant and child mortality, child morbidity and fatal accidents, neglect and physical abuse; poor housing conditions and homelessness are associated with low income; educational attainment is likely to be lower; poverty is a risk factor for problematic behavioural outcomes; and poverty is also likely to be related to adverse mental health. These links, especially inter-generational inequalities, have been highlighted by the current government.⁸⁴

It is important not to see these links as automatic and inevitable, however.⁸⁵ And, as Plewis *et al.* note, the links over time between child poverty, medium- and long-term child outcomes and the intervening effects of 'within family' processes, local services and neighbourhoods are not yet well enough understood.⁸⁶ There may not be a single critical time point for all significant outcomes (educational progress, health, behaviour etc.); and subsequent events are also important.

Their view about differential time points seems to be borne out by research using the British Household Panel Survey (1991–99) and the British Youth Panel (added in 1994) to focus on child poverty outcomes in adolescence and young adulthood.⁸⁷ The authors of this research conclude that their findings demonstrate that family policies and income maintenance programmes are both likely to be relevant. The study also draws attention to some of the more intangible effects of child poverty, including lower self-esteem, fatalism in attitudes to health, and low educational aspirations; and it highlights possible differences between the impact of childhood poverty on men and women. Plewis *et al.* also point out that interventions may act through intermediate effects (e.g. affecting the nature of parental support, rather than children's development); and poverty experiences may be filtered through different lenses for different groups. We also know that whilst there is an overlap between low income and material deprivation, it is not complete. Whilst the damaging effects of poverty in general are clear, therefore, any policy response must be nuanced to take these complexities into account.⁸⁸

82 A previous literature review – Millar and Ridge (2001) – looked at this area of policy. It ranged much wider, however, giving demographic and other information, and was also based on data up to 2001 only.

83 See Bradshaw (ed.) (2001), which originated in an Economic and Social Research Council study.

84 HM Treasury (2001). Bradshaw (2001b) points out that some of the indicators used in *Opportunity for All* reports are inputs rather than outcomes.

85 Stressed, for example, by Kathleen Kiernan in Hills *et al.* (eds.) (2002)

86 Plewis *et al.* (2001).

87 Ermisch *et al.* (2001).

88 See wider overview of research by Robert Walker (2003).

Main policy levers and Public Service Agreements (PSAs)

Main relevant PSAs

: to reduce number of children in low-income households by at least a quarter by 2004/05, as a contribution towards the broader target of halving child poverty by 2010 and eradicating it by 2020.⁸⁹ Progress by 2004–05 judged by low-income measure (children in households with under 60% contemporary median income). But longer-term⁹⁰ progress when all of three totals decreasing: numbers with ‘absolute’ low income (below fixed income threshold before housing costs (BHC), uprated only with inflation); relative low income (under 60% contemporary median income BHC) and combined material deprivation and low income (under 70% contemporary median income BHC). Child poverty ‘eradicated’ when material deprivation amongst children approaches zero, and UK among best in Europe on relative low income as measured by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) modified equivalence scale, adjusted for household size.

: to reduce the total number of children in workless households over the three years to 2004, and to reduce the proportion of children in workless households over three years (spring 2003–spring 2006) by 6.5%⁹¹ (in fully operational childcare/early years programmes, aim for 12% reduction in proportion of young children in workless households by 2005–06.) **Other employment targets also relevant:** increase employment rates of disadvantaged areas and groups taking account of economic cycle – ethnic minority groups, 50 plus, those with lowest qualifications, and 30 districts with poorest initial labour market position; and significantly reduce difference between their employment rates and overall rate. Over the three years to spring 2006, increase the employment rates of lone parents significantly and reduce the difference between their employment rates and the overall rate. Furthermore, as part of the National Action Plan on employment, the government also aims to increase the lone parent employment rate to 70% by 2010.

Policies (general)

Strategy on poverty and social exclusion outlined in annual *Opportunity for All*. Child poverty strategy comprises redistribution, employment, prevention and human capital investment;⁹² major policies include ‘work for those who can and security for those who cannot’;⁹³ to reduce worklessness (in part by making work pay) and improve incomes for the workless. Recently included more generous new tax credits and income support increases for younger children, plus expansion of those who ‘can’ (and are expected to) work, and policies to help, encourage and (for some) compel them to. For children/families, ‘breaking cycles of deprivation’ also key.⁹⁴ Area-based policies complementary. Asset-based welfare policies for children not yet started, but Child Trust Funds Act would give lump sum at birth to all children, with more for those in low-income families, realized at age 18. Child support overhauled,⁹⁵ with simpler formula and disregard for those out of work, replacing previous system which it is argued failed to improve financial support for children.⁹⁶

89 The long-term goal was originally set by the Prime Minister in a speech on 18 March 1999. The PSA was set out in HM Treasury (2002b). The baseline year is 1998–99, when there were 4.2 million children living in low-income households after housing costs and 3.1 million before housing costs.

90 Department for Work and Pensions (2003b). The threshold which will be counted as material deprivation has not yet been decided.

91 HM Treasury (2002b).

92 Bradshaw (2001a).

93 Department of Social Security (1998a).

94 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a).

95 Department of Social Security (1998b); Department of Social Security (1999).

96 Wikeley *et al.* (2001).

Policies (specific)**Making work possible**

New Deal schemes, covering lone parents, young and older people, disabled people and partners, to help people into jobs; **childcare provision** is intended to complement 'welfare to work' policies. **Jobcentre Plus** will provide an integrated service to all people of working age, with more focus on work, and work-focused interviews as a gateway into the benefits system for more groups.

Making work pay

The **working families tax credit and disabled persons tax credit** were introduced in 1999 to provide improved levels of support for low-income working families and disabled people. In April 2003 these were replaced by the **working tax credit and child tax credit**, with the latter being extended to people on income support and income based jobseekers' allowance during 2004–05. A **childcare element of the working tax credit** helps with childcare costs. Child tax credit and the childcare element of the working tax credit are paid direct to the main carer. Working tax credit is currently paid by employers but this will shortly be changed.

The **national minimum wage** was introduced in 1999, and has been increased in value since then.

Income tax: the starting rate was reduced to 10% and the basic rate was cut to 22%.

National insurance contributions: the 'entry fee' was abolished and the starting point for paying contributions has been aligned with the income tax personal allowance (primary threshold).

Targeting resources at children

Children's allowances in income support and other means-tested provision were raised, including a doubling in real terms of the rates for children under 11. **Child benefit** has been increased, in particular the rate for the first or eldest eligible child, now 25% higher in real terms than in 1997.

Child support: the new scheme started to be phased in from March 2003, with new cases first.

Sure Start maternity payment: increased to £500 from June 2002, available via certain benefits.

(Information in the section on specific policies taken from Memorandum from Department for Work and Pensions submitted to Work and Pensions Select Committee Inquiry into Child Poverty, 2003).

3.2 Overall impact of government policies

There are some problems with measuring poverty and social exclusion for children, who are often just included within households. In addition, the effects of policies to increase low-income families' incomes may be modelled separately in advance, but are often evaluated together once implemented. Gauging the impact of policies is also complex, as some increase/decrease poverty measured by income directly, while some shift the (relative income) 'poverty line' up or down⁹⁷ – and factors such as economic and demographic change, as well as policy, also affect poverty rates.

The differential risks of children falling into poverty across Europe show that children are not inevitably more vulnerable to poverty than other groups.⁹⁸ In the UK, financial support for families in general has been increased, particularly since 1999;⁹⁹ international comparisons show that the UK's 'child benefit package' had in fact already improved markedly by mid 2001 compared with 1992.¹⁰⁰ Out of the 22 countries studied, the UK tax/benefit system was evaluated as second only to that in the US for families on low earnings, and was also quite generous for non-working families.¹⁰¹ Further improvements have been implemented since 2001. By September 2004, families with children will on average be £1,300 per year better off, and in the poorest fifth, £2,900 per year better off, in real terms because of personal tax and benefit measures since 1997; a one-earner family on half average earnings with two young children will be £3,750 per year better off.¹⁰² These are significant sums benefiting families.

Child poverty has fallen. From a position in the mid 1990s which was historically and comparatively dire, with a dramatically high level of child poverty, trends have been moving in the right direction.¹⁰³ By 2001–02, 3.8 million children (about 30%) lived in poverty in Britain, 400,000 fewer than in 1998–99, the government's base year.¹⁰⁴ The latest figures show another fall of 200,000, to 3.6 million (some 28%), by 2002–03.¹⁰⁵ Increasing levels of employment and above-inflation increases in some benefits/tax credits, especially for families with children, have been the main reasons for this fall.¹⁰⁶ By 2001, the UK had improved its relative position within the European Union, having leapt several places after being at the bottom of the child poverty league.¹⁰⁷ The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimated that the government would probably – after the 2003 Pre-Budget Report announcements – more or less be on course to meet its child poverty target by 2004–05.¹⁰⁸ More recently, following the 2004 Budget (which announced increases in the child element of the child tax credit), the IFS has firmed up this prediction, and suggested that the government is on course to meet this target.¹⁰⁹ The Secretary of State himself has said: 'We are pretty confident that we will hit [the target] on a before-housing-costs basis; it is more challenging on an after-housing-costs basis'.¹¹⁰ We should know in spring 2006 if the target has been met.

98 Ruxton and Bennett (2002).

99 Adam and Brewer (2004).

100 Bradshaw and Finch (2002).

101 Cited in Sefton (2004) (though he notes that the results for non-working families are sensitive to the treatment of housing costs).

102 HM Treasury, information following 2003 Pre-Budget Report; see also House of Commons Hansard (2003), Debates 10 December, col. 1087, TSO.

103 Bradshaw and Bennett (2003).

104 Brewer *et al.* (2003). Northern Ireland is being included in Households Below Average Income data from 2002. See note below for 'poverty line' used here.

105 Department for Work and Pensions (2004a). (These figures are for disposable income after housing costs; before housing costs, the figure for 2002–03 is 21%, or 2.6 million children (see below).)

106 Sutherland *et al.* (2003). The 'poverty line' often used in public debate (and across the European Union) is 60% of median income – where the median is the level of income after direct taxes and benefits, adjusted for household size, such that half the population is above the level and half below it. The measure used most here is after housing costs, although analysis on a before housing costs basis is often also used. (There is also an argument for taking account of childcare costs in a similar way to housing costs, which is currently not done; the issues are explored in Appendix 4 in Department for Work and Pensions (2004a)). Since research evidence suggests that parents tend to sacrifice their own well-being to try to protect their children from poverty, parents may be more deprived in practice than childless adults.

107 Department for Work and Pensions (2003b).

108 Institute for Fiscal Studies, Pre-Budget Report briefing, 11 December 2003; and Brewer (2003).

109 Brewer *et al.* (2004); Brewer (2004). The latter report suggests that the government will just meet its after-housing costs-target; the Secretary of State seems more cautious.

110 House of Commons Hansard (2004), Oral Answers 26 April, col. 626.

The proportion of children experiencing persistent poverty (below the poverty threshold in three or four years of a four-year period) has also fallen.¹¹¹ Recent analysis shows that the median poverty gap amongst children rose between 1996–97 and 2000–01, and in pounds per week has continued to rise (up to 2002–03) – but it has risen less quickly than median income recently, and so the median poverty gap ratio is declining.¹¹²

‘Poverty’ figures do not usually include the impact of indirect taxes (poor families tend to be disproportionately affected by increases in such taxes); but including them only marginally reduces the fall in poverty since 1997, though the incidence varies, and poverty for lone-parent households increases by 1%.¹¹³ The ‘social wage’ is not usually included either; but evidence suggests that benefits in kind have become more ‘pro-poor’ recently, especially since 1997.¹¹⁴

This analysis is not focusing on income inequality. But analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests that the pattern of changes in income inequality has altered. Recently the richest individuals have been drawing away from the rest, but with the incomes of many lower-income families rising faster than the average. In the late 1990s, incomes for the large majority became more equal, but those at the very top were pulling away, and those at the very bottom not keeping pace; over the early 2000s, income inequality (measured by the Gini coefficient) may have fallen slightly, though this is not statistically significant, and inequality still remains very high.¹¹⁵

3.3 What have been the main positive impacts? Who has benefited most? Which policies work well together and why?

The Families and Children Study found that from 1999 to 2001, children in their sample experiencing hardship fell from 67% to 53%, and those with multiple hardships fell from 28% to 15%.¹¹⁶ In a later interpretation of the evidence, which includes figures from 2002, Marsh and Vegeris state that severe hardship ‘almost vanished’ among working families after 1999, and was also reduced amongst out-of-work families.¹¹⁷ The proportion of families on income support in arrears decreased from 55% to 48% between 1999 and 2002.¹¹⁸ Improvements in families’ living standards have benefited children first;¹¹⁹ and the £2 billion transfer from fathers to mothers via the new tax credits¹²⁰ is also likely to mean that more will be spent on children.¹²¹

111 Department for Work and Pensions (2004a).

112 Brewer *et al.* (2004), p. 37, note 47. The ‘poverty gap’ is the total amount of income by which all households fall short of the poverty line.

113 Sutherland *et al.* (2003).

114 Sefton (2002). Sefton suggests, however, that this has not been enough to offset rising income inequality.

115 Brewer *et al.* (2004); see also Goodman and Oldfield (2004).

116 Vegeris and Perry (2003). Hardship measures focus partly on housing. The panel was composed of lone parents and low- to moderate-income couples with children. The analysis of hardship scores excludes the self-employed. (The researchers say that some improvement would be expected in a panel study surveying an ageing sample, and that FACS has been shown to overestimate positive change compared to other data; but they emphasise that it is the direction of change that is important.)

117 Marsh and Vegeris (2004). Their data show that amongst lone parents on tax credits, severe hardship fell from 21% to 6% between 1999 and 2002, and amongst those on moderate income it fell from 4% to 2%; amongst couples, the equivalent figures were a fall from 23% to 6%, and from 4% to 1%. (The measures of ‘hardship’ and ‘severe hardship’ are specific to the FACS.)

118 Kempson *et al.* (2004b). (There was no fall from 2001 to 2002.)

119 Farrell and O’Connor (2003). (Based on 37 families from the 2000 and 2001 Families and Children Study.)

120 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a). The basis for this estimate is not clear; the biggest transfer is likely to take place from April 2004, when child tax credit replaces child allowances in income support and jobseekers’ allowance.

121 See, e.g., Goode *et al.* (1998).

Looking at employment, the New Deals have made a useful contribution to increasing employment levels.¹²² Children in workless households have decreased by 296,000 since autumn 1998 to 1.77 million in autumn 2003 (a reduction from 17.1% to 15%).¹²³ Moreover, there is evidence of success in ‘making work pay’: the national minimum wage, whilst having ‘no discernible effect on employment levels’,¹²⁴ has directly benefited some 6–7% of workers.¹²⁵ This may be less of an impact than was intended, however, because of problems with the accuracy of the low pay statistics used to predict its potential effects – now improved; the government has recently accepted recommendations from the Low Pay Commission to increase its level significantly above inflation.¹²⁶

Another key policy for ‘making work pay’ is in-work tax credits. Families on working families tax credit were gaining by an average £64 per week in 2001 compared with income support;¹²⁷ and by 2002, a fifth of all families with children were in receipt of working families tax credit, mostly receiving between £60 and £99 per week.¹²⁸ In the past, the voluntary New Deals have had lower levels of investment in human capital.¹²⁹ The Chancellor in the 2003 Pre-Budget Report announced a ‘New Deal for Skills’, however, and one element of the strategy on employment is ‘making work skilled’. The increased emphasis on skills acquisition is part of a growing focus on progression in work.

Child benefit (which reaches more children living in poverty than any benefit designed specifically for them)¹³⁰ has been increased, especially for the first/eldest child, although from 2003 child tax credit became more significant in the financial support provided for families.¹³¹ There have been generous increases in income for families without paid employment: income support rates for the under-11s have more than doubled in real terms since 1997.¹³² Support has therefore been increased for younger children in particular, based on solid research evidence about the costs of children of different ages.¹³³ There is a growing consensus that early childhood is a crucial period;¹³⁴ the additional element of the child tax credit for the first year of life is one of various ways in which to focus resources on this age group. Child poverty (measured here by receipt of means-tested benefits by the family) varies hugely by area across the UK, and is highly concentrated in some areas;¹³⁵ area targeting has therefore been argued to be an effective means of reaching poor children.¹³⁶

122 Nickell and Quintini (2002). For evaluations of specific New Deals, see, e.g., Evans *et al.* (2003); White and Riley (2002); Wilkinson (2003). The New Deal for Disabled People is more recent. We do not analyse the impact of the New Deals in detail in this report, since a separate report on the impact of government policies and initiatives on social exclusion amongst working-age adults is doing so.

123 Office for National Statistics (2004a).

124 The Government’s Evidence to the Low Pay Commission (2002).

125 Dickens and Manning (2002). The NMW was introduced in April 1999. Improved low pay estimates were published in 2002.

126 Metcalf (2002).

127 McKay (2003); WFTC was introduced in October 1999.

128 Barnes and Willitts *et al.* (2004).

129 Evans (2001).

130 Take-up of child benefit is estimated at some 98%, according to recent data (House of Commons Hansard (2003), Written Answers 8 December, col. 329W, TSO).

131 Adam and Brewer (2004).

132 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a).

133 Middleton *et al.* (1997).

134 Harker and Kendall (2003).

135 Noble *et al.* (2001).

136 Tunstall and Lupton (2003).

Policies for lone parents seem to be working well together:¹³⁷ personal advisers are popular, tax credits reward work from 16 hours per week upwards, and receipt of child support is disregarded on top, with paid work being more likely among those receiving it (though not everyone who could benefit from it is aware of this).¹³⁸ Lone parents' employment in the UK had lagged behind that in other countries, but rose from 42% in 1992 to 54% in 2003, with some 80,000 (5%) more lone parents working due to major policy measures – results that were achieved alongside increases in out-of-work benefit and voluntary (not compulsory) participation in employment programmes.¹³⁹ Receipt of child support (private maintenance payments for children) increased from 25% to 31% of lone parents between 1999 and 2001,¹⁴⁰ and the controversy surrounding the introduction of the new scheme under the previous Conservative government appears to have subsided.¹⁴¹ In 2002, among families where at least one child had a non-resident parent, 52% had an order or agreement for child support, with 64% of these having actually received payments.¹⁴² A new scheme, which employs a different formula to calculate child support payments, is being phased in. Maintenance is also part of 'welfare to work' strategies; although £10 per week of child support can be retained on income support, the whole amount is disregarded for working tax credit. The new scheme is more generous to a non-resident parent with other children living with him/her (whether they are his/her own or not) although the non-resident parent's housing costs are not taken into account in the new formula. Policy coherence for couples, who have more varied benefit status, may be more challenging; for them, some commentators argue, 'such high levels of wage supplementation' (via working families tax credit) may 'lower the threshold to splitting up, and delay a move from single earner to dual earner status'.¹⁴³ However, this was written before the introduction of the new tax credits.

3.4 Which groups have benefited the least? Where are there unintended consequences or tensions?

Looking at 'welfare to work' and 'making work pay', concern has shifted to focus on the sustainability of jobs, including those obtained via the New Deals; barriers to work do not disappear once a job has been obtained.¹⁴⁴ There is therefore an increasing focus on retention once 'welfare to work' has done its job,¹⁴⁵ to which the government is beginning to respond. 'Mini-jobs' for lone parents may not be viable¹⁴⁶ – although, if maintenance is received, this can help them to be so. Research has found that, despite in-work benefits/tax credits increasing in value, gains can still be quite modest for some in part-time work.¹⁴⁷ Bradshaw and Finch have noted that childless couples now get more housing benefit than couples with children on the same earnings levels.¹⁴⁸ Many people have enjoyed significant increases in discretionary income as they have entered work; but for some, increases in costs (such as for childcare and/or housing) may reduce these, and some people may even return to benefits in order to be able to manage.¹⁴⁹ This may be in part because

137 See, for example, Marsh and Perry (2003).

138 Marsh and Perry (2003).

139 Gregg and Harkness (2003); see also Marsh and Perry (2003). Personal advisers are particularly appreciated. These achievements were summarized by the government in Department for Work and Pensions and HM Treasury (2003), published alongside the 2003 Pre-Budget Report.

140 Marsh and Perry (2003).

141 Though see parliamentary debates in House of Commons Hansard (2004), Debates 15 June, cols. 749-756 and 165WH-188WH.

142 Barnes and Willitts *et al.* (2004).

143 Marsh and Perry (2003).

144 Millar (2003).

145 Kellard (2002).

146 Kasparova *et al.* (2003). In another publication, Marsh and Vegeris (2004) point out that this is the way many mothers in two-parent families ease themselves back into the labour market.

147 Sutherland (2002).

148 Bradshaw and Finch (2004).

149 Farrell and O'Connor (2003).

debts are often ‘called in’ once someone enters work. However, these studies were completed before the new tax credits were introduced in April 2003, and we do not yet know to what extent, if at all, these problems will still exist under the new scheme. The number of children in working households on low incomes has not fallen recently.¹⁵⁰ The New Deal for Lone Parents helps 1–2% of lone parents to leave benefit every six months, making it a challenge to reach the employment target of 70%.¹⁵¹

In-work support has been implicated in the past in disincentive problems for second earners,¹⁵² although the most recent evidence does not support this with reference to primary earners.¹⁵³ Take-up of working families tax credit was estimated as 62–65% in 2000–01,¹⁵⁴ although the government believes that take-up of the new child tax credit is very high. (Official take-up figures are not yet available.) The increased emphasis on progression in work means that the next stage of employment policy may have less focus on expanding in-work tax credits.

There are some concerns about ‘security for those who cannot [work]’ (DSS, 1998a), and more generally about stability of income for poor households with children. Take-up of income support amongst lone parents is very high, but income-based jobseeker’s allowance only has a take-up rate of 62–71% (2000–01).¹⁵⁵ Recent research pinpointed transitions to and from work and benefits, and from one family type to another, as times of heightened risk of persistent and/or severe poverty for children¹⁵⁶ (though this study was carried out before the introduction of various measures to aid the transition into work). Reports suggest that changes in tax credit awards, particularly recovery of over-payments, are causing some problems,¹⁵⁷ and the Inland Revenue has urged people not to spend their tax credits in case they have to make repayments; but research evidence is not yet available.¹⁵⁸

‘Security’ can also be interpreted as adequacy of income, as well as stability. The full longitudinal analysis of hardship amongst families, including the most recent results from FACS for 2002,¹⁵⁹ is not yet available; but it appears that the falls in severe hardship in out-of-work families between 1999 and 2001 levelled off after 2001, with one in five still experiencing severe hardship in 2002.¹⁶⁰ Four in ten of the poorest children live in households which are not in receipt of any of the main means-tested benefits, and therefore are not affected by increases in their amounts.¹⁶¹ For those on means-tested benefits, income support levels are still below 60% of median income¹⁶² – though even by 2001 they were much closer to ‘low cost but adequate’ family budgets.¹⁶³ Many low-income families live on a lower income level than may be assumed, with at least one in three

150 Palmer *et al.* (2003).

151 Evans, M. in D. Thurley (ed.) (2003).

152 Brewer and Clark (2003); though note that, although the new tax credits will have a mixed impact, it is likely that for some potential ‘second earners’ incentives will improve because of the £2,500 ‘allowance’ and the use of gross rather than net income for the calculation.

153 The issue was raised by Bryson (1998); but recent evidence of wage progression for those on tax credits is provided in Lydon and Walker (2003).

154 Inland Revenue (2002), ‘Working Families’ Tax Credit: Estimates of take-up rates in 2000-01’. All figures on take-up given here are by caseload; analysis is often also available by expenditure.

155 ‘Income Related Benefits Estimates of Take-up in 2000/2001’, Department for Work and Pensions, 27.3.03.

156 Adelman *et al.* (2003). (Income was examined before housing costs, which may affect results, especially given that the focus of this research is the lowest income groups.)

157 Evidence from One Parent Families to HM Treasury Select Committee, June 2003; Dornan (ed.) (2004) p. 76; Child Poverty Action Group press release (2004), 6 April.

158 Forthcoming evidence from the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, which is carrying out a study examining fluctuations in incomes from week to week, should help to throw some light on this.

159 Barnes and Willitts *et al.* (2004).

160 Marsh and Vegeris (2004).

161 Brewer and Goodman (2003).

162 Sutherland *et al.* (2003).

163 Bradshaw (2001c).

claimants having one or more deductions from benefit.¹⁶⁴ In addition, the low benefit level for many of childbearing age (£43.25 per week on jobseeker's allowance for a single person under 25 in 2003–04) may be storing up problems for the future.¹⁶⁵

Concerns about the discretionary Social Fund continue to be reported,¹⁶⁶ and the Social Security Advisory Committee plans to examine it in the coming year.¹⁶⁷ The government has recently increased the budget of the discretionary Social Fund, however.¹⁶⁸ It also has a major programme of research on the Social Fund, one report from which has been published recently.¹⁶⁹ It found that nearly half those who had either had their application for a community care grant refused or had been given a partial award that left them at least £50 short had to do without at least some of the things they applied for, which resulted in hardship. A similar proportion had to repay loans they took out to make up the shortfalls, which created an additional burden. The most common reasons for applying for a grant were to set up a new home or to move. This may suggest that the Social Fund is one instrument for helping at times of transition, but may not always fully meet the resulting needs. The costs of education, especially uniform and school trips, still seem to cause parents problems;¹⁷⁰ the government is investigating this issue at the moment.¹⁷¹

The government estimated that by 2004 over half of all children in low-income families would be in larger families¹⁷² (though these families have also experienced some of the biggest declines in poverty). Financial support for children has been tilted towards one-child families¹⁷³ – though future child tax credit increases in the amount per child, as announced in the 2004 Budget, may now tilt this back. The government is also concerned about the position of some ethnic minority groups,¹⁷⁴ some of whom may be disadvantaged in social security provision (e.g. lower allowances for some asylum-seekers, and lower take-up rates of some benefits). Some ethnic minority lone parents seem particularly likely either to be unaware of, or to express negative feelings about, the Child Support Agency.¹⁷⁵

Unintended consequences of policies may include lack of awareness or confusion among targeted groups, due to the complexity of some measures (especially their interaction) and the number of initiatives, etc. Policy-makers may underestimate the impact of (deficient) delivery on low-income families; and disruption to incomes can be caused by large-scale administrative changes, as with new tax credits.¹⁷⁶ Some major reforms have been delayed to avoid this (e.g. child support reforms).¹⁷⁷

164 This figure is taken from the November 2001 Quarterly Statistical Enquiry (income support).

165 This compared with £54.25 per week in additional benefit above and beyond the amount for the adult(s) for a family with one child (including the per family element): Chote *et al.* (eds.) (2003). It is also less than half the amount for a single pensioner on means-tested benefit in 2003–04.

166 Social Security Select Committee (2001a).

167 Social Security Advisory Committee (2003).

168 HM Treasury (2002a).

169 Kempson *et al.* (2004a). Several other reports are due to be published shortly but were not available at the time of writing.

170 See, for example, Tanner *et al.* (2003); report of Gingerbread survey of members, in report of annual conference, 17.4.02; survey by National Association of Citizens Advice Bureaux, 14.8.02; Ridge (2002).

171 Department for Work and Pensions (2003c).

172 Department for Work and Pensions (2002b). There is an examination of the issue in the Fifth Annual Report 2003, pp. 85–102.

173 Adam and Brewer (2004).

174 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a), pp. 128–145.

175 Pettigrew (2003).

176 See reports by Treasury Select Committee (2003) and Citizens Advice (2004) on this; the Social Security Select Committee (2001b) had asked for an undertaking that the transition would be a smooth one.

177 They are being phased in, with the result that only new cases are currently receiving the benefit of the new measures.

More generally, it is argued by some that in order to tackle child poverty successfully, the government will need to pay more explicit attention to women's poverty.¹⁷⁸ In particular, women's employment will be critical to making both lone parent and two parent families better off.¹⁷⁹ It has also been argued that more attention could be paid to the responsibility of others besides the government itself for a national anti-poverty strategy, including private providers.¹⁸⁰

3.5 Gaps in knowledge

Some policies are too recent to have been fully evaluated yet (new tax credits, new maternity/paternity/parental rights, new right to ask for flexible working etc.). As elsewhere, low-income data in the UK are still produced with a time lag (the latest available being those for 2002–03), though the UK does well relative to other countries in this regard. As elsewhere, there is concern about the quality of the income data for those on very low incomes in particular.

Although the government has made considerable progress, we cannot yet know about the longer-term impact of many of its policies. Evaluation of the New Deals does not usually include specific analysis of their impact on people with children;¹⁸¹ and the focus of the New Deal for Lone Parents evaluation was on lone parents themselves, rather than on their children.¹⁸² There is a good case for evaluating the 'Sure Start' maternity payment, as there seems to be some anecdotal evidence about problems.¹⁸³ There is only limited evidence about the consequences for children of policies affecting their families' incomes negatively, such as benefit sanctions.¹⁸⁴ And the government has not commissioned research into a 'minimum income standard' as a basis for benefit levels;¹⁸⁵ it has therefore not fully articulated what it means by 'an income which allows for a decent life'.¹⁸⁶ The government argues that 'there is no accepted single research method that can be used to calculate a minimum income standard for all families',¹⁸⁷ and has instead clearly set out its plans for a longer-term measure of child poverty.¹⁸⁸

There are some areas where further research would be particularly valuable. For example, apart from specialized studies of children in care and Traveller children, there seems to be room for more research into the impact of insecurity on children, in terms of their moving house frequently, causing instability in education, friendships and social activities.¹⁸⁹ One study found, for example, that only 29% of children of homeless families were attending mainstream school, although 73% had been attending before their families became homeless.¹⁹⁰ Researchers have called for a large quantitative survey of ethnic minority children's poverty; a new survey of children, with a high priority on children's own views and child-based indicators of poverty and social exclusion;¹⁹¹ and

178 Bradshaw *et al.* (2003).

179 Marsh and Vegeris (2004).

180 Howarth *et al.* (2001); National Consumer Council (2003).

181 Millar and Ridge (2001).

182 As noted by the authors of one of the synthesis reports: Evans *et al.* (2003).

183 Personal communications: Maternity Alliance and Institute for Public Policy Research. (No research evidence is available, because of the lack of official evaluation of this policy.) However, the Maternity Alliance confirms that the payment now approaches the one-off costs related to childbirth.

184 There is some limited evidence of the impact of sanctions and the mitigating effect of hardship payments (which were not always received) in Saunders *et al.* (2001).

185 Social Security Select Committee (2001), and government reply; see also Work and Pensions Select Committee (2004).

186 Department of Social Security (1998a).

187 House of Commons Hansard (2004), Written Answers, 1 April, cols. 1585W-1586W, TSO.

188 Department for Work and Pensions (2003b).

189 Raised as an issue in research in Ridge (2002).

190 Vostanis *et al.* (1999). See also Shelter survey of families living in temporary accommodation, reported in Shelter (2004b); and a more recent report from Shelter (2004a).

191 Adelman *et al.* (2003); this is thought by the authors not to be sufficiently emphasized in the deprivation measures used in the Families and Children Study.

regular monitoring of child well-being, with consistent UK-wide data.¹⁹² Family change is often thought of as an independent factor, but incentives regarding family life can, in theory at least, be affected by policies on incomes;¹⁹³ we could try to find out more about this complex area.

3.6 Directions for the future

'Children are kept in poverty not by a padlock to which there is a single key but by a combination lock that requires an alignment of factors if it is to be released.'

(UNICEF (2000); 'A league table of child poverty in rich nations', Innocenti Report Card no. 1)

The government has now adopted a new measure to assess its longer-term progress on child poverty.¹⁹⁴ In effect, this comprises three measures, one of which has yet to be fully developed (the material deprivation threshold, as part of a measure that combines low relative income and deprivation). Some concern has been expressed about the fact that all three measures look at income only before housing costs.¹⁹⁵ It has also been noted that the larger the household, the less is retained for other essential spending after housing costs;¹⁹⁶ using a before housing costs measure may therefore seem to decrease the impact of poverty on large families, a group about which the government has expressed its concern.¹⁹⁷

In terms of policies on poor living standards, the government's child poverty review¹⁹⁸ suggests a recognition that further impetus is needed to fulfil its longer-term, more challenging objectives. The review is looking at: improving employment opportunities; supporting those unable to undertake paid work; improving the effectiveness of public services in tackling deprivation and enhancing their contribution to improving life chances; and improving services for children and families in deprived areas.¹⁹⁹ The 2004 Budget proposed some new measures as an interim stage in this review, including the increases in child tax credit noted above, as well as a series of more tailored policies in the welfare to work area for specific groups and particular purposes.²⁰⁰ The Work and Pensions Select Committee has suggested that a roadmap of progress towards meeting the 2010 target of halving child poverty is required; and that in order to meet this target, the poorest families (measured on the after housing costs basis) require an additional £10 per week per child.²⁰¹

Some commentators have argued in the past that there is a tension between emphasizing responsibilities and self-reliance whilst simultaneously increasing the numbers on income-related assistance;²⁰² various mechanisms in the design of the new tax credits are intended to address this, but it is too early to gauge their success. There is also concern about the impact of complexity on

192 Bradshaw (ed.) (2002); the word 'well-being' is sometimes used to denote a focus on the present, not just on 'well-becoming' in the future.

193 Brewer and Clark (2003).

194 Department for Work and Pensions (2003b).

195 Work and Pensions Select Committee (2004).

196 Ambrose (2004), pp. 10–11.

197 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a).

198 HM Treasury (2003), press release 7 July.

199 HM Treasury (2003a), para. 5.25.

200 HM Treasury (2004).

201 Work and Pensions Select Committee (2004).

202 See, for example, Piachaud and Sutherland (2000).

203 Lonsdale (2004); and Social Security Advisory Committee (2003). The National Audit Office is starting a study of benefit complexity.

benefit claimants,²⁰³ which may result from the interaction of different benefits, and/or from frequent changes in provision. It has been suggested that the ‘cost of compliance’ should be taken as seriously for low-income families coping with benefit changes as it is for businesses coping with regulations.²⁰⁴ These points are examples of the fact that the ‘design of public systems may have effects going beyond the purely distributional’, as Hills notes.²⁰⁵

‘Lone parents’ are a diverse group, whose characteristics also change as they move through lone parenthood (2–5 years on average); commentators have suggested that it may make sense to focus policies on factors other than their lone parenthood.²⁰⁶ There can sometimes seem to be confusion between the goals of helping with the direct and the indirect costs of children.²⁰⁷ Employment measures may not be able to reduce poverty much more; it has been suggested that further redistributive measures will be needed²⁰⁸ – especially the uprating of benefits/tax credits and the minimum wage with income growth, rather than just inflation.²⁰⁹

A focus on prevention is already central to some features of the government’s approach; but a stronger emphasis on prevention of poverty may be important, both because of the destabilising impact of transitions, and because being poor one year increases the chances of being poor the year after, regardless of other characteristics.²¹⁰ The government has stressed that it wishes to be amongst the best in Europe on the basis of the relative income measure of child poverty;²¹¹ lessons from those countries that already manage to achieve this (in 2001, Denmark, Finland and Sweden) will be easier to exchange in future, because of the arrangements for discussion and peer review of member states’ National Action Plans on social inclusion. Lastly,²¹² a contribution to the Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s centenary project on ‘tackling disadvantage’ suggested that a key government priority should be ‘developing a strategy which garners the support of the public’.²¹³

3.7 KEY MESSAGES

- Links between child poverty and negative outcomes are clear but complex.
- Child poverty has fallen, to 3.6 million (some 28%), by 2002–03. Increases in employment (including via the New Deals) and in benefit/tax credit levels have been the main reasons. By 2001, the UK had improved its relative position within the European Union Child Poverty League.
- Severe hardship decreased significantly among working families after 1999, and was also reduced amongst out-of-work families. Improvements in families’ incomes have been spent on their children.
- Financial support for children has increased, especially for low-income families, and in particular for younger children. Policies for lone parents seem to be working particularly well together as a package.
- There is a developing focus on sustainability of jobs and progression in work, as well as continuing concern about ‘making work pay’ policies.

204 See, for example, Blackwell (2003).

205 Hills (2002), p. 238.

206 Rafferty and Walker (2003).

207 Bennett (2002).

208 Sutherland *et al.* (2003).

209 Sutherland (2002); see also Clark and Leicester (2004).

210 Cappellari and Jenkins (2002).

211 Department for Work and Pensions (2003b).

212 Bradshaw and Bennett (2003).

213 Regan and Robinson (2004).

- Security of income issues include stability as well as adequacy, and delivery mechanisms are important to low-income families. Groups of particular concern include some ethnic minority groups and large families.
- Some policies are too recent to have been fully evaluated and we may need more focus on the impact on children in future evaluations.
- The child poverty review will be an impetus to further policy development, to help sustain and further develop the strategy to tackle child poverty.

CHAPTER 4: Poor living conditions

4.1 The risk of social exclusion

There are well-established links between poor housing conditions (housing that is overcrowded, in poor repair or poorly insulated) and the risks to children of ill health, educational disadvantage, and slower social development generally. Children in such conditions are more likely to suffer from conditions such as bronchial problems, asthma and skin disorders; they are more likely to have insufficient space for home study; and they are more likely to suffer from a lack of safe or stimulating play space. Children from low-income backgrounds are significantly more likely to suffer accidental injury or death from fires in the home. There is also a specific link between a poor quality environment outside the home and deaths or serious injuries suffered by child pedestrians in road accidents: children from low-income backgrounds are more likely to live near main roads, and more likely to play by or in roads (because they do not have safe alternatives) and to walk rather than travel by car. Children from ethnic minority groups are over-represented in households experiencing poor housing conditions, and among pedestrian road accident victims. Families with a disabled child are more likely to be living in poor housing conditions; disabled children also suffer specific problems from poorly adapted housing, and a lack of accessible play facilities outside the home (see chapter 8, below).

Main policy levers and Public Service Agreements (PSAs)

Housing and homelessness

A key PSA target is to achieve a better balance between housing availability and demand (**ODPM5**). Number of homeless households with children in temporary accommodation is indicator for this target; and key milestone is to end use of bed and breakfast accommodation (B&B) for homeless families with dependent children (or expectant mothers) by 2004, except in urgent cases of under six weeks' duration. Housing authorities obliged by law to adopt homelessness strategy by July 2003. The Supporting People Programme (from April 2003) aims to meet support needs of vulnerable households who face recurring homelessness, including mothers and their children fleeing domestic violence. Housing benefit reform 'essential' to child poverty strategy.²¹⁴

Target to bring all social housing up to decent condition by 2010; and, among private homes occupied by vulnerable groups, to steadily increase proportion in decent condition (**ODPM7**). Key milestones: to reduce non-decent social sector homes by a third (2001–04); and to ensure over 65% of vulnerable private sector households in decent homes by 2006–07. No separate targets for children, but reducing proportion in non-decent homes seen as integral to child poverty strategy.²¹⁵ Target to reduce accidental fire-related deaths in home (in England and Wales) by 20% between 1994–99 and 1999–2004: children in low-income households identified as at particular risk, but no specific targets.

Target to end fuel poverty for vulnerable households (including families with children) by 2010, starting by improving energy efficiency of 600,000 homes during 2001–04 (**DEFRA7**). There have also been measures to improve access by disadvantaged consumers to privatised energy services.

214 Department for Work and Pensions (2002a), p. 3.

215 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a).

Living spaces for children

Neighbourhood renewal strategy aims to narrow the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and rest, and ensure that by 2010–20 nobody is seriously disadvantaged by where they live (**ODPM1**).

Targets to reduce child road casualties (killed/seriously injured) in GB by 2010 by 50% compared to 1994–98, and (from 2002 in England) to tackle significantly higher incidence in disadvantaged communities (**DT5**). Wide range of local schemes encouraged and given central funding.

Another objective is to improve quality of public spaces, including local authority parks, green spaces and children's play spaces, with new national standards by 2005.²¹⁶ Social services departments must increase number of disabled children using inclusive play services.²¹⁷

Strategic priority to promote sporting activity by children, with some programmes targeting deprived areas (**DfES4/DCMS1**). Action taken to stem loss of school playing fields to developers.

4.2 What does the existing evidence tell us about the overall impact of government policies?

Housing and homelessness

The number of households with dependent children or expectant mothers in bed and breakfast accommodation was 830 at the end of March 2004 (12% of all households in bed and breakfast), compared with 4,800 in March 2003 (40% of all households). Of those 830 households, around 30 (4%) had been resident for more than six weeks, a fall of 99% (2,740 cases) compared with one year previously.²¹⁸ But the overall number of households with dependent children accepted as homeless rose by 13% between 1997 and 2002; and by a further 7% in the first half of 2003.²¹⁹

Housing benefit administration has improved, with complaints down a quarter in 2001–02.²²⁰ Standard housing allowances (varying according to family size) are being piloted in the private sector, and are likely to be extended to the social housing sector in future.

Between 1996 and 2001 the proportion of social housing classed as decent rose from 46% to 62% (non-decent properties falling from 2.1 million to around 1.6 million).²²¹ Between April 2001 and March 2004 the number of non-decent properties is expected to have fallen by around a further 500,000 – the milestone of achieving a reduction of a third in this period is likely to be met just a few months late.²²² Between 1996 and 2001 the proportion of vulnerable households living in decent homes in the private sector rose from 42% to 57%.²²³ Overall, the proportion of children living in decent homes rose from 57% to 70%.²²⁴ Another survey also showed small improvements

216 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002b).

217 Department of Health (2002), p. 154.

218 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004a).

219 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2004b), Table 4.

220 Commission for Local Administration in England (2002).

221 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003f), Table 1.

222 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003a).

223 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003f), Table 2.

224 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a), p. 182, based on English House Condition Surveys.

in 2001 in a number of aspects of housing conditions.²²⁵ (An earlier target, to reduce the backlog of council house repairs by at least 250,000 by March 2002, was met: the reduction was 350,000, though this included losses from the sector.)²²⁶

Around 100 local authorities were considered in 2002 to be at risk of not delivering the 2010 decent homes target, and have been developing action plans to secure delivery.²²⁷ The process of getting housing adaptations for disabled children (see chapter 8, below) has been found to be often lengthy and expensive:²²⁸ at local level, no single agency or department assumes lead responsibility.²²⁹

The number of accidental fire-related deaths in the home has continued to fall, and target milestones were reached in 1999–2000 and 2000–01: but those for 2001–02 and 2002–03 were not, and achievement of the overall target (for 1999–2004) is now at risk; there were an estimated 294 deaths in 2002, compared to the 2002–03 milestone of 275 (no separate analysis for children is published).²³⁰

The number of vulnerable households in fuel poverty fell from 3 million in 1996 to 1.2 million in 2002;²³¹ and fuel expenditure was 6% of income for the lowest three income deciles in 2001–02, against a target of below 5% by 2003–04.²³² But the reduction in fuel poverty was partly due to changes in incomes and energy prices, rather than gains in the thermal efficiency of homes.²³³ Local authorities lack of control over disparate initiatives has restricted development of coherent strategies.²³⁴ Continuing problems have been found over disconnection by people on pre-payment meters.²³⁵

From April 2001 to December 2002, some 470,000 vulnerable households received assistance with heating/insulation improvements: the interim 2004 target was therefore 'on course' to be met.²³⁶ About 65% of spending under the Energy Efficiency Commitment has gone to vulnerable households, compared to a target of 50%.²³⁷ But the Warm Front scheme was found to be poorly targeted and making a smaller contribution to eliminating fuel poverty than it could.²³⁸ Warm Zones were estimated to have reduced fuel poverty by 2.4% in the first 15 months, compared to a three-year target of 50%.²³⁹ Despite the health consequences of fuel poverty, the NHS has no strategic involvement in lifting disadvantaged consumers out of fuel poverty: on the other hand, tackling fuel poverty has become conflated with environmental goals, distorting the behaviour of companies tasked with delivering the strategy.²⁴⁰

225 Vegeris and Perry (2003).

226 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003c), p. 83.

227 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2002a).

228 Audit Commission (2003).

229 Beresford and Oldman (2002).

230 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003a), p. 22.

231 Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs and Department of Trade and Industry (2004).

232 Department of Trade and Industry (2003b).

233 Fuel Poverty Advisory Group (2003a).

234 Shenton (2003).

235 Klein (2003).

236 Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (2003), p. 67.

237 Department of Trade and Industry (2003a).

238 National Audit Office (2003).

239 Energy Saving Trust with Centre for Sustainable Energy and National Energy Action (2003).

240 Klein (2003).

Living spaces for children

A 2001 review found limited evidence that geographical concentration of social exclusion in deprived neighbourhoods adds to its scale or effects;²⁴¹ moreover, official guidance on spatial interventions does not identify socially excluded children (or other specific vulnerable groups) for evaluation purposes.²⁴² In practice, however, there is a wide range of area-based initiatives primarily aimed at children.²⁴³

In general, area targeting using the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000 (IMD 2000) has been found to be more effective in reaching children than other methods, since poor children are more spatially concentrated at district/ward level than adults.²⁴⁴ But by 2001 there was no clear qualitative evidence that childhood disadvantage in the poorest areas was declining.²⁴⁵ The targeting efficiency of special and specific government grants (tackling issues like child poverty) has been criticized. There are also many pockets of poverty within otherwise affluent areas which do not qualify for 'disadvantaged area' status; improving 'mainstream' services is not by itself adequate, and there remain problems of access to funding to deal with multiple problems.²⁴⁶

The Department for Transport says it is 'well on the way' to achieving the 2010 child road casualty target.²⁴⁷ Casualties in 2002 were 33% below the 1994–98 baseline,²⁴⁸ and fell a further 5% in the first quarter of 2003.²⁴⁹ But it is not yet clear whether there has been any significant acceleration in a well-established trend: indeed, the reduction in all deaths and serious injuries during the baseline period 1994–98 was slightly greater (11.8%) than in 1998–2002 (10.9%).²⁵⁰ Total casualties in districts in the 88 Neighbourhood Renewal Fund (NRF) areas fell by more (between the 1999–2001 baseline and 2002) than the percentage drop in England:²⁵¹ prior to the target being set, the accident rate had declined more slowly in the lowest socio-economic group.²⁵²

About half of local authorities were found in 2003 to be behind schedule in delivering local transport plans;²⁵³ skill shortages have been cited as a contributory factor.²⁵⁴ But on the whole, local authorities were found to be implementing 20 mph zones in areas with higher levels of deprivation and pedestrian casualty rates.²⁵⁵ Such zones were found to cut child pedestrian accidents by 70%;²⁵⁶ and to make parents more willing to allow children to play in the streets.²⁵⁷ Successful

241 Lawless *et al.* (2001).

242 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (2003d).

243 Only those relating to spatial aspects of neighbourhood are covered here; see other sections for evaluations of initiatives in early years provision, education and health.

244 Lupton and Tunstall (2002).

245 Lupton (2001).

246 Association of London Government (2003).

247 Local Government Association (2003), p. 6.

248 Department for Transport (2003a), p. 49.

249 Department for Transport (2003b); see also Lambert and Purdy, 'Review of progress towards the 2010 casualty reduction targets', in same publication.

250 Department for Transport (2003c), Table 2.2.

251 Department for Transport (2003c), Table 1.2.

252 Department for Transport (2003d).

253 White *et al.* (2000).

254 Atkins (2003).

255 Harman and Lyons (2003).

256 Grayling *et al.* (2002).

257 Webster and Mackie (1996).

258 Allott and Lomax (2000a), (2000b), (2000c).

schemes consult the community at an early stage.²⁵⁹ Traffic calming measures were found to be more effective than road safety education in reducing child injuries, and inequalities in child health.²⁶⁰

The first Home Zone evaluation showed that traffic speeds and flows fell; residents thought motorists were more considerate to children playing in the street.²⁶¹ Home Zones were found to improve life for visually impaired children, including their access to play areas.²⁶² In disadvantaged areas Zone projects were used to develop local community capacity.²⁶³ But neither degree of local disadvantage nor child casualty rates was among the primary criteria for choosing Home Zone schemes.²⁶⁴ Moreover, planning and implementing a Home Zone has been found to be complex, requiring high levels of community organization.²⁶⁵

There are underlying tensions between a pure strategy of minimizing road casualties (regardless of social grouping/location) and the targeting of either children (as opposed to other vulnerable road users such as elderly people) or children in deprived areas (as opposed to all children).²⁶⁶ Deprived areas may provide less access to gardens or open space, making children more likely to play in the street:²⁶⁷ but DfT targets and strategy documents rarely cross-refer to wider government strategy on public spaces, housing and children's play. Those involved in designing new highways have been found to lack both the means and the motivation to explore ways of providing 'people-focused' streets; 1998 guidance failed to consider using streets for children's play.²⁶⁸ Children in deprived areas may be less likely to be driven by car by their parents and therefore more likely to be pedestrians, creating greater exposure to road accidents:²⁶⁹ but moves to increase walking and cycling by children (e.g. to school) may aggravate this risk further.

Two surveys in 2002 pointed to declining standards of the local environment and public spaces.²⁷⁰ Lottery spending on public parks since 1996 was described as the largest capital investment in them since their creation:²⁷¹ but only 18% of public parks were classed by their local authorities in 2001 as being in good condition,²⁷² and parks in deprived areas were likely to be in a worse condition than in others.²⁷³ The 'green flag' standard was achieved by 182 green spaces in England and Wales in 2003, compared to 125 in 2002 and seven in 1997 (the first year of the award): but this may simply reflect wider awareness of the scheme.²⁷⁴

Most initiatives to promote children's play space are recent and not yet evaluated. But a survey found many local authorities had no strategic approach to children's play.²⁷⁵ Work on children's play spaces was not identified as a short-term priority for the new Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) Space Unit:²⁷⁶ the Living Spaces scheme (to improve local play

259 Transport Research Laboratory (1996).

260 Liabo *et al.* (2003).

261 Layfield *et al.* (2003).

262 Allen *et al.* (2002).

263 Biddulph (2001).

264 Department for Transport (2001).

265 Transport 2000 and Sustrans (2003).

266 Graham *et al.* (2002).

267 Graham *et al.* (2002).

268 WSP, David Lock Associates and TRL (2003).

269 WSP, David Lock Associates and TRL (2003).

270 MORI Social Research Institute (2002a), (2002b).

271 Institute of Leisure and Amenity Management (2003).

272 Urban Parks Forum (2001).

273 Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (2003a).

274 Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (2003b).

275 Cole-Hamilton *et al.* (2002a).

276 Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (2003c).

spaces) was not orientated towards deprived areas, and involved applications by existing neighbourhood groups. Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) programmes for street cleanliness and safety make no references to 'children' or 'play', or to Home Zones.²⁷⁷ Lack of play provision appears to be most acute for children of statutory school age.²⁷⁸

On the other hand, improving open spaces and play areas was found to be among the most common housing outcomes adopted by partnerships under the New Deal for Communities.²⁷⁹ A lottery-backed initiative to improve spaces for play and recreation also showed (on early evidence) potential for substantial achievements in promoting social inclusion.²⁸⁰

Local authorities were found to be failing to provide adequate inclusive play facilities for disabled children.²⁸¹ Another report found a variety of problems for the parents of disabled children in finding suitable play facilities; only 28% of low-income families felt appropriate facilities were available.²⁸²

In late 2003, the target on sporting activity was met by a third or more of schools (compared to a 25% baseline in 2002, and 75% target for 2006).²⁸³ The Playing for Success scheme has shown gains in basic skills for underachieving children in urban areas.²⁸⁴ Since 1998, only around 25 applications per year (with a declining trend) have been approved that resulted in the net loss of school playing fields capable of forming a sports pitch, compared to an estimated 30–40 per month before 1998; approvals have affected about 0.5% of maintained schools;²⁸⁵ in 91% of approved cases in 2001–02, sport benefited or remained unaffected.²⁸⁶ But development applications rose 40% in 2000–01,²⁸⁷ and some have argued that the published data exclude losses to non-inclusive facilities.²⁸⁸

4.3 Gaps in knowledge

Housing and homelessness

There is a lack of local authority data, and routine evaluation, relating to housing adaptations for disabled children.²⁸⁹ There is a need for evaluation of housing association and local authority expenditure on energy efficiency and fuel poverty.²⁹⁰ There is a lack of information and evidence on the precise nature of the rural fuel poverty problem.²⁹¹

277 Worpole (2003).

278 Cole-Hamilton and Gill (2002).

279 Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (2003).

280 New Opportunities Fund (2003).

281 Petrie *et al.* (2003).

282 Shelley (2002).

283 House of Commons *Hansard* (2003), Written Answers 9 September, col. 296W, TSO.

284 Sharp *et al.* (2003).

285 Department for Education and Skills (2003a).

286 *Ibid.*

287 Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2002).

288 National Playing Fields Association (2003).

289 Beresford and Oldman (2002).

290 Cheshire (2002).

291 Centre for Sustainable Energy (2002).

Living spaces for children

The direct links between deprivation, social exclusion and the condition of local environments are unproven.²⁹² There is a need for more sophisticated research methods in neighbourhood evaluations.²⁹³

More detailed analysis of child road casualties is needed to shed light on key behavioural issues.²⁹⁴ The reasons for over-representation of ethnic minority children in road accidents are not known:²⁹⁵ more research is needed to identify any specific causal factors.²⁹⁶ Little research has been done on the increased risk of traffic accidents among disabled children.²⁹⁷

There has been little evaluation relating to the promotion of physical activity among socially excluded children.²⁹⁸ Evaluation data is often lacking with regard to specific projects where play was a core component.²⁹⁹ There has been no comprehensive research to identify the most cost-effective elements in public parks management strategies.³⁰⁰ There is a need to establish benchmarks for the efficiency and effectiveness in the planning and management of urban green spaces.³⁰¹

4.4 Directions for the future

Housing and homelessness

An order taking effect from April 2004 set minimum standards for temporary accommodation for homeless families with children. The Housing Bill when enacted will replace the current fitness standard with an evidence-based Housing Health and Safety Rating System; it is also designed to improve the worst conditions in houses in multiple occupation. The Housing Corporation is confident that all housing associations will meet the 2010 target on the decent homes standard.³⁰²

At the current rate of expenditure on energy efficiency measures, the earliest fuel poverty could be eliminated would be some time in the next century; fuel price increases are likely to increase fuel poverty in the short term.³⁰³ There will still be 1.5 million households in fuel poverty by 2010 on current policies and trends.³⁰⁴ Out of 329 Energy Conservation Authorities surveyed, only four (1.2%) explicitly aimed to eliminate fuel poverty for vulnerable groups by a deadline.³⁰⁵

292 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a), para. 365.

293 Lupton (2003a).

294 Grayling *et al.* (2002).

295 Department for Transport (2000).

296 Thomson (2000).

297 Williams *et al.* (2002).

298 Brunton *et al.* (2003).

299 Cole-Hamilton *et al.* (2002b).

300 Williams and Green (2001).

301 Urban Green Spaces Taskforce Working Group 1 (2002).

302 Housing Corporation (2002).

303 Shenton (2003).

304 Fuel Poverty Advisory Group (2003b).

305 Impetus Consulting and Association for the Conservation of Energy (2003).

Living spaces for children

Only 39% of local authorities surveyed in 2002 felt that their local transport plan clearly showed the targets for reducing child road casualties to be achievable.³⁰⁶ The Road Safety Bill when enacted will empower local traffic authorities to develop urban safety hierarchies, and to identify 20 mph zones and Home Zones.

From October 2004 public play and leisure facilities will be covered by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. New Opportunities Fund (NOF) financial support for children's play will come on stream from 2005: the linked 'Dobson' review³⁰⁷ identified areas and groups poorly served by current provision, and recommended that NOF funding should be focused on areas and groups with the poorest access to good quality play opportunities, with a major emphasis on the inclusion of disabled children and young people. Most Space for Sports and Arts capital projects should have been completed by March 2004.

4.5 KEY MESSAGES

- Considerable progress has been made on reducing the numbers of families with children in bed and breakfast accommodation. But the overall number of homeless households with children has been steadily increasing in recent years.
- There has been progress in improving the physical condition of housing for households with children. Notwithstanding the known multiple risks of poor housing, there appears to be a lack of focus on children in housing policies.
- The number of fuel-poor vulnerable households, including those with children, has been sharply reduced. Further progress may be difficult without considerable additional funding. The fuel poverty strategy has been criticised for being poorly targeted, and needs better evaluation.
- Children (along with other specific groups) are largely 'invisible' within national strategies for neighbourhood renewal and for improving public spaces. This makes it hard to say whether strategies in these areas have been effective in tackling social exclusion among children. But there is clear evidence that initiatives focusing on public space (e.g. Home Zones) can benefit children as a whole – as well as evidence that this kind of initiative fits well with local community priorities.

306 Hallam (2002).

307 Department for Culture, Media and Sport (2004).

CHAPTER 5: Lack of access to quality early years provision

5.1 The risk of social exclusion

Early years services have long been viewed as making an important contribution to tackling social exclusion. As we argued earlier, their impact is principally two-fold. First, they can provide the kind of environment that supports healthy child development. There is already a substantial body of research that shows that experience of good quality early years services can lead to positive outcomes in terms of educational attainment, social adjustment, community participation and prospects for adult employment.³⁰⁸ Second, early years services can enable parents to take up employment and thereby reduce the risk of family poverty. Lack of access to affordable and appropriate services is frequently cited as a barrier to work.³⁰⁹ The government's National Childcare Strategy, launched in 1997, is a hallmark of public commitment to high quality childcare as a key element in social investment in children and increased mothers' access to the labour market, targeted at low-income families and the most disadvantaged areas. The Strategy aims to improve the accessibility, affordability and quality of provision and recognizes that there is no sensible distinction between early education and care.³¹⁰ Children's access to early years services has markedly improved in recent years (although it is still low by European standards).

Free, part-time *early years education* is now available for all four year olds and, as of April 2004,³¹¹ also for all three year olds whose parents want it. Most *childcare* services, however, are provided within a market system, with parents' choice of provision for their children heavily influenced by what they can afford. Increasingly, services are being developed within integrated settings such as Sure Start Local Programmes, Early Excellence Centres, the Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative and most recently Children's Centres, and area-based initiatives have targeted extra funding for childcare and family support services in deprived areas. Additional financial assistance with costs of childcare for low-income parents includes the childcare element of the working tax credit (paid to the main carer), the childcare grant for full-time students and the New Deal for Lone Parents.

308 E.g. Schweinhart and Weikart (1993); Karoly *et al.* (1998); Melhuish (2004); Gregg and Washbrook (2003).

309 E.g. Marsh *et al.* (2001) found that 42% of lone parents actively looking for work said that the scarcity or cost of childcare was stopping them getting a job. Woodland *et al.* (2002) reported that over 50% of lone parents unable to find childcare when they wanted it needed childcare for work, and a further 20% for study. The Inter-Departmental Childcare Review (Strategy Unit (2002)) reported an unpublished analysis by the Department for Work and Pensions of the Families and Children Study (FACS) 2001, showing that when lone parents gave reasons for not working/not working 16+ hours per week (the eligibility cut-off point for Working Tax Credit), 15% said that no childcare was available and 19% said they could not afford childcare. 2002 FACS figures for this group showed that only 9% said they were not working/not working 16+ hours because no childcare was available (5% in London), compared with 17% (15% in London) who said they could not afford it (McKay (2004)).

310 The National Childcare Strategy was launched by the government in 1997, and set out in Department for Education and Employment (1998).

311 House of Commons *Hansard* (2004), Written Answers 29 March, col. 1183W, TSO.

Types of early years provider			
Service	Overview of services catered for	Age range provider	Type of provider
Day nursery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * provide full or part-time day care, education and play for children below compulsory school age (5 years) * nurseries can be profit-making or non-profit-making * generally open 8am to 7pm 	0 to 5 years	Public, private or voluntary
Nursery school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * educate pre-school aged children * staffed with a high ratio of qualified teachers * work in partnership with other trained professionals * many staff have special qualifications for the age group 	3 to 4 years	Public or private
Nursery class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * can be attended either full-time or part-time one year before a child starts compulsory education. Full time refers to school term-time, not holiday 	3 to 4 years	Public
Pre-school playgroup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * playgroups are usually part-time or 'sessional', and operate for 23 hours per session 	2.5 to 5 years	Private or voluntary
Child-minder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * a self-employed person who provides day care for more than 2 hours per day * usually in the childminder's own home * hours tend to be flexible 	usually up to 8 years	Private
Reception class	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * children in a reception class are usually completing the final year of the Foundation Stage. They then move on to Year One of the primary or infant school on reaching statutory school age 	4 to 5 years	Public or private
After school, out-of-school care, breakfast clubs and holiday schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * cater for children of school age and to help meet the needs of working parents * a range of activities are offered including sports, drama, arts and crafts, and music 	Compulsory school age	Public, private or voluntary
Creches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * offer short-term childcare for young children, while parents are unable to look after them, for example if they go on a residential course, training or leisure activities * creches may operate all week on a sessional basis, but will usually cater for different children at each session 	0 to 5 years	Private or voluntary

(Table 3, National Audit Office (2004), *Early Years: Progress in developing high quality childcare and early education accessible to all*, HC 268, Session 2003–04, 27 February, p. 5)

The key initiatives in the early years and childcare sector			
Initiatives	Overview	Introduced	Cost
Early Excellence Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * 107 centres nationwide, generally, but not exclusively, in poorer areas * 'One-stop-shops' for integrated care, child and adult education and family support * provide a setting for parents to learn about caring for their children 	Dec 1997 (pilots)	£95m 1997–2003
Out of School Childcare Scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * provides care mainly for children of school age outside of normal school hours (including school holidays), usually in non-domestic premises 	April 1999 1999–2003	£235.5m NOF**
Sure Start Local Programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * supports families with children up to age four * aims to achieve better outcomes for children, parents and communities by promoting the physical, intellectual and social development of babies and young children. This is done through increasing the childcare available; improving health, education and emotional development for young children; and by providing a range of support for parents * the focus is upon helping services to develop in deprived areas * programmes work with Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships * each of the 500 programmes is run by a local partnership and has a catchment area of some 400–800 children under four years of age * as at Oct 2003, 522 programmes had been approved 	April 1999 1999–2004	£760m
Neighbourhood revenue	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * found in the 20% most deprived areas, with the target of offering 45,000 places by 2004 	January 2001	£203m
Nursery Initiative and Neighbourhood Childcare Initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * aim to meet the needs of local children and parents, through a mixed economy of providers from the private, voluntary and maintained sectors * most provide nursery education along with the obligatory full day care for children from birth to school age * linked to development of Neighbourhood Childcare and Out of School Clubs in deprived areas 	DfES 2001–04	£100m NOF** capital
Mini Sure Starts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * small-scale Sure Start Local Programmes found in rural areas and small pockets of deprivation 	March 2002	£22m over 2 years

Children's Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * building on and re-branding Early Excellence Centres, Sure Start local programmes and Neighbourhood Nurseries * found in the 20% most deprived wards in England, with the target of reaching 65% of children in those wards by 2006 * aimed at addressing local needs by raising standards and integrating care, education, family support and health services * designed to develop and disseminate models of excellence in the delivery of centre-based integrated multi-agency services nurseries * all centres will be open at least five days a week, 48 weeks a year and for ten hours a day so that daycare is suitable for parents in work/training 	March 2003–06	£435m (incl. funds previously allocated)	Neighbourhood Initiative
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** through the New Opportunities Fund

(Table 5, National Audit Office (2004), *Early Years: Progress in developing high quality childcare and early education accessible to all*, HC 268, Session 2003–04, 27 February, p. 17)

Note: mid 2004: the New Opportunities Fund has now been merged with the Community Fund to create the Big Lottery Fund.

Main policy levers and Public Service Agreements (PSAs)

National Childcare Strategy	Introduced in 1998, outlining structures and funding with aim of ensuring development of good quality, accessible and affordable childcare for 0–14 year olds (up to 16 year olds if Special Educational Needs (SEN)).
Childcare Tax Credit	Replacement of childcare disregard (1994 on) with childcare tax credit in 1999 aimed at reducing childcare costs for low-income parents, improving family income. Now part of working tax credit.
Children's Centres	Community based centres providing integrated care, education and family support services for children under five in the most disadvantaged areas. Launched in 2002, Children's Centres will initially reach 650,000 children in the 20% most disadvantaged areas by March 2006. A longer-term commitment announced in March 2004 has plans for 1,700 Children's Centres across all of the 20% most disadvantaged wards by 2008.
Early Excellence Centres	Over 100 centres designated early excellence centres since 1997, because they combine early education and daycare services, parenting support, SEN, access to adult education and training, health and other community services. Although they work with children from all backgrounds, the centres are strongly focused on promoting social inclusion for isolated and disadvantaged families.
Neighbourhood Nursery Initiative	Launched in 2000 in order to create 45,000 new childcare places in the most disadvantaged areas.

NOF out of school hours programme	Launched in 1998, this programme had a particular focus on creating out-of-school childcare services to help tackle unemployment and increase labour market activity in deprived areas.
Nursery vouchers/early education	Following attempt by Conservatives to increase access to early years education via vouchers, Labour government has extended free, part-time early years education to all three and four year olds.
Sure Start	Introduced in 1998. Programme provides services and support for all children under four and their parents in targeted areas of deprivation, with specific aims to reduce various aspects of social exclusion. Operating in 524 areas, programme expected to reach 400,000 children (1 in 3 children in poverty) by March 2004.
PSA (Sure Start): See chapter 7 below (health).	

5.2 What does the existing evidence tell us about the overall impact of government policies?

A major expansion of free, part-time, early education places means that all three and four year olds now (as of April 2004) have access: in 2002, 98% of four years olds were taking up a place.³¹² The number of three year olds taking up a place at least once a week increased from 71% in January 2002 to 88% in January 2003.³¹³ Childcare places for over 1.6 million children have been created since 1997, against a National Childcare Strategy target of places for 1.6 million children by 2004 (so this target has now been met), and over 2 million children by 2006.³¹⁴ Overall, in 2003 there was one childcare place for every five children under the age of eight, compared to one place for every nine children in 1997.³¹⁵

Sure Start local programmes were expected to reach 400,000 children by March 2004. By February 2004, 67 Children’s Centres had been announced, many of them based on existing high quality early years centres, focused in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods, and intended to offer a range of integrated services.³¹⁶ For older children, out-of-school places for older children have been greatly expanded since 1997. Between April 1997 and September 2001, over 500,000 new registered school-age childcare places were established in the UK.³¹⁷

There has been a substantial increase in out-of-school provision; according to 2002 figures, 350,000 children were using an estimated 170,000 out-of-school childcare places in England, and these places will have increased sharply since then.³¹⁸

5.3 Who has benefited most? Who has benefited least/been left behind?

Children most likely to have benefited from the increase in *early years provision* in recent years are those living in certain deprived areas targeted for initiatives, the children of lone parents, children who would not have received early years education without the provision of free places and the children of parents who can afford to pay market rates for childcare.

312 Department for Education and Skills (2003d).

313 Department for Education and Skills (2003d).

314 HM Treasury (2003a); House of Commons *Hansard* (2004), Written Answers 29 March, cols. 1176W-1179W, TSO.

315 Daycare Trust (2003).

316 See Sure Start website: <http://www.surestart.gov.uk/>.

317 Department for Education and Skills (2002).

318 Barker *et al.* (2003).

Support for the government's policies comes from the 2002 *Repeat Study of Parents' Demand for Childcare*,³¹⁹ which found that the main groups wanting to use formal childcare but not currently using it included lone parents, workless households, low-income families, and families living in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Families in the most disadvantaged areas were least likely to be using childcare at all. Almost 8 in 10 lone mothers who were not working said they would go out to work or study if they could find good quality, convenient, reliable and affordable childcare. Childcare-related reasons for not working were more to do with affordability (lack of free or cheap childcare) or hours (lack of childcare at suitable times) than availability (lack of childcare in the local area).³²⁰ Lone parents' use of formal provision has, however, sharply increased: in 2001, 29% of lone parents working part-time used some form of early years education or other formal provision, compared with 19% in 1999.

New government policies may well take time to filter through to the families and neighbourhoods most likely to be at risk of social exclusion. As the 2004 report from the National Audit Office (NAO) noted, there are still gaps in provision for some groups, such as disabled children, and parents requiring flexible hours, as well as gaps in some geographical areas.³²¹

Despite the increases noted in the total numbers of childcare places, there is still considerable regional and local variation. For example, in 2003 the number of childcare places varied between 11 and 58 per 100 pre-school children between local authorities, ranging from 44 places per 100 children in the South East Region to 22 places in inner London.³²² The 'childcare gap' in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods has been of concern. In 2001, there were just over half the number of places for 0–14 year olds in the 20% most disadvantaged wards compared to the number of places across all wards.³²³ However, as the NAO report points out, since 2001 increased new funding has been targeted at the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods,³²⁴ and the gap in provision is now narrowing nationally, although not in all areas.

Childcare use is lower among groups such as families with children with disabilities, who face a higher risk of social exclusion. Fewer mothers with disabled children are in employment compared with mothers with non-disabled children.³²⁵ There is also evidence of insufficient childcare catering for children with special needs. One study found that 79% of parents of a child with a disability found it difficult to combine working and caring for their child because of childcare problems, and 74% of parents of a disabled child had to cut back or give up work because of childcare problems.³²⁶ The NAO's 2004 report concluded that few providers, especially childminders, are currently able to cater for disabled children, and many are not trained to do so.³²⁷

319 Woodland *et al.* (2002). Use of formal childcare is increasing, albeit slowly: formal provision accounted for around 26% of the total childcare regularly used by parents in 2001, compared with 24% in 1999.

320 Note that this is supported by the Families and Children Survey 2001 (DWP unpublished analysis, reported by the Inter-Departmental Childcare Review (Strategy Unit, (2002)), p.15: when lone parents gave reasons for not working more than 16+ hours per week (the eligibility cut-off point for Working Tax Credit), 15% said that no childcare was available and 19% said they *could not afford* childcare.

321 National Audit Office (2004), pp. 6–7.

322 National Audit Office (2004), pp. 6–7, drawing on NAO analyses of data from Ofsted and Early Years Development and Childcare Partnerships' (EYDCP) Implementation Plans 2003–04.

323 Inter-Departmental Childcare Review (Strategy Unit (2002)), pp. 16–17, drawing on unpublished 2001 DfES analysis of 10% EYDCPs. Data for 0–14 year olds (0–16 for children with special needs).

324 For example, the government's Neighbourhood Childcare Initiative set the target of creating 70,000 new childcare places in disadvantaged areas and reducing this gap to 3.7 places per 100 children by March 2004. The Sure Start Unit, in collaboration with the New Deal for Lone Parents, has launched a pilot to run from April 2004 to March 2006 in Bradford, Haringey and Lewisham to create additional childcare places, primarily in 'extended schools', to help lone parents return to work. The Chancellor also announced in the 2004 Budget an extension of this extended schools childcare pilot in four additional areas.

325 Russell (2003a).

326 Contact a Family (2002).

327 National Audit Office (2004).

Use of childcare is also lower among ethnic minority groups. The 2002 *Repeat Study of Parents' Demand for Childcare*³²⁸ found that 87% of white parents accessed some form of registered childcare in the previous year, compared to 81% of Black parents, 70% of Asian parents and 71% of other ethnic minority groups. Families working atypical hours are also likely to have difficulty accessing childcare.³²⁹ So do certain groups of children: for example, there is a shortage of out-of-school places for 10–14 year olds.³³⁰

5.4 Which policies have worked well together, and why?

Has the recent increase in provision helped to reduce social exclusion? Increased provision may have had a positive impact on children's development, as we would expect from existing research such as that on Early Head Start in the US.³³¹ The most thorough UK findings to date come from the Effective Provision of Pre-School Education (EPPE) programme.³³² This shows that pre-school education enhances children's development and that disadvantaged children in particular can benefit from good quality pre-school settings.

The EPPE findings suggest that the advantages associated with pre-school education are linked to the quality of the pre-school setting, especially where services have a good proportion of trained teachers on the staff. The EPPE research also shows that the earlier children attend pre-school education, the more significant the gains to their intellectual development, independence, concentration and sociability. Disadvantaged children especially benefit from good quality pre-school settings if they attend centres that cater for a mixture of children from different social backgrounds. Where settings view educational and social development as complementary and equal in importance, children make better all round progress.

So far in the UK there is less evidence relating to the impact of early years policy on young children under the age of three. The evaluation of the national Sure Start programme (NESS) is the most substantial research designed to produce evidence of outcomes for young children under the age of four and their families in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.³³³ Findings published so far have demonstrated that the Sure Start programme is successful in targeting the most disadvantaged areas characterized by higher rates of deprivation across a number of indicators including child and adult health, educational achievement, school behaviour, crime, low income, child poverty, unemployment and benefit dependence.³³⁴ Further findings in due course will enable evaluation of the effectiveness of the programme in changing 'life chances' for young children and their families in such areas.

Evaluation of the Early Excellence Centres pilot programme³³⁵ reported case studies which indicated that the centres could help reduce social exclusion through enhanced social, emotional and cognitive development, early remediation of special needs and improved inclusion rates in mainstream settings, reduction in rates of child protection orders and 'looked after' children and improved physical well-being. Findings from the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative evaluation project will include quality assessment of nursery provision and evidence about child outcomes.

328 Woodland *et al.* (2002).

329 Statham and Mooney (2003); Dex (2003); La Valle *et al.* (2002).

330 There is estimated to be fewer than 500 out-of-school places for three million young people of this age group. Provision for those aged 12 and over is particularly scarce: SCRE Centre (2001).

331 See, for example, www.mathematic-mpr.com/earlycare/headstar.asp

332 Sylva *et al.* (2003).

333 See the National Evaluation of Sure Start (NESS) website: www.ness.bbk.ac.uk

334 Barnes *et al.* (2003).

335 Bertram *et al.* (2002).

There is some evidence that the overall increase in childcare provision has contributed towards increased employment rates and/or working hours among parents. For example, the evaluation of the New Opportunities Fund Out of School Hours Childcare programme found that parents reported increased take-up of employment as a result of the new provision.³³⁶ The increase in childcare places may be linked to rising employment levels. Since 1997, the percentage of children living in workless households has fallen from 17.9% to 15.2%,³³⁷ and more than half of lone parents are now in work, compared to 44% in 1997.³³⁸

5.5 Which policies are in tension/conflict with one another, and why?

As demonstrated by the figures given earlier, there has been a major expansion of early years services since the announcement of the National Childcare Strategy in 1997, targeted at those most at risk of social exclusion. It is too soon to judge the success or failure of this expansion, but there is modest evidence pointing in the right direction, as has been noted (for example, lone parents' use of formal childcare is increasing; the childcare gap in some of the most disadvantaged areas is narrowing). New policies continue to be developed to help working parents with childcare costs.³³⁹

However, there are a number of barriers. Cost currently remains significant – according to the Daycare Trust, the price of a childcare place has continued to rise well above inflation.³⁴⁰ The childcare tax credit has high take-up among eligible families and appears to be influencing their use of childcare,³⁴¹ but eligibility is restricted (only a percentage of costs is met, for up to two children, for parents working 16+ hours a week); it is too soon to judge overall impact on the supply of services. Parents report insufficient information available about childcare services; in 2002, only 3% of parents reported using their local Children's Information Services (CIS).³⁴² There is also some evidence that available childcare is not seen as culturally or religiously sensitive by ethnic minority groups, particularly Asian and Muslim mothers.³⁴³ One study, which gathered the views of 180 parents from ethnic minority communities, found that barriers to using childcare included lack of trust in services, lack of culturally appropriate services, lack of information, expense, racism and prejudice and inflexibility in the delivery of services.³⁴⁴

Some surveys of childcare providers report anxieties about future sustainability.³⁴⁵ It remains to be seen whether initiatives to improve provision and take-up in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods will be self-sustainable with current support in the shape of tax credits and tax

336 The 2001 evaluation of the NOF Out of School Hours Childcare programme found that 43% of parents and carers had been able to take up employment opportunities as a result of the new out-of-school hours provision.

337 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a).

338 Figures from the Labour Force Survey, quoted in *One Parent Families* (2003).

339 See, for example, new tax exemptions announced by the Chancellor in his Pre-Budget Report 2003, to take effect from April 2005.

340 Daycare Trust 2003 survey reported that a full-time nursery place for a child under 2 costs on average £134 a week (almost £7,000 a year) and a maximum of £338 a week.

341 In one study, a third of Working Families Tax Credit (WFTC) recipients reported that WFTC had affected their childcare use and one quarter reported that it had influenced working hours: McKay (2003). WFTC preceded Working Tax Credit, but had a similar element of childcare tax credit for low-income families facing childcare costs.)

342 Woodland *et al.* (2002).

343 Hall *et al.* (2004).

344 Daycare Trust, 'Parents' Eye: Building a vision of equality and inclusion in childcare services': http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/mod/fileman/files/ParentsEye_Report.pdf

345 Callender (2000).

exemptions for low-income working parents,³⁴⁶ once targeted funding comes to an end.³⁴⁷ It is worth noting that area-based initiatives do not target all disadvantaged children: according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000, only 54% of poor children live in the 20% most deprived wards.³⁴⁸

Initiatives such as Sure Start, targeted at deprived areas, are developing ‘outreach programmes’ to make contact with the minority of ‘hard to reach’ families: likely reasons for difficulties include lack of information, social anxiety, stigma and lack of trust in formal services.³⁴⁹ The national Sure Start evaluation will produce much information on these practical, social and cultural barriers, and the effectiveness of targeted, sensitive programmes in tackling them.

5.6 Gaps in knowledge

There is still relatively limited data on the impact of government early years policy on social exclusion among children in the UK, but the evaluations of EPPE and Sure Start are beginning to provide important evidence.

5.7 Directions for the future

Government initiatives since 1997 have invested heavily in contributing towards the childcare costs of low-income families and stimulating the supply of early years provision and childcare services in deprived areas. It is too soon to judge the success of these initiatives, but so far there are improvements in the right direction, even if the growth of affordable and sustainable services does not yet meet the needs of all poor families. Increasing the ‘dosage’ of existing policies might widen their impact – for example, extending the coverage of area-based programmes to the most disadvantaged 30% of areas would reach 70% of the poorest children. Improvements could also be made to the childcare tax credit by raising the percentages of costs met, increasing support for larger families or extending support to those who are unemployed or working less than 16 hours a week. The most recent evidence on how local childcare markets respond to national initiatives³⁵⁰ suggests that the National Childcare Strategy has played a vital role in encouraging local authorities not previously involved in childcare to develop local services, but raises issues about current use being determined by ability to pay. The government’s vision for a Children’s Centre for every community³⁵¹ offers the prospect of universal provision of fully integrated services – combining care and education, family support and other related services. These services are intended to be universal, and affordable for low-income families, so should make a substantial contribution to reducing social exclusion.

346 Harries *et al.* (2004); www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR526.pdf. See also Corlyon and Meadows (2004); www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR526MP.pdf

347 For example, revenue support under the Neighbourhood Nurseries Initiative (NNI) for childcare places in the 20% most disadvantaged districts tapers off after three years of funding.

348 Work and Pensions Select Committee (2003), para. 43. (Poverty defined in relation to income-related support rather than relative income.)

349 E.g. see Chappell *et al.* (2002). Examples of good practice include Sure Start in Camden and in Hammersmith and Fulham. See also Ghate and Hazel (2002) for an analysis of parents’ views about preferred methods of service delivery, and the ‘fine line between “help” and “interference”’.

350 Harries *et al.* (2004); www.dfes.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR526.pdf

351 The government plans to establish 1,000 Children’s Centres over the next five years (Chancellor’s speech (2003), Pre-Budget Report, 10 December).

5.8 KEY MESSAGES

- The National Childcare Strategy launched in 1997 demonstrates government commitment to increased provision of high quality early years services as promoting social investment in children and tackling child poverty through mothers' access to the labour market.
- There has been an expansion of integrated early years services targeted at disadvantaged areas, such as Sure Start Local Programmes and Children's Centres. These are major elements in the commitment to tackle social exclusion of children and families.
- There has been a major expansion in early education – free part-time places have been taken up by almost all four year olds and nearly 9 in 10 three year olds.
- There has also been a major expansion in child care – places for over 1.6 million children have been created since 1997. This means one childcare place for every five children under eight in 2003, compared to one place for every nine children in 1997.
- Working parents' demand for childcare is high; access, however, is variable. The 'childcare gap' in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods means that childcare is less available in the areas where it is most needed to help parents into work, although this may be narrowing nationally (but not in all areas). Problems with affordability (lack of free or cheap childcare) and appropriateness (lack of childcare at suitable times) are often given as reasons for parents not being able to take up paid employment.
- International evidence, for example from the US, supported by findings in the UK, suggests that high quality early years provision can have a positive impact on children's educational achievement and long-term development, but evidence is still to come for the youngest age group.
- Barriers for service users include cost, lack of information, inflexibility and culturally inappropriate provision. Sustainability is a key issue, particularly in disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

CHAPTER 6: Poor educational access and achievement

6.1 The risk of social exclusion

Education returned to centre stage as one of the key areas of policy in the late 1980s, with a series of educational reforms following the 1988 Educational Reform Act. More than ten years ago, the HMI report, *Access and Achievement in Urban Education*,³⁵² focused attention again on the wide, possibly widening, gap between children and young people from socially disadvantaged areas and the rest of the country. From the late 1990s, the role that education can play in mitigating social exclusion has become a key target in educational reform.

Research continues to underline the ways that educational success remains a key determinant of children's and young people's future life chances.³⁵³ Lack of educational qualifications is associated with higher risks of subsequent unemployment, poverty, crime, poorer physical and mental health, and reduced opportunity. The higher the educational qualifications, the higher the earnings. The recent White Paper on the future of higher education estimated that 'those who have been through higher education in the UK earn on average 50% more than those who have not'.³⁵⁴

Disparities in educational access and achievement are closely associated with the principal drivers of social exclusion – that is, they disproportionately affect children and young people growing up in socially disadvantaged areas and/or members of particularly vulnerable groups. Gillborn and Mirza have reviewed recent patterns of educational inequality by race, social class and gender.³⁵⁵ Gore and Smith have looked at inequalities in economically depressed areas.³⁵⁶ Others have reviewed the prospects for particular groups, for example, Traveller children or Gypsy/Roma children,³⁵⁷ or groups classified by behavioural characteristics or by institutional setting, for example, the permanently excluded,³⁵⁸ persistent absentees,³⁵⁹ young people with behavioural difficulties and young people who have grown up in care.³⁶⁰ Heath reviews the long-term trends in these social and educational inequalities, and concludes that there is 'some decline in class inequalities ... a clear narrowing of gender inequalities, and substantial progress among ethnic minority minorities ... However, overall social inequalities remain substantial ... and a major problem for educational policy for the foreseeable future'.³⁶¹ International comparisons demonstrate that these disparities are found in all developed countries, although there are some striking differences in the range of inequality, which may be the result of more or less effective national policies (not necessarily restricted to educational policies) to reduce educational inequality.³⁶²

352 Ofsted (1993).

353 See, for example, Ferri *et al.* (2003).

354 Department for Education and Skills (2003h), p. 11.

355 Gillborn and Mirza (2000).

356 Gore and Smith (2001).

357 Ofsted (2003a); Gundara *et al.* (2000); Save the Children (2001).

358 Parsons *et al.* (2001); Daniels *et al.* (2003).

359 Malcolm *et al.* (2003).

360 Social Exclusion Unit (2003a); Department for Education and Skills (2004b).

361 Heath (2000).

362 Unicef (2002). See also figure 2.3 in OECD (2002).

Main Policy Levers and Public Service Agreements (PSAs): Children (5–13)

RAISING ATTAINMENT PSAs & INITIATIVES

i) Attainment

Primary School Attainment (2002 Spending Review): 1. Raise standards in English and maths so that by 2004, 85% of 11 year olds achieve level 4 or above and 35% achieve level 5 or above, with performance sustained until 2006; 2. Significantly reduce the number of schools in which fewer than 65% of children achieve level 4 or above.

Secondary School Attainment (2002 Spending Review): Raise standards in English, maths, ICT and science in secondary education so that: 1. by 2004, 75% of 14 year olds achieve at least level 5 (70% in science) and 85% (80% in science) by 2007; 2. significantly reduce by 2007 the number of schools where fewer than 60% of 14 year olds achieve level 5; 3. ensure that 90% of pupils reach level 4 in English and maths by age 12 in 2007.

Literacy and Numeracy Strategies: The National Literacy Strategy introduced in English primary schools in autumn 1998, and the National Numeracy Strategy introduced in 1999, were intended to improve standards so that by 2002, 80% of 11 year olds should reach at least level 4 in English and 75% in mathematics at the end of Key Stage 2. New targets were set in 2002, to be met in 2004, now revised to 2006.

Family Literacy and Numeracy Strategies: A joint initiative of the DfES and the Learning and Skills Council, working with 12 partners across the country to provide a framework for the development and mainstreaming of family literacy, language and numeracy provision.

Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (introduced 1998, replacing section 11 Local Government Act funding). Analysis of LEA Plans: To raise educational achievement among pupils with English as an additional language (EAL).

ii) Access and other initiatives

Reduction in Class Sizes (Comprehensive Spending Review 1999): To reduce the number of pupils aged five, six or seven in infant classes of over 30 from 477,000 to zero by September 2001 at latest.

Truancy (2002 Spending Review): Reduce school truancies by 10% by 2004 compared with 2002, sustain the new lower level and improve overall attendance levels thereafter.

School Exclusions (2002 Spending Review): By 2002, there will be a one-third reduction in permanent (from 1999) and fixed-term (from 2000) exclusions. All pupils excluded for more than three weeks to receive alternative full-time and appropriate education.

RAISING ATTAINMENT THROUGH INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE OR DEVELOPMENT

i) School development and school improvement

Specialist Schools (relaunched 1997). The programme helps schools, in partnership with private sector sponsors and supported by additional government funding, to establish distinctive identities through their chosen specialisms. Specialist schools have a special focus on their chosen subject area but must meet the National Curriculum requirements and deliver

a broad and balanced education to all pupils. Any maintained secondary school in England can apply to be designated as a specialist school in one of ten specialist areas.

Academies (announced 2000) are an integral part of the government's strategy for raising standards in the most disadvantaged and challenging areas by innovative approaches to management, governance, teaching and the curriculum. The involvement of sponsors from the voluntary and business sector or faith groups will allow them to bring their skills and expertise to each Academy.

Beacon Schools (established 1998): To collaborate with and help to raise standards of other schools by identifying high performing schools and linking them into partnerships to build upon good practice/collaboration. Improve attainment levels in partnership schools and good practice in all areas. The Beacon School programme will be phased out by August 2005.

Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances: In schools in exceptionally challenging circumstances, to raise the levels of attainment of individual students and improve their life chances. During 2002–03, all mainstream secondary schools facing challenging circumstances and with fewer than 25% of their pupils achieving 5 GCSEs at A*–C (or equivalent) received additional targeted funding through the School Improvement Grant or the Excellence in Cities/Education Action Zones programmes.

ii) Area Based initiatives

Education Action Zones (first zones established under the School Standards and Framework Act 1998): To raise educational standards in disadvantaged urban and rural areas at both primary and secondary level by developing, in conjunction with local partners, imaginative approaches to raising educational standards in seriously disadvantaged areas.

Excellence in Cities (programme launched in 1999): Aim is to raise educational standards and promote social inclusion in major cities and in areas that face similar problems to those faced by the inner cities. Partnerships are now running in 57 local authorities, with a further 34 local authorities involved in Excellence Clusters. Intended to work alongside other initiatives such as Single Regeneration Budget, New Deal for Communities and Neighbourhood Regeneration Strategy. A major evaluation of the Excellence in Cities policy has been commissioned by the DfES.

Excellence Clusters (first round, September 2001; third round, September 2003) are designed to bring the benefits of Excellence in Cities to small pockets of deprivation. There are currently 50 Excellence Clusters in operation.

INCLUSION

Pupil Learning Credits (piloted 2001–03): To provide additional learning opportunities for Key Stage 3 pupils whose social circumstances are exceptionally challenging. No evaluation as yet identified. Piloted in 24 Excellence in Cities and six Excellence Cluster areas (all but two of which are in Neighbourhood Renewal areas) for two years from September 2001. An evaluation of this policy has been established.³⁶³

363 For more information see:
<http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/programmeofresearch/index.cfm?type=0&keywordlist1=0&keywordlist2=0&keywordlist3=0&and=or&keyword=learning+credits>

Schools Access Initiative: The SEN and Disability Act 2001 brings access to education within the remit of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. Since September 2002, schools and LEAs are under a duty not to treat disabled pupils less favourably, without justification, than their non-disabled peers; and to make reasonable adjustments to ensure that they are not put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison to pupils who are not disabled. The Schools' Access Initiative provides funding to LEAs for capital projects to improve the accessibility of mainstream schools for disabled pupils.

Alternative Educational Initiatives: To provide educational provision for excluded pupils and young people out of school for other reasons. Provision to enable them to equip themselves with the skills, knowledge and personal qualities needed for life and work.

The Behaviour Improvement Project (BIP): Government has given funding to 34 local education authorities to support action to improve behaviour and attendance. The LEAs involved in the project have planned specific measures, to be implemented at 2–4 secondary schools and the primary schools that feed them, to tackle poor behaviour and attendance. Commitment to fund until the end of the current spending review period in March 2006.

Enhance the Take-up of Sporting Opportunities (Spending Review 2002) for 5–16 year olds, by increasing the percentage of school children who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high quality PE and school sport within and beyond the curriculum from 25% in 2002 to 75% by 2006.

Identification, Referral and Tracking Project (Children Bill 2004): The IRT project is now part of the wider Information Sharing and Assessment policy. There will be a record for every child, so that practitioners can check that the child is receiving basic services and see who is providing other services. The purpose of the information database proposed in the Children Bill is to provide a tool so that all children get all the services they need at the earliest stage possible, thus supporting a shift towards prevention and early action before crisis point is reached.

Pupil Inclusion (2002 Spending Review): Range of initiatives to support all pupils to ensure they learn without disruption due to poor behaviour and attendance, and series of programmes focused on disadvantage. Also aims to reduce school truancies by 10% by 2004 compared with 2002 and improve attendance levels thereafter. Ensure all pupils who are permanently excluded obtain appropriate full-time education.

6.2 Types of policies

The above box sets the main policy levers and Public Service Agreements relevant to educational access and achievement. These can be grouped as follows.

There has been a significant number of *general initiatives* to raise standards of attainment, sometimes in specific areas, e.g. *literacy and numeracy*,³⁶⁴ or for particular groups such as *ethnic minority groups*.³⁶⁵ There has been much emphasis on *overall school improvement* and the introduction and/or the development of new ways of classifying schools, e.g. '*beacon schools*',³⁶⁶

364 Ofsted (2002c); Ofsted (2003c).

365 Ofsted (2004a); Tikly *et al.* (2002); Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003); Ofsted (2002a).

366 Rudd *et al.* (2000).

'schools facing challenging circumstances', and the increasingly widespread idea of 'specialist schools'.³⁶⁷ Another approach has been to target a limited number of socially disadvantaged areas, e.g. the Excellence in Cities (EiC) programme.³⁶⁸ By 2002, a range of different strands of work had been rolled up under the EiC initiative – Learning Mentors, Learning Support Units and City Learning Centres, including Specialist Schools and Beacon Schools. In addition, there is a wide range of other initiatives to improve access, retention and attainment of particular at risk groups.³⁶⁹ More information on these different initiatives is set out in the following sections.

Many of these initiatives have been individually evaluated. However, hardly any of these policies were put in place on an experimental basis in order to make evaluation of success clear-cut. Their overall combined effects are therefore even harder to measure. And many of these initiatives are relatively recent, so what follows must be an interim judgement.

6.3 What does existing evidence tell us about the impact of government policies?

For the purposes of this review, the general impact of government policies on those aged 5–13 has to be separated from the impact on particular groups most at risk of social exclusion.

Attainment of low-income groups and ethnic minority groups

The overall picture of attainment, using the Key Stage results and the government's targets for Key Stage 1 (age 7) and Key Stage 2 (age 11, the end of primary schooling), shows that, after an initial significant rise in performance from 1997 through to 2001, more recent years have seen only limited further improvement. For example, 'in 1997, 63% of children reached the expected level [level 4 of Key Stage 2] in English, a figure that increased to 75% in 2002 ... In mathematics, 73% of children reached the expected level, ... a considerable increase from the 61% in 1997. However, ... English and mathematics results have changed little since 2002'.³⁷⁰ While some of these improvements may be attributed to educational policies and programmes, the period from 1995 to 2000 was also marked by a rapid fall in unemployment, affecting almost all areas. Fewer children would thus have been growing up in workless families, which may also be a factor reinforcing educational progress.

Recent data for 2002–03³⁷¹ break down Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 results by ethnic group, gender, eligibility for free school meals (a proxy indicator for low-income groups or economic disadvantage) and special educational needs (SEN). Results for pupils on free school meals (FSM) significantly lag behind the overall population. In 2003 at Key Stage 1, on reading 69% of FSM children compared with 88% of non-FSM children achieved the expected level; for mathematics, the figures were 81% compared with 93%. In 2003 at Key Stage 2, on English 54% of FSM children obtained level 4 compared with 79% of non-FSM children; on mathematics, 53% compared with 76%; and on science, 72% compared with 89%. While ethnic minority groups, particularly Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Black pupils, performed less well at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 than their White counterparts, the gap is in general not so wide as with low-income groups.

367 West *et al.* (2000).

368 Machin *et al.* (2003).

369 Social Exclusion Unit (1998), (2003a).

370 Earl *et al.* (2003), Executive Summary, p. 1.

371 Department for Education and Skills (2004i): see Tables 9 and 10.

These findings for England may get some support from recent international studies of reading literacy among ‘fourth grade students’ (approximately ten years old).³⁷² Overall results show pupils in England with the third highest average score out of 16 countries. However, England and the US typically have a wider spread of scores and a longer ‘tail’ of under-achieving students than many other high-attaining countries. The most recent Ofsted report on the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) suggests that even national ‘flagship’ programmes such as these have great difficulty in moving up the lowest attaining 25% of pupils.³⁷³

Children from ethnic minority groups, particularly Black Caribbean, Pakistani and Bangladeshi boys, together with Gypsy/Roma and Traveller children, continue to under-perform.³⁷⁴ However, the overall position is improving,³⁷⁵ and there is some evidence that Bangladeshi and Pakistani heritage pupils are ‘improving at higher rates leading to a narrowing of the gap’ at Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 4. The Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG) seems to have made some contribution to this improvement.³⁷⁶

Bhattacharyya and colleagues note the levels of disadvantage in these groups, with approximately 30% of Black and Pakistani pupils and over 50% of Bangladeshi and Traveller and Gypsy/Roma pupils eligible for free school meals.³⁷⁷ However, results for the 2002 GCSE show some striking differences when ethnic minority groups are separated out on the free school meals measure. Thus, only 22% of White and Black Caribbean pupils on free school meals achieved 5+ A*–C GCSEs. However, more than 40% of Bangladeshi and Indian pupils on free school meals achieved this level.³⁷⁸

Schools with a strong ethos of expectation that pupils will achieve their best, strong leadership and systems, well-formulated policies, intellectually engaging lessons, intensive pupil support, close parental links and monitoring may better serve Black Caribbean pupils in particular.³⁷⁹ In a similar vein, a study of EMAG found that Black Caribbean pupil attainment improved where there was a focus on pupil attendance, supplementary schools and mentoring support for pupils, particularly at GCSE, along with a broad range of strategies for liaising with minority organisations and parents.³⁸⁰

Racism remains a serious problem. There is evidence that in some settings teachers minimise the significance and the value of cultural and ethnic diversity.³⁸¹ The Teacher Training Agency met its target in 2001–02 of recruiting 7% of trainees from ethnic minority groups (currently less than 2% of all teachers are Black Caribbean).³⁸² The Macpherson report emphasised the need to tackle and identify racism, and suggested strategies included learning support assistants and educational psychologists, making the national curriculum more relevant, accelerated promotion, and better understanding on the part of both teachers and pupils about the diversity of backgrounds and perspectives in the increasingly dispersed ethnic minority population.³⁸³ This applies also to Traveller and Gypsy/Roma children whose cultures and lifestyles are often seen as incidental to the mainstream, divorced from the efforts of schools to promote race equality for all pupils.³⁸⁴

372 OECD (2003), Chart A4.3 and Table A4.1. Data from Progress In Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS).

373 Ofsted (2003c).

374 Department for Education and Skills (2004i). The Key Stage results for Traveller children and Roma/Gypsy groups are dramatically low in comparison to other groups. However, there are very few children in these categories – an estimated 0.2% of the total UK population (Save the Children (2001)).

375 Ofsted (2004a).

376 Tikly *et al.* (2002).

377 Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003).

378 Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003), Figure 5, p. 12.

379 Ofsted (2002a).

380 Tikly *et al.* (2002).

381 Cline *et al.* (2002).

382 Department for Education and Skills (2003o); <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000411/sfr23-2003.pdf>

383 Macpherson (1999).

384 Ofsted (2001a), (2003a).

Parental interest and involvement in their children's education

Parental interest and involvement in children's education has a significant effect on their educational performance and long-term development.³⁸⁵ Involvement can be broken down into (i) parents' educational attitudes, values and aspirations; (ii) educational activities that parents engage in with their children (for example, reading to their child, teaching songs or nursery rhymes, helping with homework, making library visits); and (iii) school involvement (for example, helping in class or on trips, attending school events, discussions with teachers, serving as a school governor). The most important form of involvement is what Desforges and Abouchar describe as 'at home good parenting', and the model suggests that parenting influences operate by shaping the child's self-concept as a 'learner' and setting high aspirations; parental involvement in school activities does not appear to contribute so much to children's achievement.

In the most recent review of parental involvement in their children's education and general school life, the large majority of parents found their child's school welcoming (94%) and willing to involve them (84%). About one-third of the parents (29%) felt 'very involved' in their child's school life, although more primary than secondary school parents felt this way and they were more likely to help with homework. About three-quarters (72%) wanted to be more involved, and said they were prevented by competing demands of work, other children's needs, childcare and lack of time in general.³⁸⁶ The DfES initiative Parental Involvement in Children's Education (PICE) is exploring ways of engaging parents in disadvantaged communities.³⁸⁷

School development and school improvement initiatives

The increasing use of 'value-added' measures of educational progress has focused attention on the extent to which some schools are apparently 'more effective' than others – that is they significantly enhance the performance of their intake compared with schools with similar pupils at intake. While the exact characteristics that make schools effective (or indeed whether there is a 'whole school' effect) remain elusive, and the extent of this effectiveness has sometimes been overemphasised – more effective schools typically reduce rather than eliminate the performance gap between disadvantaged and advantaged intakes – this approach provides an effective strategy for school improvement.

Beacon Schools represent one of the initiatives forming part of the government's school improvement agenda. Expanding from 75 schools in 1998 to 1,052 in May 2004, the initiative identified high-performing secondary schools and linked them via increased funding into partnerships with poorer performing schools, in order to develop networks of good practice. This seems to have been largely successful,³⁸⁸ but evaluation has not yet produced hard evidence of raised standards in pupil attainment, and the programme will be phased out in August 2005.

The *Schools Facing Challenging Circumstances* initiative began with 70 pilot schools in 2000. In April 2001, it was extended to all schools where 25% or fewer of their pupils achieved 5 GCSEs at A*–C. From April 2003, 1,400 mainstream secondary schools in England, in recognised areas of high disadvantage with high proportions of disadvantaged pupils, were to receive support from the Leadership Incentive Grant. In the provisional GCSE statistics published in October 2003, schools facing challenging circumstances improved two and a half times faster than schools not in this

385 Desforges and Abouchar (2003). See also Cooper (1994); Kralovec and Buell (2001).

386 Williams *et al.* (2002).

387 See Parental Involvement in Children's Education website: <http://www.parentcentre.gov.uk/>

388 Rudd *et al.* (2002).

category. The proportion of pupils achieving this level rose from 15% or fewer in 1999–2000 to 28.5% in 2003.³⁸⁹ In spring 2002, the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit carried out a review of the programme. This led to the recommendation that policies such as the Leadership Incentive Grant should be rolled out more widely (e.g. to EiC schools) and many of the lessons learned have been taken on board by the government as part of its wider drive to transform secondary education.³⁹⁰

The *Specialist Schools Programme* began in 1994. By May 2004, there were about 1,600 schools in operation, and 2,000 are expected to be in place by 2006. Specialist schools, promoting languages, technology, mathematics, science, design and technology, arts and drama, etc., represent 54% of all secondary schools, and teach half of all secondary pupils. The great majority are comprehensive schools. The aim of the programme is to raise standards of achievement for all pupils, to extend the range of opportunities, and to raise standards of teaching and learning. Results so far have varied by specialism. More pupils in technology, language and arts colleges were achieving five or more GCSE A*–C and A*–G grades than in maintained schools nationally.³⁹¹

However, there are concerns whether the development of diversity (more specialised types of secondary schools) has served to reduce the capacity of more socially deprived children to access higher performing schools. Do schools exercise 'cream skimming' in order to improve their league table performance? Some commentators are concerned about the possibility of 'new tiers of schools unequal in status, resources and prospects'.³⁹² There is some evidence that where specialist schools have autonomy over their admissions policies, as in faith-based schools, they may admit fewer socially disadvantaged children than neighbouring schools.³⁹³ However, the 2001 Ofsted report found that the average proportion of pupils in receipt of free school meals (that is, from low-income families) was well above the national average, particularly in arts and sports colleges, and the proportion from ethnic minority groups was broadly similar to the national average, although the proportion of special needs pupils was below the national average.³⁹⁴

The government's introduction of *Education Action Zones* and the *Excellence in Cities* programme sprang in part from concerns stemming from the 1993 Ofsted report *Access and Achievement in Urban Education*³⁹⁵ and OECD figures indicating a wide divide between high and low performers in the UK.³⁹⁶ The widening gap between the top and bottom income deciles³⁹⁷ returned to the policy agenda with increasing concern about the spatial concentrations of low-income families, and the implications for schools of geographical concentrations of poor families.³⁹⁸ The persistent problems of low achievement and the growing problem of social exclusion were identified in the 1997 White Paper *Excellence in Schools*.³⁹⁹

389 Department for Education and Skills (2003m).

390 See, for example, <http://www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/sie/si/SFCC> and www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/sie/si/SFCC/rev; Department for Education and Skills (2003m).

391 Ofsted (2001b).

392 Chitty *et al.* (2001).

393 Fitz *et al.* (2003).

394 Ofsted (2001b).

395 Ofsted (1993).

396 OECD (2001).

397 Goodman and Webb (1994).

398 Green (1994); Noble and Smith (1996).

399 Department for Education and Employment (1997).

Ofsted's 2003 report on these programmes⁴⁰⁰ concluded that their influence on pupils' attainment 'is more evident in primary than secondary schools ... Overall trends in improved performance concealed a very disparate picture from individual schools in both programmes. While some present a story of constant improvement, others have little to show ... Standards in schools in disadvantaged areas are rising at a slightly faster rate than in all schools, but the gap between them is still too wide.' In the latest (2004) evaluation overview, while the impact on KS3 results was stated to be modest, 'pupils in EiC schools seemed to have a higher probability of achieving five or more A*–C GCSEs than similar pupils in non-EiC schools'.⁴⁰¹

Programmes targeting particular groups

If we conceptualise 'inclusion' as 'being in school', then in this sense a number of groups are already 'excluded', not just 'at risk' – persistent truants, excluded children, children with behavioural difficulties and children in care/looked after. A range of strategies and programmes have been developed to target these groups.

Non-attendance at school, in terms of both truancy and exclusion, is a high priority policy concern for the government.⁴⁰² In 1999, the government set targets of reducing truancy and exclusion rates by one-third by 2002, and reducing truancy by a further 10% from 2002 onwards. Figures for 2002–03 show that there were 9,290 permanent exclusions from primary, secondary and all special schools – a decrease of 24% since 1997–98;⁴⁰³ the figures dropped steeply for the first two years, until 1999–2000, rose slightly for the next two years, until 2001–02, and then dropped slightly again. Eight in ten permanently excluded pupils are boys. The exclusion rate is highest for pupils aged 14. It is about twice as high for Black pupils (25 in every 10,000) as for White pupils, and lowest for Chinese and Indian pupils (two and three respectively in every 10,000). Black Caribbean boys are three times more likely than other pupils to be excluded from school.⁴⁰⁴

Progress on truancy has been more disappointing. Provisional figures for 2002–03 indicated a rate of 0.7% unauthorised absences,⁴⁰⁵ a small fall from the previous year. However, there has been a clear downward trend since 2000–01 in overall authorised and unauthorised absences at both primary and secondary level.

Between 1997 and March 2001, nearly £300 million was invested in tackling truancy and exclusion. From April 2001, at least £600 million has been earmarked through the Connexions Service, the Children's Fund and the Pupil Support Grant up to 2004. Strategies and programmes include the creation of Learning Support Units and Learning Mentors, a more flexible and relevant curriculum for 14–16 year olds, the establishment of the Connexions Service, anti-bullying programmes, the Behaviour Improvement Project (BIP), Behaviour and Education Support Teams, the Information Sharing and Assessment project and preventative work funded through the Children's Fund. All pupils excluded should, within a month of exclusion, have Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and receive full-time education; by 2000, a third of pupil referral units were offering full-time provision for secondary pupils. These initiatives have now been rolled up into the Excellence in Cities schools and Education Action Zones programmes.

400 Ofsted (2003d). See also Ofsted (2003e), (2003f), (2003g); Schagen *et al.* (2003); Machin *et al.* (2003). See also: http://www.nfer.ac.uk/research/EiC_CP2.asp

401 Kendall (2004).

402 Social Exclusion Unit (1998); Social Exclusion Unit (2001): Annex B – Truancy and School Exclusion.

403 Department for Education and Skills (2004j).

404 Department for Education and Skills (2002c).

405 Department for Education and Skills (2003j).

Truancy remains a puzzling and complex problem. Surveys of pupils give far higher figures than the official figures⁴⁰⁶ – possibly because some pupils leave school after registration. There is evidence that truants tend to be older pupils and from poorer backgrounds. In a recent study,⁴⁰⁷ 27% of primary school children said they had truanted without the collusion of their parents and 16% of secondary school pupils admitted to truanting (other studies give even higher figures).⁴⁰⁸ Pupils who truanted highlighted bullying, boredom, problems with lessons, tests, rules and teachers. While most teachers in this study associated truancy with home factors (parents did not value education and therefore condoned absence), most parents thought it was very important for children to attend school regularly and associated truancy with school-related factors.

'Truancy sweeps' can be carried out by the police together with education welfare officers (EWOs) under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. Examples of the effectiveness of truancy sweeps reported in an evaluation in 82 LEAs in 2002–03 included improved attendance, raising pupils' and parents' awareness of the importance of children and young people being in school, finding 'missing' children who had dropped out of the system and the identification of attendance problems (for example, bullying, the responsibilities of young carers, bereavement).⁴⁰⁹ In York, when truancy sweeps were launched in 1999, youth crime fell by 67%, and in parts of Newham car crime fell by 70%.⁴¹⁰

Parents may also be prosecuted through parenting orders and fines under the 1998 Crime and Disorder Act. Evaluation suggests that the process of taking parents to court may be more effective than the actual outcome, and that prosecution could be effective when parents were in a position to effect change in their own and/or their child's behaviour.⁴¹¹ Further powers introduced under the Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 include parenting contracts and orders for exclusion, truancy, or antisocial or criminal behaviour.

Evaluation of the Alternative Education Initiatives (AEIs),⁴¹² part of the Home Office's Crime Reduction Programme, suggests some success in re-engaging young people in the education process, improving young people's behaviour and fostering more positive attitudes about future employment, education and training. There was concern at young people's history of poor attendance, and often complex emotional and behavioural needs. One in ten of the young people in this study were classified as 'looked after' – that is, in the care of the state.

Other programmes target young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and the groups who are hardest to reach. The 'On Track' programme, designed originally as a crime prevention programme by the Home Office and now run by the Department for Education and Skills, targets factors such as under-achievement at school, poor school attendance, poor 'readiness to learn', etc.; early qualitative findings on the children and young people involved suggest small improvements in behaviour, confidence and self-esteem, more use of education, and better relationships with adults, but these are very preliminary findings.⁴¹³ Home school agreements have a modest impact on parents and teachers working together, and parents supporting their children's learning at home.⁴¹⁴ Behaviour support plans have had some success in opening up links

406 Social Exclusion Unit (1998).

407 Malcolm *et al.* (2003). See also Edward and Malcolm (2002); Osler *et al.* (2001).

408 Social Exclusion Unit (1998).

409 Halsey *et al.* (2003). See National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (2003) on children who 'drop out' of the system.

410 Social Exclusion Unit (2001), Annex B.

411 Kendall *et al.* (2004).

412 Kendall *et al.* (2003).

413 Doherty *et al.* (2003a); Parsons *et al.* (2003); McCarthy *et al.* (2003); Atkinson *et al.* (2003).

414 Coldwell *et al.* (2003).

with other agencies to become involved in providing alternative education.⁴¹⁵ An anti-bullying pack⁴¹⁶ is being evaluated to tackle one of the major problems cited by children and young people at school (not just those at risk of truanting or being excluded). In one study,⁴¹⁷ more than half of the children and young people interviewed said that bullying was a big problem or quite a problem in their school.

Children in care/looked after are one of the most at risk groups in the education system.⁴¹⁸ In 2002–03, only 9% of children in Year 11 who had been continuously looked after for at least 12 months achieved five or more GCSE A*–C grades, compared to more than half of all young people. At age 16, fewer stayed on in full-time education (57% compared with 72%), and significantly more were unemployed (22% compared with 7%). Twenty-seven per cent of children who have been in care for a year or more have statements of special educational needs, compared to 3% of all children. Children in care are much more likely than their peers to be permanently excluded from school – approximately 1% of looked after children compared with 0.1% of all children. The government has set a new Public Service Agreement (PSA) target to narrow the gap in educational attainment and attendance between children in care and their peers by 2006. A number of initiatives are in place, but there is little evidence as yet as to significant improvement.⁴¹⁹

Resourcing education

Overall levels of expenditure on education should broadly over time come to reflect government priorities. Overall public expenditure on education in the UK as a proportion of GDP remained fairly static over the period 1995–2000 (4.6% in 1995; 4.5% in 2000).⁴²⁰ This was below the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development average. However, when tertiary education costs are extracted, the UK public expenditure levels on primary, secondary and other non-tertiary education are roughly in line with the OECD average. National data for England support this picture of a rather flat pattern of expenditure at school level, with significant rises only at the end of the period. Overall expenditure began to rise in 1998–99, and rose more steeply from 1999–2000. Using per pupil expenditure as a standardised measure, pre-primary/primary expenditure per pupil remained relatively unchanged from 1993–94 until 1999–2000, and then rose steeply (the total spend on this sector rose with the increase in spending on the under fives). Secondary expenditure per pupil actually fell back in real terms during the mid 1990s, only recovering to the level of 1993–94 with the figures for 2001–02.⁴²¹

How far do these allocations favour more disadvantaged pupils and areas? The central government formulae for identifying levels of educational spending at local authority level (now known as Education Formula Spending) take significant account of social needs factors in the so-called Additional Educational Needs (AEN) formula. The recent revisions to this formula have probably made it reflect these needs more accurately (based on measures of children in families dependent on income support, tax credits or in ethnic minority group households). As a result, disadvantaged LEAs have significant scope for higher educational spending than less disadvantaged areas. However, because the requirements for allocation to schools (under what is now known as the 'Fair Funding' system) are heavily based on pupil numbers, this variation in expenditure between LEAs

415 Wilkin *et al.* (2003).

416 Smith and Samara (2003).

417 Oliver and Candappa (2003).

418 Social Exclusion Unit (2003a); see also Department for Education and Skills (2004b).

419 Social Exclusion Unit (2003a); and from Department for Education and Skills (2004b), Figures 3.4 and 3.5, and Table 1.

420 OECD (2003), Table B2, p. 207.

421 Department for Education and Skills (2003k). Table 8 has been used for these figures, as this includes LEA-level expenditure on schools as well as school-based expenditure. Table 7, which has school-based expenditure only, shows that the increase here began approximately a year earlier.

on social needs may not be carried through to schools. This means that in effect a school with an advantaged catchment area in a disadvantaged LEA is likely to fare better than a disadvantaged school in an otherwise advantaged LEA.⁴²² There is a financial premium that each school receives, for example for each pupil in receipt of free school meals; but it is not in line with the allocation that central government itself makes to LEAs on this same criterion.

Many of the government policies reviewed in this section are likely to have brought more resources to disadvantaged areas and schools, though there is no easy way to calculate their financial impact. Sefton estimates that there was a 32% increase in education spending in the 10% most deprived local authorities, compared with a 25% increase in the least deprived 10% over the period 1997–98 to 2003–04.⁴²³ Programmes such as Excellence in Cities and Excellence Cluster programmes will have contributed significant extra resources to disadvantaged areas. However, a few policies may have tipped resources to more socially favoured areas. For example, the 1997 commitment to reduce class sizes to 30 pupils or fewer at Key Stage 1 may have tended to favour more advantaged areas, as areas with high AEN allocations tended to have smaller class sizes already.

6.4 Who has benefited most/least?

In assessing the overall impact of educational policy, it is important to distinguish effects on individual families and children, schools and neighbourhoods and on particular groups. Different programmes, as has been shown, have different targets. An overall balance sheet is therefore extremely difficult to produce; and in addition, many of the programmes are still in early stages or have not yet been evaluated.

In terms of achievement, as measured by Key Stage results and international comparisons, there appears to have been a significant improvement in overall performance, though this may have reached something of a plateau post-2000. However, overall success should not obscure the fact that there still remains a longer ‘tail’ of under-achieving pupils than in many other high-attaining countries. In terms of schools in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, there is some evidence, for example from the Excellence in Cities programme and the Education Action Zones, that standards are rising at a slightly faster rate than in schools on average, although the gap still remains too wide. Similarly, schools facing challenging circumstances have improved their performance overall. However, overall results may mask a very disparate picture, with some schools making very little progress.

There is increasing evidence that some very disadvantaged ethnic minority groups, for example Bangladeshi pupils, are significantly reducing the gap in educational achievement, particularly by the time they do GCSEs. Those of Bangladeshi, Pakistani and Indian origin who are on free school meals have significantly better results at GCSE level than disadvantaged White or Black groups. Black Caribbean groups appear to be making less progress.

Programmes targeting particular groups also have mixed results. Exclusions from schools have dropped, then risen again; truancy rates have only marginally decreased. There is some evidence that programmes targeting the most disengaged young people can improve motivation and behaviour, and create links with a wider range of services for this age group, but children and young people who have been in care, children with statements of special educational need and Black Caribbean pupils remain most at risk. These programmes are still in the early stages of implementation and development and it is too soon to see their impact clearly.

422 Sefton (2004).

423 Sefton (2004), p. 17.

On the financing of education, there has been a significant increase in spending for the pre-primary sector, while funding per pupil in the primary and secondary sectors did not rise until 2000–01. A larger share of resources appears to be directed to the more disadvantaged areas. However, funding allocation mechanisms to local education authorities and schools mean that these funds do not always reach the most disadvantaged pupils.

Overall results indicate some significant gains. But there is consistent evidence that the hardest to reach groups may not always share in these improvements. Against this backdrop of modest improvement, however, it is important to underline that advantaged areas and schools also continue to move ahead, and some overall policies may well continue to enhance their advantage. League tables, open enrolment, formula funding and schools admissions policies may serve to advantage pupils from more middle-class backgrounds and particular types of school.⁴²⁴ The better resourcing of higher and more selective levels of the education system again advantages areas and schools where pupils are more likely to remain in the system beyond the compulsory stages.

6.5 Which policies work well together, and which are in conflict?

The overall picture of educational policy development since 1997 is one of many separate initiatives, some universal, others targeted at particular schools, areas or groups. In some cases, one initiative has been overtaken by others. ‘Joined-up thinking’ on this scale, across these different levels and types of intervention, has some way to go. The risk is an apparent scatter of initiatives that are only partially coordinated. Some clear examples have already been given where initiatives have not been coordinated in their approach to the most disadvantaged groups or areas. One is the financing of education, where funding allocation policies do not necessarily reach through to the most disadvantaged. A second is the potential for schools admission policies and assessment procedures to discourage or penalise the most disadvantaged.

The effects of social deprivation on education continue to be marked. Reducing these effects through educational policies requires sustained and coordinated action on many levels – hence the importance of programme coordination.

6.6 Gaps in knowledge

Many of the initiatives already described have not yet been fully evaluated, and the effects of any one initiative may be hard to disentangle from others. But without such information, it is hard to draw firm conclusions about successes or failures. Although the key message from any evaluation of policy impact is that initiatives need to be research- and evidence-based, it is also the case that outcome evaluations will need time. And all evaluations should also include a cost/benefit analysis.

There have been some significant improvements in performance by some ethnic minority groups from very disadvantaged backgrounds. There could be further studies to identify the mechanisms at work in producing these improvements.

There is increasing information available about resourcing at the local level. However, we do not have systematic information about the extent to which, and the way in which, funding is reaching through to disadvantaged groups and areas.

Good schools and good teachers make a difference. However, not enough is yet known about how to attract and maintain high quality staff in the poorest performing schools.⁴²⁵ Parental involvement in their children’s education improves performance. But too little is known about how to engage

424 West and Pennell (2000).

425 Marzano (2003); Wenglinsky (2002); Ofsted (2002b).

parents in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods. And other government policies, such as encouraging parents, particularly mothers, with young children to return to the labour market, may reduce the time they have for supporting their children's education.

6.7 Directions for the future

As David Bell, HM Chief Inspector of Schools, noted, there has been improvement, but not enough. He has argued for a tightening of the focus on reducing educational disadvantage – a guarantee of high quality staff, and funding systems that ensure that the costs of closing the achievement gap are met.⁴²⁶ Whilst there is much to praise in the government's approach, it may be that a narrow focus on education and targets runs the danger of mistaking an attainment target met with a real long-term improvement for those most at risk. However, the range of initiatives, the evidence of improvement, and the accumulation of knowledge about 'what works' for disadvantaged children and young people, provide a strong basis for the way forward.

6.8 KEY MESSAGES

- There have been substantial gains in performance overall. However, the improvement appears to be stronger in the period up to 2000 or so. Part of this might be attributed to the rapid fall in unemployment over the same period.⁴²⁷
- Some ethnic minority groups, for example Bangladeshis, appear to be making significant progress in performance, despite particularly high levels of disadvantage. However, other groups, for example disadvantaged pupils from Black Caribbean and White groups, seem to be making much less progress.
- Targeting behavioural problems can work, but highly disadvantaged pupils are subject to many external pressures that may lead to these patterns re-establishing themselves.
- Only post-2000 has educational expenditure at school level begun to rise sharply. Disadvantaged areas may have shared disproportionately in this increase, though some programmes tend to favour less disadvantaged areas. Higher levels of education, with correspondingly higher expenditure levels, tend to have disproportionately larger numbers of pupils from advantaged areas.
- There is a mass of different programmes with overlapping purposes and targets. Programmes attempting to raise educational performance for disadvantaged groups and reduce behavioural problems can be effective but require a high level of sustained investment over time.
- Assessing the specific effects of these initiatives is compounded by the complexity of overlapping programmes. It is also early days to measure their impact.

426 Bell (2003).

427 Unemployment fell steeply from its peak in 1993 until about 2000. It then continued to fall, but much less steeply.

CHAPTER 7: Poor health (age 0–13)

7.1 The risk of social exclusion

Health status is a crucial element of social inclusion. Whilst ill-health need not automatically lead to social exclusion, it is a clear risk factor in itself, and can also be linked to others (children's chronic ill-health leading to absence from school, for example). There is also clear evidence of links in the other direction – such as the material deprivations of living on income support long term leading to worse health.

The advent of the Labour government in 1997 heralded a new era in health, taking up some of the themes of the 1980 Black report in keeping health inequalities at the forefront of the public health agenda and re-emphasizing the link between public health strategies and improvements in health outcomes.⁴²⁸ The Acheson Report, published in 1998, argued that all policies should be evaluated in terms of their impact on health inequalities, and formulated in such a way that by favouring the less well off they would, wherever possible, reduce such inequalities.⁴²⁹ It built on the Black Report, by emphasizing the cross-cutting nature of health inequalities and setting them within a wider framework.

The Acheson Report recommended that policies aimed at improving health and reducing health inequalities in women of childbearing age, expectant mothers and young children should be given high priority; that policies should further reduce income inequalities and improve the living standards of households on benefits; and that additional resources should be provided for schools serving children from less well-off groups. Policies were advocated to reduce psychosocial ill-health in young women in disadvantaged circumstances, particularly those caring for young children, and to provide social and emotional support for parents and children. A partnership between the NHS Executive and regional government was suggested.

The report highlighted the need both to reduce the high child mortality rate from road traffic accidents and to exercise within a safe environment. It recommended promoting moderate intensity exercise, whilst advocating reducing car use to cut the mortality and morbidity associated with emissions. It also argued for increases in the real price of tobacco, to discourage young people from becoming habitual smokers. In addition, it identified the importance of specifically considering the needs of ethnic minority groups in policies aimed at reducing socio-economic inequalities, and the development of services sensitive to the needs of ethnic minority people that also promote greater awareness of their health risks.

The ensuing White Paper, *Saving Lives: Our Healthier Nation*,⁴³⁰ set out the government's targets for 2010, reflected in public service agreements (see below). Health authorities were to have a new role in improving local health. Primary care groups and trusts would have new public health responsibilities, forging powerful local partnerships with schools, housing departments, etc., to deliver health goals. Health Action Zones would break down barriers in providing services, complemented by Healthy Living Centres. A new Health Development Agency was to raise the quality of public health provision. This new approach, based on a three-way partnership of individuals, communities and the government, would work towards reducing health inequalities and improving the health of all.

428 Black (chair) (1980).

429 Acheson (chair) (1998).

430 Department of Health (1999).

Main policy levers and Public Service Agreements (PSAs)

By 2010, reduce inequalities in health outcomes by 10% as measured by infant mortality and life expectancy at birth.

Increase breastfeeding initiation rates by two percentage points per annum through the NHS Priorities and Planning Framework 2003–06, focusing especially on women from disadvantaged groups.

Sure Start Service Delivery Agreement Targets in relation to health: to establish Children's Centres so that by March 2006 at least 650,000 children have access to their services; to increase by 2005 the proportion of babies and young children 0–5 years with normal levels of personal, social and emotional development for their age; to ensure by 2006 that all families with new-born babies in Sure Start local programmes and Children's Centre areas are visited in first two months and given information about services and support; to improve awareness of healthy living among children by helping parents to support their children's healthy development before and after birth; to ensure by March 2006 a 6% reduction in proportion of mothers continuing to smoke during pregnancy; to ensure information and guidance is available on breastfeeding, nutrition, hygiene and safety; to reduce by 10% number of those aged 0–4 years admitted to hospital as an emergency with gastro-enteritis, lower respiratory infection or severe injury; to provide antenatal support and advice to all pregnant women and their families.

Improve life outcomes of adults and children with mental health problems through year on year improvements in access to crisis and Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS).

Reduce mortality rate from suicide and undetermined injury by at least 20% by 2010.

Reduce under-18 conception rate by 50% by 2010.

Drugs, alcohol, smoking (includes Young Persons Substance Misuse Plan): Spending Review 2002 provided funding for drug-related education, prevention and treatment services for young people. Reduce harm from drugs by reducing use of class A drugs and frequent use of any illicit drug among all young people under 25, especially by most vulnerable, and reduce drug-related crime. Linked to this is the government's wider strategy to reduce smoking and the number of teenage pregnancies.⁴³¹

Healthy Schools Programme aims to improve the overall health awareness of young people and the environment within schools.

National School Fruit Scheme: Being introduced from 2004; has been piloted in more than 500 schools in England. All four to six year old children in state schools will be entitled to a free piece of fruit or vegetable each school day. This will eventually entail distributing around 440 million pieces of fruit to over 2 million four to six year olds in some 18,000 schools across England each year.

⁴³¹ These last two are the areas we focus on in this review as they are of more relevance to the age group 0–13 (for teenage pregnancy because of the potential consequences for the children of teenage parents).

Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service: Improve life outcomes of adults and children with mental health problems through year on year improvements in access to crisis and CAMHS services. Reduce mortality rate from suicide and undetermined injury by at least 20% by 2010. All CAMHS to provide comprehensive services including mental health promotion and early intervention by 2006. Increase CAMHS by at least 10% each year across the services according to agreed local priorities.

Healthy Living Centres: Established as a vehicle for a new approach to health, by boosting health, leisure and community services at the same time as addressing the wider determinants of health such as social exclusion, poor access to services, and so on. To improve health and well-being within a context that complements Health Action Zones. Priority will be given to those in deprived urban and rural areas.

Healthy Schools Programme: To create a healthy ethos within schools; improve the health and self-esteem of the school community; and enable children to make healthier choices.

Health Action Zones: To tackle inequalities in health in the most deprived areas through health and social care modernisation programmes. As well as tackling coronary heart disease, cancer and mental health, teenage pregnancy, and drug misuse prevention in young people and smoking cessation, they address other interdependent and wider determinants of health, such as housing, education and employment, and link with other initiatives.

Strategy to Reduce Unintentional Injuries: Aims to reduce the number of children killed or seriously injured by 50% by 2010 compared with the average for 1994–98, tackling the significantly higher incidence in disadvantaged communities.

Healthy Start: Plans to replace the welfare foods scheme and to improve nutrition for pregnant women, mothers and young children. In 2004 government announced plans to introduce vouchers with a fixed monetary value to replace current volume-based vouchers. Beneficiaries will be able to exchange the vouchers for liquid milk, infant formula or fresh fruit and vegetables through general retail shops. Pregnant women and families with young children will register for the scheme by completing a simple application form and getting it endorsed by a health professional. Health professionals will continue to have an important role in advising beneficiaries about health and nutrition, including breastfeeding, and in promoting the appropriate use of vitamin supplements. Children attending nursery will receive either milk or fruit.

7.2 The overall impact of government policies

It would be premature to anticipate the overall impact of the government's policies for this age group. The long-term health impact of the Five-a-Day initiative to increase children's fruit and vegetable consumption, for example, cannot as yet be ascertained. The government's target, therefore, of reducing by 2010 by at least 10% the gap between the one-fifth of areas with the lowest life expectancy at birth and the population as a whole cannot yet be evaluated. But where initiatives have had specific aims, evaluation has been possible – although much of the evaluative work is still at the process rather than outcome stage. There can be little doubt, for example, that the initiative to improve the outcomes of children with mental health problems through year on year improvements in access to crisis and child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) has been broadly welcomed, but that it has commenced from a baseline of gaps in service provision, long waiting lists, inappropriate resources and barriers to joint working.⁴³² Some evaluation is

432 Street (2000); Pettitt (2003).

hampered by lack of statistical data, or specificity for this age group. The government's target of reducing death from suicide and undetermined injury by at least 20% by 2010 does not link specifically, for example, into the under-14 age group, despite the fact that research suggests that such incidents among this group tend to be under-reported.⁴³³

As yet infant mortality rates remain fairly constant, with infant deaths falling by 3.5% in England and Wales in 2002, but stillbirths rising by 6.7%.⁴³⁴ In 2002, 68% of infant deaths occurred within the first 28 days, and the majority of these deaths were related to prematurity. Babies born with low birthweights as a result of being born too small or too soon, and also the largest babies, are at greatest risk of both immediate and long-term health problems, with the smallest being most likely to die within the first weeks and months of life. Although social class mean birthweight remained similar between 1991 and 2000, the incidence of low birthweight appears to have increased between 1993 and 2000, with the highest levels reported amongst sole registrations, babies with fathers in manual occupations and those whose mothers were born in the Caribbean Commonwealth, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Africa (excluding Southern Africa).⁴³⁵ It is still too early to evaluate fully the government initiative to increase breastfeeding initiation rates, with particular focus on women from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is evidence of an overall increase in breastfeeding rates between 1995 and 2000⁴³⁶ but also of persisting inequalities, with only 59% of those in lower occupations initiating breastfeeding, compared with 85% of mothers classified to higher occupations.⁴³⁷

In Sure Start areas, targets are especially focused to bring about improvements in antenatal,⁴³⁸ neonatal and early years' health. The national evaluation of Sure Start is still ongoing. Early evaluation of implementation⁴³⁹ suggests that virtually all the programmes are developing a range of new or extended antenatal services, including home visits by midwives. The majority of programmes screened their new mothers for postnatal depression and provided support for them. Eighty-nine per cent of programmes provided breastfeeding advice, information and support, with the remainder intending to do so. Smoking cessation and healthy eating advice were seen as highly important aspects of every programme. Although 70% of programmes provided home safety equipment to parents, less than half offered home safety checks, and 80% did not monitor housing quality. There have been some difficulties in collaborative multi-disciplinary working, and it is as yet unclear whether ethnic minority groups, 'hard to reach' families and fathers are fully engaged in Sure Start. Moreover, it should be borne in mind that not all those at risk of social exclusion live in Sure Start areas.

7.3 Who has benefited the most? Who has benefited the least?

The government's initiatives to reduce teenage pregnancies, substance misuse, poor mental health outcomes, accident fatalities and injuries and the incidence of suicide have the potential to benefit disproportionately those from low-income households precisely because it is they who are at greatest risk of suffering from these 'risk factors' for poor health outcomes.

433 Shaffi (1989); Office of Population Censuses and Surveys (1992).

434 Office for National Statistics (2004b).

435 Office for National Statistics (2004c).

436 Office for National Statistics (2004c).

437 Hamlyn *et al.* (2002).

438 Reduction in smoking in pregnancy.

439 Tunstall *et al.* and the NESS Research Team (2002).

The chapter on living conditions (above) deals with road accidents for children. Although targets for reducing the under-16 conception rate have not yet been met, data for 2001 show a reduction since 1998, down by 11%; in addition, 27.3% of teenage parents were in education, training or work in 2003, compared with only 16% in 1997.⁴⁴⁰ All areas have agreed local conception reduction targets of 40–60% by 2010, with the greatest reductions sought in the highest rate areas. It is not clear, however, whether the reduction is linked, for example, to an increase in the number moving on into higher education, to greater use of ‘safe sex’ strategies, to the introduction of the ‘morning after’ pill, which since 2001 has been available without prescription from pharmacists, or to other factors. There has, however, been an increase in sexually transmitted infections.⁴⁴¹

With the exception, however, of the reduction in accidental deaths, there is as yet little dramatic evidence of change. Thus, although there is evidence of a reduction in smoking in the 11–15 age group, from 13% in 1996 to 10% in 2002, which exceeds the government’s target for this group (11% by 2005), there has been a slight increase in the proportion smoking from the 1999 figure of 9%, and the extent to which the reduction links with socio-economic group remains unclear.⁴⁴² (The picture on alcohol overall is one of stability in consumption, and the proportion of those using Class A drugs has remained relatively stable.)

There has been an increase in the proportion of overweight children. In 2000, 27% of girls aged 2–19 years were overweight compared with 20% of boys. Concern has been expressed about both diet and levels of physical activity, with the *Health of Children and Young People* study reporting that in 1999 children spent on average 11.4 hours a week watching television and videos compared with 7.5 hours spent on physical activity outside school.⁴⁴³ The Five-a-Day scheme/national school fruit scheme are part of the government’s drive to increase healthy eating habits amongst those most at risk and have been complemented by recent changes to the welfare foods scheme.

Lack of physical activity among children and young people has been addressed in part by the government’s initiative to enhance the take-up of sporting opportunities by 5–16 year olds by increasing the percentage of school children who spend a minimum of two hours each week on high quality physical education and school sport within and beyond the curriculum from 25% in 2002 to 75% by 2006. Action has been taken to stem the loss of sports fields, and a recent Ofsted report highlighted some positive trends.⁴⁴⁴ But state school children lag far behind independent school children in the provision of sporting opportunities, and those most at risk of social exclusion may be those least able to afford, or travel to, out-of-school sports clubs. The introduction of Health Action Zones and Healthy Living Centres may help to increase leisure and sports facilities in targeted areas; but the rapid increase in out-of-school private leisure facilities, including swimming pools, may in future jeopardize public provision for many others on low incomes.

Those least likely to benefit from the government’s initiatives remain, however, those among ethnic minority groups. Significant health inequalities remain among Black and ethnic minority communities. For example, whereas in 2000 the overall rate of infant deaths per 1,000 was 5.5 (down from 5.7 in 1999), for mothers born in Pakistan the rate was 12.2 (this is up from 10.1), and for mothers born in the Caribbean the rate was 10.4 (down from 12.2).⁴⁴⁵

440 Teenage Pregnancy Unit (2003).

441 Public Health Laboratory Service report (2003).

442 National Centre for Social Research & National Foundation for Educational Research (2002).

443 Office for National Statistics (2004c).

444 Ofsted (2004b).

445 Home Office (2002a).

Teenage pregnancy rates are particularly high among Bangladeshis, Black Caribbeans and Pakistanis,⁴⁴⁶ with more research needed into factors influencing lifestyle ‘choices’. Further, statutory services may not be effective in detecting mental health problems across different ethnic groups, in engaging them in treatment, or in gaining their confidence.⁴⁴⁷

7.4 Which policies have worked well together and why?

The reduction in the numbers of children killed and injured suggests that cross-departmental public health strategies have the potential to be effective across the board, although it is not clear that they will necessarily narrow the gap in health inequalities. Again, although reducing teenage conception rates should at first glance improve life chances for those most at risk of social exclusion, it is not as yet clear that the reduction in conceptions occurs in this group. On balance, single-issue policies (smoking, teenage conception, road fatalities) have shown the earliest short-term gains, but this may mask longer-term gains from more complex multi-agency strategies such as Sure Start.

7.5 Which policies are in conflict/tension with one another?

It is perhaps the lack of direct government action that most jeopardizes the initiatives for this age group. Initiatives such as Healthy Schools, combined with increases in sport within schools, have the potential to improve health outcomes, but have as yet concentrated on the ‘soft’ end of health promotion. In this regard, no action has been taken to remove sales of ‘soft drinks’, cakes, crisps, and so on from schools, or to ensure whole school provision of lunches high in nutritional value, or the establishment of freely accessible, clean and well-maintained drinking fountains. Many schools, for example, sell bottled water, with research from Leeds suggesting that only 18% of schools had working water fountains.⁴⁴⁸ Lack of stronger government action in some areas may then work against initiatives designed to promote healthy lifestyles. Those eligible for free school meals, who are arguably most at risk of poor nutrition, do not always benefit from a school meals system originally designed to boost their nutrition and overall health, because whilst nutritional guidelines are in regulations, in many schools there are vending machines and/or less healthy choices on the school meals menu.

Similarly, the alcopops industry remains relatively unfettered, although it is known both that the peak age for consumption is 13–16, and that one of the established controls on young people’s drinking – bitterness – has been removed.⁴⁴⁹ Although controlling access to tobacco by under-16s is a priority in the White Paper, *Smoking Kills*, the evidence suggests that when retail outlets are restricted, young people continue to obtain cigarettes or alcohol from relatives or friends.⁴⁵⁰ This has led the British Medical Association to argue that increasing the cost of cigarettes both quickly and sharply may be a more effective method of reducing their use by adolescents, and more efficacious than educational measures.⁴⁵¹

Again, it is not clear whether the risk to health is greater from teenage parenthood or from the proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and an increasing abortion rate. As the British Medical Association makes clear, the health outcomes from teenage pregnancy for both mother

446 Social Exclusion Unit (1999).

447 King’s Fund (1997).

448 See www.healthedtrust.com

449 Alcohol Concern (2001). Whilst this peak age only touches our relevant age group, this of course means that younger children are also consuming alcopops.

450 National Centre for Social Research & National Foundation for Educational Research (2002).

451 British Medical Association (2003).

and child require balancing (for example, health advantages from early maternity against social disadvantages).⁴⁵² Although there is little research on improving outcomes for teenage parents, we do know that condoms may provide the best protection from STDs, but remain unpopular and unreliable.⁴⁵³ Research suggests that 18% of boys and 22% of girls who first had sex aged 13–14 said they did not use contraception.⁴⁵⁴

Other areas of conflict involve the reduction in child pedestrian casualties which, whilst greatly to be welcomed, has been accompanied by an increase in the number of children travelling by car to school;⁴⁵⁵ and the increase in the prescription of Ritalin for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, which some argue has shadowed the introduction of the literacy hour and national curriculum.⁴⁵⁶

7.6 Gaps in knowledge

Overall, much of the evidence is missing, either because it is too early to evaluate the impact of initiatives – for example, the long-term impact of the Five-a-Day campaign on mortality rates – or because evaluation is hampered by lack of statistical evidence, or lack of specificity for this age group. Some initiatives may need to address more openly those factors that inhibit good practice. Within these limitations, the overall impact has been one of change, innovation and a move towards joint working across the boundaries between health, social care and education. But, despite the changes, we do not necessarily always have the robust and independent data necessary to prove that they have worked.⁴⁵⁷

7.7 Directions for the future

In some areas – such as school nutrition, the holding of children in prisons (2,633 in 2002, 90% more than in 1992) and the regulation of the food and drink industry – the government may wish to take a more direct approach. Although some steps have been taken with, for example, the Food Standards Agency setting targets to reduce average salt intakes by 10% by 2005–06, more proactive steps may be needed. This may be particularly effective in relation to provision within schools, where those most at risk of social exclusion and poor health may be more easily targeted. But there is also an urgent need for more data both to inform initiatives, and thereby increase the likelihood of their success, and to evaluate whether reforms are effective, particularly with regard to cost-intensive projects such as Sure Start. More research is also needed to ensure that the needs of young people from ethnic minority groups and Travellers are identified, and that service delivery is readily accessible.

7.8 KEY MESSAGES

- It is too early to evaluate the health impact of many of the government's initiatives on health for children.
- Single issue policies have shown the earliest short-term gains; but this may mask longer-term gains from more complex multi-agency strategies such as Sure Start.

452 British Medical Association (2003).

453 Swann *et al.* (2003).

454 Wellings *et al.* (2001).

455 Office for National Statistics (2003), *Social Trends 33: A portrait of British society*, TSO.

456 Walsh (2003).

457 Leatherman and Sutherland (2003).

- Government initiatives to increase school sport and physical education have proved promising, but those most at risk of social exclusion may be those least able to afford, or to travel to, out-of-school sports and leisure clubs.
- The reduction in child pedestrian casualties has been accompanied by an increase in the number of children travelling by car to school.
- The Healthy Schools Initiative, combined with increases in sport within schools, has so far been accompanied by promotion of healthy options rather than further regulation of foodstuffs sold in schools.
- There are persistent inequalities in child health that have their origins at birth, such as low birth weight and infant mortality, and these are proving difficult to turn around.

CHAPTER 8: Disabled children and children with special educational needs⁴⁵⁸

8.1 The risk of social exclusion

There are estimated to be around 400,000 disabled children in the UK under 16 years, around 1 in 38 of the child population.⁴⁵⁹ The government has recently emphasized the risk of poverty and social exclusion for disabled people, including children, and the importance of ensuring disabled people are aware of their rights and able to secure them.⁴⁶⁰ The costs of disability are not taken into account in the official statistics on low income, so the families of disabled children may be even poorer than they appear. Difficulties with access to all aspects of school life may have an impact on a disabled child's quality of life and reinforce feelings of separateness. The importance of early assessment and intervention, and the recognition that disabled children, given their frequent dependence on help from multiple agencies, are especially vulnerable to poor service co-ordination, makes it all the more essential that disabled children benefit from the extra help promised by the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*, specifically improved information sharing, a common assessment framework, lead professionals (key workers) and co-ordinated service delivery.

Disabled children are likely to remain at risk of social exclusion unless their experiences and opportunities, as children, become more typical of children in the general population. Initiatives that specifically target disabled children can only achieve part of these aspirations; disabled children's vulnerability to social exclusion will also be diminished by strategies aimed at the general child population which also accommodate the needs of disabled children – and similar strategies aimed at adult populations. The Green Paper *Every Child Matters* is a positive example of the latter. Wider social acceptance and understanding of the needs of disabled children and adults in the community as a whole may be even more important, implying a crucial role for public education as a tool for combating social exclusion, as well as direct services.

Main Policy Levers and Public Service Agreements (PSAs)

Disability Benefits	Higher rate mobility element of disability living allowance extended to include 3–4 year olds. Disability element of child tax credit introduced.
Sure Start	Aims to identify pre-school children with special educational needs and provide early intervention and support.
Quality Protects	Seeks to provide wider range of flexible services for families of disabled children and to integrate children into mainstream leisure services.

458 Some aspects of Special Educational Needs are discussed in chapter 6 under education.

459 Department of Health (2000).

460 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a). Subsequent points in this paragraph are taken from pp. 103–128 unless otherwise indicated.

Special Educational Needs: - SEN & Disability Act 2001 - 'Removing Barriers to Achievement' - SEN Code of Practice 2001	Amends Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and gives disabled children and children with special needs the right to mainstream education; identifies and suggest strategies for removing obstacles to learning; codifies good SEN practice.
Schools Access Initiative	Made available in 1996–97 to help schools prepare for changes that were to be initiated by SENDA, and continues to support schools in making the total environment of mainstream schools, including the curriculum, more accessible to disabled children.
National Childcare Strategy	Provision for children (0–14) including disabled children up to 16.
Transport Act	Aims to make vehicles and transport more accessible to disabled people.
Carers and Disabled Children Act and Carers Special Grant	Allows direct payments to be made and gives greater choice and flexibility to parents receiving services.
Children's Fund	Provides funding for services aimed at the most vulnerable children in the middle years.
Disabled Facilities Grant	Contributes toward the cost of providing adaptations and facilities within the home.
Family Fund	Government contributes grants to help reduce stress on families with severely disabled children.
Section 64 Funding	Provide grants to voluntary organizations that target DfES priorities, which include families with disabled children.
Early Excellence Centres	Special centres support disabled children and their families.
Early Support Pilot Programme	Supports the development of co-ordinated multi-agency support services for disabled children under three years and their families.
National Service Framework	External working group for disabled children; reporting in late 2004.
Communication Aids Project	Funded by DfES, runs from 2002 to 2006; designed to promote access to curricula by supporting pupils who have difficulties with understanding language, communicating verbally or with written communication.
Together from the Start	Practical guidance for professionals who work with children from birth to two years and their families.
Every Child Matters	Green Paper summarizing government's vision for children; commits government to making improvements for disabled children and children with SEN in the key areas of early intervention, educational exclusion, low expectations and partnership working.

8.2 What does the existing evidence tell us about the overall impact of government policies?

Disabled children are at particular risk of poverty because their parents generally have lower incomes, while having to meet the extra costs of disability. Disability benefits increase the income of families with disabled children, but often do not go far enough to redress the balance, as it costs up to three times as much to raise a severely disabled child as a non-disabled child.⁴⁶¹ The equivalence scale used in low-income statistics does not take account of the additional costs of disability, and therefore is likely to underestimate the poverty of disabled children. Parents of disabled children are much less likely to be in full-time work compared with parents of non-disabled children. Difficulties with the extra expense and shortage of appropriate childcare can contribute to this. These problems are exacerbated for those with more than one disabled child.⁴⁶² Take-up levels of benefits also remain unsatisfactory.⁴⁶³

The National Childcare Strategy seeks to address shortages of childcare services, with £4 million invested so far in providing care for disabled children and children with SEN.⁴⁶⁴ Childcare places have now increased significantly (see chapter 5, above); but there are no figures available on places available to disabled children. However, we do know that many parents of a child with a disability have found it difficult to combine employment and caring, and many have also had to cut back or give up paid work, because of childcare problems (see chapter 5, above).

Child tax credit and the childcare element of working tax credit have been introduced, aiming to help people on low incomes, including giving help with childcare costs. Other financial resources include the Family Fund, which helped 43,017 families with severely disabled children during 2002–03,⁴⁶⁵ and the disabled facilities grant, which helped 123,000 people to improve access to their homes.⁴⁶⁶

A 2003 evaluation of the Quality Protects initiative⁴⁶⁷ found improvements in the quality and availability of services for disabled children, which were particularly evident in the early years play and leisure services. However, there is still a national shortage of inclusive and specialist provision. Many potential improvements are still at the planning stage. The Children's Fund provides funding for services targeting vulnerable children aged 5–13, and 21% of services have so far targeted disabled children.⁴⁶⁸ No evaluation of the impact of such services has been conducted thus far, however.

While feedback from families has been generally positive, the overall long-term impact of Sure Start is as yet unclear for the general child population, and less evaluative information exists for the population of disabled children. However, the need to ensure that services are delivered to disabled children and their families, the close links between Sure Start projects and primary care services, and the evaluative material available so far, give grounds for optimism. Early Excellence Centres have 35 pilot centres with a key role in supporting disabled children and children with SEN. The pilot evaluation suggested positive effects on social exclusion.⁴⁶⁹

461 Russell (2003b).

462 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1998), 'The number and characteristics of families with more than one disabled child', Findings 218; <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/scr218.asp>. Full report: Lawton (1998).

463 Reith (2001).

464 Note that disabled children do not always have special educational needs.

465 Family Fund Trust (2003).

466 Tenbury Wells Community website (2003).

467 Council for Disabled Children (2003).

468 Children and Young People's Unit (2002b).

469 Bertram *et al.* (2002).

An Audit Commission study⁴⁷⁰ found wide variations in support for children with SEN (which will necessarily include some of those with disabilities) in mainstream schools, and variable attitudes to pupils. It was also found that many teachers lacked understanding of the needs of disabled children, and that children still face barriers, including shortfalls in specialist support, exclusion from certain lessons or activities and inaccessible buildings and facilities. Too many children, it was reported, waited too long to have their needs met, families faced large variations in service quality and quantity, and special schools themselves were unclear about their future role. The Schools Access Initiative Fund was introduced to address these accessibility issues, which relate to curriculum-related as well as physical access issues. Currently, 6,000 schools have benefited, with £100 million allocated to the task for the coming year alone.

The Transport Act⁴⁷¹ aims to make public transport vehicles accessible to disabled people. Currently public transport is often inaccessible to disabled children, as many vehicles are too old to comply with regulations.

8.3 What have been the main positive impacts from current policies? Which groups have benefited the most? Why have policies worked?

The benefits system for disabled children can be both complex and confusing for parents. In recent years, however, the government has made significant improvements to the amount of money families with disabled children are entitled to. The benefits/tax credits system is also currently changing to create a more seamless system which should be easier to access, with all benefits for disabled children coming under child tax credit and disability living allowance, rather than via working families tax credit and additional premia in means-tested benefits.

The government has introduced many new policies that aim directly or indirectly to improve the lives of disabled children, many of which are in the early stages and the goals of which are long-term. There are promising early signs from Sure Start, the Early Excellence Centres and Quality Protects. The aims of Sure Start and Early Excellence Centres include the early identification of children with special needs and ensuring early professional intervention. There have been examples of good practice from the pilot studies, but no conclusive evaluation yet.

8.4 Which groups have benefited the least? Where have the policies not delivered all the impacts intended and why? Are there any unintended consequences?

Many people eligible to claim disability benefits currently do not do so, due to lack of information and problems in making applications.⁴⁷² The most socially disadvantaged families are the least likely to apply. Particularly at a disadvantage within the current system of financial support are families where there is more than one disabled child. Such families receive extra benefits; but the benefits system does not take into account the cumulative effects of care.⁴⁷³

470 Audit Commission (2002a).

471 Social Exclusion Unit (2003b).

472 Reith (2001).

473 Joseph Rowntree Foundation (1998), 'The number and characteristics of families with more than one disabled child', Findings 218; <http://www.jrf.org.uk/knowledge/findings/socialcare/scr218.asp>. Full report: Lawton (1998).

The Quality Protects programme allocates £60 million of the £885 million children's service grant to provide more support for families with disabled children. There are currently wide variations in services within areas and consequently some families are at a disadvantage due to their locality. Many councils are assessing the accessibility of their services but work is not planned to start in the near future. New and better quality services are planned nationwide but it is again too early in the process for any positive effects to emerge. Many public buildings remain physically inaccessible to disabled members of the community.⁴⁷⁴

Local education authorities are under a new duty (from 2002) to improve the accessibility of mainstream schools to disabled children over time. The Schools Access Initiative provides the funding for making schools physically and educationally accessible (see above); but currently, only 23% of primary schools and 10% of secondary schools are fully accessible for disabled children.⁴⁷⁵ This makes it difficult for authorities to fully carry out their duties to give disabled children the right to mainstream education as identified in the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA). Currently, 87% of pupils permanently excluded from primary schools and 30% from secondary schools have SEN – which may indicate that the system is failing to meet the needs of these children. In England,⁴⁷⁶ although the proportion of pupils with statements of SEN remained broadly static at 3%, the number of children with SEN statements rose by 11% over the period 1997–2002; of pupils with SEN statements, 60% were in mainstream schools by this date – a rise from 48% since 1993; 37% were in special schools and 3% in independent schools.⁴⁷⁷ The government has commissioned research to look at practices and policies with regard to admissions and exclusion for pupils with SEN, which will be published later in 2004.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 enabled, but did not oblige, the government to make accessibility regulations, setting minimum standards for new public transport vehicles (buses, coaches, trains, trams and taxis), so that disabled people can use them, and can travel in safety and reasonable comfort. The Transport Act (2000) has set minimum standards for new vehicles, the latest 'end date' being 2020 for small coaches. But there is no end date for the completion of all public vehicles being accessible and the disadvantage for disabled people and families with disabled children still exists. Many parents of disabled children find it necessary to use taxis, the costs of which are often not reimbursed.

8.5 Gaps in knowledge

The current demographic profile of disabled children and their circumstances remains unclear. We need to know to what extent services offered by Sure Start and the Children's Fund are being accessed by disabled children. The impact of the SEN and Disability Act 2001 can be expected to be substantial, but again, a longer view is required before any conclusion can be reached. Increasing information is available, and more is likely to become available, on the educational performance of children with SEN and which educational settings and strategies are more likely to help SEN children fulfill their potential. The absence of any specific targets on removing families with disabled children from poverty makes it hard to evaluate what progress is being made on what many families with disabled children might consider the biggest barrier to social inclusion.

474 Council for Disabled Children (2003).

475 Audit Commission (2002a).

476 Russell (2003b).

477 Department for Education and Skills (2002b).

8.6 Directions for the future

The welfare of disabled children is affected by a wide range of government initiatives: those affecting children as a whole, those affecting disabled adults and, indeed, those affecting the population as a whole. In addition to dedicated strategies, the impact of broader legislation on disabled children and their families needs to be considered.

8.7 KEY MESSAGES

- There is a lack of data about the prevalence of childhood disability and the circumstances of disabled children; the main source of data remains the 1989 OPCS survey.
- A number of positive changes to benefits/tax credits have occurred since 1999. However, improving the take-up of benefits, especially disability living allowance, remains a challenge.
- The greater willingness to consult directly with disabled people – including children – is a positive trend.
- The single most important feature of the experience of families with disabled children remains poverty. Greater childcare costs and lower parental incomes are strongly associated with childhood disability.
- Extra benefits for families with more than one disabled child do not take into account the cumulative effects of care.
- While action on special educational needs has been considerable over the past decade, the inclusion of children with disabilities and/or special educational needs in all aspects of school life within mainstream schools continues to be an aspiration rather than a reality for many children.
- As well as benefiting from general childcare programmes, we can expect disabled children to experience positive results from broader strategies and legislation that take account of the needs of all disabled people.
- While a substantial number of economic, social and educational initiatives have either targeted, or included, disabled children in recent years, little hard information is available as to the extent of their impact; and, where such information is available, it is rarely underpinned by baseline data and measurable targets.

CHAPTER 9: Vulnerable families, children in need, child protection

9.1 The risk of social exclusion

The importance of family support has been reinforced by research findings showing that problems in family life are associated both in the short term and into adulthood with a range of adverse outcomes: social, educational, relational, health and crime.⁴⁷⁸ These problems have costs to both the child and society generally.

Scott and others⁴⁷⁹ have shown that by the age of 28, costs for individuals with conduct disorder are ten times higher than those with no problems. The average individual costs for the conduct disorder group were £70,019, compared with £7,423 for the 'no problem' group. In all groups, crime incurred the greatest cost, followed by extra educational provision, foster and residential care, and state benefits; health costs were smaller. Parental social class had a relatively small effect on antisocial behaviour, and although substantial independent contributions came from being male, having a low reading age, and attending more than two primary schools, conduct disorder still predicted the greatest cost. Some believe that how children are parented is a major cause of social exclusion; but parenting happens in a social context,⁴⁸⁰ and parenting is made easier or more difficult by the social situations in which parents live.⁴⁸¹

As noted earlier, the government's approach to family support is outlined in the Green Paper *Supporting Families*⁴⁸² and the more recent Green Paper *Every Child Matters*.⁴⁸³ Traditionally, services for children, health, education and social care have been divided up between different central and local government departments, causing duplication and confusion; but this will change with the implementation of the 2003 Green Paper and the Children Bill.

The importance of the context in which parents bring up their children is recognised in the 1998 Green Paper, *Supporting Families*, which proposed a package of practical measures: first, services to support parenting, financial support, help for families balancing work and home, and help with relationship problems; and second, services for vulnerable families with more serious family problems (see chapter 1, above). The £540 million Sure Start programme was the major vehicle for giving children in disadvantaged areas a better start in life. Child protection was not considered in this document.

This gap was remedied in the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*. Lord Laming's recommendations following the death of Victoria Climbié showed that child protection could not be separated from policies to improve children's lives as a whole. Taking stock of the current condition of children, the Green Paper noted: 'Overall this country is still one where life chances are unequal. This damages not only those children born into disadvantage but our society as a whole'. The Green Paper recommended universal services, targeted services and as a last resort compulsory action. For

478 Buchanan and Hudson (2000); Harnden *et al.* (2002).

479 Scott *et al.* (2001).

480 Utting (1995).

481 Hughes *et al.* (2000).

482 Home Office (1998); <http://www.parliament.the-stationery-office.co.uk/pa/cm199798/cmwib/wb981107/wgp.htm>.

483 HM Treasury (2003b).

children aged 0–13, the key proposals were to develop the Sure Start children’s centres so that they offered childcare for older children as well, becoming children’s information centres. More radically, the Green Paper proposed the integration of education, health and social care services in ‘extended schools’. It was intended that these would act as the ‘hub’ for services for children. Children’s trusts were to be set up to integrate local education, social care and some health services for children and young people within a single organisational framework.⁴⁸⁴

Main policy levers and Public Service Agreements (PSAs)

Children aged 0–13

Family support

Children Act 1989: It shall be the duty of every local authority to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in their area who are in need and so far as is consistent with that duty to promote the upbringing of such children by their families by providing a range and level of services appropriate to those children’s needs.

Children, Young People and Families Directorate within DfES (CYPFD): Set up in 2003 to co-ordinate children’s services programmes and to bring together six mutually reinforcing strands of work. The aim of the six strands of the programme is to create a framework to support the delivery of locally preventative services. Involved in the directorate is a local transformation group; Sure Start unit; safeguarding children and supporting families group; supporting children and young people’s group; children’s workforce unit; and a strategy group.

Children and Young People’s Unit (which is now merged with CYPFD) was set up in 2000 to improve the lives of children and young people across the country, by: 1. influencing policy in the interests of children and young people; 2. making children and young people’s services preventive, not reactive; 3. being a centre of expertise on helping children and young people achieve positive outcomes; 4. ensuring children and young people are involved in developing the services they use.

The Parenting Fund: £25 million to assist voluntary and community organisations in the delivery of parenting support. In particular, contributing to an expansion in support available to all parents; increasing support services for groups who currently receive little access – for example, assisting voluntary and community organisations who provide services to Black and ethnic minority families, fathers or parents of adolescents; spreading parenting support services; increasing the capacity of the whole parenting support sector to grow.

Family Support Grant: Started in 1999–2000 and is worth up to £6.3 million for work starting in the financial year 2004–5. The grant provides core funding for the National Family and Parenting Institute, Parentline Plus, and Home-Start UK; and continuation funding for project work agreed under previous rounds. Most projects are now funded for three years. Funding for new projects is under an open round agreed annually by the relevant minister as well as a small grant programme for voluntary organizations. For the purposes of this grant programme ‘family support’ means ‘activities to support parents in their parenting role’ such as parenting education, or activities to improve family relationships between children and parents.

484 HM Treasury (2003b).

Sure Start: (now part of CYPFD) – see Early Years and Health sections.

Children’s Fund (now part of CYPFD) is a £450 million fund launched in 2000. It is aimed at developing services that support multi-agency working for preventive services for children and young people aged from 5 to 13 across England. This intention is addressed by encouraging partnership working between the voluntary, community and statutory sectors and the participation of children, young people and their families in the development of these services. As of June 2003, the Children’s Fund was supporting the delivery of services to over 220,000 children, young people and their carers. Since the Children’s Fund has now absorbed the On Track programme, 25% of its budget is for children at risk of offending.

On Track was originally established by the Home Office in 1999 with a budget of £10 million. In April 2001, the programme was transferred from the Home Office to the Children & Young People’s Unit and was incorporated into the Children’s Fund. On Track was for children aged 4–12 and focused on reducing the risk factors associated with behaviour likely to lead to offending and antisocial behaviour and on promoting protective factors. It was piloted in 24 disadvantaged areas in England and Wales. There were five core interventions: home visiting; pre-school; parent support and training; family therapy; home-school partnerships and local specialist option.

The Local Network Fund for children and young people: The fund is for all children and young people aged 0–19 and the budget is £150 million over five years from 2001. It is delivered through 57 local Funds run by voluntary organizations, with grants of up to £7,000 and capacity building support available to small community groups working with children and young people facing disadvantage. The four themes are economic disadvantage, isolation and access, aspirations and experiences and children’s voices. Funding decisions are taken by local panels.

Children’s Centres: By March 2006, government expects children’s centres to reach 650,000 pre-school children (350,000 through existing Sure Start programmes and 300,000 new children). They will play key roles in supporting at risk groups and deliver universal childcare and education services.

Children’s Trusts are about integrated commissioning leading to more integrated service delivery and better outcomes for children and young people. They will be formed through the pooling of budgets and resources across a range of agencies.

Marriage and Relationship Support Grant programme (MARS), set up to give grants for preventative services for children, young people and families before they hit crisis.

Parenting Order: Parents of children who are involved in criminal or antisocial behaviour, or who fail to attend or are excluded from school, can be made subject to a parenting order where the order would be desirable in the interests of preventing the child from engaging in further criminal or antisocial behaviour, or in improving their attendance at or behaviour in school. Under the order parents are required to attend a parenting programme in the form directed by the responsible officer. The order can also include specific requirements the parents must comply with which are desirable in preventing a repetition of the kind of behaviour by the child that led to the order being made. Failure to comply with the terms of the order can result in criminal ‘breach’ proceedings, a return to court and potentially a fine or community sentence.

Welfare and protection

Children Act 1989 gives framework for both private (following separation and divorce) and public law (child welfare/child protection) for supporting families, dealing with children in need, child protection, looked after children.

Quality Protects programme (now part of CYPFD) launched in 1998 to transform management and delivery of children's services. Eleven objectives relating to: child protection; children in need; disabled children; looked after children; leaving care; adoption. Quality protects spending over five years amounts to £885 million, with £138 million going on a main grant; £60m on disabled children; £298m on leaving care; £9.5 million on IT fund.

Children in need (CIN): Aim: to ensure children in need gain maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health and social care. Local authorities have a duty to provide services.

The Children in Need census includes children supported in families or independently (CSF/I) as well as child protection cases and looked after children; as such, CIN now includes all children who receive some sort of social service provision. In the past these groups have been separated out.

Child protection: Aim: to ensure children are protected from emotional, physical, sexual abuse and neglect (significant harm). Changes due as a result of Victoria Climbié Inquiry, the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* and the Children Bill.

Looked after children: Aim: to ensure children who are looked after (those that cannot live with their families) gain maximum life chance benefits from educational opportunities, health care and social care. Also a PSA to improve level of education, training and employment outcomes so that the levels for this group are at least 75% of those achieved by all young people in 2004.

Adoption and Children Act 2002, where children are unlikely to be able to return to their families, encouraged more adoption of looked after children. Supported by research showing children adopted do better on a range of outcomes than children who are long-term fostered.

Vulnerable Children's Grant: £252 million over 2003–06 will provide additional educational support for children most in need, including children in care. An extra £113 million over 2003–06 will improve care placements and stability through the Choice Protects programme.

9.2 What does the existing evidence tell us about the overall impact of government policies?

Although important large-scale evaluations of many government family support programmes have yet to report, there are preliminary indications that the programmes are impacting positively on large numbers of children, young people and families. There is also some evidence that better family support services in the community reduce the numbers of referrals to social services as children 'in need'.⁴⁸⁵

However, improving services and outcomes for children 'in need' (which includes those needing protection and looked after children) is proving more challenging. Given that these children are likely to be amongst the most disadvantaged and most at risk of social exclusion, it is encouraging that some progress is being made and that there are positive indications that families find the help provided from social services helpful.⁴⁸⁶

Family support policies and programmes

The national evaluation of the Children's Fund will not finally report until 2006. It will, among other things, be exploring the impact of the Fund on its users and research will include the experiences of children with disabilities. Already, there have been emerging messages on the positive influence of the programme from an interim report in September 2003.⁴⁸⁷ Morris and Spicer⁴⁸⁸ describe the common challenges and early lessons. They found that the Children's Fund was described as raising the profile of prevention and preventive services and supporting innovative practice in local areas. By encouraging joint mapping of children's needs, the Children's Fund was seen as supporting a broader understanding of the connections between indicators of social exclusion. There was evidence of a range of skills and knowledge around participation being built by the Fund. There was also evidence of some sophisticated mainstreaming activity and programme managers were generally enthusiastic about this. Overall the Children's Fund appeared to have acted as a driver in the development of partnership working in prevention, encouraging multi-agency discussion and the development of preventive services. The first annual report of the evaluation will be published in 2004, and other interim and annual reports will be published during the lifetime of the project.

There is also anecdotal and local evaluation evidence emerging from local Children's Fund projects. For example, it was reported in Manchester in 2003 that fewer children were starting school with pre-existing behaviour problems and that over 15,000 children had accessed holiday schemes and other play and sport activities throughout the six weeks' summer holiday.⁴⁸⁹ The furore earlier in 2004 about the proposed spending cuts on this programme, which has now been resolved, was perhaps indicative of the esteem in which the programme is held.⁴⁹⁰

The Local Network Fund has funded 6,200 projects, with over 3,000 of these reported as being led by children and young people, and nearly 1,600 reported as being led by Black and ethnic minority groups. In total the Fund has distributed £28.7 million in grants. Funds are allowed for projects that come under four themes: aspirations and experiences; economic disadvantage; isolation and access; and children and young people's voice. An interim report from the national evaluation on the Local Network Fund for Children and Young People suggests that the Fund is having a beneficial impact on the lives of its beneficiaries. 'I've done things I wouldn't normally

485 Gardner (2002).

486 Buchanan *et al.* (2002).

487 Morris and Spicer (2003).

488 Morris and Spicer (2003).

489 Manchester Social Services: http://www.manchester.gov.uk/education/services/5-13_sep03.pdf

490 House of Commons *Hansard* (2004), Written Answers 26 January, cols. 127W-134W, TSO.

have done', explained one 15 year old boy. Although some minority groups are proving difficult to engage, the capacity to reach them appears to be developing, as does the capacity to develop effective safeguarding policies.⁴⁹¹

The emerging findings from On Track, which is now part of the Children's Fund, are also positive. A national qualitative study⁴⁹² of the On Track programme showed that interventions relating to the Home Office categories were depicted as being successful and of high quality. Following *home visiting*, children's behaviour, school attendance and self-esteem had improved. Parents reported that their home management, confidence, family functioning, health and emotional well-being had benefited and they were less stressed. They were better able to manage their children's behaviour and to access help from other services. The *pre-school education* programme was also associated with positive outcomes for children and parents. The *parent support and training* strand impacted on the whole family. Better relationships with partners and children were reported and more positive attitudes to professionals. The specialist interventions were also viewed as helpful. Overall, the impacts on children were overwhelmingly positive and there appeared to be general agreement between users and practitioners about the outcomes.

The former cross-cutting Children and Young People's Unit (CYPU) appears to have played an important role in ensuring that the projects reached those children and families at risk of social exclusion. In 2003, the CYPU shifted its focus to help those harder to reach: Travellers, asylum seekers and homeless and transient children.⁴⁹³ Whilst the Unit itself no longer exists, its responsibilities were absorbed into the new Children and Young People's and Families Directorate in the Department for Education and Skills, and the focus on these client groups continues to be a priority. The National Family and Parenting Institute and Parentline Plus are playing a major part in supporting parents more generally. The recent evaluation of Parentline Plus recognized that it provided a good quality helpline service to over 60,000 callers per annum, of whom three-quarters were first-time callers. One in five callers in one call centre were from an ethnic minority group, 39% were lone parents and 14% step-families. Plans to increase the helpline service and to develop an email service have recently been approved.^{494 495}

Media reports on the first Children's Trust pilots⁴⁹⁶ highlight the range of ways trusts are responding and the different priorities they are pursuing in different areas. For example, Croydon will initially focus on improving services for children with disabilities and those with mental health problems. Others such as Bexley plan to set up children's centres integrating health, education and social services. There will be a three year evaluation of children's trust pathfinders, which will report in 2007. The aims of the evaluation will be to examine the structure, process, outputs, outcomes and costs of different models of children's trust pathfinders, to identify features associated with successful implementation in the context of local circumstances and national policy, and to build up a robust base of evidence in order to contribute to the development of practice and policy in relation to future children's trusts.

The Marriage and Relationship Support Grant programme (MARS), which arose from the proposed Strategy for Marriage and Relationship Support for 2002 and Beyond, *Moving Forward Together*,⁴⁹⁷ noted that since stable relationships and families were key to a healthy society, and as family life is currently undergoing unprecedented change, there is need for more support for couples at an earlier stage. In the 2003–04 round, public funding supported a wide range of voluntary sector

491 Craig (2004).

492 Atkinson *et al.* (2003).

493 Children and Young People's Unit (2002a).

494 Department for Education and Skills (2003c).

495 House of Commons *Hansard* (2004), Written Answers 26 January, cols. 142-144W, TSO.

496 The Guardian (2003), articles in July.

497 Lord Chancellor's Department (2002).

organisations providing marriage and relationship support services to couples in England and Wales. Specific projects include supporting couples in Brighton through problems associated with drug use, and a national scheme to assist manic depressives in maintaining positive relationships.⁴⁹⁸

9.3 Children in need⁴⁹⁹

The Children in Need census, as mentioned earlier, includes children of all ages requiring support in their families or independently (CSF/I) as well as children needing protection and looked after children. There were 388,200 children reported from the CIN database based on a sample week in February 2003⁵⁰⁰ who required some sort of local authority provision. Just over two-thirds of all these children were aged 13 and under. In all, there were about 2,600 children in need per authority. A total of 69,000 (18%) were looked after and the remaining 319,200 (82%) were children supported in families or independently. During the specified week, social services actively worked with 164,400 children (52%) requiring support in families or independently. On average, social work staff spent, in individual work, 3.2 hours per child in the survey week on looked after children and 1.7 hours per child on those living independently or with their families.

The survey showed that the single main need for social service intervention is abuse and neglect, which accounted for more than half of all looked after children and just over a quarter of other children in need. Age-wise, CSF/I peaked at two and three years old, whereas looked after children were more likely to be aged between 13 and 18. Overall, around 18% of children in need are of ethnic identity other than White, suggesting that this category is between 1.2 and 1.7 times the national average in the under-18 population as a whole. Children of Black or mixed ethnic identity are over-represented, whereas children of Asian ethnic identity are under-represented. Asian children are most likely to be in need because of a 'child's disability'.

There is very little information on outcomes for children in need, apart from those for looked after children, but evidence from small-scale projects indicates that in many cases parents feel that social workers are doing a good job and that both they and their children benefit from involvement.⁵⁰¹

Some 65,000 children in 2003 had been involved in S.47 enquiries (child protection), or a rate of 59 per 10,000 children in England.⁵⁰² There were 26,600 children on child protection registers (CPRs) at 31 March 2003. Sixteen per cent of the children on the registers at this time were also looked after. More than a third of registrations during 2002–03 related to children considered to be at risk of neglect. Caution is necessary when interpreting these figures, as they do not include all children who have been abused.⁵⁰³

The Laming Inquiry⁵⁰⁴ highlighted the major challenges and concerns in protecting children in England and Wales; but a recent report,⁵⁰⁵ published in March 2004, notes that councils are improving their performance on safeguarding children. Evidence from the US, Australia and Scotland, however, shows how difficult it is to protect all children. In most areas, the system struggles to keep up with referrals.⁵⁰⁶

498 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/marriageandrelationshipsupport/grant0304.shtml>

499 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/VOL/v000451/index.shtml>

500 Department for Education and Skills (2004e).

501 Buchanan *et al.* (2002).

502 Department for Education and Skills (2004a).

503 Sibert *et al.* (2002).

504 Home Office (2003).

505 Social Services Inspectorate, The Audit Commission's Joint Reviews of Social Services and the National Care Standards Commission (2004).

506 Buchanan (2003).

Although the aim for children who are looked after is to maximise their life chances, this has also proved difficult to achieve. Some 60,800 children were being looked after between March 2002 and March 2003.⁵⁰⁷ The CIN census (mentioned earlier) records a slightly higher number of children but it is possible that this is explained by the numbers of children in respite care. Although children who are looked after only accounted for 27% of all children who received a service during the survey week, expenditure on children who were looked after accounted for 61% of the total children's budget.⁵⁰⁸ Most of this money goes on the costs of residential or fostering services. Overall, children in need cost social services on average about £59.5 million per week, with £36.5 million being spent on children who are looked after.

Placement stability is a major concern, although this is improving – but with considerable variability between authorities. Overall, only 15% of looked after children had been in three or more placements in 2002–03, compared to 18.5% four years earlier. A worrying issue is that a small but growing minority of looked after children do not have an assigned social worker.⁵⁰⁹ In addition, spending on looked after children seems to vary locally by a factor of two or more between the highest and lowest spending authorities in England: 'although there may be good reasons for spending more in some areas than others, it seems hard to justify this degree of variation'.⁵¹⁰

Improving the education of looked after children is still key to a better future for them. Progress is being made, in particular in improving the educational attainment of children in more stable placements. A report published in April 2004⁵¹¹ notes that 44,900 children had been looked after *continuously* for at least 12 months by English local authorities and of these 35,100 were eligible for full-time schooling. An increasing number of these children are passing Key Stage tasks at Level 2, 4 and 5. There is still a long way to go. Fifty-seven per cent of these children in Year 11 took at least one GCSE or GNVQ compared to 96% in the general population, and nearly 9% achieved 5 GCSEs or equivalent at grade A*–C. The percentage of young people who had been continuously looked after for at least 12 months who were convicted, or subject to a final warning or reprimand, is around three times higher than children in the general population.

The report from the Social Exclusion Unit,⁵¹² *A Better Education for Children in Care*, outlines the key changes needed to improve these children's education: greater placement stability, so that they do not move about so often; less time out of school and longer in education; help with homework; more help from home to support schoolwork; improved health and well-being. Research from the National Children's Bureau⁵¹³ notes that young people say the most important factor in making educational progress is encouragement from their carers, teachers and social workers. 'When I have done well, my foster carer is really proud. That makes me want to keep doing my best', one 12 year old was reported as saying.

Jackson, in a study comparing a group of high-achieving young people who had been in care with another lower-achieving group, found the factors associated with high achievement were: stability and continuity in placement; early reading; having a parent or carer who valued education and saw it as the route to a good life; having friends outside care who did well at school; developing

507 <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SBU/b000424/table1.xls>

508 ONS (2004), *Children in Need in England: Results of a survey of activity and expenditure as reported by Local Authority Social Services' Children and Families Teams for a survey week in February 2003: Local Authority tables and further national analysis*; <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/VOL/v000451/index.shtml>

509 Social Services Inspectorate, The Audit Commission's Joint Reviews of Social Services and the National Care Standards Commission (2004).

510 Sefton (2004).

511 Department for Education and Skills (2004b).

512 Social Exclusion Unit (2003a).

513 Harker *et al.* (2004).

out-of-school interests and hobbies (which also helped to increase social skills and bring them into contact with a wider range of non-care people); meeting a significant adult who offered consistent support and encouragement and acted as a mentor and possibly a role model; and attending school regularly.⁵¹⁴ With all the risks looked after children were exposed to, developing educational resiliency, she felt, was likely to be the best route for ensuring better futures for them.

The challenge of ensuring better outcomes is great. Evidence from the US and Australia points to how hard it is for the administrative parent to be a good parent.⁵¹⁵ An Office for National Statistics (ONS) survey showed that 45% of young people who were looked after aged 5–17 were assessed as having a mental health disorder.⁵¹⁶ Although it is likely that some of these difficulties relate to earlier experiences, there is a concern that some difficulties may be related to the additional difficulties they experience when being looked after.⁵¹⁷

For children who cannot return to live with their families, adoption may offer a better future.⁵¹⁸ Targets are set to increase by 40% the number of looked after children who are adopted and to reduce the period children remain looked after before they are placed for adoption. Some 3,500 looked after children, compared to 2,200 in 1999, were adopted in England in the year ending 31 March 2003. Of these, 59% were aged between one and four, whilst 29% were aged between five and nine.⁵¹⁹ More than 80% of these children were placed for adoption within 12 months of the 'best interest' decision. There is concern that, as more difficult and older children are adopted, there may be more adoption disruption.⁵²⁰ Post-adoption services have been slow to develop. There is a realisation that support with adoption placement needs to continue into a child's adult life.

The last policy analysed is the controversial new parenting order. Where possible, youth offending teams work with parents of young offenders on a voluntary basis with or without a contract, but where parents refuse to co-operate they can be made subject to a parenting order. In the national evaluation of the whole programme,⁵²¹ 66% of referrals came via the voluntary route and 16% via a Parenting Order. Information was missing on the remaining 18%. Parents who took part showed high levels of need, with more than 8 in 10 saying they wanted help in managing difficult behaviour in their child. Although parents were initially sceptical, attendance at sessions was high, with on average parents attending three-quarters of the sessions. By the time they left, they reported statistically significant positive changes in parenting skills and competencies and offending in their children dropped by a third. The results of the reconviction study should, however, be taken as cautiously indicative because parenting programmes contributed to these outcomes in many cases alongside other interventions with the young offender. The contribution of the different programmes is not known. We wait to see what the longer-term impact from parenting programmes within youth justice will be.

514 Jackson (2002).

515 Buchanan (2003).

516 Meltzer *et al.* (2003).

517 Cheung and Buchanan (1997).

518 Rushton (1999).

519 Department for Education and Skills (2003p).

520 Rushton and Dance (2002).

521 Ghate and Ramella (2002).

9.4 Who has benefited most? Who has benefited least?

Those who have access to services in their communities appear to have benefited,⁵²² but we will get a better picture when the results emerge from the major national evaluation of Sure Start. Evidence suggests that the Children's Fund and On Track are having some success in targeting hard-to-reach groups in their areas, but this is still proving challenging. The On Track thematic report notes that the more specialist, threatening or stigmatizing the service, the greater the perceived distance between it and the community.⁵²³ The use of community venues and sites not associated with a specific agency appeared to increase engagement and reduce any stigma associated with referral. In many family support services, engaging families from Black and ethnic minority communities can prove difficult. Language issues and gender can be major barriers in accessing services.⁵²⁴

The overriding message in providing family support services is that we need to hear what parents and children want. Ghate and Hazel,⁵²⁵ in a study of 'parenting in poor environments', note that parents want improved accessibility and quality services open to all in the community – as well as more information, as many parents felt inadequately informed about key aspects of parenting and child rearing, particularly on parenting teenagers. Parents also want practical support services that allow them to feel 'in control', and access to services when they need help quickly. Ghate and Hazel conclude that we need a diversity of formal, semi-formal and informal services to meet the multiple problems and needs of some families living in poor environments and that these need to involve multi-agency working in order to deliver 'joined-up' services. Informal and semi-formal support was not a universal panacea for all parenting problems. Some parents, despite considerable support, still had difficulties in coping. One of the major problems highlighted by Ghate and Hazel was that 'support' was not always perceived in a positive light. They felt that there was an urgent need to tackle the concept of 'negative support', and the poor public image of many family support services.

Barrett,⁵²⁶ in a systematic review of parenting programmes, echoes this view:

'research has consistently shown that to be effective parenting programmes need to ensure that they do not stigmatise or create dependency and last long enough for changes to be sustained rather than for false hopes and negative reactions to be evoked.'

(Barrett, H. (2003), *Parenting Programmes for Families at Risk*, National Family and Parenting Institute, p.4)

There is some evidence that family support with an education focus better engages with families and is less stigmatising and therefore more acceptable.⁵²⁷ Desforges and Abouchaar⁵²⁸ highlighted the important role that parental involvement has on children's education. In the early years parental involvement has a significant impact on a child's cognitive development, literacy and number skills; at school age such involvement is more powerful than family background, size of family and level of parental education. Whereas parental involvement is related to school

522 Chappell *et al.* (2003).

523 Doherty *et al.* (2003a).

524 Butt and Box (1998); Becher and Husain (2003).

525 Ghate and Hazel (2002).

526 Barrett (2003).

527 Evangelou and Sylva (2003); Scott and Sylva (2002).

528 Desforges and Abouchaar (2003).

achievement, educational failure is associated with lack of parental interest. Fathers' interest is strongly linked to educational outcomes. Most parents believe that they should share the responsibility for their children's education with the school and nearly three-quarters of parents say they want more involvement.⁵²⁹

Under the new provisions in the Children Bill, schools will play a much more pivotal role in the co-ordination of services for children. Some government programmes are already doing this with positive effect. An evaluation of On Track found that schools are already playing an important role. The school was emerging as a pivotal institution for delivery of the programme. Multi-agency work brought new care workers into schools, and with them a need to tackle problems in a shared way.⁵³⁰

For those families who do not access community family support programmes, or who have more complex needs, social services fill an important gap. Evidence suggests that we may need to do more to engage parents with depression, as they may be less assertive in accessing appropriate services.⁵³¹

9.5 Which policies have worked well together and why? Which are in tension/conflict with one another, and why?

The main analysis for this section was undertaken in August 2003, before the publication of the Green Paper *Every Child Matters*. The earlier analysis vividly illustrated the tensions of different central government departments being responsible for different sections of children's services – health, education and social services. In particular, the separation of family support from child welfare and protection appeared to compound the problems of promoting children's well-being and safeguarding vulnerable children. Many of those turning up at the different health, education and social services resources are the same children. Bringing together the various departments involved should not only offer more integrated support but also enable more easier tracking of children at risk.

9.6 Gaps in knowledge

Barrett notes that, with regard to parenting programmes, there is a particular need for more information about ethnic minority parents, including refugee families – both about how well the needs of these families are currently being met and also about what else is needed.⁵³² Overall, Barrett feels that there is a need for information about parenting projects to be more systematically collected so that it can be disseminated more effectively.

Another gap is for more information on out-of-school care. Recent research⁵³³ shows that out-of-school childcare has positive impacts on children, providing safe and well-equipped space for children's free play in a positive environment. With the increase in mothers in paid employment, it is likely that quality pre-school, after-school and holiday care will be increasingly important, and we need to know more on how to provide quality after-school and holiday provision.

With figures suggesting that one child in four under 16 will experience their parents' separation or divorce, and evidence that conflict around divorce is particularly damaging for children, more help for families and their children during this time is needed. A study by Butler *et al.* looked at the

529 Desforges and Abouchaar (2003).

530 Parsons *et al.* (2003a).

531 Buchanan *et al.* (2002).

532 Barrett (2003).

533 Barker *et al.* (2003).

experience of divorce through children's eyes. The authors suggest that a new strategic approach is necessary to give effective emotional and socio-legal back-up to children and families beyond that given by parents and carers.⁵³⁴ Research has also shown that some children presenting in private law cases are not very different from those presenting in public law care proceedings.⁵³⁵ Bringing the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service (CAFCASS) into the Department for Education and Skills along with other children's services should be a positive move. Barrett also notes that it is not yet clear how parents can best be helped to care for their children post-separation or divorce, and that more information is needed so that an accurate picture can be gained about how existing programmes may be enhanced and delivered.⁵³⁶

9.7 Directions for the future

If we look to the future, we may want to consider to what extent family support policies have not focused sufficiently on developing resilience and opportunities and fostering aspirations. Schoon and Bynner note in new research that it is now increasingly being recognized that research on children and young people needs to pay at least as much attention to the development of competences, resources, skills and assets as to disadvantage and risk.⁵³⁷ The Parenting Education and Support Forum, working with Coram Family and supported by the Department for Education and Skills, is now developing national occupational standards for work with parents, together with piloting a national quality training centre⁵³⁸ which may meet this need.

9.8 KEY MESSAGES

- Although the main evaluations of the major child initiatives are still to report, there is evidence that the Children's Fund and On Track have proved popular and are impacting on the lives of a large number of children and young people.
- Research has indicated the effectiveness of both early and later parent- and family-focused interventions for reducing criminal activity and antisocial behaviour. Education-focused projects may be more acceptable to parents.
- Family support services can suffer from 'negative impact' or stigma but generally agencies are making progress in engaging the 'hard to reach'.
- During one sample week in February 2003, 388,200 children in need received some sort of local authority provision. Under the current categorization, 'children in need' include those needing protection and looked after children. The majority of these children were referred because of child abuse and neglect. Of these, 82% were supported independently or within the family, and only 18% were 'looked after'. These large numbers are putting enormous strain on social services departments. Availability of family support programmes in the community may reduce the numbers of children in need.
- Progress is being made in improving outcomes for children who are looked after, but educationally these children still lag a long way behind children in the general population.

534 Butler *et al.* (2003).

535 Buchanan *et al.* (2001).

536 Barrett (2003).

537 Schoon and Bynner (2003).

538 Parenting Forum (2004).

CHAPTER 10: Access to justice

10.1 The risk of social exclusion

Lack of access to justice carries a significant risk of social exclusion. Young children living in families experiencing eviction, debt, unemployment, discrimination, immigration, mental health problems and family breakdown may be especially at risk. They are likely to be the indirect victims of problems that might have been avoided if their parents had had appropriate access to justice.

The importance of access to justice was highlighted in a large survey by Genn⁵³⁹ that explored how the public, as well as possible plaintiffs or potential defendants, dealt with potential legal disputes and problems. It identified structural factors or lack of knowledge that prevented access to the legal system where it was desired. Those with low levels of computer literacy and ordinary literacy had specific problems in accessing justice. It concluded that a better understanding of the law was fundamental to citizenship. These findings were supported by two important papers by Pleasence *et al.* in 2003,⁵⁴⁰ based on a subsequent survey for the Legal Services Commission, which showed that in some groups, particularly those at risk of social exclusion, 'justiciable' problems could cluster and escalate. Lack of knowledge of potential help from advice and legal services meant that minor difficulties became more serious.

A lack of understanding and confusion about the legal processes is highlighted by a study of families from different cultures involved in child protection cases in the courts.⁵⁴¹ The complexity of their lives also increased their difficulties.

Main policy levers and Public Service Agreements (PSAs) (Lord Chancellor's Department/ Department of Constitutional Affairs)

Objective I: To provide a fair, swift and effective system of justice which provides confidence in the rule of law; helps reduce crime, the fear of crime, and the economic consequences of crime; and gives value for money.

Objective II: To improve people's knowledge and understanding of their rights and responsibilities, including how to resolve disputes that affect them, in a way and at a cost proportionate to the issue at stake.

Objective III: To improve the availability of affordable and good quality legal services so that the law underpins economic success at home and abroad, and that the use of public funds secures greater social justice and reduces social exclusion.

Objective IV: To make civil and family law clearer and more easily enforceable, giving priority to key government objectives in tackling social and economic issues.

539 Genn (1999).

540 Pleasence *et al.* (2003a), (2003b).

541 Brophy (2003).

Objective V: To improve the lives of children, and help build and sustain strong families through providing a legal and procedural framework which sustains family relationships, and, when they do break down, to resolve disputes with the least distress to those affected, especially the most vulnerable.

Main Initiatives

Access to Justice Act 1999. Among other things, this Act was set up the Legal Services Commission to 1) manage the Community Legal Service (CLS) and 2) manage the Criminal Defence Service.

The Community Legal Service (replaced the Civil Legal Aid Service).

The Partnership Innovation Budget. Forms part of the CLS fund and aims to encourage CLS partnerships to explore innovative ways of delivering legal and advice services to vulnerable communities.

10.2 What does the existing evidence tell us about the overall impact of government policies?

The Lord Chancellor has directed the Legal Services Commission that priority should be given to help with welfare issues that will enable people to climb out of social exclusion. The Community Legal Service (CLS) is the government's main expenditure programme for all civil legal and advice services for the public. It was formally launched in April 2000 to ensure that the public could have much better access to good quality legal and advice services. The CLS focuses on those areas of law that affect people's everyday lives: housing, debt, employment, welfare benefits, community care, discrimination, immigration and mental health.

The CLS partnerships provide the framework for local networks of legal and advice services based on meeting local needs and priorities. Local partnerships bring together the Legal Services Commission, local authorities, local solicitors' firms, citizens' advice bureaux, law centres and other independent advice centres. By April 2002, 206 CLS Partnerships in England and Wales involving 391 local authorities covered 97% of the population. The Lord Chancellor had set a target of 90% coverage by April 2002, which was met eight months ahead of schedule. The aim in 2003 was to continue to integrate the CLS with the wider neighbourhood renewal programme. The partnerships are establishing links with Local Strategic Partnerships that are now beginning to take an overview of all social exclusion issues in this area. CLS partnerships are also forging links with many other initiatives, e.g. Connexions, primary care groups etc.

The House of Commons Constitutional Affairs Select Committee published a report in July on the adequacy of civil legal aid. This highlighted the difficulties in recruiting solicitors and barristers to do legal aid work.⁵⁴² Further evidence comes from a report by James Sandbach of Citizens Advice⁵⁴³ which suggests that the CLS may be under strain. The survey of Citizens Advice Bureaux (CAB) views on CLS partnerships showed that support from publicly-funded legal services in emergency situations such as housing eviction or domestic violence is becoming less accessible, especially to those on low incomes. There is concern about the decline in solicitors' practices offering legal aid work, the manageability of contracts and the sustainability of partnerships.

542 Constitutional Affairs Select Committee (2004).

543 Sandbach (2004).

10.3 Who has benefited most? Who has benefited least?

With regard to the PSA to ensure effective and accessible justice, and protect the rights of citizens, in June 2003, 40% of the population believed that the criminal justice system is effective in bringing people to justice – but of course this means that 60% did not.⁵⁴⁴

The government is making strenuous efforts to bring advice and access to justice to those at particular risk of exclusion. In the first round of The Partnership Innovation Budget, two-thirds of the 75 successful bids went to projects in the most deprived local authority areas. Proposals for the second round are to be directed at taking services to the most excluded groups such as the homeless, older people and those in isolated rural areas.

The independent review of the Community Legal Service⁵⁴⁵ noted that although progress was being made, five key areas needed further development. First, there was a need to clarify the aims and functions of the CLS and to define the role and strategy for the CLS in tackling social exclusion and performance management systems to enable delivery. Second, there was a need to establish the evidence base for the CLS and the extent to which advice and legal services contribute to the reduction of social exclusion. Third, there was a need to develop national funding streams and procedures. The fourth issue was the importance of ensuring quality and the fifth was the need to translate the CLS aims into local provision and meet the needs of service users.

10.4 Which policies have worked well together and why? Which are in tension/conflict with one another, and why?

Access to justice is one of those cross-cutting areas where the solutions cannot lie simply with the legal and advice services. Access to justice is not only about ensuring that advice and legal help are accessible but also about people perceiving a problem as one where a legal resolution might help. Citizen education for young people and adults, particularly those new to the country, should ensure that everyone is aware of what sort of problems are 'justiciable' and how to access legal help.

10.5 Gaps in knowledge; and directions for the future

Further knowledge is needed, as identified by the independent review noted above, to determine what works in resolving 'justiciable' problems. The Legal Services Research Centre (LSRC) survey illustrates that people from different family types have different strategies for finding advice. Any future policy-making on advice provision for family problems requires a detailed understanding of this diversity and the complexity of people's behaviour and motivations. 'A great challenge for those providing family advice and support services is to utilise resources to enable those at high risk of experiencing multiple family problems to avoid doing so and to enable those who have already found themselves faced with a cluster of problems to move on from them.'⁵⁴⁶

10.6 KEY MESSAGES

- Research has shown that lack of access to justice carries a significant risk of social exclusion. Some problems for children may have been avoided if their parents had had appropriate and earlier access to justice.

544 Home Office (2004).

545 Matrix Research and Consultancy (2004).

546 Pleasence *et al.* (2003a).

- A lack of understanding and confusion about the legal processes is seen in a study of families from different cultures involved in child protection cases in the courts. The complexity of the parents' lives also increased their difficulties in accessing help.
- The Community Legal Service is the government's main expenditure programme for all civil legal and advice services for the public. The CLS focuses on those areas of law that affect people's everyday lives: housing, debt, employment, welfare benefits, community care, discrimination, immigration and mental health.
- An independent review of the CLS in 2004 noted that, although progress was being made in developing services, the CLS needed to clarify its role and strategy in tackling social exclusion; it needed to establish the extent to which advice and legal services contributed to the reduction of social exclusion; and then to translate this, through effective management systems, into local provision in a way that met the needs of service users.
- The House of Commons Constitutional Affairs Select Committee published a report in July on the adequacy of civil legal aid which highlighted difficulties in recruiting solicitors and barristers for legal aid work. A survey of CAB views on CLS partnerships showed that support from publicly-funded legal services in emergency situations such as housing eviction or domestic violence may be becoming less accessible, especially to those on low incomes. They too were concerned about the decline in solicitors' practices offering legal aid work, the manageability of contracts and the sustainability of partnerships.

CHAPTER 11: Discrimination

'There is nowhere to get away from the torture.'

(Young person talking to Young Voice, quoted in Katz, A., Buchanan, A. and Bream, V. (2002), *Bullying in Britain: Testimonies of Teenagers*, Young Voice)

11.1 The risk of social exclusion

It is crucial to consider the close links between discrimination and social exclusion. There is considerable evidence that discrimination is linked to depression, low self-esteem and psychological problems.⁵⁴⁷ This makes sense when we consider the importance of 'agency' (see chapter 1, above) – when children feel they have no control over how they are treated, they may either turn in on themselves or 'act out', gaining recognition through antisocial behaviour. Children may not call the pain they experience because of 'difference' – be it difference based on racial or ethnic group, gender, religion, disability or the social conditions in which they live – 'discrimination'. To them, it is 'bullying'. Esther Rantzen noted that the biggest single problem that children rang Childline about was bullying, with 22,372 calls in 2000.⁵⁴⁸

In this section we consider children's experience of discrimination and, because discrimination happens in a social context, we also consider the parents' perspective. Children bear witness, as 'bullies' or 'the bullied', to their parents' experiences and views. Finally, we look at a particularly vulnerable group of children – those in asylum-seeking families and unaccompanied minors. Discrimination linked to disability is considered elsewhere.

Discrimination because of colour, culture or ethnic origin

Although the Race Discrimination Act (1976) is now nearly 30 years old, the death of Stephen Lawrence in 1993 demonstrated that as a society we still have a long way to go to eliminate 'racism' in the UK. As the Inquiry noted:

"Racism" in general terms consists of conduct or words or practices which advantage or disadvantage people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. In its more subtle form it is as damaging as in its overt form.'

"Institutional Racism" consists of the collective failure of an organization to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantage ethnic minority people.'

(Home Office (1999), *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry*, Cm 4262-1, TSO)

In a study of bullying in England in 2003,⁵⁴⁹ a fifth of pupils in Year 5 reported that they had been called racist names.

547 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (2001); see also Taylor and Turner (2002).

548 Rantzen (2001).

549 Oliver and Candappa (2003).

'Bullying is when someone picks on someone else because they are different – their race, height, weight, looks [It's about] ... prejudice and discrimination.'

(Girl, year 8, quoted in Oliver, C. and Candappa, M. (2003), *Tackling Bullying: Listening to the views of children and young people*, Department for Education and Skills/Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education)

An earlier study of 7,000 young people⁵⁵⁰ across the UK in 2001 also found that half of all children had been bullied both within school and outside school premises at some time, with one in ten experiencing severe bullying. This study also highlighted that 'being different' for a wide range of reasons was often at the heart of bullying. Twenty-three per cent of girls and 31% of boys in the 2001 survey of 7,000 children had experienced racist bullying from other children. A quarter of all the young people said that bullying was the major source of stress in their lives. There were strong links between bullying, depression and suicide attempts.⁵⁵¹

These figures are reflected in another recent study by Eslea, published in April 2004.⁵⁵² In a survey of 2,000 8–13 year old children from a disadvantaged area in Blackpool, Eslea found that 43% of boys and 46% of girls had been bullied at school at some time. Almost 1 in 10 was a victim of bullying several times a week. A third of children were bullied outside school in locations including streets, parks and undergrounds, at home and at the shops. Similar figures are evident from the neighbourhood study by the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion, in which analysis of some of the interviews shows that nearly half of the children of mothers living in low-income areas in East London had been bullied.⁵⁵³

A further study has shown that children in families living on benefits were significantly more likely to worry 'a lot' about being bullied.⁵⁵⁴ Child-on-child racist bullying takes many subtle forms: verbal abuse by name calling, racist jokes and offensive mimicry; physical threats or attacks; wearing of provocative badges or insignia; bringing in racist leaflets, comics or magazines; inciting other in a racist way; racist graffiti or other written insults about food, music, dress or customs.⁵⁵⁵ The common characteristic is that racist bullying was likely to hurt not only the victim but also other pupils from the same ethnic minority group who perceived that a particular child was being bullied who had similar characteristics to them.

Asylum-seeking families and unaccompanied children

Under the 1951 Geneva Convention, the UK has certain responsibilities to offer asylum to people who are forced to leave their countries of origin because of conflicts or well-founded fear of persecution. Of those who flee, a significant proportion come with families and children. Other children arrive on their own. Under section 20 of the Children Act 1989, local authorities have a duty to provide accommodation for children where there is no one with parental responsibility for a child. An unaccompanied asylum-seeking child is 'a person who at the time of making the asylum seeking application is or (there is no proof) appears to be under eighteen, is applying for asylum in his or her own right and has no adult relative or guardian to turn to in this country'.⁵⁵⁶ When dealing with unaccompanied minors, the welfare of the child should be the central consideration.

550 Katz *et al.* (2002).

551 Buchanan *et al.* (1999).

552 Eslea (2004).

553 Mumford and Power (2003).

554 Ridge (2002) (based on author's analysis of British Household Panel Youth Survey).

555 Department for Education and Skills (2000).

556 <http://www.ind.homeoffice.gov.uk/default.asp?pageid=3164>

Main policy levers and Public Service Agreements (PSAs)

Home Office Aim: Build a safe, just and tolerant society.

Race equality

Objective VI: Support strong and active communities in which people of all races and backgrounds are valued and participate on equal terms.

9. Bring about measurable improvements in race equality and community cohesion across a range of performance indicators, as part of the government's objectives on equality and social inclusion.

Objective V: Regulate entry to and settlement in the United Kingdom effectively in the interests of sustainable growth and social inclusion.

7. Focus the asylum system on those genuinely fleeing persecution by taking speedy, high quality decisions and reducing significantly unfounded asylum claims.

The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 imposed a general duty on public bodies (including schools) to have due regard to the need to promote race equality. Under this Act, schools have a duty to draw up a race equality policy and ensure that policies do not discriminate against racial groups.

11.2 What does the existing evidence tell us about the overall impact of government policies?

Children's experience

Following the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry, the public duty imposed by the Race Relations Amendment Act 2000 was in effect legislation designed to bring about 'mainstreaming' of racial equality, not an 'add on'. It was about 'institutional change, getting the concept of inclusion into the bloodstream of an organization'. As a result of the legislation, most schools now have an agreed anti-bullying policy which includes a definition of bullying, including racist, sexist and homophobic bullying; aims and objectives; procedures to follow; and intervention techniques.⁵⁵⁷

Much bullying, as witnessed by the murder of Damilola Taylor, takes place outside school premises. Schools are not directly responsible for bullying off their premises, although, exceptionally, failure to combat harmful behaviour outside the school might breach the school's common law duty of care.⁵⁵⁸

Having policies is one thing – but having policies that work is another. There is concern about how well anti-bullying policies are working in schools. Whereas over a third of children at primary school thought their school was 'very good' at dealing with bullying, only just over 1 in 10 felt this

557 Department for Education and Skills (2000).

558 Leah Bradford-Smart v West Sussex County Council (Queen's Bench Division, 23–27 October 2000).

was the case at secondary school.⁵⁵⁹ In year 8, a higher proportion of Black and Asian pupils (33%) reported that they had been bullied that term compared with pupils from other ethnic groups (30%) and White pupils (26%).⁵⁶⁰ The report concluded:

'These findings suggest that anti-bullying policies might be expected to have limited effect if they fail to take into account the realities of the child's social world. "Bottom up" as well as "top down" responses are needed. Nevertheless, the findings indicate that anti-bullying policies provide a useful starting point for tackling bullying but regular reviews of both policies and strategies are necessary including examining the relationship with curriculum development, support and training for teachers and working in partnership with parents.'

(Oliver, C. and Candappa, M. (2003), Tackling Bullying: Listening to the views of children and young people, Department for Education and Skills/Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education)

A 'bullying charter for action for schools' was launched by Ivan Lewis in November 2003.⁵⁶¹ This brings together staff, pupils and parents to create a school community where bullying is not tolerated. Incorporated in the charter are ideas for responding to the bullying behaviour that children and young people experience.

Children are likely to reflect the views of their parents. Results from the Home Office 'Citizenship Survey' in 2002⁵⁶² suggest that perceptions of racism had increased marginally in the last five years. Respondents who were white and the elderly were the most pessimistic. A higher proportion of people from ethnic minority groups felt that services treated them less well than people from other races.

When it comes to reducing inequalities, education is central (see chapter 6 above). A research report from the Department for Education and Skills reveals the diverse and complex picture of ethnic minority attainment and participation right across the education system.⁵⁶³ Black, Bangladeshi and Pakistani pupils perform less well than other ethnic groups throughout compulsory education. On the other hand, Indian and Chinese pupils perform better than all other ethnic groups throughout. Family background can explain some of the variations in how well children do at school. The 2003 figures shows that some children are significantly disadvantaged. Over 30% of Pakistani and Black pupils and over 50% of Bangladeshi and Gipsy/Roma pupils are eligible for free school meals (FSM). It is interesting, however, that the greatest discrepancy in attainment between those eligible for FSM and those not eligible is found amongst White pupils, suggesting that other factors must also be considered.

The Department for Education and Skills has a range of initiatives in hand to improve these children's attainment. *Aiming High: Raising the achievement of ethnic minority pupils*⁵⁶⁴ outlines a whole school approach to achievement, involving strong leadership; high expectations; effective teaching and learning; and an ethos of respect and parental involvement. A second publication, *Aiming High: Understanding the educational needs of ethnic minority pupils in mainly white schools*,⁵⁶⁵ addressed the difficulties of isolation which can present ethnic minority pupils with additional barriers to their achievement. A further set of publications was made available to schools and local

559 Oliver and Candappa (2003).

560 Oliver and Candappa (2003).

561 Department for Education and Skills (2003e).

562 Cited in Home Office (2002a).

563 Bhattacharyya *et al.* (2003).

564 Department for Education and Skills (2003f).

565 Department for Education and Skills (2004f).

education authorities providing advice on how to make effective use of the Ethnic Minority Achievement Grant (EMAG).⁵⁶⁶ In addition, a pilot project undertaken in partnership with the Primary National Strategy has been set up in 21 local education authorities to increase the confidence and expertise of mainstream primary teachers in meeting the needs of advanced bilingual learners.

When it comes to vulnerable families, the ethnic distribution of the children in need population compared with data from the 2001 Census of the national population for the ethnic distribution of children aged under 18 shows that children of a Black or mixed ethnic identity are over-represented within the children in need population.⁵⁶⁷ In contrast, children of an Asian ethnic identity are under-represented. In particular, children from a mixed ethnic group are over-represented in the looked after population.

Immigration and asylum-seeking

Immigration and asylum-seeking policy has the difficult task of regulating entry to and settlement in the UK. Although most immigrants are single young people, some also bring their families. The Nationality, Asylum and Immigration Act 2002, following the White Paper *Secure Borders, Safe Havens*,⁵⁶⁸ published in February 2002, radically overhauled the asylum system, placing emphasis on the control and removal of unsuccessful applicants. In 2003, further tough measures were announced. Support for families able but unwilling to return home was withdrawn, with the possibility that some of their children could be removed into 'public care'.⁵⁶⁹

Figures from the Department for Education and Skills for looked after children in the year ending 31 March 2003 show that 2,400 unaccompanied children were being looked after, of whom approximately 1,700 were in London. The 2003 Children in Need census notes 12,500 asylum-seeking children who were receiving a service.⁵⁷⁰ Figures from the London Consortium show that in 2002, 4,482 children were being supported and in March 2003, 4,516. Thirteen London boroughs had more than 500 children whom they were supporting aged 0–18.⁵⁷¹

The literature reports major difficulties,^{572 573} both in providing for the children and in ensuring the welfare and protection of both unaccompanied children and children in asylum-seeking families. Some unaccompanied children have been accommodated under section 17 of the Children Act 1989 in unsupported lodgings. In one study, 20% were in bed and breakfast accommodation. Education is another concern. There are often delays in finding school places. When in school, language support can be poor and children can experience bullying.

There are also unmet physical concerns (in one study, 36 out of 118 were not registered with a GP – all these were unaccompanied children). A particular concern is the healthcare needs of asylum seekers. The British Medical Association in 2002, while recognizing that all asylum seekers are entitled to free medical treatment under the NHS, has noted that there was a lack of government funding, planning and co-ordination of health services for them and has argued for additional payments to doctors offering an extended range of services to this group of patients.⁵⁷⁴ The

566 Department for Education and Skills (2004g).

567 Department for Education and Skills (2004e).

568 Home Office (2002b).

569 Webber (2003). See also <http://www.refugeecouncil.org.uk/news/april04/relea158.htm> and http://www.oxfamgb.org/ukpp/resources/downloads/poverty_report_jul02.pdf.

570 Department for Education and Skills (2004e).

571 London Asylum Seeking Consortium: <http://www.westminster.gov.uk/lasc/dataservices/>

572 Ritchie and Buchanan (2003).

573 Dennis (2002).

574 British Medical Association (2002).

Refugee Council⁵⁷⁵ notes that good health care is a fundamental right. Refugees and asylum seekers can suffer a range of health problems, but many had difficulty in accessing services. Their difficulties were compounded by language, lack of knowledge about entitlement and lack of information amongst health service workers, some of whom believed that asylum seekers were not entitled to free health care.

Anxieties surround what happens when a child becomes 18, especially if their status and financial future are uncertain. Social workers working with unaccompanied and other asylum-seeking children feel that these children are more at risk than UK-born children in terms of physical and sexual abuse and exploitation in employment. They also have concerns about trafficking and about the relationship of children who arrive in this country with so-called 'guardians'.⁵⁷⁶

These findings are supported by a recent publication from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation,⁵⁷⁷ which notes that 'UK legislation and policy tends to treat asylum-seeking and refugee children as asylum-seekers and refugees first and foremost rather than children. Consequently, these children face restrictions to their rights and entitlements'.⁵⁷⁸ The author notes that many of these children are living in poverty, and that in many urban areas asylum-seeking and refugee children now compromise a significant minority – up to 15% of pupils in some inner London local education authorities. She also notes the potential for partnership, for example in assisting refugee groups in developing their own early years' provisions.

11.3 Who has benefited most? Who has benefited least?

A recent Ofsted report⁵⁷⁹ noted that asylum-seeker children can inspire their classmates and teachers because of the seriousness with which they treated education. Even though all the asylum-seeker pupils spoke little or no English initially, nearly all made at least satisfactory progress, and many progressed well in a short time. The report said:

'They and their parents often provided an intoxicating cocktail of motivation and determination to succeed, despite the difficult and often traumatic circumstances surrounding the leaving of the home country.'

(Ofsted (2003), *The Education of Asylum-seeker Pupils*, HMI 453, p. 33)

At the other end of the scale, the low level of attainment, particularly amongst Black Caribbean boys, is worrying. William Atkinson, Britain's most prominent black head teacher, described the disruption caused by some disaffected black youngsters as a new form of 'Black-on-Black violence' that was damaging the life chances of their peers. Many black leaders maintain that institutional racism is the real problem. The Commission for Racial Equality also warned that 'peer pressure' had made a substantial contribution to the decline in black achievement.⁵⁸⁰

575 Refugee Council (2003).

576 Ritchie and Buchanan (2003).

577 Rutter (2004).

578 Rutter (2004), p. 51.

579 Ofsted (2003b).

580 National Literacy Trust (2003).

11.4 Which policies have worked well together and why? Which are in tension/conflict with one another and why?

When it comes to anti-discrimination, the main issue is the mixed messages given by anti-discrimination policy on the one hand – which is trying to promote ‘inclusion’ and tolerance – and policy on asylum-seeking on the other, which is promoting some exclusive and punitive policies, in order to deter those who are not ‘genuine’. There is also sometimes a danger of unthought-through public rhetoric failing to challenge racist attitudes.

11.5 Gaps in knowledge; directions for the future

The whole treatment of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and other asylum-seeking children is a sensitive area. Some might say that we treat children who are not born in the UK differently; but all children need to be integrated effectively into our society if they are not to become socially excluded.

The UK has a long history of welcoming migrants and offering a safe haven to those at risk of persecution. Eliminating the risk of social exclusion because of discrimination of one sort or another is both a national and global challenge; but promoting inclusion is about promoting opportunities, supporting parents’ and children’s ‘agency’ and aspirations and demonstrating that neither colour, culture, ethnic origin nor gender is a barrier to human progress.

11.6 KEY MESSAGES

- For children, the daily reality of discrimination is represented by ‘bullying’ behaviour by their peers. Childline data has indicated that the most frequent problem that children rang Childline about was bullying.
- In a study of bullying in England in 2003, a fifth of pupils in Year 5 reported that they had been called racist names.
- Following national government initiatives, most schools now have an agreed anti-bullying policy which includes a definition of bullying, including racist, sexist and homophobic bullying, aims and objectives, procedures to follow and intervention techniques.
- Findings suggest that anti-bullying policies provide a useful starting point for tackling bullying but regular reviews of both policies and strategies are necessary, including examining the relationship with curriculum development, support and training for teachers and working in partnership with parents.
- Children are likely to reflect the views of their parents. Results from the Home Office ‘Citizenship Survey’ in 2002 suggest that perceptions of racism had increased marginally in the last five years.
- Immigration and asylum-seeking policy has the difficult task of regulating entry to and settlement in the United Kingdom. Figures from the Department for Education and Skills for looked after children for 2002–03 show that 2,400 unaccompanied children were being looked after, and the 2003 Children in Need census notes 12,500 asylum-seeking children who were receiving a service.

- Some ethnic minority groups, particularly some Asian groups, have done well educationally and in their later careers. Asylum-seeker children can inspire their classmates and teachers because of the seriousness with which they treat education.
- The low level of attainment, particularly amongst Black Caribbean boys, is worrying. Many black leaders maintain that institutional racism is the real problem. The Commission for Racial Equality also warned that 'peer pressure' had made a substantial contribution to the decline in black achievement.

CHAPTER 12: Conclusions and Directions for the Future

In this chapter, we bring together our findings from the separate sections and assess the overall impact of government policies for children aged 0–13 and families in or at risk of social exclusion. In doing this, as outlined in chapter 1, we assess the extent to which government policies have been successful in tackling social exclusion for all children, in terms of their experience of childhood as well as the longer-term consequences of social exclusion. Secondly, we consider how far the government has reduced the risks associated with social exclusion and how far, by making opportunities and encouraging children and their parents to take advantage of them, it has promoted resiliency and inclusion. Thirdly, we consider the extent to which the government has made progress in ensuring rights and respect (such as facilitating access to legal services and tackling discrimination), as these are also important elements of social inclusion.

In the final sections of the chapter, we consider some cross-cutting messages from the literature review and then discuss possible directions for the future.

12.1 Overview

Progress in tackling social exclusion

The review has shown clearly that, after inheriting a legacy of child poverty and rising inequality which was comparatively and historically dire,⁵⁸¹ the current government has made considerable progress in making a positive impact on the lives of children (0–13) and their families in or at risk of social exclusion. As one recent report suggests, ‘a combination of a healthy labour market, reduced demographic pressures and policy developments have begun to have an impact on social exclusion’.⁵⁸² And recent measures have focused in particular on children and families.

Our literature review has shown that:

- the numbers of children living in poverty have fallen, hardship has declined and improvements in family living standards have directly benefited children;
- the use of bed and breakfast for families has been reduced and more children are living in decent housing;
- more early years provision is now available, with almost all three and four year olds taking up part-time early education places, and child care is publicly recognised as a key service for children and for families;
- educational attainment has risen overall, and some groups have made significant progress despite continuing high levels of disadvantage;
- health policies on specific issues (such as road fatalities) have shown clear gains and there is greater awareness of the centrality of health inequalities;
- disabled children have benefited from specific policies and there is a greater willingness to consult directly with disabled people, including children;

581 Bradshaw and Bennett (2003).

582 Bradshaw *et al.* (2004) (taken from summary, p. 7).

- more support is available to all parents and in particular vulnerable families.

Reducing risks and promoting opportunities

But the legacy of the previous 20 years which the current government inherited, in terms of high levels of poverty and polarization and the 'long tail' of educational under-achievement in particular, makes tackling social exclusion a long haul. Challenges still remain in reducing the risks associated with social exclusion for children and families, and in encouraging them to take advantage of the opportunities available.

More specifically, there is still more that needs to be done in the following areas:

- a further impetus is needed to fulfil the government's longer-term objective to eliminate child poverty;
- further efforts need to be made to reduce the number of homeless households with children;
- more needs to be done to reduce the 'childcare gap' in the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods and to tackle barriers to accessing services, such as cost, lack of information, inflexibility and culturally inappropriate provision;
- further steps should be taken to increase the educational achievements of some ethnic minority groups, such as disadvantaged Black Caribbean and White groups; and to ensure that additional spending on education intended to help disadvantaged pupils reaches them;
- although programmes such as Sure Start are likely to be important in the longer term for child health (and other aspects of children's lives), we need to consider how to reduce persistent inequalities in child health such as low birthweight, which have an impact on life chances in the short and long term;
- we need to learn how to ensure that families with disabled children are lifted out of poverty; and
- we need to know more about supporting families without 'negative impact' and stigma. We also need to find ways of responding to the needs of large numbers of children in need who are placing local social services under strain and how to promote better the life chances of children in care.

Ensuring rights and respect

Our review included access to justice and discrimination issues, as important elements of trying to tackle social exclusion. What we found was that:

- the importance of access to justice and rights, and anti-discrimination measures, is now clearly recognized;
- although progress is being made in opening up access to justice, we need to ensure that parents are aware of services and that publicly-funded legal assistance is accessible for those on low incomes in emergency situations;
- bullying in school and after school remains a major concern. Further initiatives are needed to tackle this behaviour which causes so much misery for children and impacts on so many areas of their lives. Further steps also need to be taken to ensure that asylum-seeking children receive the same standard of care as those born in the UK.

12.2 Looking to the future

It has been argued that there are three possible directions for the next stage of government policy in this area: 'increasing the dosage'; filling the gaps; and adopting new approaches.⁵⁸³ This is a useful division, although some initiatives or changes of emphasis could probably be put under more than one of these headings. It is also important to remember that because social exclusion is multi-faceted and dynamic, it is unlikely that one overarching policy will solve all problems, and policies will need to be continually reviewed. In addition, as the Strategy Unit has pointed out, 'many of the determinants of individuals' life chances are not under the government's direct control and may not be susceptible even to indirect influence'.⁵⁸⁴ These points should be borne in mind, but should not prevent the development of thinking about the next stage in the government's policy priority of tackling social exclusion amongst children and families.

In looking to the future, it is useful to summarise some of the cross-cutting messages from the review.

Cross-cutting messages from the review

- *The pattern of inequality* has changed, with incomes for the large majority becoming more equal over the 1990s; but inequality still remains very high. In education, though overall achievement levels are rising, the gap for disadvantaged children remains large.
- *The need for a bridge between children's services*: this review was started before the publication of the Green Paper *Every Child Matters* and the early stages of the analyses highlighted the need to build bridges, and achieve more cohesive planning, between different policy areas impacting on children's lives. This may come with the implementation of the Children Bill.
- *The 'hard to reach'*: the most disadvantaged, some ethnic minority groups, vulnerable families and looked after children may be missing out. In many policy areas these groups appear to have benefited less than children from families not from these groups.
- *Protecting children at times of transition*: research on the negative impact of transitions of parental employment and family status appears to indicate a need for greater protection of children at these times. Most recently, another report has also focused on transitions, in terms of disrupted education for homeless children. Provision is needed to cover periods of insecurity.
- *Increasing the take-up of opportunities*: the review has highlighted that one barrier to the take-up of opportunities may be a lack of information. This was apparent in the take-up of pre-school places, family support and parental support in education and access to justice. But there are other possible barriers that need to be considered.

583 Lisa Harker (2003), in presentation to Save the Children seminar on 'Dimensions of poverty and social exclusion, and persistence of severe poverty in childhood', 23 June.

584 Strategy Unit (2003).

- *Some children and families may need more targeted help:* for some, the take-up of available opportunities may seem like a step too far. For this group, mentors and advisers have played a useful role, but there is a need to consider what else could be done.
- *How to keep children at the centre of policies and understand more about exclusion:* the government has made important efforts to consider children's views in all areas of government policy, but there are still some areas where their voice appears less strong. The challenge also remains of how to find out more about, and understand more clearly, the lives, experiences and views of the most socially excluded groups.

Increasing the dosage

Our evidence has shown that the government is making significant progress in tackling social exclusion amongst children and families. Analysis suggests that some of the pressures leading to social exclusion are likely to increase in the future, while others may diminish.⁵⁸⁵

Tackling child poverty must remain a priority

Many children are still deprived of basic necessities,⁵⁸⁶ or live in severe poverty and social exclusion,⁵⁸⁷ and disabled children's poverty is underestimated, because additional costs caused by disability are not taken into account in the Households Below Average Income data. Emerging policy concerns about children and families – in part articulated through the latest edition of *Opportunity for All*,⁵⁸⁸ in part through the cross-cutting child poverty review, etc. – include how to help specific vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minority populations, large families and families with disabilities. Some of the poorest families will not be living in families on means-tested benefits or tax credits at all, and so cannot be reached by policies to improve living standards by increasing these payments.⁵⁸⁹ The government may need to refocus its research on low incomes, in order to know more about the position of the poorest groups, and therefore also about how to tackle their poverty. However, the difficulties of doing this should not be underestimated.

Research on the negative impact of transitions of parental employment and family status appears to indicate a need for greater protection of children at these times.⁵⁹⁰ Most recently, another report has also focused on transitions, in terms of disrupted education for homeless children.⁵⁹¹ It suggests that thousands of children in temporary housing are absent from school for more than ten weeks in a year; over two-thirds of families without permanent homes said their children had problems at

585 Bradshaw *et al.* (2004).

586 As portrayed in the annual Families and Children Study, which identifies items defined as social necessities that families may be going without because they cannot afford them.

587 Adelman *et al.* (2003).

588 Department for Work and Pensions (2003a).

589 Adelman *et al.* (2003).

590 Adelman *et al.* (2003). (Though, as noted elsewhere in this report, this research was carried out before the recent introduction of some measures to help with the transition into employment.) There is also a recommendation for increased protection at times of transition in Farrell and O'Connor (2003).

591 Shelter (2004a).

school.⁵⁹² Provision does not necessarily need to be targeted at these particular times, but could be geared to providing adequate ongoing support – in terms of both material resources and social networks – to cover periods of insecurity.⁵⁹³

In addition, care is always needed to ensure that policies do not cause gaps to increase. As the government itself says, ‘there is a clear sense in which a widening income gap between the poorest children and the rest and social inclusion are at odds’.⁵⁹⁴ It is known that if transfer payments and low wages are allowed to lag behind general income growth, growing polarization is inevitable; and before the impact of recent benefit rises, research found that families on benefits had no higher a standard of living than that of similar families in 1950.⁵⁹⁵ As noted above, recent analysis shows, however, that the pattern of income inequality seems to have been changing, with those on lower (though not always the lowest) incomes catching up to the median, and incomes for the large majority becoming more equal over the 1990s, but the very top pulling away, especially in the late 1990s; over the early 2000s, income inequality may have fallen slightly.⁵⁹⁶

Whilst there are many influences on such shifts, the recent increases in benefits/tax credits are clearly making their mark in terms of the increases in lower incomes. The government is also committed to increasing the child element of child tax credit in line with earnings over the rest of this parliament. Our evidence suggests that uprating policies for benefits, tax credits and the national minimum wage will continue to be significant in the future if those on low incomes are to keep up with increases in living standards and if relative poverty is to be further reduced.⁵⁹⁷ Indeed, the government itself suggests that more will be needed; it argues that its child poverty target means ‘not only that some children should not fall further behind as society overall grows richer, but that they must actually catch up with the typical family’.⁵⁹⁸

More work is needed to tackle inequalities and discrimination

Health inequalities have proved harder to shift in a positive direction.⁵⁹⁹ Inequalities such as low birthweight and infant mortality which have their origin at birth are proving difficult to turn around. In addition, young people from disadvantaged backgrounds often seem to be fatalistic about their health, believing that good health is largely a matter of luck.⁶⁰⁰ How to increase their sense of control and ‘agency’ (as described in chapter 1), whilst acknowledging and tackling the largely structural determinants of their health, remains a key challenge. The new health questionnaire being completed by 11–15 year olds in the current wave of the Families and Children Study may be a useful experiment in this area. The government is due to publish another paper on health inequalities later in 2004.

592 Shelter (2004a).

593 One advantage of child benefit, for example, is that it ‘follows the child’, via the main carer, through transitions in family status as well as in employment and income level. The Work and Pensions Select Committee (2004) has recommended that the government’s national strategy on child poverty should reassert its commitment to retain universal child benefit, uprated to maintain and enhance its real value. Increases in universal child benefit are progressive because families with children generally have lower relative incomes (Clark and Leicester (2004).

594 Department for Work and Pensions (2003d).

595 Carr-Hill and Lavers (2000).

596 Brewer *et al.* (2004); Goodman and Oldfield (2004). The fall over the early 2000s is not statistically significant, however. The description here is based on movements in income inequality, which is the commonly used measure; Goodman and Oldfield (2004) also examine inequality in expenditure over time, which presents a rather different picture.

597 See, for example, Sutherland *et al.* (2003); Clark and Leicester (2004); and work by Evans and others at the University of Bath, modelling lifetime income trajectories under the current policy regime.

598 Department for Work and Pensions (2003d).

599 This is confirmed by Sefton (2004).

600 Ermisch *et al.* (2001) (data based on British Household Panel Survey youth element).

In addition, as Lupton notes in relation to deprived areas, ‘discrimination on racial grounds may well turn out to be one of the biggest drivers of socio-economic segregation’.⁶⁰¹ A review which has highlighted the importance of a socially inclusive experience in childhood, as ours has, must reaffirm that any strategy to combat social exclusion is, and is seen to be, embedded in a broader framework of principles, including a strong anti-discrimination ethos which permeates through to school and street level. This is particularly important given increasing diversity.

Improving evidence and quality of data

‘Increasing the dosage’ tends to suggest a focus solely on policy effort. However, another cross-cutting issue that touches on all our policy areas is availability of evidence and quality of data. On evidence gathering, several policy chapters in the review suggest that there could be more focus on the impact on children in the evaluation of policy initiatives. Many researchers have also argued that, although the government has made great progress in collating relevant information, the coverage of national data on children could be improved.⁶⁰² Some argue that it is increasingly difficult to extract consistent data about children across the UK, because of devolution.⁶⁰³ A study of financial support for children since 1975 in relation to their costs has been published recently⁶⁰⁴ and the analysis of government expenditure in relation to children in England has been mentioned above.⁶⁰⁵ We also need surveys of overall child well-being so that changes can be measured over time.⁶⁰⁶ Despite what appears to be a plethora of information on the state of children, many improvements are still required.

Filling the gaps

Bringing services together

The implementation of the Children Bill, from November 2004, will do much to bridge the gap between different services at local level for children and in particular the gap between services for vulnerable families and children in need of protection; but perhaps more is needed.

Our evidence suggests that in addition to the development of the Children, Young People and Families Directorate within the Department for Education and Skills, there is a need to fully mainstream a strategy against the social exclusion of children and families throughout government. This is similar to a call in the Work and Pensions Select Committee’s recent report for the government to set out a comprehensive strategy for its longer-term goals for reducing child poverty.⁶⁰⁷ Particular challenges set out in chapter 3, for example, include focusing more on children in housing policies, and making children more visible in the agenda on neighbourhood renewal, improving public spaces, and in strategic considerations in transport, given the importance of the local neighbourhood and travel to children’s social inclusion.⁶⁰⁸ The private sector might also be encouraged to take greater corporate responsibility for its role in helping to create, or to prevent, social exclusion – including, in particular, utilities providers and financial services.

601 Lupton (2003b), p. 218.

602 However, see also Plewis *et al.* (2001) for additional proposals for maximising the potential of existing surveys and data.

603 Bradshaw, J. (2004), in presentation to seminar on researching the well-being of children, 21 January, organized by the Policy Studies Institute.

604 Adam and Brewer (2004).

605 Sefton (2004).

606 Bradshaw (ed.) (2002).

607 The government has just responded to this; see Department for Work and Pensions (2004b).

608 See, for example, Ridge (2002).

Reaching the 'hard to reach'

When thinking about some of these gaps, we need to understand more about why the take-up of opportunities has to some extent by-passed those most at risk, the poorest and some ethnic minority groups, who are sometimes described as 'hard to reach'.

Several recent reviews have highlighted the 'hard to reach' as a particular cause for concern.⁶⁰⁹ The concept of 'hard to reach' was originally coined by social research agencies such as Mori,⁶¹⁰ who noted that traditional methods of researching the general public were not appropriate for particular groups, for example, Black and ethnic minority groups, young people, refugees and asylum seekers, people with learning disabilities and deprived communities. In a study on delivering services to hard-to-reach families in On Track areas,⁶¹¹ three broad groups were identified: minority groups including ethnic minority groups, Travellers and asylum seekers; the overlooked – slipping through the net such as the learning disabled; and the service resistant or those unwilling to engage with service providers, the suspicious, the over-targeted or disaffected.

However, it has also been pointed out that a different perspective could see such groups as 'hard to hear', rather than 'hard to reach',⁶¹² and we have already noted in this review the government's determination that listening to children will be one of the underlying principles of policy development. And 'hard to reach' groups may be seen in a positive sense as posing a clear challenge – of how to create 'easy to use' services.⁶¹³

Increasing the take-up of opportunities

For some people the main barrier, as we have seen above, is a lack of knowledge about the opportunities available. More problematic, however, is when parents' lack of knowledge means that they cannot support and guide their children. This is a particular problem in education, as noted in a report on children in Bradford just after the recent riots. Parents from some ethnic minority groups could not give their children the essential parental support that is so connected to educational success because they did not understand the educational system.

A second barrier is that services may be seen to be inappropriate, inaccessible or associated with stigma. We can see this in the views expressed, particularly by minority groups, on some family support services. Mainstreaming may reduce the stigma as Sure Start programmes and Children's Centres increase.

A third barrier is that cultural factors may work against taking up opportunities:

'My dad thinks having an education is very good but he also believes making money is also very important. That's why I'm not going to university. I can start making money now and my dad will be proud of me that way.'

(Boy in Bradford, quoted in Katz, A., Buchanan, A. and Bream, V. (2001), *Thwarted Dreams: Young views from Bradford*, Young Voice)

609 See, for example, the seminar on 7 May 2003 organised by the Social Exclusion Unit and the Strategy Unit on social exclusion.

610 www.mori.com/localgov/reach.php

611 Doherty *et al.* (2003b).

612 Suggested by participants at a workshop on inclusive consultation in June 2002 organised by the Cabinet Office to inform its production of Viewfinder, a guide for departments on consulting with their service users.

613 Suggested by participants at seminar organised by Joseph Rowntree Foundation on 'Tackling Disadvantage', 8 June 2004.

An area populated by a particular ethnic minority group can become segregated.⁶¹⁵ If cultural expectations suggest that a girl must leave school early to help care for young siblings, she may feel that it is not much use to work hard at school, and this creates strong cultural pressures not to take up opportunities. A bridge needs to be made to find culturally acceptable ways to link parental expectations and a child's aspirations.

A fourth barrier is that some parents and children may make a rational choice that the opportunities offered are not for them. Childcare, for example, may be too expensive, so that the rewards from working are cancelled out. Some children, particularly Black Caribbean boys,⁶¹⁶ may make a decision that achievement in education is not possible, so they choose other routes, perhaps through antisocial behaviour and bullying, to achieve status and esteem.

Targeted help

Finally, escape from social exclusion is particularly difficult, as discussed earlier, for children and parents who have been rendered depressed because of poor social conditions; community norms that may encourage low expectations; domestic violence and child abuse, discrimination and bullying – as well as for parents who worry that their children, because of their circumstances, will repeat the tragedies of their own lives. Some people will benefit from more targeted services.

The current work by the Social Exclusion Unit on mental health, and a forthcoming literature review by the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion of the two-way links between mental health and social exclusion,⁶¹⁷ will help to inform this sensitive area of research and policy for parents in particular. And the new study of mental health amongst children and adolescents will give guidance for future strategies for them. Those with severe depression will need treatment from mental health services and support in the long term; but others can benefit, as we have seen, from mentors and advisers, and where they are not only given support but helped to develop new skills, competences and confidence, and create opportunities for new experiences. For this group of parents and children, it may not be enough to reduce the risk, or to present the opportunities; they also need a helping hand to help them take control of their lives and discover that exercising 'agency' can make a difference.

New approaches

As we noted above, central to many of the findings in this analysis is that those least likely to benefit from the government's initiatives are the so-called 'hard to reach'. The phrase 'hard to reach' may suggest that it is only necessary to stretch that bit further to ensure policy impact on such groups; but it may be that new approaches are also needed.

Learning to hear

Although the government is now making considerable progress in accessing the views of children, we still need to know more about how socially excluded people perceive their own experiences and how they make decisions.⁶¹⁸ This gap in knowledge could be remedied by adopting more participatory methods in research, which fully involve socially excluded groups and give them more 'voice'.⁶¹⁹ One organization that works closely with families in persistent poverty, for example,

615 Lupton (2003b).

616 Frosh *et al.* (2002).

617 Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion (2003).

618 This was highlighted by some participants in the Social Exclusion Unit/Strategy Unit seminar on social exclusion held on 7 May 2003, for example.

619 See, for example, Bennet (with Roberts), (2004).

explored the idea of involving parents with children ‘at risk’ or in care as full partners with professionals.⁶²⁰ (Some research also suggests, however, that whilst some groups may be seen by others as ‘socially excluded’, they may not identify with or favour this term themselves.⁶²¹)

More appropriate targets

It may also be that with ‘hard to reach’ groups generally, we lack measures of success that are appropriate for them, above and beyond the targets specified in current PSAs etc.⁶²² For some, returning to work or training can be too great a leap. An intermediate step may be attending a day centre or becoming involved in voluntary work and these ‘steps on the way’ should also be recognized and rewarded, both for service users and service providers.

Tackling stigma and discrimination and building trust

There may in fact need to be a step change in the delivery of services to make them more relevant to ‘hard to reach’ groups. We do know already that when asked about their priorities for services, people living in deprived areas themselves identified not only more resources – which should be tackled by the policy of guaranteeing a ‘floor’ of minimum standards – but also staff attitudes. And recent research found that socially excluded children feel less respected by their teachers.^{623,624} This suggests a need to ensure enough priority is given to help front-line staff involved in delivering services to children and parents develop relationships of trust and stability with them. This is one way to ensure that ‘bending mainstream services’ to meet the needs of socially excluded people – in deprived areas and elsewhere – can have greater impact. The government’s current investigation of the costs of education could also be broadened into a wider exploration of how to ensure that school is an inclusive experience for all children.

Timing of interventions

Adopting a more ‘child-centred’ view implies that strategies to tackle social exclusion may need to be more differentiated by age-group. As noted earlier in this report, the various elements that make up social exclusion may be more or less important at different ages for children; our approach may therefore need to become more nuanced.

There is currently a move to focus attention and resources on the early years, especially the first 12 months.⁶²⁵ But, as we suggested in chapter 4, taking a preventative strategy on child poverty seriously may mean linking back further than this, to pregnancy, and even the pre-conception period. This implies a need to look at the adequacy of provision for childless single people and couples – working-age adults and especially young people. The health and well-being of those who become parents, or who are likely to become parents shortly, are crucial for the health and well-being of their children. This is of course particularly the case for prospective mothers. Yet there has been much less policy focus on the level of out-of-work benefits for this group than for children. The weekly level of income support/income-based jobseeker’s allowance in 2003–04 for single 18–24 year olds was well under half the amount of the pension credit minimum guarantee for single pensioners (£43.25 per week, compared to £102.10).⁶²⁶ Yet many of these young people will be parents at this age; some will be pregnant. Even those aged 25 or over only received some £10

620 ATD Fourth World (1996), *Talk With Us Not At Us*.

621 Mumford and Power (2003).

622 For example: ‘for some people with lower abilities or opportunities, the very focus on paid work and academic attainment was excluding in itself’ (Lupton (2003b), p. 215).

623 In research carried out by the Social Exclusion Unit prior to the creation of the neighbourhood renewal strategy; also described in more detail in Ghate and Hazel (2002), and in Commission on Poverty, Participation and Power (2000).

624 Ridge (2002)

625 See, for example, Harker and Kendall (2003).

626 Cited by Jonathan Bradshaw at seminar on researching the well-being of children, 21 January 2004, organized by Policy Studies Institute.

more per week. It is difficult to see how a healthy diet can be maintained on this level of income alongside other costs; this may pose an increased risk of low birthweight babies, with all the associated risks that that implies, as described in the chapter on health above.

12.3 Conclusion

Breaking patterns of social exclusion for this age group is also about, as one group of refugee children put it, 'Dreams, Struggles and Survival'.⁶²⁷ The centrality of education for reducing social exclusion, in terms of its potential both to provide an inclusive experience for children now (or not) and to influence their future as adults, has been underlined in this report. Much of government policy is about helping children to have a better future. We need to identify and remove the barriers, such as poverty, poor living conditions, poor health and discrimination, that stand in their way; and then we need to give them the skills, competence and confidence to achieve their goals and realise their dreams. Children can only do this with the support of their family, so we need to support their parents in this endeavour as well.

Children's dreams, struggles and successes also require active promotion. The general public needs positive stories of children's and parents' achievements 'against the odds' if we are to combat the negative press and public stereotypes of those living in social exclusion, which are so damaging to all. The government should give a consistent lead in its use of language and imagery. But we *all* have a responsibility to promote and help create a truly inclusive society.

Postscript, July 2004: spending review and child poverty review

On 12 July 2004, as this report was going to press, the Chancellor announced both the spending review and the child poverty review. There was not sufficient time to integrate their contents into the main text of the report. However, some of the recommendations of both reviews are very pertinent to the findings and conclusions in this report, and, more importantly, to the lives of children aged 0–13 and their families.

Major targets and aspirations set out in the two reviews of particular relevance include those on financial support and employment:

- to halve both the number of children in relative low-income households and those suffering a combination of material deprivation and relative low income between 1998–99 and 2010–11,⁶²⁸
- to reduce the proportion of children living in workless households by 5% between spring 2005 and spring 2008;
- to increase the proportion of Parents with Care on Income Support and income-based Jobseeker's Allowance who receive maintenance for their children to 65% by March 2008;
- abolition of the 'double debt' rule and lowering of the repayment rate for Social Fund budgeting loans, together with work with the private and voluntary sectors to develop more affordable loans for those on low incomes;

⁶²⁷ Clare (2002).

⁶²⁸ Note that the threshold of what will count as 'material deprivation' has not yet been decided.

- a long-term aspiration to improve financial support for large families; and
- work to assess whether there are systematic differences in the take-up of income-related benefits and tax credits by ethnic group.

There are also plans on housing which will affect children in particular:

- resources for 10,000 additional units of social housing per year by 2007–08;
- a continuing target to ensure that all social housing is ‘decent’ by 2010; and
- a new target to ensure that 70% of households in the private sector are living in a decent home by 2010 and a new PSA target highlighting children’s needs.

On public services, the spending review announces:

- new, more challenging PSA floor targets to drive up standards in schools located in deprived areas, with monitoring of the bottom 10–20% of educational under-achievers and of the most vulnerable groups, and a review to ensure such schools are treated equitably and resources are used efficiently;
- expanded parenting support, with help at key transition points for children;
- further work on transport accessibility planning and the bus subsidy review;
- work on the evidence base on health care and public health issues for children from lower socio-economic groups, and a PSA target on childhood obesity; and
- continued commitment to early intervention for young offenders; pilots of women’s community sentences for female ex-offenders; sentence reform to try to ensure that fewer children of offenders are separated from their parents.

There is further progress on childcare and early years’ provision:

- new targets for the Sure Start Unit to increase Ofsted-registered childcare by 10%; increase take-up of formal childcare by lower-income working families by 50%, and introduce by April 2005 a light-touch childcare approval scheme;
- plans to set up 2,500 children’s centres by 2008 (beyond the commitment to a children’s centre in each of the 20% most disadvantaged wards in England);⁶²⁹
- piloting of free part-time early education for 12,000 two year olds in disadvantaged areas;
- providing at least an extra 120,000 new childcare places by 2008, and additional childcare support for at least 2,000 very disadvantaged children; and
- increased levels of investment in childcare, and a commitment to publishing a ten-year strategy for childcare in the Pre-Budget Report this year.

629 This is from the spending review; the child poverty review mentions 1,700 children’s centres, i.e. one in each of the 20% most disadvantaged wards in England, by 2007–08.

The government is also setting up a 'child poverty accord' with the Local Government Association to support further co-ordination between central and local government and the voluntary sector. Whilst we have obviously not had the opportunity to study these proposals in detail, or to analyse their potential impact, they clearly add up to an impressive body of targets, intentions and more specific proposals, many of which relate to the issues of particular focus in this report.

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Appendix A: Methodology

We have followed the lead of Bradshaw *et al.* (2003), in their analysis of the drivers of social exclusion for the Social Exclusion Unit, in interpreting the task as follows: 'the review is not intended to be a systematic review in the sense employed in health studies, but a narrative review that is both systematic and transparent in its methods'. In our descriptions of policy measures and our analysis of their impact, we have focused largely on England, as the Social Exclusion Unit's remit covers England only. However, some policies are relevant to England and Wales, and others cover the UK as a whole. Some sources which we have drawn on – particularly those giving statistical information – also refer to a wider geographical area within the UK, or to the UK as a whole.

Our literature review has involved five phases:

Our starting point has been the knowledge of social exclusion and social policy among our team of experts, and additional expertise that we have sought from outside the team (e.g. Dr Tony Newman, Lisa Harker and Ken Jones). Our combined knowledge has both informed and complemented the formal literature searches. At various times throughout the project, we have sought advice from our team of experts and advisers. We have also contacted expert informants from outside the Department, as suggested in the initial remit.

Secondly, we have looked at government-published literature, involving evaluations of policies and initiatives.

Thirdly, formal literature searches using keywords have been undertaken, including in the following databases: ASSIA, ERIC, Social Services Abstracts, Sociological Abstracts, PsychInfo and Google.

Fourth, these searches have been supplemented with searches on relevant databases, including government websites, the Social Policy Digest in the *Journal of Social Policy* (Cambridge University Press), Joseph Rowntree Foundation, ESRC, CASE and catalogues of relevant voluntary organizations. In particular, the review has examined a great deal of 'grey' literature published by voluntary organizations and obtained through personal contact from our experts, as well as material about to be published.

Fifth, the evidence elicited from the above sources has been systemically recorded, first on a literature log by policy area and then summarized on a matrix; and finally, the findings have been drawn together in the written summaries presented here.

This report presents a review of the literature about the impact of government policy on social exclusion among children.

The report contains a discussion about what social exclusion means to the lives of children and the main policies aimed at tackling it. It presents evidence of policy impact and discusses some issues for the future direction of policy. The Department of Social Policy and Social Work at the University of Oxford carried out this review.

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