



A review of training and materials which aim to support the children's workforce to reduce the impact of childhood poverty and disadvantage

October 2010



1. Introduction and purpose of the report

The Children's Workforce Development Council (CWDC) commissioned DMSS Research and Consultancy to undertake a review of national and local support, guidance and training that aims to equip the children's workforce to reduce the impact of child poverty. The project had the key objective of identifying effective models and strategies for developing the knowledge and skills of the children's workforce in relation to child poverty and disadvantage, taking into account the diversity of needs in the core, and wider, workforce and across the public, private, voluntary and independent sectors.

This report considers the following questions:

- What are the needs of the children's workforce for support, guidance and training on child poverty and disadvantage?
- What support, guidance and training currently exist, or are under development, specifically on the topic of child poverty?
- What other training and resources exist on aspects of childhood disadvantage more generally?
- What are the shortfalls in provision and how might these be addressed?

This report is accompanied by an index of resources which provides a summary of available training courses, toolkits and other resource materials identified in the course of the review. Further information about organizations referred to in this report can be found in the index of resources.

2. Methods

Information for this report was gathered in the period January to March 2010 using the following methods:

- **Telephone interviews with 25 key informants** from a range of organizations including training providers, government departments, local authorities and third sector bodies (See appendix 1). These interviews were used to gather intelligence on support, training and guidance currently available or under development, other contacts to pursue and the views of informants on the development needs of the children's workforce in relation to child poverty.
- **Additional intelligence gathering** via a) a meeting with a representative from the Child Poverty Unit who cascaded our request for information to regional government leads, relevant CPU and child poverty pilot contacts; b) attendance at a NW regional

consultation event set up to discuss the draft guidance for the Child Poverty Bill.

- **A focused web-search** to identify relevant materials with follow-up email and telephone contact to obtain further information on resources. We reviewed the websites of 60 organizations and pursued further information by follow-up email and phone contact with 27 of them.
- **An e-survey of 118 training managers of Local Safeguarding Children Boards** to identify the extent to which child poverty and disadvantage were specifically addressed in their current training programmes. This elicited 41 replies (a response rate of 34%).
- **An additional focus on drug and alcohol misuse as an aspect of disadvantage** reflecting the CWDC's particular interest in this topic. A specific web-search and selection of interviews were undertaken to identify the extent to which a) training on substance misuse addresses child poverty, and b) the extent to which the children's workforce receive training and support on substance misuse as an aspect of childhood disadvantage. Web-searches and follow up phone or email contact were conducted with six specialist organizations. We also hand-searched the training brochures of 21 LSCB's for 2009/10.
- **Review of materials identified.** We developed a template for the review of materials identified through the above processes, presented as an index of resources encompassing a short description of what is available, the types of resources (training, toolkits, publications etc), who provides them, target audiences, how they have been used and whether they have been evaluated or accredited.
- This report is based on our analysis of the data generated through the above processes and discusses the implications for support, training and development across the children's workforce.

3. The role of the children's workforce in tackling child poverty and disadvantage

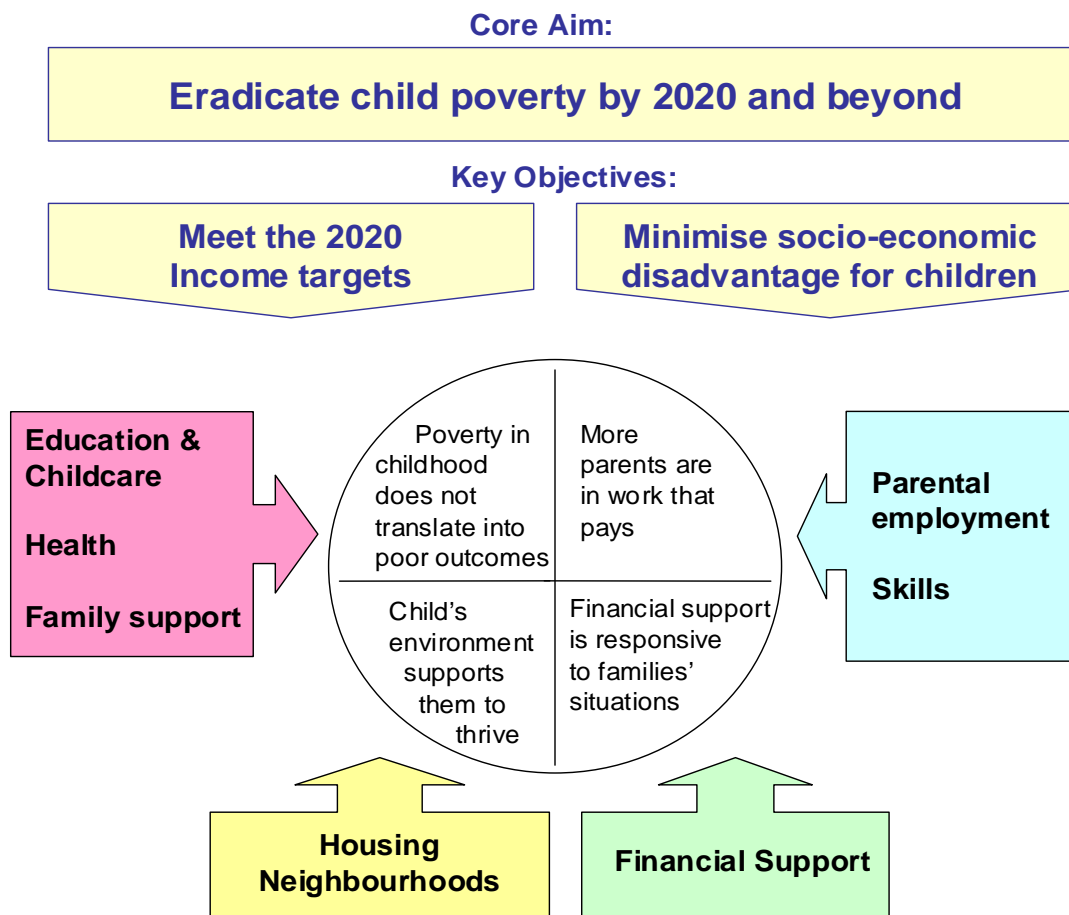
Ultimately, all those working as part of the children's workforce have a role in improving children's life chances. This may be via their involvement in the provision of universal services in, for example, schools and health settings through to more targeted interventions with children identified as having additional needs. There is strong evidence that child poverty is a key determinant of children's outcomes, impacting on their long term health, educational achievement and their ability to participate positively as an active member of society. It is equally the case that good outcomes in each of these areas improve children's chances of a poverty free future.

As providers of services to children, young people and families, local authorities have a vital role in tackling child poverty, narrowing the gaps in outcomes between children from low income families and their peers, and breaking inter-generational cycles of deprivation. The children's workforce, therefore, has an important role to play in tackling child poverty by:

- Improving the **education and personal development** of all children and young people and narrowing the gaps in achievement between poor children and the rest.
- Working with families to reduce **health inequalities**, and improving support and access for those with poorer health and disabilities; and
- **Supporting parents** to undertake their role as well as possible, by reducing the pressures on families and strengthening their capabilities.

Part 2 of The Child Poverty Act, which received Royal Assent in March 2010, requires responsible authorities and their delivery partners to co-operate to reduce, and mitigate the effects of, child poverty in their local areas. The Act places a duty on responsible local authorities to prepare and publish a local child poverty needs assessment and produce a joint local child poverty strategy. The (non-statutory) guidance on Part 2 of the Act issued in September 2010 highlights the range of partner agencies with a role to play in preventing and ameliorating the effects of child poverty.

Figure 1



As Figure 1 illustrates, tackling child poverty clearly involves a wide range of children’s practitioners including health visitors, early years and children’s centre staff, social workers, teachers and other school-based staff, parenting advisors and youth workers. But tackling child poverty also involves the wider children’s workforce – those who do not work directly with children but whose role can have a direct impact on child poverty. Examples include those working in housing, employment, community development and regeneration roles, as well as those providing services to adults who may also be parents (e.g. mental health practitioners, drug and alcohol workers). It follows that all those working as part of the children’s workforce need to understand how poverty affects children’s current lives and future life-chances, and have the skills to address child poverty and its associated disadvantages as part of their work. This is underlined in section 3.17 of the guidance to Part 2 of the Act which states that:

‘Local authorities and their partners will want to consider and address the implications

of their needs assessments and strategies for the development of their workforces, and ensure that their strategies include the necessary actions to develop shared understandings of the causes and consequences of child poverty across the workforce and the knowledge and skills to play their part in tackling it.¹

4. The challenges

From the above, it may seem obvious that the core and wider Children's Workforce need to play a central role in tackling child poverty. However, there are several challenges to them fulfilling that role, including:

- Achieving a shared understanding of child poverty among those working in and with the children's workforce.
- Agreeing the priority child poverty should be given.
- Defining its relationship to other forms of disadvantage.

4.1 Achieving a shared understanding of child poverty as a priority for the children's workforce

Research by IPSOS/Mori on practitioner's perspectives on child poverty² suggests that the term 'poverty' does not have immediate resonance for staff working with disadvantaged children and families. 'Poverty' was not generally seen by staff as either a relevant or appropriate construct and they preferred to use terms such as 'families struggling to cope', 'needy families', 'deprived children' or 'children in need' to describe their client group. However, when prompted, many practitioners displayed considerable relevant knowledge and experience and were able to link their own roles and broader efforts to tackle child poverty.

One of our interviewees with direct experience of delivering poverty awareness training to the children's workforce remarked:

'There's lots of confusion about what poverty is. For some it's only about the Third World. Some blame the failings of individuals... It's a hearts and minds area, where feelings run high and are contested.[The children's workforce includes] low income staff who are not much better off than their clients and some have very negative attitudes towards benefit claimants.'

¹ HM Government Child Poverty Unit A Guide to Part 2 of the Child Poverty Act, 2010: Duties of Local Authorities and other bodies in England, September 2010

² Cameron, D et al. (2008) *Practitioners' perspectives on child poverty*, London: DCSF

The key informants we interviewed for this project generally acknowledged the importance of child poverty as an issue for the children's workforce but, with rare exceptions, were unable to cite examples of training or resources which made direct reference to child poverty as a key issue. Many assumed that '*poverty was in there somewhere*', or suggested that it was '*taken for granted that poverty is an underlying issue*'.

Of course, we cannot conclude from this that training is not addressing the issue of child poverty *indirectly*. We encountered many examples of courses on issues such as child neglect, parental substance misuse and domestic violence, all of which could make reference to poverty as an associated factor. However, without reviewing the detailed content of every course it is difficult to judge the extent to which this is the case. Of the course outlines we were able to review in the time available, very few mentioned poverty and tended to use terminology similar to that identified in the IPSOS/MORI workforce study e.g. 'vulnerable children'.

4.2 Policy and guidance

Achieving a shared understanding and language in relation to poverty is a major challenge – and not just for those working in and with the children's workforce. It is a challenge for government too. The previous government first made a commitment to eradicating child poverty in 1997, but subsequently a series of other policy initiatives considered issues closely related (and overlapping with) the poverty agenda but using different terminology. Initiatives on 'social exclusion', 'narrowing the gap', addressing 'inequalities', improving 'life-chances' and, increasing 'social mobility', each generated their own sets of language and concepts. Practitioners (as well as the general public) have been exposed to a plethora of concepts, all somehow related to poverty but discussing it in different ways. There is no wonder then that child poverty has not been consistently understood or tackled across the children's workforce.

Ambiguity at national policy level has filtered down to bodies such as the CWDC. The lack of very clear messages about child poverty at a national level seems to have resulted in its absence as a core priority in guidance and standards produced for the children's workforce.

Although a review of all the guidance, practice standards etc aimed at the children's workforce was beyond the scope of this project, we carried out a targeted search for references to child poverty in the four sets of guidance/standards we considered to be most relevant. Our findings (see table 1) suggest that the importance of poverty and disadvantage is not being communicated to the children's workforce through these channels. Consequently, training materials linked to these (e.g. induction training and CAF training) do not explicitly refer to child poverty either.

Table 1: References to poverty and disadvantage in selected guidance and standards aimed at the children’s workforce

Guidance/standards	No. of references to ‘poverty’	No. of references to ‘disadvantage’	Comment
Common Core of Skills and Knowledge (recently refreshed)	1	1	Both appear in a list of examples of ‘barriers to communication’
Induction Standards for children’s social care (2006)	0	0	Has sections on inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice, understanding child development and the ‘context of children’s wider family caring and social network’ but does not make the links with child poverty or disadvantage
Early Years Foundation Stage Practice guidance (2008)	0	0	The EYFS guidance has sections on ‘Meeting the diverse needs of children’, ‘Learning and development’ and ‘Promoting children’s welfare’ but does not make the links between any of these and child poverty or disadvantage.
Training, support and development standards for foster care (2009)	0	0	Has sections on inclusion and anti-discriminatory practice, understanding child development and the ‘context of children’s wider family caring and social network’ but does not make the links with child poverty or disadvantage.

4.3 Child poverty and other forms of disadvantage

To date, the terminology of ‘child poverty’ and ‘disadvantage’ does not feature strongly in the discourse of the children’s workforce at the level of policy, guidance or practice. This is not to say that individuals working in and with the children’s workforce do not recognize the significance of poverty and its relationship with other forms of disadvantage. However, one of the challenges of achieving a more widespread and shared understanding is the complexity of this relationship.

Put simply, ‘disadvantage’ can encompass anything that has a negative impact on children or their development, including neglect, abuse, disability, poor parenting, domestic violence, family instability, poor housing and neighborhoods, racism, parental mental health or substance misuse.

In some cases, particular disadvantages may be directly *caused* by poverty. In some cases, their impact is likely to be *compounded* by poverty. Some disadvantages may *increase the risk* of poverty, whilst others may be *associated* with poverty more or less strongly. To take a particular example, poverty can cause and compound maternal depression. Maternal depression can also increase poverty (if it prevents mothers from earning). However, it can also affect affluent mothers and have an independent negative effect on their children.

At the same time, poverty is not randomly distributed and some groups are more at risk than others including some ethnic minority families, women and those living with disability. Discrimination is also a factor, with several studies suggesting that discrimination against those who are poor is fairly rife – and interacts with other forms of discrimination.

Developing the children’s workforce to fulfill their role in relation to child poverty and disadvantage will require an integrated approach to both guidance and training. This requires a strategy to increase understanding of child poverty and its relationship with other forms of disadvantage, and develop the skills needed to work with this complexity. As one of our interviewees put it:

‘Generally training for the children’s workforce is very narrow and specific. What people need is a broader structural map.’

One cause of the narrowness referred to is the tendency for child development to be understood in terms of the individual child and their family divorced from any wider social context. There is frequently a lack of attention to influences at the level of the community or society and how these impinge on child development.³

³ Jackson, G and Gill, O (2003) *The Missing Side of the Triangle: Assessing the importance of family and environmental factors in the lives of children*, London: Barnardo’s.

4.4 Addressing development needs across the children's workforce

The diversity of the children's workforce means that there are different development needs according to level and role. A further challenge, therefore, is to identify what knowledge and skills are required across the core and wider children's workforce. This is identified in Figure 2 where we have taken the framework of universal, targeted and specialist workforce development and what is needed by different segments of the workforce. We propose this as a starting point for defining the development needs of the children's workforce in relation to poverty and disadvantage.

Because child poverty and disadvantage is so significant to outcomes for children, all those working directly or independently with children and families need a minimum *universal* level of knowledge and skill. We suggest that this should include knowledge and understanding of what child poverty means, how it acts as a context for child development and affects children's life chances, and the skills to communicate with children and families living in poverty, identify their needs and make appropriate referrals to ensure that those needs are met.

Those whose primary role is to work with children and families (for example, staff in Children's Centres) need development *targeted* to address the work they do. We suggest this requires a more enhanced level of knowledge and skills incorporating knowledge of the economic and social determinants of child poverty and disadvantage and how they interact, and the skills to address the needs of children and families living in poverty across a range of domains, e.g. income, health and housing.

People in *specialist* roles need knowledge of the relationship between child poverty and their specialist area (e.g. substance misuse) and the skills to address the needs of children and families living in poverty with whom they work.

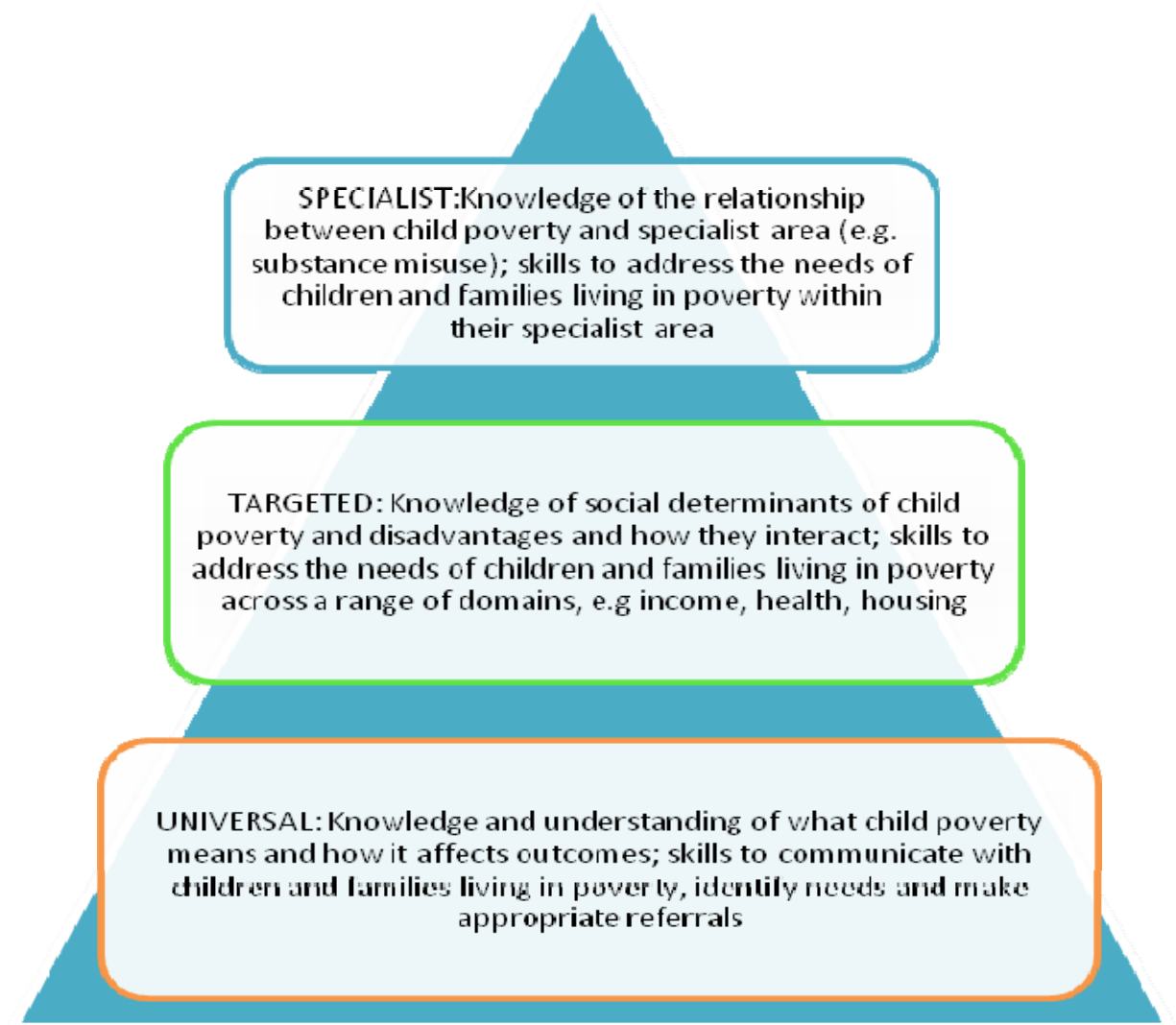
When thinking about workforce development needs it is also important to take account of staff at different levels including those responsible for service planning. As one of our interviewees pointed out:

'It is important for people not just to know about poverty, but also to know what to do when they identify it...it's not just about front-line staff - we also need to get at people higher up, including commissioners.'

The framework below could be used to develop a much clearer understanding of workforce development needs. It could also be used to inform the content of guidance, standards and training materials directed at different parts of the workforce. For example, the Common Core of Knowledge and Skills is a *universal* tool. There is a good argument, therefore, for ensuring that it explicitly includes the universal level of knowledge and skill relating to child poverty. An

example at a target level is the training for outreach workers which is being implemented by CWDC. There is also a good argument for explicitly including the appropriate level of child poverty knowledge and skills in the practice standards in specialist areas such as fostering. By making some relatively straightforward additions and adaptations to these products, CWDC could have a significant impact, both on the extent to which child poverty is accorded priority, and the amount of training and support on poverty provided to the workforce.

Figure 2: Poverty related knowledge and skill framework for the children's workforce



5. What currently exists: overview of available training or other support material on child poverty

5.1 Training provided by local safeguarding children boards (LSCBs)

Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) are, in most areas, the largest single commissioner/provider of training to the children's workforce. We therefore chose to explore the extent to which poverty is incorporated in the training they provide. Most LSCBs provide a range of (usually one-day) courses on different forms of disadvantage associated with safeguarding. These commonly include courses on neglect, parental substance misuse, mental health, domestic violence and sexual exploitation.

An email was sent to training managers in 118 LSCBs⁴ for whom we could obtain up-to-date email addresses. They were asked to respond to the following questions:

- Does the LSCB currently commission any training specifically on poverty (e.g. poverty awareness, working with families in poverty)?
- Does training you commission on other topics (e.g. drug awareness, domestic violence or neglect) EXPLICITLY address poverty as a core issue (i.e. is it covered in the learning outcomes)?
- Is there training for the children's workforce on this topic commissioned by others (e.g. your early learning unit)?
- Are there any plans to commission training - or provide information/resources to the children's workforce - to support the authority's anti-poverty strategy?

As requested in the email many also passed these questions on to children's workforce development or early years colleagues in their authority. We received responses from informants in 41 local authorities. In most cases, the response came from the LSCB training manager/Learning & Development lead, sometimes incorporating information from colleagues. In three instances an independent response was sent by a children's workforce development officer and one response was received from a Sure Start/early years coordinator.

In 33 out of a total of 41 cases the answers received to all questions was: 'no'. Typical responses were as follows:

'No, we don't offer specific training.'

'No, currently there is nothing in the learning outcomes that would cover this.'

'Sorry, I don't know of any training commissioned by others or any plans to commission training to support the authority's anti-poverty strategy.'

'I really don't think we have anything on poverty - I can't think of any course outline that has it in its aims and objectives anyway.'

A few respondents had knowledge of other relevant training. For example:

'There is currently nothing within the LSCB directory that addresses the subjects of poverty and disadvantage directly. We have not had Neglect training during this year but will offer this as part of 2010/11 training programme. I am aware of Fuel Poverty training that I believe Change for Children team has been involved with.'

Perhaps most interesting was the fact that simply asking these questions had clearly triggered debate:

'I am afraid the LSCB does not currently address poverty as a core issue in any of its very extensive training programme. It is of course an integral part of the wider debate on all our courses. Your email has however triggered debate on how we might more effectively do this within the LSCB training. I will pass this email on to my colleagues in the Learning Development Team.'

'Following your communication we are considering what more we could be doing'

A couple of respondents took the opportunity to pass on their thinking about the importance of the issue and how it needed to be tackled:

'Just to say that probably the straight answer to all of the questions below is currently 'No' to LSCB commissioned/delivered training although it may be mentioned in passing. Having said that we are in times of great changes for training as the Children's Trusts take the lead and the LSCBs undertake the scrutiny role. In this area we are developing a multi-agency child protection training strategy to help the CT to commission essential child protection training and it seems to me that the CT needs to develop the whole training programme to address all of the skills required by the children's workforce and this needs to be done in total - not each bit in isolation, only in that way can we begin to address the diversity of training need including poverty and improve outcomes for children.'

'Tameside has an interim child poverty strategy. [It] sets out the processes for the development of the Child Poverty Assessment and the Strategy (March 2011). It also sets out some key indicators of progress. [...]The interim strategy does speak about raising awareness of child poverty but does not set out training plans'

We received a total of five responses in which people claimed that although they had no

specific poverty awareness training, and poverty was not necessarily explicit in learning outcomes, it **was** appropriately covered in the content of some LSCB courses:

'Poverty is most specifically addressed in our Neglect workshop and it is referred to in case studies/ discussion in our parental substance misuse and parental mental health courses. It is also discussed in the children with disabilities workshop. The Domestic Abuse Forum provides a domestic violence Basic Awareness course which also references it via case study/ discussions. I'm not aware of any other training or any plans for any - but I will raise it as a topic at key meetings as a result of this email.'

[The] Safeguarding Children Board don't deliver a course directly relating to Working with Families in Poverty but do incorporate this in all our training as this is a high priority for Hartlepool.' 'Poverty is mentioned as a potential vulnerability factor in training on other topics (e.g. drug awareness, DV or neglect). '

Four local authorities reported more specific and focused integration of poverty awareness into children's workforce training.⁵

The training and development officer in **St Helens** reported on her own experience of integrating poverty awareness with training on the Common Core:

'I am delivering the Common Core of Knowledge to St Helens Children and Young People's Services - I think poverty awareness and an understanding of the inequalities this brings to children and families is a key ingredient to working effectively as an integrated workforce. This borough is one of high deprivation so the subject of poverty and inequality is often raised naturally within group activities. If it isn't I usually play devil's advocate. For my own use I have found the Shelter and Joseph Rowntree websites useful and books like The Spirit Level: Why more equal societies almost always do better by Wilkinson and Pickett gives me ways of challenging and opening up perspectives with groups.'

In **Somerset** the Integrated Workforce Development Manager reported that:

'As part of all training programmes we cover the issue of poverty awareness and the impact this can have on a child's life chances. It is also incorporated into work we do with support staff in schools and as part of our teacher training programme and our training of early year's professionals.'

We received information from **Reading** on their training of 800 school-based staff on the Bridges programme 'No Child Left Behind' which is being evaluated by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER). (See below and index for more information on

⁵ Examples from other local authorities were obtained from other sources e.g. from contact with the Beacon Authorities.

this programme). However, none of the LSCB courses in the authority explicitly addressed poverty.

Derby reported that they were in the process of putting a group together to develop a multi agency poverty awareness course. This was the only LSCB which had learning outcomes on poverty for courses including neglect, domestic violence and safeguarding black and ethnic minority children.

5.2 Other training and resources identified.

In addition to our survey of LSCBs, we sought information about available training and resources from a range of other sources, including phone interviews with informants from key organizations (many of whom cascaded our request to other relevant contacts), email exchanges, a call for information on the child poverty community of practice (co-ordinated by LGID) and a focused web-search.

An index of resources identified accompanies this report. Here we provide an overview of what exists and an indication of what else may be in development.⁶

The training identified through this review fell into three main categories:

1. Courses specifically on child poverty (e.g. poverty awareness);
2. Courses on particular topics closely related to child poverty (e.g. welfare rights, fuel poverty);
3. Courses including poverty as part of training on related topics (e.g. courses on neglect including discussion of child poverty as one of the underlying factors).

5.2.1 Courses specifically on child poverty

We identified just a few of these:

- Courses provided by **Capacity** (a training, research and practice consultancy) to a few local authorities, in particular **Barking and Dagenham** where they have provided training to all Children's Centre workers. They have developed a one day poverty awareness training course which they deliver in-house and tailor to local plans and

⁶ We may, of course, have missed some initiatives. Although we made extensive efforts to ensure that the review was comprehensive in its coverage, in the time available we were dependent on responses to our requests for information (particularly where information was not available from other sources e.g. organizations' websites). Inevitably, there were some potential informants who did not respond.

issues.⁷ They offer two other courses which can be delivered stand-alone or as linked modules.

- A **SCIE e-learning course** on Poverty, Parenting and Social Exclusion. Produced in 2008, this 9 module course was one of the first e-courses SCIE produced. SCIE successfully involved families (from ATD 4th World) in this project to peer review the resources, advise on their content and appear in a series of video interviews.
- A programme developed by **Church Action on Poverty**. *Just Church* is a free programme for use by churches, Christian groups and ecumenical bodies, made up of 12 modules, some designed for particular groups such as those working with children and young people.
- **Child Poverty Solutions, Wales** have been providing half-day training courses for local authorities (in Wales) on child poverty since 2005 alongside the development of web-based resources. This is a joint initiative between the Wales Assembly and **Save the Children (UK)**. We have been informed that there are plans to offer poverty awareness training to local authorities in England as part of Save the Children's contribution to C4EO's range of support on the implementation of the Child Poverty Act.
- In **Reading**, a programme of training has been running since 2007. The **Framework for Understanding Poverty (FW4UP)** is a US based programme that aims to 'provide practical, real-world support and guidance to improve staff's effectiveness in working with people from all socioeconomic backgrounds'. In a pilot initiative, Reading provided an initial round of training (two days) to 63 staff from schools and children's centres. Subsequently, Reading has sent staff to the USA to be trained as trainers in the programme and the training is being rolled out to all schools. The Framework for Understanding Poverty has a sister programme called **Bridges out of Poverty**, using the same concepts but providing them in a way that helps the wider children and families workforce make use of them. An evaluation of the initial pilot was carried out in 2008, funded by the Sutton Trust, and NFER are currently evaluating the wider implementation of both programmes (with the support of C4EO).
- In addition to these training programmes, we were informed about a number of other training initiatives developing in a range of settings. For example, in **Tameside** a training module has been developed by John Smith, a Locality Lead for Health

⁷ One-day courses have been delivered to LA managers in Sunderland, Bristol, East Sussex and York

Improvement, on *Working in Disadvantaged Communities: the Politics of Poverty*. In **Kent**, training has been provided to front-line workers in two Children's Centres as part of their Child Poverty Alleviation Strategy.⁸ In **Hull** we were told about awareness training being provided to Children's Centre staff by a Job Centre Plus Child Care Partnership Manager. Our informant thought it likely that similar workshops were being provided more widely on an informal basis. As we note below there are a number of current developments, such as the Work Focused Strategy pilots, which are likely to be generating such training.

5.2.2. Courses on topics closely related to child poverty

A variety of training falls into this category. For example:

- **National Energy Action** has an awareness-raising programme on fuel poverty called '*A cold, damp home is a danger zone*'. This includes a range of resources freely available on their web-site as well as training which they have delivered to the children's workforce in several local authorities, particularly in the North East region.
- **Day Care Trust** provide training on issues facing low-income families, in particular, increasing access to child care for disadvantaged families and the take-up of working families tax credits. **Gingerbread** provides similar training.
- **Child Poverty Action Group** offers a range of workshops and courses, primarily on welfare rights, benefits and debt, notably their *Quids for Kids* resources. These kinds of courses are also offered by **Citizens Advice**.
- **Inclusion** offers a number of core and bespoke courses on relevant issues, particularly on welfare to work, the labour market and financial inclusion.
- **Turn2us**, supported by the DCSF and in partnership with the **Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)** and **Home-Start UK**, are delivering a new '*Maximising Income for Families*' pilot service to help families of young children in financial need access the funds they are entitled to – including benefits, tax credits and grants. CPAG is helping deliver face to face training workshops for 70 Home-Start volunteers, and have provided additional content for e-learning materials. Turn2us also runs free workshops with intermediaries from information- and advice-giving charities across the voluntary sector, to increase knowledge of welfare benefits and charitable grants.

⁸ Kent was one of ten local authority innovation pilots on child poverty funded by the Child Poverty Unit.

- **TAC (Training and Consultancy)** with funding from **CfBT Education Trust** developed a course on *Working with young people at risk of social exclusion (2004)*. This is a modular course with three core modules and eight additional modules that can be accumulated, leading to the achievement of the Certificate in Working with Young People at Risk of Social Exclusion. Alternatively, individual modules can be delivered as standalone training.

5.2.3. Courses including poverty and disadvantage as part of training on other topics

As part of our review, we also wanted to include examples of courses which are not directly focused on child poverty or disadvantage, but address these issues as part of training on other topics. Given the breadth of training and the range of potentially relevant topics, we conducted focused searches in relation to two topical issues: parenting support and substance misuse. This was the most challenging part of the review because the majority of courses which one would expect to include poverty and disadvantage do not use these terms in any of their written materials.⁹

For example, in respect of parenting support training, the National Academy for Parenting Practitioners produced a comprehensive 100 page prospectus in 2009 covering all the evidence based programmes and practitioner training courses on offer through the parenting academy. The prospectus was designed to help parenting commissioners and others make informed choices about the training programmes which would best support their parenting delivery plans locally.

The practitioner training programmes covered include those for:

- Families and Schools Together (FAST).
- Family Links: the Nurturing Programme.
- Incredible Years.
- Mellow Parenting.
- Parenting Positively.
- Strengthening Families 10-14.
- Strengthening Families Strengthening Communities.
- Triple P.

The entry for each of the providers consists of:

⁹ The search terms we used included 'poverty', 'disadvantage[d]', 'low-income', 'socially excluded', 'economic', 'socio-economic'.

- A description of the parenting programme itself.
- A description of the core practitioner training designed to enable practitioners to facilitate this programme for parents.
- A description of the refresher training programme, if available.
- A description of the specialist or skills development training, if available.

The word 'poverty' does not appear in the brochure. Disadvantaged families are mentioned in relation to two programmes: Incredible Years and FAST. Target groups for the Incredible Years programme are described as:

'Economically disadvantaged families, families with children with high rates of aggression and behaviour problems, families referred by child protective services for abuse and neglect. Foster parents. Families with children diagnosed with Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD), Conduct Disorder (CD) or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). The programme has been used with families from a wide range of cultural and ethnic groups in the UK, USA and other countries.'

The target group for FAST is described as:

'... all families, uses universal recruitment and does not target individual children or parents. Local authorities may, however, decide to target a school located in a community which has high numbers of disadvantaged families, high health problems, school drop-out rates or reports of child abuse and neglect.'

Although all the programmes included in the prospectus are evidence-based and information is provided on the evaluations to which they have been subject, only FAST mentions outcomes specifically for 'disadvantaged' families:

'Four large randomised controlled trials (RCTs) have been completed since 2001. Each of the four studies showed that socially marginalised, low-income families in urban and rural areas from a range of ethnic and cultural backgrounds, including African-American, native American and Mexican immigrants, had 80% retention rates. The results have also shown decreases in child problem behaviours, increases in child strengths and school success and increases in parent leadership in the community'

Save the Children are collaborating with Families and Schools Together (FAST) and Philosophy for Children/Communities (P4C) to roll out a UK wide programme that will demonstrate how it is possible to implement a cost effective, inclusive and scalable parental support intervention to deliver against a range of improved outcomes for the poorest children aged 3-5 years. The rationale for Save the Children's development of this programme is that: *'Living on or below the poverty line all too often reinforces a cycle characterised by ineffective education, exclusion or self-exclusion, terrible job opportunities and increased chances of*

*poor health and an impoverished future. Schools play an important part but 85% of a child's success at school depends on the type of support their parents are able to offer them.*¹⁰

Each programme listed in the prospectus includes an equality and diversity statement such as the following from Parenting Positively:

'The programme adopts flexible times to try to accommodate the needs of fathers. Furthermore, issues concerning immigrant communities and parents at military bases are discussed. Trainees will have explicitly discussed working with minority groups and others who may be discriminated against. The training programme gives consideration to lone parents, grandparents, ethnic groups (e.g. to consider religious festivals when planning timing of sessions) and to ensure transport is arranged for disabled parents.'

None of the statements include income/class/poverty/disadvantage/social exclusion amongst the equality/diversity issues mentioned. The phrase 'others who may be discriminated against' in the quote above is as close as it gets.

This does not mean that trainers are not discussing poverty and disadvantage during the course of the training (and there is some evidence that some of these parenting programmes are successfully delivered in deprived communities) – but the extent to which this occurs is impossible to gauge from the course prospectus.

In relation to **substance misuse**, we sought information in three ways:

- Telephone interviews with experts from the substance misuse field
- Searching web-sites of relevant organizations
- Searching a random sample of LSCB training brochures for Parental Substance Misuse Training

For the latter, we downloaded a random sample of 21 LSCB training brochures for 2009/10. Twelve LSCBs (57%) were providing (mostly one-day) training courses on parental substance misuse at levels 1-3. Nine (47%) had no course on this topic in their current brochure.

We also accessed a 2 hour e-learning course: '*Hidden harm: the effect of parental drug and alcohol misuse on children*' produced by the Safeguarding Children e-Academy.

The most extensive training we identified was in **Torbay** which offered a one-day course on '*Substance misuse and pregnancy*' and a two-day course on '*The impact of alcohol and substance misuse and parental mental ill health on children and young people*'.

¹⁰ A Fair Chance at School? Save the Children, 2009

The following learning outcomes at level one are from an **East Yorkshire** course on Substance Misuse Awareness:

'By the end of the course participants will have:

- *Explored their own and others attitudes and assumptions about substance misuse.*
- *Examined the different groups of substances that are used: their effects, signs, risks and harms of use and be aware of local trends in use.*
- *Considered the impact of alcohol use and will have been introduced to a brief intervention to help people cut down their drinking.*
- *Learnt how support and treatment is offered locally and how it can be accessed'.*

At level 2/3 the learning outcomes for a **Northamptonshire** course on 'Parenting capacity: the impact of drugs and alcohol' are:

'By the end of the course participants will be able to:

- *Apply their understanding of parenting capacity and how this affects meeting the needs of children*
- *Identify how problem drinking/drug taking by parents can negatively affect parenting and the care and development of children*
- *Name drug and alcohol related problems and the aspects of family life that can be affected*
- *Develop an empowering way of working with parents who have drug/alcohol problems that promotes protective parenting and the meeting of children's needs.'*

No course outline we examined included any reference to poverty or disadvantage in either the course description or learning outcomes.

Our interviews and web searches of relevant organisations in the substance misuse field tended to confirm this picture. Interviewees raised two primary concerns: first, they commented on the lack of knowledge and skills relating to substance misuse in the children's workforce and, second, the lack of knowledge and skills relating to children's issues in the specialist substance misuse workforce. Some attempts are being made to address these concerns. For example, training is being provided by Adfam, Alcohol Concern and Drugscope to sections of the children's workforce e.g. Family Intervention Projects. The Department for Education has funded a series of regional workshops.

However, on the whole, the focus of these examples are on raising awareness of drugs and alcohol among the children's workforce and introducing a 'Think Family' approach to adult substance misuse workers, encouraging them to consider when working with adults with problematic drug/ alcohol use, whether there are any children's needs to be addressed in the family. None of the programmes we were informed about *explicitly* included a discussion of the relationship between poverty, disadvantage and substance misuse (though, again, this does not mean that these issues do not get raised in the course of the training). Interviewees were certainly well aware of the significance of poverty in relation, not only to the level of substance misuse, but also to the extent to which it is regarded as problematic.

5.3 Other resources and support materials

Most of the organisations referred to in the previous sections as providing training, also have other resource materials available on their websites. Indeed, although this review found relatively few training courses specifically relating to child poverty, we found no shortage of other resources, including a considerable amount of material which could be used to inform the development of training modules if required. The Index accompanying this report includes more details but we provide a summary of some of the most important resources below:

- **Child Poverty Unit**

The CPU website contains details of all research commissioned by the CPU (and links to reports); recommended research from other sources; up-to-date information on legislation and guidance and links to a range of associated sites. It also contains information on child poverty data, tackling child poverty locally and details of the various child poverty pilot projects. Relevant research includes *Living with Poverty*, Tess Ridge (2009). This review of qualitative research with low-income families and children presents a summary of evidence from the last ten years regarding the 'lived experience' of poverty.

- **C4EO**

The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes (C4EO) exists to help those working in the sector to improve the life chances of all children and young people and, in particular those who are most vulnerable. They distill the best academic research combined with front-line practice to generate evidence of 'what works'. Child poverty is one of their priority themes. So far, they have produced a research summary on child poverty and a summary for Directors. A full knowledge review is pending. They have recruited a number of Sector Specialists on child poverty available to provide tailored support to Children's Trusts. They also host an on-line community of practice on child poverty in

partnership with **LGID**. At present most of their focus on the child poverty theme is at a strategic (rather than practice) level, in particular supporting local authorities to meet the requirements of the Child Poverty Act, through the provision of data and other resources. However, much of their material is also relevant to practice. C4EO also oversee the **Narrowing the Gap programme**, initially hosted by the Local Government Association, and now funded by the DfE. Its aim is to narrow the gap in outcomes between vulnerable and excluded children and others, against a context of improving outcomes for all.

- **National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (NCSL)**

NCSL held a national conference on child poverty for Children's Centre leaders in 2009 and maintain a database of all Children's Centre leaders in the country (3,500). NCSL are currently doing a workforce development needs analysis (due for completion in May/June 2010) and working with Teachers' TV to produce a programme on child poverty.

- **Child Poverty Action Group/Inclusion**

Developed a toolkit in 2007 to help local authorities and their partners to:

- Frame an informed debate on child poverty in relation to employment, income, education, health and social services;
- Analyse the local child poverty story using the most reliable and comprehensive data sources;
- Develop a local child poverty target;
- Ensure that local policies are 'child poverty-proofed';
- Design a multi-themed strategy for achieving this.

The Tool Kit includes practical tools such as pre-formatted spreadsheets, policy briefs and check-lists to help build local strategies and a range of good practice examples from throughout England.

- **Together for Children**

Provide support to Children's Centres on a regional basis through a network of programme advisors and have a contract with DCSF to support delivery of 10 work-focused strategy (WFS) pilots. Each WFS pilot area has three Job Centre Plus workers who are based full-time in Children's Centres and are seen as Children's Centre staff. Together for Children also have a **Child Poverty toolkit** available to local authorities through their website (last revised in March 2008).

- **Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF)**

JRF have had poverty as one of their priority themes for several years and have developed a wealth of material. Their child poverty programme focuses on four key questions:

- What will it take to end child poverty?
- What will policies to end child poverty cost?
- Will current policies eradicate child poverty by 2020?
- What will happen if we don't end child poverty?

Recent reports include *Ending Child Poverty in a Changing Economy*, Donald Hirsch (2009), *Child Care and Child Poverty*, Alison Garnham and Jane Waldfogel (2008). JRF also have a programme aimed at changing attitudes to poverty and produce a regular update of trends as part of their *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion* project.

- **Barnardo's**

Have produced a number of reports on aspects of child poverty available on their website. Their 2009 report '*Below the breadline: A year in the life of families in poverty*', by Julie Harris, Morag Treanor and Neera Sharma is a year-long study of 16 families living in poverty in the UK.

- **Capacity**

In addition to their training, Capacity has produced reports on outreach work and '*Children's Centres: meeting the needs of children most in need*' (2007)

- **Commission for Rural Communities**

Produced a report, *Insights from users and providers of Children's Centres in rural communities* (2010)

- **UK Coalition Against Poverty,**

Produced *Communicating Poverty* (2007), a aiming to contribute to the debate about how ideas, policies and proposals to tackle poverty could be communicated more effectively.

- **Oxfam UK**

Making Ends Meet (2009), a report on how families cope, based on research in Cardiff.

- **ATD 4th World**

Voices for a Change (2008), a peer research project on the experience of poverty in London.

5.4 Recent developments

The most significant recent development is the Child Poverty Act (2010) and the requirement it places on local authorities to conduct needs analyses and produce local child poverty strategies. This is clearly making child poverty more visible as a local policy issue and as authorities begin to enact their new duties it is likely that awareness of child poverty will increase. While needs assessments are being carried out and strategies developed, there remains an opportunity to develop the capacity of the workforce to improve outcomes for children living in poverty and ensure that workforce issues are incorporated.

There are a number of other relevant developments at a local level. In 2009 three authorities were awarded Beacon status¹¹ for their work on preventing and tackling child poverty. These were Cornwall, Tower Hamlets and Newcastle. We contacted each of these as part of the review anticipating that workforce development may have been on their agenda and they would be able to provide examples of training as potential models for elsewhere. In fact, although all had a range of initiatives as part of developing their work in addressing child poverty, workforce development was not greatly evident as a priority. In common with many other authorities their focus was more on strategy development and engaging with partners at a strategic level rather than on front-line practice. However, Newcastle reported that they are looking to embed the 'Narrowing the Gap' framework as part of their children's workforce development and Cornwall have recently appointed a member of staff to pull together a child poverty curriculum based on existing presentations and materials. All have a range of resources, including DVDs, which have the potential for wider use.

In addition, several local areas have recently been involved in the child poverty pilot programmes which focused on aspects of child poverty. These include:

Childcare affordability (also known as CAP 09): Five pilots were set up to explore how the affordability of childcare impacts on sustainable parental employment in London and the South East. Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) ran three of the pilots, which looked at the impact of changes to the tax credits system. These are the disabled children's pilot, the actual costs pilot and the 100% child care offer. The London Development Agency

¹¹ The Beacon scheme was replaced by the Local Innovation Awards Scheme (LIA scheme) in April 2010 – www.localinnovation.idea.gov.uk

was responsible for the two remaining pilots looking at providing a subsidy to childcare providers and supporting families into employment.

- **Child development grants:** This pilot was testing whether paying parents a financial incentive will increase the take-up of services offered by children's centres with the aims of increasing the number of parents taking advantage of services known to boost outcomes for families and children.
- **Family intervention pilots** have provided intensive support to families with complex needs who are affected by longstanding worklessness and poverty.
- **Tax credit advice in children's centres** - HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) outreach. Following an initial pilot in May 2008, HMRC committed to having a presence to advise on tax credits in 100 children centres across London (40), the West Midlands (35) and Lancashire (25). This pilot aimed to increase the take-up of tax credits for those eligible, and improve existing customers' understanding of the tax credit system.
- **Work-focused services in children's centres:** Thirty children's centres across 10 areas embedded Jobcentre Plus (JCP) advisors in the centres, along with enhanced packages of support, to help increase engagement with JCP and get more people ready for, or into, work.
- **Local authority (LA) innovation pilots:** Focused on partnership working between LAs and their partners, this pilot examined ways of improving children in low income families' outcomes by raising incomes and building the capacity of communities to tackle child poverty. The pilot went live in May 2009 in 10 areas.

8. Conclusions and recommendations

Our work for this project has generally confirmed that those working in and with the children's workforce do not readily identify 'child poverty' as a priority issue. We also found that a lack of immediate identification with the term is evident at all levels. This is reflected in the dearth of training directly addressing the issue and the absence of specific references to child poverty in guidance aimed at the children's workforce. At the same time, child poverty remains on the strategic agenda of both national and local government and the children's workforce clearly has a significant role to play in delivering outcomes from this agenda. However, to date there has been little evidence of a joined up approach to child poverty and workforce strategies.

There is a double challenge in achieving a shared terminology and a conceptual framework which integrates the language of 'poverty' with that of outcomes for children, alongside

making child poverty a more core focus of practitioners in the children's workforce. The concept of a 'Children's Workforce' is relatively new and made up of workers from a wide variety of disciplines and sectors. Integrating this workforce with a shared set of values, core competencies and shared language is a major challenge.

8.1 Recommendations

- CWDC to continue working closely with the Child Poverty Unit and key partners such as Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children's Services (C4EO), SCIE and Together for Children to get workforce practice embedded in current service development related to child poverty. There is an opportunity for both workforce capacity and development needs to be considered as part of the current requirement on local authorities to undertake needs assessment and develop child poverty strategies.
- CWDC should review its own practice guidance, standards and training programmes to ensure that child poverty is explicitly addressed in knowledge and skills requirements. Clear messages about the importance of understanding poverty and its relationship to other forms of disadvantage should be embedded within the Common Core.
- CWDC should consider undertaking further work to define the workforce development needs at universal, targeted and specialist levels, building on figure 2 above and consider the development of training modules for child poverty at universal and targeted level with a view to making materials available and encouraging their use by local authorities and their partners.

Appendix 1: Key informants

Representatives of the following organisations provided information for this report via interview and/or email exchange.

- Addaction
- Adfam
- Alcohol Concern
- Audit Commission
- Barnardo's
- Brighton and Hove
- C4EO
- Capacity
- CfBT
- Child Poverty Solutions Wales
- Child Poverty Unit
- Cornwall County Council
- DayCare Trust
- Department for Children Schools and Families
- Drugscope
- Government Office North West
- Government Office South East
- Government Office Yorkshire and Humberside
- IDeA
- Inclusion
- Job Centre Plus
- Joseph Rowntree Foundation
- Kent County Council
- Local Government Association
- London Borough of Tower Hamlets
- London Borough of Newham
- National College for Leadership in Schools & Children's Services (NCSL)
- NEA
- Newcastle City Council
- Reading Local Authority
- Save the Children
- Scottish Child Poverty Information Unit
- Tameside
- Together for Children
- Turn2Us

Web searches were also undertaken in respect of the following organisations (in addition to those listed above)

- Accent
- Action for Children
- ATD 4th World
- British Agencies for Adoption and Fostering
- Child Poverty Action Group
- Children England
- Citizens Advice
- Commission for Rural Communities
- End Child Poverty
- Federation of Drug and Alcohol Projects
- General Social Care Council
- Gingerbread
- Homestart
- National Foster Care Association
- National Academy of Parenting Practitioners
- National Children's Bureau
- Oxfam GB
- The Children's Society
- Shelter
- Turning Point
- UK Coalition Against Poverty

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11 Albion Street, Leeds LS1 5ES
email info@cwdcouncil.org.uk
or fax us on 0113 390 7744

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