

Child Poverty Strategy Consultation



RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

[Submitted by CPAG in December 2010 using standard form provided by the Scottish Government. Administrative information has been removed from this copy.]

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

We are keen to gain views from as wide a range of stakeholders as possible, on our existing approach to tackling child poverty, and how we can most effectively build on this in our forthcoming strategy.

1. What are your views on the Scottish Government's current approach to tackling child poverty, outlined in this paper? Does it capture the key areas where action is required to ensure the greatest impact on reducing child poverty? Are there any important steps to be taken by the Scottish Government that are not covered in this paper?

CPAG in Scotland welcomes the Discussion Paper, the fact that it states clearly no child in Scotland should be born into or brought up in poverty, that it recognizes the damage that poverty does to children (although it could perhaps say more on the damage that poverty does to society as a whole); and the fact that it brings together for the first time how existing strategic frameworks are understood to contribute to the specific aim of eradicating child poverty.

Furthermore we welcome the fact that the paper discusses many of the areas that we believe require action as set out in the CPAG *Ending Child poverty: a manifesto for success* (www.cpag.org.uk/manifesto) and in the priorities paper for the child poverty strategy previously submitted by CPAG along with other members of the End Child Poverty (ECP) coalition in Scotland. The following responses to the consultation questions should be read as complementary to these previous submissions

In particular we welcome the proposed strategic aims of maximising the resources of households with children by maximising household incomes and reducing pressure on household budgets and improving the wellbeing and life chances of children. As the Discussion Paper notes these are overlapping aims – inadequate household income is a driving force in undermining child well-being and life chances.

The specific references to the importance of good quality, well targeted information and advice to help maximise family incomes is particularly welcome as is the importance attached to increasing employment opportunities, reducing in work poverty and focussing on the way early years and education services are delivered.

However CPAG in Scotland believes that the Strategy will need to convey a greater sense of urgency, priority and importance to the task of ending child poverty, backed up by a higher level of political commitment to the task.

Ending child poverty sits well with the Government's high level purpose and its Solidarity target to reduce income inequality. A greater sense that the Solidarity target and tackling child poverty, and poverty and inequality more widely, are at the forefront of the Government's priorities is required.

The strategy will need to go beyond drawing together current frameworks and analysis of the areas of policy that need addressing and set out clear and substantive actions that the Scottish Government and its partners agree they will take to make further progress.

Describing a desired direction of travel, identifying areas where action is needed and facilitating support for local delivery are not in themselves sufficient for the scale of action required to make serious inroads into Scotland's child poverty shame.

Fundamental shifts are required in the way that Scotland values and distributes rewards from paid employment, protects those for whom paid work is not possible or sufficient, and expects from those with the greatest wealth and highest incomes.

Whilst it is absolutely right to recognise that eradicating child poverty will require working with local authorities, their community planning partners as well as Scotland's private and Third Sectors it is important to note that it is Scottish Ministers that are responsible for developing the strategy and for reporting on progress against the strategy.

It is important that the strategy conveys and incorporates that sense of responsibility. The strategy must also set out how Scottish Government will ensure other partners prioritise, and contribute substantively, to ending child poverty, and how Ministers will hold them to account. This is of particular importance given the lack of any legislative requirement on local government under the Child Poverty Act 2010 (unlike in England and Wales), and the decision by the UK Government not to proceed with the socio-economic duty under the Equalities Act 2010.

CPAG in Scotland would disagree that the 'current accountability structure' described on p30 and p31 of the Discussion Paper is proving adequate to the task. We believe the strategy needs to review and rethink how best to support and ensure policy and spending decisions, at every level, work toward reducing and eradicating child poverty. Already important policy commitments relating to ending child poverty, such as the roll out of free school lunches to all P1 to P3 pupils and the extension of nursery to 15 hours a week have failed to be delivered to the agreed August 2010 timetable.

Finally it is important that the strategy more fully recognises the unequal risk of poverty different groups of children face. Children growing up in families affected by disability, in migrant and black and ethnic minority households and in lone parent households are all, for example, at particularly high risk of poverty. The strategy should set out how agreed actions will impact on those groups at greatest risk of child poverty

In summary CPAG in Scotland believes the Scottish strategy must ;

1. Demonstrate a greater sense of urgency and priority to ending child poverty.
2. Set out clear actions that will be prioritised to achieve the aims set out in the Discussion Paper, with clear outcomes against which progress will be measured.
3. Prioritise actions that :
 - make work accessible and tackle in work poverty;
 - ensure families receive the benefits and tax credits they are entitled to and, where possible within existing powers, improve the financial support available to families;
 - ensure devolved tax levers are used in such a way as to reduce the disproportionate burden of taxation levelled on low income families, ensure greater contribution from the wealthy and maximise the resources available for the public service provision needed to prevent child poverty.
 - reduce the additional costs of school
 - improve and integrate childcare and early years provision
 - ensure a decent home for every family
4. Set out how the Scottish Government will work to mitigate the impact of UK welfare cuts that increase the risk of child poverty, and how it will work in partnership with the UK government to influence the development of welfare policies that will reduce child poverty.
5. Strengthen the mechanisms in place to ensure implementation of agreed actions and monitor progress, including urgently revisiting the need for statutory duties to tackle child poverty at local level, and regulation to back up commitments to roll out universal free school meals and extend universal nursery provision.

2. What do you think should be the priority areas for action in the child poverty strategy?
 - (a) What will make the biggest difference to reducing levels of child poverty?
 - (b) What kinds of measures will make the biggest difference to reducing the impact of socio-economic disadvantage on children?

(a) The three key priorities if child poverty is to be eradicated in Scotland, and across the UK, are:

- 1) to ensure **employment** offers a genuine route out of poverty for those families where parents are able to undertake paid work;
- 2) to ensure that the **social security** benefit and tax credit system protects families from poverty, and;
- 3) to ensure that **taxation** policy is progressive, secures a fairer contribution from our wealthiest households and businesses, does not make disproportionate demands on low income families and raises the revenue required to provide the services and financial supports needed to prevent poverty.

In relation to the Scottish strategy this means setting out clear actions to 1) make

work accessible and tackle in work poverty; 2) ensure families receive the benefits and tax credits they are entitled to and, where possible within existing powers, improve the financial support available to families; and 3) ensure devolved tax levers are used in such a way as to reduce the disproportionate burden of taxation levelled on low income families, ensure greater contribution from the wealthy and maximise the resources available for the public service provision needed to tackle child poverty.

1. Making work accessible and tackling in work poverty;

1.1 The strategy needs to build on commitments to pay a Living Wage to all those directly employed by the Scottish Government by setting out the action the Scottish Government, local authorities and their partners will take to ensure employees across the public and private sectors are paid no less than the Scottish Living Wage (currently £7.15 an hour).

A key characteristic of countries with low levels of child poverty is far more equal pay distribution. In Scotland around half of children living in poverty live in families where an adult is working, whilst a fifth of low pay is in the public sector.¹

The Scottish public sector pay bill makes up a significant proportion of pay distribution in Scotland. Ensuring that the overall pay bill within the public sector is distributed more equally, increasing rates of pay at the bottom of the public sector pay spectrum and seeking to promote the Living Wage through procurement and contracting arrangements, would play a vital role in tackling the low pay that underpins much of Scotland's child poverty, as well as setting an example to the private sector.

While increasing pay rates is not the only solution to low-paid employment (parental hours and other income transfers are also important), it makes a significant contribution to family incomes, and can help fulfil the promise of employment as a route out of poverty. Whilst interaction with reserved tax and benefit systems may limit the impact of a Scottish Living Wage on overall family incomes in the short term, reducing inequality in wage distribution is an important condition for the long term eradication of child poverty and should be a key element of the Scottish Child Poverty Strategy.

1.2 The strategy must include clear actions to ensure childcare is available, affordable and accessible to families across Scotland. In the first instance this means prioritising the development of national review of childcare and developing a national strategy linking childcare with early education, setting out a goal of universal provision free at the point of delivery with milestones established against which progress toward that goal is judged (see below for more details and linkage with early education).

1.3 Action is also needed to ensure Scottish Government business support and enterprise activity gives high priority to reducing child poverty, and wider poverty and inequality, as a key objective. Ensuring work is a genuine route out of poverty requires working with public and private sector employers to increase the number of quality jobs available to parents and placing tackling low pay (along with the insecurity, discrimination and family unfriendly practice that too often makes work an ineffective route out of poverty) at the heart of Scottish and local government

enterprise and business support priorities.

Services that provide ongoing training and skills development opportunities to ensure that parents can maximise their chances to access work with improved pay, conditions and longer term prospects need to be prioritized and the business benefits of flexible employment opportunities further promoted.

1.4 Furthermore it is important that advice and information is available on the in-work benefit and tax credits support parents are entitled to as they make transitions into work and increase their earnings at work (see also 2 below)

2. Ensuring families receive the benefits and tax credits they are entitled to and, where possible within existing powers improve the financial support available to families.

2.1 Official estimates suggest one in five families fail to claim tax credits worth around £70m in Scotland aloneⁱⁱ, and there is evidence that families facing the most severe and persistent poverty are not receiving the benefit support they should be.ⁱⁱⁱ Despite being at particular risk of poverty less than half of disabled children receive Disability Living Allowance.^{iv} Research shows welfare rights services “improve take up and deliver significant financial gains for clients”; that the “extra resources acquired by clients tends to be directed toward extra spending on fuel, food, education, recreation and transport”; and that the “local economy gains”. Furthermore evidence suggests welfare rights advice is cost effective. RNIB estimate that for every £1 of funding £44 worth of unclaimed benefit is raised, whilst CAB estimate every £1 spent on take up campaigns nets up to £85 for local areas.^v

2.2 Action is needed to build on the Review of a Strategic Approach to the Provision of Information, Advice and Representation to ensure that there is adequate provision of frontline income maximisation advice and information services across Scotland that support families to receive the benefits, tax credits and devolved sources of financial support that they are entitled to. In the first instance a national mapping of income maximisation advice and information is required to identify gaps.

2.3 The Scottish strategy should else set out how government in Scotland will continue to support the provision of second tier advice, information training and casework support to ensure frontline advisers have the skills, knowledge and support needed to ensure families receive the benefits and tax credits they are entitled to, particularly given the significant changes in the welfare system proposed by the UK government

2.4 The strategy should set out how Scottish Government will build on the Healthier Wealthier Children model being developed by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and partners to ensure income maximisation support is integrated into mainstream frontline service delivery wherever possible. It is important that the strategy sets out actions that link maximising household resources with wider action to improve health, wellbeing and life chances.

2.5 It will also be important that Scottish government undertakes, and publishes, analysis of the impact of UK government cuts to benefits and tax credits on families in Scotland both in and out of work, as described on p4 of the Discussion Paper, and acts on that analysis to seek to influence UK welfare policy so that it reduces, rather

than increases, levels of child poverty in Scotland. Recent analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggest that current policies will actually increase levels of child poverty (<http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5372>) and it is vital that the Scottish strategy addresses the implications, particularly where elements of social security may be devolved (council tax benefit, social fund), or where there are strong interactions with devolved areas of policy (e.g. housing policy). Action is needed to ensure proposed devolution of parts of the welfare system (e.g. elements of the social fund and council tax benefit) are devolved and developed in such a way as to improve rather than reduce the financial support available to low income families.

As a leading member of the Scottish Campaign on Welfare Reform (SCoWR) CPAG in Scotland believes a new approach needs to be taken to reform of the welfare system wherever powers lie. An outline of a new approach to welfare is set out in the SCoWR manifesto (<http://www.cpag.org.uk/scotland/SCOWR-Manifesto.pdf>) and we urge the Scottish strategy to highlight how debate in Scotland might help move toward a system that treats people with dignity, enables smooth transitions into work and provides adequate levels of support.

2.6 It would also be useful for the strategy to include an action to explore how, within devolved powers, Scottish Government can boost financial support available to low income families. This should include implementing the Scottish Government's school clothing grant working group recommendations to boost school clothing grants, as well as for example exploring the potential for a Scottish health in pregnancy grant to promote maternal health and mitigate the damage poverty does even before children are born.

3. Action to ensure devolved tax levers are used in such a way as to reduce the disproportionate burden of taxation levelled on low income families, ensure greater contribution from the wealthy and maximise the resources available for the public service provision needed to tackle child poverty.

The strategy should set out actions to analyse how proposed changes to devolved tax powers under the 2010 Scotland Bill might be used to address child poverty, for example through greater use of progressive income tax to ensure a greater contribution from the wealthy, promote solidarity and increase the resources available to provide the public services needed to prevent child poverty.

Whilst the bulk of taxation policy is currently outwith the control of Scottish government, local taxation already presents a potential lever to reduce the burden of taxation on the poorest households. Even after council tax benefit is taken into account, the poorest households with children pay 5 per cent of their gross incomes in council tax compared with 1 per cent for the richest families.^{vi} Council tax is levied on property value, not on incomes, and the rate of council tax does not rise sharply with rising property value. This means the poorest families often pay the highest council tax bills as a proportion of their incomes.

It is vital that the current council tax is reviewed through a child poverty lens with a view to ensuring any reform or replacement is both fairer and raises the necessary revenue to deliver the services those on the lowest incomes most depend on.

In the shorter term the child poverty strategy must also assess the implications of the current council tax freeze on low income families. Whilst some families will benefit

from reduced tax bills others will suffer the consequences of the loss in potential revenue that could enable local authorities to continue to deliver services, and protect the jobs required to deliver those services, that low income families are particularly reliant on and which are currently being cut or placed under threat.

Council tax benefit exists to help poorer families meet the costs of council tax, but fifteen percent of non-pensioner households entitled to it do not receive it. Much more needs to be done to maximise take-up particularly in the run up to any proposed devolution of responsibility for council tax benefit. Increasing benefit take up not only boosts the incomes of families at risk of poverty but also has important multiplier effect, additional income and subsequent spending helping boost local economies (see 2.1 above)

Consideration also needs to be given to the potential role variation in the rate of income tax might play in increasing the resources available to the Scottish government to eradicate child poverty.

(b) Key priorities for addressing the wider socio-economic disadvantage children face.

1. As the Discussion Paper makes clear action to tackle the attainment gap and ensure all Scotland's children are able to benefit fully from educational opportunities is important to addressing child poverty and wider socio-economic disadvantage.

This must include **action to reduce the additional costs of school** that act as a barrier to full participation and undermine the potential educational attainment of children from low income families.

The Child Poverty Strategy must set out actions to;

- minimise the impact of charges for school related activities by identifying, developing and promoting good practice;
- provide school clothing grants that reflect the real cost of school clothing with consistent minimum entitlement criteria across Scotland, as a first step implementing the recommendations of the Scottish Government Working Group on School Clothing Grants.
- take steps to remove the means test for healthy school lunches by, in the first instance, implementing roll out of universal free school lunches to all children in the early years of primary school as committed to in the Concordat and the *Achieving our Potential* framework, revisiting the need for regulation to ensure delivery.

2. **Action to improve and integrate childcare and early years provision**, both to enable parents to take up employment, education and training opportunities and to ensure all children have access to high quality early learning and development opportunities.

Initial priorities should include:

- honouring the commitment to increase universal nursery provision for 3 and 4 year olds to 15 hours per week ensuring this is implemented in every local authority area whilst maintaining the quality of that provision and furthermore making the “substantial progress towards a 50% increase in pre-school entitlement “ already agreed in the Concordat;
- setting out a commitment and strategy for extending further the hours of universal free high quality nursery provision on offer and widening the age range of children entitled to it;
- making the commitment in the Early Years Framework to undertaking a strategic review of childcare an immediate priority;
- developing a childcare strategy based on the holistic needs of children, not just parental labour market status;
- reviewing the impact of children’s centres in England with a view to assessing to what extent Scotland might learn and adopt from approaches that have worked;
- addressing the low pay and skills issues that continue to undermine the quality of childcare and early years provision in Scotland. Too often childcare workers, and their children, are themselves at risk of poverty as a result of low pay and lack of skills development opportunities;
- assessing and acting on the evidence from across Europe (see e.g. http://www.childreninscotland.org.uk/wfi/WFIFinalReportDecember2010_000.pdf.pdf) that it is those countries that have integrated childcare and early years education services with high levels of universal entitlement and a higher qualified and better paid workforce that also have the lowest levels of child poverty and highest levels of child wellbeing.

3. Action to ensure a decent home for every family

Housing has a crucial impact on child poverty in several ways. First it saps family incomes, both directly and indirectly. High direct housing costs weigh particularly heavily on families with children, taking up too much of already inadequate incomes and leaving little for other essentials. This is perhaps most graphically illustrated by the fact that before housing costs are taken into account 210 000 children in Scotland are officially recognised as living in poverty, yet after housing costs are taken into account, i.e. looking at family income once rent or mortgage has been paid, 260 000 children are living in poverty. Indirectly poor energy efficiency and heating systems increase the cost of fuel, whilst the location of housing can significantly add to household food and travel costs.

Inadequate housing also damages children’s health (with children in low income households more likely to have accidents associated with the physical condition of the house and to suffer from asthma associated with dampness) and education (through consequences of poorer health, lack of space to concentrate on homework, and insecurity leading to moves between school).

But current housing policy also undermines work as a route out of poverty. Moves into work and increased earnings lead to loss of Housing Benefit in a way that seriously undermines financial gains from employment.

The Scottish child poverty strategy therefore needs to include actions to:

- Create more high quality *affordable* family housing.
- improve the quality of housing children are living in, for example by building on current action to tackle the energy inefficiency that is such a drain on family resources.
- Ensure that at every level housing policy takes into account the needs of children and be proofed for the impact on child poverty, for example:
 - Will the way housing is provided and accessed promote parents ability to increase earnings through work?
 - Will it help reduce additional costs of fuel, food and transport?
 - Will it promote children's health and educational opportunities?
 - Will it enable housing providers to build on already important wider action such as the provision of welfare rights services to ensure family incomes are maximised?

3. What are the main constraints to tackling child poverty in Scotland:

- (a) at the (Scottish) national level?
- (b) at local (Community Planning Partnership) level?

a) The passing of the Child Poverty Act 2010 itself demonstrates the huge progress that has been made in developing a political and growing public consensus around the existence of child poverty, the fact that that child poverty is driven by lack of income, and that it can, and must, be eradicated.

Nevertheless a key constraint at the Scottish (and UK) national level remains a lack of political and public commitment to tackling the fundamental inequalities that underpin and drive that poverty.

Child poverty will not be ended if we continue to see it as a problem of the poor and seek to address it through programmes and services aimed primarily at those in poverty. Scottish Government must take the lead in articulating the problem of inequality and poverty as being a problem of wealth and unfair distribution of resources. Real solutions to poverty will only emerge and gain public support if Government recognizes the extraordinary wealth Scotland has and challenges the still widespread idea that the 'poor are always with us'. Seeking to change the attitudes and behaviour of those who currently enjoy a disproportionate share of Scotland's wealth, and demonstrating the gains for society as a whole of achieving greater solidarity will be crucial to further progress. Ministers, and political leaders at all levels and of all parties, must provide the leadership that will create the shifts in the social and political environment that are needed to enable Scotland to move toward the more equal pay distribution, fairer tax system and higher levels of public investment associated with those societies with the lowest levels of poverty and inequality.

b) At local level the key constraint is a lack of legislative requirement, or equivalently robust mechanism, for ensuring reducing child poverty is a priority in all spending and policy decisions. At a time when local authorities and their community planning partners are experiencing severe cuts in the resources available to them priority is inevitably given to meeting statutory requirements. Without equally robust expectations, addressing child poverty will continue to be of low priority. See 5 and 6 below for further consideration of the action needed to drive progress at local level.

4. This discussion paper sets out the principles of an 'assets based approach' (section 3). What are your views on this approach? What would help to deliver and promote it?

It is absolutely right that the strategy to eradicate child poverty should build on the assets and capabilities of the families and communities that are most at risk of poverty. The vast majority of parents with low incomes go to extraordinary lengths in the most difficult circumstances to protect their children from the poverty they face, managing hopelessly inadequate family budgets in order to give their children the best possible start in life, prioritising spending that meets their children's needs first¹ and making difficult judgements about how best to juggle paid work and child-caring responsibilities to best meet the needs of their children. Approaches to supporting parents, particularly in relation to paid employment, and reducing poverty and its impact on children must build on and support the resilience, skills and capacity parents already exercise in their children's interests.

However the child poverty strategy must focus on identifying what factors erode and undermine those assets, and what can be done to ensure parents can make full use of their existing strengths and capacities. Evidence suggest that of key importance to parents is lack of income, whether as a result of low pay, inadequate benefits and tax credit support, or a combination of both; lack of affordable childcare; high energy costs; additional costs associated with childrens education; and lack of information and advice to deal with these challenges.

Finally the child poverty strategy should recognise that parents and carers are in themselves an important asset to the country as whole, particularly those caring for disabled children, and set out actions, for example to provide better respite and support, on how that asset can be better nurtured and protected.

5. What can Scottish Government do to effectively support its partners to tackle child poverty? In particular:

- This discussion paper notes the particular challenges of focusing public spending on early intervention and prevention in a constrained economic climate. What could Scottish Government do to support local areas with these challenges?
- More generally, what can Scottish Government do to facilitate local strategic approaches to tackling child poverty, and to support effective local delivery?

¹ See p57 *Monitoring Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010*, JRF/NP1 (<http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/poverty-social-exclusion-2010-full.pdf>)

Crucial to supporting partners will be leading by example. It is a matter of great concern that the implementation of explicit and important commitments already made by Scottish Ministers within the Concordat and Achieving our Potential framework have been scaled back as a result of decisions to give local authorities more flexibility in the face of funding pressures. The lack of progress on rolling out universal free school meals to all P1 to P3 pupils and on extending the number of hours of free early years education are two examples where Scottish Government, and its local authority partners, has failed to prioritise measures that would make an extremely positive contribution toward meeting child poverty commitments.

As well as delivering on existing commitments, and holding local government to existing commitments, the Scottish Government must also ensure budget decisions prioritise spending that will protect low income families and demonstrate how it has proofed the Scottish budget for its impact on child poverty.

Tools also need to be provided to ensure local authorities and their partners proof local budgets for their impact on child poverty. CPAG, in partnership with Save the Children has long argued the need for additional tools, building on online toolkits developed in England and in Wales, to support local government and its partners to develop local child poverty strategies. We look forward to seeing the online toolkit currently being developed by Glasgow Caledonian University for the Scottish Government.

It is also vital that robust mechanisms are developed to support those officials and politicians at local level who are seeking to prioritise child poverty. CPAG, along with other members of the End Child Poverty coalition in Scotland, is concerned that there is little evidence to date that child poverty is being given sufficient priority with few Single Outcome Agreements providing evidence of a strategic approach to tackling child poverty (see 6 below). The limited take up of Action Learning Set support offered by the Community Regeneration and Tackling Poverty Learning Network also raises concerns that there is a lack of focus on the issue at local level and/or that the right supports are not yet in place.

In the absence of the development of a sufficiently robust alternative to a legislative duty on local authorities relating to their and their community planning partners child poverty responsibilities we believe Ministers should revisit the need for legislation to ensure local authorities and their partners' in Scotland are under similar obligation as their counterparts in England and Wales. With competing demands for ever more limited resources it is more important than ever that adequate leverage is provided to those responsible for tackling poverty at local level.

The failure to implement the commitment to roll out free school meals to all P1 to P3 pupils or to extend hours of free nursery provision across all local authority areas highlights the need for far more robust mechanisms for ensuring delivery at local level and the child poverty strategy should revisit the role of national regulation to ensure that agreed actions are actually implemented.

6. What are your views on existing measures to monitor progress on tackling child poverty, set out in Section 5?

CPAG welcomes the political consensus supporting the existing national measures as set out in the Child Poverty Act. They strike a good balance between ensuring progress in tackling child poverty is understood in terms of improving the relative incomes of our poorest families as well as measuring the impact of reducing poverty in terms of the material deprivation that children face.

Given the role that income inequality plays in undermining progress in tackling child poverty CPAG has particularly welcomed the Scottish Government Solidarity purpose target to reducing income inequality. However as paragraph 16 of the Scottish Government's 2008 *Discussion Paper on Tackling Poverty, Inequality and Deprivation in Scotland* made clear it is important that the proportion of income earned by "each of the lowest three deciles" is increased, not just the overall proportion of the bottom three deciles. CPAG would welcome a development of the Solidarity target to ensure progress is judged on increasing the proportion of income held by each of the bottom three deciles.

However it is important to note that the Act requires the strategy to set out the progress that Scottish Ministers intend to make. It is vital therefore that the strategy sets out measurable targets against which the success of the Scottish strategy can be judged. CPAG would argue that these should be targets both relating to reduction in the number of children living in poverty in the period covered by the strategy but also indicators of progress toward creating the conditions needed for a Scotland free of child poverty. Such indicators might include, for example, progress toward ensuring more equal pay distribution and progress toward provision of universal integrated early years and childcare provision.

At local level CPAG is concerned that existing measures for driving and measuring progress at local level are proving inadequate.

Achieving our Potential made clear that "*Single Outcome Agreements... will provide the vehicle for describing how poverty is being tackled at a local level*". However analysis by CPAG and other members of the End Child Poverty coalition in Scotland found a lack of priority for tackling child poverty across Single Outcome Agreements (SOAs). While all SOAs discuss poverty and deprivation, it was difficult to identify strategic approaches to tackling child poverty (or poverty more generally). Only four explicitly state that tackling child poverty is a priority and only two set a local outcome to reduce child poverty. Only one refers to a child poverty strategy.

In the absence of the development of a clear alternative mechanism to drive progress and ensure Achieving our Potential and the new Child Poverty Strategy delivers for families in poverty at local level, CPAG, along with other members of the End Child Poverty Coalition in Scotland recommends that:

- The need for statutory duties to tackle child poverty at local level should be revisited as a matter of urgency.
- Guidance for Community Planning Partnerships is developed on taking a strategic approach to tackling child poverty at local level.
- A set of consistent child poverty outcomes and indicators is developed across the range of policy areas outlined in the strategy (complementing existing work). These should be adopted at local level and reported on in a transparent way at national level each year, as part of reporting on progress of the Scottish strategy.

7(a) We are interested in examples of effective local practice in tackling child poverty. If there are any examples you think it would be useful for us to be aware of, please provide a brief summary below.

1. NHS Greater Glasgow Healthier Wealthier Children project developing and assessing a partnership model of providing income maximisation advice at a local level and a strategic approach to linking such service provision with health and other services for the future (see www.nhsggc.org.uk/content/default.asp?page=s1646)

2. West Dunbartonshire Council is the only council to date to have rolled out universal provision of free school meals to all in P1 to P3. The evaluation of the Scottish pilot free schools programme for P1 to P3 pupils^{vii} showed a substantial effect on take up of school meals, increasing take up by 22 percentage points from 53% to 75%, dramatically demonstrating the additional benefit of the universal approach. Furthermore amongst children already entitled to free school meals under the existing means-testing arrangements take-up rose by up to 8.5 percentage points.

Poverty at home is compounded by costs imposed at school, including the cost of school meals. Removing those costs is crucial to ensuring all children fully benefit from the education system. Provision of free school meals to all P1 to P3 pupils in the Scottish pilot trials also had a positive impact on family budgets and the home environment. There was "...evidence that the trial had impacted positively on the home environment of pupils," and "... the simple benefit of increasing disposable income was particularly evident amongst parents with more than one child." (see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/236867/0064986.pdf>)

7 (b) Would you be prepared to be contacted for further information on any examples you have provided above? If so, please provide contact details below.

Contact as above

8. Do you have any other views in relation to the development of the Scottish strategy?

The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires Scottish Ministers to request, and have regard to, the advice of the Child Poverty Commission. CPAG is concerned that the Commission is as yet not established and would urge the Scottish Government to press the UK government to ensure the Commission is established to ensure the Commission is able to advise on the Scottish strategy.

Finally, in developing the Scottish strategy it is important to remember that the very real progress that had been made on reducing child poverty had stalled even as the economy boomed and public spending rose. But just as a growing economy and rising public spending were not in themselves the solution to child poverty; recession, economic recovery and public spending cuts must not be allowed to become a barrier to further progress.

Whatever the overall level of resources available, policies must focus on ensuring families have the necessary share needed to protect their children from poverty, and that services are delivered in a way that does not exclude, stigmatise or place additional pressure on them.

Policies need to be proofed at every level for the impact they will have reducing the numbers of children experiencing poverty in the short term, as well as to the extent to which they contribute to, or undermine, the creation of the conditions for a Scotland free of child poverty.

At a time of tightening public finances there is inevitable pressure to increasingly target services and financial support only at those in the most need. However in reviewing policies, spending options and priorities the apparent benefits of targeted approaches need to be weighed up against the inevitable reduction in take up that is associated with means testing, and the risk of undermining the very social solidarity that is needed to genuinely achieve the Scottish Government's strategic objective of a fairer, smarter and healthier Scotland, where Solidarity targets are met and child poverty eradicated, rather than just alleviated.

ⁱ <http://www.poverty.org.uk/s52/index.shtml>

ⁱⁱ <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/takeup-rates2004-05.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ *Britain's Poorest Children*, Save the Children, ??

^{iv} *Out of Reach: Benefits for disabled children*, CPAG, 2006

^v Wigan and Talbot, *The benefits of welfare rights advice: a review of the literature*, 2006 at www.nawra.org/nawra/docs_pdf/Benefitsofwelfarerightsadviceelitreview.pdf

^{vi} F Jones, 'The Effects of Taxes and Benefits on Household Income, 2006/07', *Economic and Labour Market Review*,

Vol 2 No 7, July 2008, analysis of Table 21

^{vii} <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/236867/0064986.pdf>