Working Paper 1

Setting the Context for Glasgow’s Response to Child Poverty

1. Introduction

The aim of this paper is to provide a conceptual framework for child poverty, provide a working definition, identify appropriate core measures for Glasgow, promote discussion of additional indicators that would help measure progress in tackling child poverty in Glasgow and outline the impact of poverty on children’s lives.

2. Children’s Rights in the Human Rights Framework

It is important not to divorce a definition of poverty from a wider conceptualization. A conceptualisation of poverty will provide a framework in which to anchor a definition and measures in order to develop a fuller understanding. It gives meaning to those who are experiencing poverty. By conceptualising poverty within the Human Rights framework we can articulate values not aspirations. This forms the framework for poverty reduction programmes integral to reducing child poverty.

_The Convention on the Rights of the Child sets out the rights that must be realised for children to develop their full potential, free from hunger and want, neglect and abuse. It reflects a new vision of the child. Children are neither the property of their parents nor are they helpless objects of charity. They are human beings and are the subject of their own rights. The Convention offers a vision of the child as an individual and as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to his or her age and stage of development. By recognizing children’s rights in this way, the Convention firmly sets the focus on the whole child._

3. Definitions

Townsend defined child poverty as;

‘Children in Britain can be said to live in poverty when they live in families which lack resources to enable their children to participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary or at least widely encouraged or approved. They are effectively excluded from ordinary living patterns’.

Townsend’s intention was to move from an absolute definition of poverty to a relative definition of poverty.

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1 The state of the World’s Children 2005
2 www.minimumincome.org.uk
• Absolute poverty refers to the level of resources needed to sustain physical survival.
• Relative poverty refers to a broader definition of poverty based on the society within which the person lives

Absolute poverty and relative poverty are both valid concepts. The concept of absolute poverty is that there are minimum resources required for survival below which no one anywhere in the world should ever fall. The concept of relative poverty is that, in a rich country such as the UK, there are higher minimum standards below which no one should fall, and that these standards should rise if and as the country becomes richer. As in Townsend’s definition, falling below these standards excludes people and in this case, children, from participation in society.

Relative poverty in the UK is considered to be individuals living in households whose income is below 60% of UK median income for that year.

According to UNICEF children living in poverty are those who experience deprivation of the material, spiritual and emotional resources needed to survive, develop and thrive, leaving them unable to enjoy their rights, achieve their full potential or participate as full members of society.

This approach to defining child poverty is useful as it suggests that child poverty is multi dimensional, relative to their current and changing living conditions and includes the complex interactions of the body, mind and emotions.

In her work ‘Poverty’ Lister says” one danger of downplaying income when defining poverty is that it can be used to justify a policy stance opposed to raising the incomes of those in poverty”. In other words the root cause of child poverty is lack of income.

The Scottish Government anti-poverty strategy ‘Achieving Our Potential’ includes three main areas of intervention to tackle poverty-

• reducing income inequalities
• introducing longer-term measures to tackle poverty and the drivers of low income
• Supporting those at risk of poverty and in danger of falling into poverty

Conceptualising Children’s Rights in the Human Rights Framework and adopting a multidimensional definition of poverty to inform the sub group’s

5 http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/11/20103815/0
strategic response to child poverty at a City level is recommended but we need to recognise that lack of income is at the heart of our measure of poverty.

4. Measures

Child Poverty Act 2010 enshrines the target to eradicate child poverty across the UK by 2020 in law, and places a duty on the Secretary of State to ensure four targets based on four measures are met by that year. In addition the Act places a duty on the Scottish government to produce a strategy describing the progress that Scottish Ministers intend to make in Scotland to the meeting of these 2020 targets.

The measures are;

1. Relative low income; measuring the number of children living in households whose income is less than 60% of the UK median income in the same year. The target is less than 10% of children will be in this group by 2020.

2. Combined low income and material deprivation: measuring the number of children living in households with less than 70% of median income and who experience material deprivation. Children are materially deprived “if they live in households that cannot afford a range of basic activities, such as school trips for the children, or celebrations on special occasions, or if they cannot afford basic material goods, such as fuel to keep their house warm.” The target is less than 5% of children will experience combined low income and material deprivation by 2020.

3. Absolute low income: measuring the number of children living in households whose income is less than 60% of the median income in 2010 updated in line with inflation? The target is less than 5% of children will be in this group by 2020.

4. Persistent poverty; measuring the percentage of children living in households whose income has been less than 60% of median income for at least three out of the past four years. The target has yet to be set.

All four measures and associated targets look at median household incomes before housing costs are taken into account. However child poverty campaigners prefer to measure incomes after housing costs have been accounted for, as this gives a greater sense of the actual disposable income available to households with children once rent or mortgage costs are paid.

http://www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2010/ukpga_20100009_en_2#pt1

In the latest years for which data is available (2008/09) 60% median income before housing costs equated to £374 for a couple with two children[^7]. So a child growing up in a couple household with two children and an income of less than £374 before housing costs are paid is considered to be living in relative income poverty.

CPAG’S child poverty tool kit lists those children at greatest risk of poverty; which includes; lone parents, large families, children with disabilities, children growing up in social housing and black and ethnic minority children[^8].

Due to issues with sample size the key poverty and income data described above is not available at local authority level. Therefore to drive and measure progress in eradicating child poverty in Glasgow other proxy indicators are needed.

**Recommendation**—The key measure proposed by the CPAG inclusion child poverty toolkit to measure progress on reducing child poverty at a local authority level is the number of children living in households that are dependent on out of work benefit or are in receipt of child tax credit and working tax credit. This is because this indicator can be measured locally. Similarly the Scottish Government[^9] recommends using the number of children living in out of work benefits or in receipt of Child Tax Credit more than the family element “as one of the best child poverty proxy indicators available at local authority level.

These measures would be supported and supplemented by local indicators to measure the multidimensional impact of income poverty on children.

7. **Cycle of Poverty**

[^8]: [http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk](http://www.childpovertytoolkit.org.uk)
We know that poverty impacts on families over successive generations. We need to be able to articulate child poverty at a City level in order to change attitudes towards child & family poverty and ultimately to break the cycle.

Poverty is dynamic, with frequent moving in and out of poverty and the experience of poverty being very different depending on levels of human and material resources. For example, the DWP showed that 58% of the UK population spent at least one year in ten below the 60% median threshold (DWP 2006), whereas snapshot figures show that just over 20% of the population are living in poverty at any one time (www.poverty.org).

8. Child Poverty in Glasgow

A recent report by Scot PHO highlights that poverty is unevenly distributed by age and gender. People living in female headed households, young adults and the oldest pensioners are identified as those of greatest risk of poverty. Higher levels of female poverty reflect a greater concentration of women in part time low paid jobs and their longer life expectancy but lower pension entitlements. Lone parents are at greater risk of living in poverty, people living in the 15% most deprived areas were more than twice as likely to be living in relative poverty in 2007/08. The proportion of children living in low income households by local authority is highest in Glasgow City. Appendix 1 shows Lone parent households in Glasgow by Ward, Springburn and Anderston/City the highest at 55.75% and 53.9% respectively.

Tomlinson & Walker’s report for CPAG suggests that four dimensions of a child’s well being (relationships at home, educational attachment; risky behaviour; self-esteem) are closely related to housing and neighbourhood conditions. This reinforces the need for a multi-dimensional approach to poverty alleviation, which would include providing quality employment opportunities, improving living conditions and neighbourhoods, and providing support for teenage children.

If income is used as the only threshold the multidimensional aspect of child poverty is ignored. Child poverty measured using relative thresholds will only improve if low income families benefit more from economic advances than better off families. However CPAG make the point that child poverty will only be reduced and child well being improved if low income families do benefit more and the gap is reduced between the poorest and the better off.

Tomlinson and Walker highlight in their report that work itself (even if well paid work) is unlikely to have enduring effects on poverty – employment with long term prospects is crucial.

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10 www.scotpho.org.uk

The Poverty Alliance proposes that a level of £7 an hour could reasonably be considered as a living wage. This has been adopted as a tool by GCC and could have significant impact if adopted across the public sector.

Establishing benchmarks is an important way to gauge our collective success in fighting poverty but we also know that access to welfare benefit leaves people anything but secure. In addition employment is not always, as is often mooted, the best route out of poverty. For example 40% of working age people in poverty in Scotland lives in a household where at least one person works12.

To quote Tomlinson and Walker it has to be ‘employment with prospects’.

Glasgow’s Single Outcome Agreement includes a local indicator on Child Poverty;

17. Reduce the proportion of children in poverty

Other indicators in the SOA are relevant to the sub group’s area of responsibility.

www.improvementservice.org.uk/library/577-single-outcome-agreement

This, combined with other local outcomes on employability, educational attainment, gender based violence and health, gives an opportunity for Glasgow to take specific measures as a City on child poverty.

Don’t forget about place;

“We know that most people in low-income neighbourhoods are not poor. But the risk of persistent and long term worklessness is found disproportionately in Scotland; cities and largest towns. So efforts to increase employment and enterprise levels in these places should still be part of any anti-poverty strategy in the years ahead. But efforts to improve public spaces and community safety, address gang violence, support unpaid carers and promote a culture of volunteering are also among the strands needed for ‘place-making’”

Jim McCormack, Poverty and Place: What have we learned from the last decade?

Glasgow Centre for Population Health & Glasgow City Council are currently developing a range of Children’s Health and Wellbeing indicators that will support the Child Poverty Strategy. The child poverty sub group should propose additional indicators to help drive and monitor the progress of reducing child poverty in the City.

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5. The Impact of Women’s Poverty on Children

The Women's Budget Group has developed research and analysis into women’s poverty, women in the labour market and the relationship to child poverty. *

They argue that effective strategies to tackle child poverty need to be set in the context of-

- Women’s roles as mothers and main carers of children and managers of poverty
- The inter-relationship between women’s position in the labour market and child poverty.

6. Effects of poverty on children’s health

There is a strong association between the level of poverty in families and health and social outcomes for children. Professor Nick Spence has looked at a range of indicators for deprivation from a health perspective and these include low birth weight, preterm birth, cerebral palsy and the impact of poverty on educational attainment shows poverty limits school attainment at all ages.13

7. Factors that might prevent children having the best start in life

**Dependence on adults**

Adults can make decisions that hinder rather than help children. For example, within families, parental addiction or domestic violence leads to the focus in a family being on the adults rather than the children. While there is research evidence that families living in poverty are likely to act to prevent children suffering material deprivation as a result, there is also a possibility that children living in more affluent households can still experience poverty if neglected, although this is thought to be rare.14

Low social status given to UK childcare workers through low pay, poor working conditions etc does not encourage the high standards and creativity seen in childcare services, for example, in Scandinavian countries.

Tomlinson and Walker propose that existing policies to address child poverty generally focus on parents’ employment despite lack of evidence of benefit to children and that new thinking is required to put in place child-focused policies.15

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13 Spencer, N. Health Consequences of Poverty for Children, End Child Poverty with the support of GMB
15 Op Cit
For example, research shows that comprehensive neighbourhood regeneration and civic participation by parents have high impacts on child well-being. Existing policies have been criticised as not addressing the complex, multidimensional aspects of poverty and unlikely to be taking into account children’s needs within a family context.16

**Parents and the family environment**  
Children, like adults, need to have a sense of belonging and control in order to develop the confidence to participate fully in society, and the family environment is clearly an important driver for this to be achieved. If parents or other family members feel badly treated by society or within their networks, they are likely to have less capacity for creating a family environment based on trust and respect. Children should be seen in policies as having rights in their own terms rather than just as being under parents’ control.17

**Teachers and the school environment**  
Teachers are often understood to provide a degree of nurturing that some children may not receive at home and there is an emphasis on home – school links to provide support to families of children as well as the children themselves. There are positive evaluations of specific initiatives but there is also potential for this to cause tension within the mainstream education agenda which is focused on educational attainment rather than child well-being. In addition, access to this approach might not always be part of mainstream school life and be dependent on individual circumstances. Additional resources within the school environment which might also play a part in mitigation of poverty but might not be universally available or encouraged include good quality food, respite from difficult circumstances, practical help, access to leisure, entertainment and cultural activities and social participation.

**Parents’ employers or benefits system**  
If a parent is unemployed, they might be at risk of stress and stigma associated with claiming benefits due to the complex and penalty-driven nature of the current system.18 If in part-time or low-paid employment they might be at risk of exploitation, lack access to good quality and stable childcare, and still be living in

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poverty if in low-skill or low status employment. Adults are unlikely to be poor from choice, and poverty brings stress related to being dependent on others, along with unpredictability and stress, all of which will impact on the family environment and on their capacity to prioritise the well-being of their children.

Who can mitigate child poverty and its effects on children’s well-being?

**Family**
The family has a key role to play in developing trust, resilience and other social and emotional developmental factors. Better outcomes are related to higher income households and access to other support, for example, periods of poverty being interspersed with periods of relative affluence which can help prevent material deprivation while in a period of poverty.

**Department of Work and Pensions**
While benefits themselves are a reserved issue one way of reducing the impact of being dependent on benefits might be to reduce the complexity of applying for benefits, improve access, and reduce the impact of aggressive recouping of overpayment, for example when going into employment.

**Academic sector**
There is extensive literature on child poverty but little consensus about cause and effects. Most academic studies focus on specific issues and there is some debate that focusing on income or employment alone is too limited to understand the complexity or to intervene effectively.

**Health and social care**
In addition to providing a safety net for children experiencing difficulties and adverse outcomes, the preventative roles of health and social care services in minimising the impact of adverse risk factors on children could be very important. The Growing Up in Scotland study\(^\text{19}\) found that children from the lowest income households have higher exposures to risk factors and worse health outcomes than those from the highest income households. Inequalities in exposure to risks were higher than inequalities in outcomes, but poor outcomes relating to behavioural, psychosocial and linguistic problems showed greater inequalities than physical outcomes. However, poor outcomes associated with exposure to the risk factors of smoking and poor maternal health remained evident for decades. Clearly, current arguments for redistributive policies to favour early years are based on strong evidence for the potential of preventative action to mitigate child poverty but are in danger of not being progressed further in the context of reduced public sector funding.

**Education and childcare**
Education and childcare share the principles of requiring to be of high quality, affordable and accessible to all. The functional aspects should be safe,

\(^{19}\) http://www.crfr.ac.uk/gus/
developmental and provide the basis for learning for life including striving for educational attainment and confidence. However, Coping with Complexity proposes that they should also value childhoods as they are being experienced and not just focus on future progression 20 (Ruth Lister).

**Society**
An inclusive, non-judgemental, child oriented society that refuses to tolerate ‘povertyism’ and enables social mobility would mitigate the worst effects of child poverty and enable creative solutions towards eradication. Social policies that reduce the financial strain on parents, lessen material deprivation, enhance the quality of the local environment and increase civic participation are all necessary to maximise well-being for children. New policies should address the differing dimensions of policy and should be explicitly child-focused rather than assume the children act only under authority of adults21.

**Employers**
There is research evidence that not all kinds of work protect families and children from long-term poverty. Skills based training and a placement particularly if tied to an employer is an important factor in moving from low-skilled employment towards stable work and improved career prospects. Family-friendly policies are also important, particularly in keeping lone parents in work.

**Recommendation**
The sub group should review Objectives in the Child and Family Service Plan; see Table 1

**Glasgow City Council: Child & Family Services Plan 2008-2012**
**Improvement Objective: Reduce the proportion of children and young people in poverty**
**Responsibilities of Child Poverty Working Group and Early Childhood and Extended Services Group**

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Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies, policies, service developments in place to achieve this objective</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Expected Outcomes</th>
<th>Performance measures and timescale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Early Childhood and Extended Services Strategy Parenting Framework More Choices, More Chances Glasgow Works Strategy</td>
<td>Further development of PACT teams (Parents and Children Together) Implement the strategies to support parents back into employment. Secure education and positive destinations for all young pregnant women and mothers.</td>
<td>A large proportion of parents/carers will have support to access education, employment or training. Local childcare facilities available to all parents and carers.</td>
<td>Increase the number of parents/carers taking part in family learning programmes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Summary

We understand child poverty in Glasgow as meaning children living in families which lack the resource to enable their children to participate in the activities and having the living conditions and amenities which are customary or at least widely encouraged or approved in the UK today. We believe that income is the key to ensuring Glasgow families have the resource they need to protect their children from poverty, and that increasing family incomes should be at the heart of our local measures, targets and policies to reduce child poverty. Given the lack of available local data relevant to national child poverty targets we propose a core income based measure of child poverty in Glasgow based on the number of children living in families receiving out of work benefits or in receipt of child tax credit more than the family element or child tax credit and working tax credit. At the same time we believe the impact of poverty on children is multi dimensional and we invite sub group members to contribute to work on developing additional indicators based on their particular areas of experience which they believe would help drive and measure progress in reducing child poverty and its impact in Glasgow.
Norma Greenwood
John Dickie
Graham Connelly
Marion Davis
Pauline Craig
Jackie Erdman

Paper produced for the Child Poverty Sub Group, July 2010
Appendix 1.

Lone Parent Households in Glasgow: Numbers & Percentages by Ward (2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ward</th>
<th>No HHs with children (71,537)</th>
<th>% Households with children (25.2%)</th>
<th>*No. Single Parent Households (27,693)</th>
<th>% Single parent HHs as % of all families (38.7%)</th>
<th>LRA</th>
<th>CHCP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ward 1 - Linn</td>
<td>4,102</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>1,524</td>
<td>37.2</td>
<td>GSER</td>
<td>South East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 2 - Newlands/Auldburn</td>
<td>3,008</td>
<td>26.6</td>
<td>956</td>
<td>31.8</td>
<td>GSWRA</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 3 - Greater Pollok</td>
<td>4,837</td>
<td>37.0</td>
<td>1,570</td>
<td>32.5</td>
<td>GSWRA</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 4 - Craigton</td>
<td>3,920</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>1,337</td>
<td>34.1</td>
<td>GSWRA</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 5 - Govan</td>
<td>3,451</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>1,551</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>GSWRA</td>
<td>South West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 6 - Pollokshields</td>
<td>2,424</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>546</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>GSER</td>
<td>South East</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward 7 - Langside</td>
<td>2,290</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>734</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>GSER</td>
<td>South East</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward 8 - Southside Central</td>
<td>3,387</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>1,500</td>
<td>44.3</td>
<td>GSER</td>
<td>South East</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward 9 - Calton</td>
<td>2,585</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>1,349</td>
<td>47.3</td>
<td>GERA</td>
<td>East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 10 - Anderston/City</td>
<td>1,852</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>998</td>
<td>53.9</td>
<td>GWRA</td>
<td>West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 11 - Hillhead</td>
<td>2,216</td>
<td>16.5</td>
<td>792</td>
<td>35.7</td>
<td>GWRA</td>
<td>West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 12 - Partick West</td>
<td>3,209</td>
<td>18.9</td>
<td>1,109</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>GWRA</td>
<td>West</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 13 - Garscadden/Scotstownhill</td>
<td>3,689</td>
<td>26.2</td>
<td>1,411</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>GWRA</td>
<td>West</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward 14 - Drumchapel/Anniesland</td>
<td>3,797</td>
<td>28.5</td>
<td>1,693</td>
<td>44.6</td>
<td>GWRA</td>
<td>West</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward 15 - Maryhill/Kelvin</td>
<td>3,273</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>1,299</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>GWRA/GNRA</td>
<td>West / North</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 16 - Canal</td>
<td>3,643</td>
<td>24.6</td>
<td>1,683</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>GNRA</td>
<td>North</td>
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<td>Ward 17 - Springburn</td>
<td>3,187</td>
<td>25.6</td>
<td>1,775</td>
<td>55.7</td>
<td>GNRA</td>
<td>North</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward 18 - East Centre</td>
<td>3,205</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>1,327</td>
<td>41.4</td>
<td>GERA</td>
<td>East</td>
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<td>Ward 19 - Shettleston</td>
<td>3,460</td>
<td>26.4</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>36.4</td>
<td>GERA</td>
<td>East</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ward 20 - Baillieston</td>
<td>4,844</td>
<td>34.0</td>
<td>1,533</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>GERA</td>
<td>East</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ward 21 - North East</td>
<td>5,158</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>1,930</td>
<td>37.4</td>
<td>GERA/GNRA</td>
<td>North/East</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


* Definition used is "1 adult and 1+ child (ren) age 0 to 15". This definition does not cover all single parent households