

Tackling Child Poverty and Improving Life Chances: Consulting on a New Approach

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Introductory comments

1. Barnardo's works directly with more than 100,000 children, young people and their families in 415 services across the UK. These services are located in some of the most disadvantaged neighbourhoods where child poverty and social exclusion are common features. We work with children affected by today's most urgent issues: poverty, homelessness, disability and abuse. Barnardo's aims to reduce the impact of poverty on children, young people, families and communities through social, economic and community action - around one third of our work focuses on the alleviation of poverty, and it is an inescapable element of nearly all our services.
2. Barnardo's strongly supports the Child Poverty Act 2010 and believes that the UK child poverty strategy is a key opportunity for the Government to set out how it will carry out its legal duty to end child poverty by 2020. **We are extremely disappointed that the Government has not produced a strategy for consultation and has failed to establish and consult with an independent Commission, which is vital for holding Government to account. We expect a robust child poverty strategy which builds on the existing framework provided by the Child Poverty Act 2010 and outlines priority areas, clear interim targets and a framework for action to tackle child poverty at national and local government level.** Our recommendations focus on what should be contained in the strategy once it is published.

Summary

- We welcome the acknowledgement that money matters and believe Government should set out, in the strategy, a trajectory to 2020 to meet the legislative requirement to achieve the four income targets.
- The consultation document appears to narrow rather than broaden the Government's approach to tackling child poverty. The Child Poverty Act 2010 makes clear that both income and services are required to tackle child poverty and outlines the building blocks which the strategy must address to enable a holistic approach to breaking the cycle of poverty. Barnardo's, along with many other service providers, campaigning organisations and academics, participated in extensive consultation on which building blocks to include and agreed on these as the research evidence shows that only a multi-dimensional strategy will be effective.

- The strategy must set out practical measures and targets to address each one of the building blocks, ensuring that such measures reach the groups most 'at risk' of poverty. This will necessitate measures to gather and monitor data that is currently unavailable on those groups most at risk.
- The Government must prioritise the establishment of the Child Poverty Commission and not dilute its powers, particularly to hold the Government to account. We are extremely disappointed that the Commission has not been set up in time for members to provide expert advice on the contents of the strategy, and concerned that as a result the Government will be in breach of the Child Poverty Act 2010 and its statutory duty.
- We believe the strategy potentially has an important role to play in assisting the Government to meet its aims of improving social mobility. However, achieving any impact on social mobility will require far more robust measures than are suggested at present. The consultation document outlines a possible strategy for tackling worklessness and poor life chances, but it does not give any indication of the strategies required to combat material deprivation and persistent poverty.

Q1: What do you think are the key points from the Frank Field Review which the Government needs to incorporate into the child poverty strategy?

3. Barnardo's responded positively to this Review and we were delighted to welcome Frank Field at our Fox Hollies Children's Centre in the Midlands. Our experience of running more than one hundred Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCC) convinces us that their integrated, multi-agency approach is one of the most effective means we have for breaking the cycle of poverty and transforming patterns of poor parenting and educational underachievement.
4. We believe that Frank Field's recommendation for a significant shift away from raising income levels to investment in Foundation Years services, as an 'alternative' strategy to alleviate child poverty; will compromise progress to the 2020 targets. In contrast, the combination of income targets and the building blocks framework as set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010 takes account of the complex and multi-dimensional nature of child poverty, and the range of measures required to tackle it.
5. International evidence shows that the only countries that have achieved a significant reduction in the link between family background and children's outcomes are the Nordic countries. They have achieved this through a combined approach, involving measures both to narrow gaps in children's early years experiences (through a universal early years services) and efforts to achieve reductions in economic inequality and maximise household income, through a combination of financial transfers and active labour market strategies.¹

Local and national Government should give greater prominence to the early years

6. Children must be supported by sufficient family income to improve their life chances, in addition to good quality early years provision and caring, responsive parenting. Early intervention is important across the age range, but we recognise that the early years, given the dependence of children on their parents, is a crucial time for children's development and long-term wellbeing. Parents can be more receptive to receiving help in the early years,² and cost savings to services over the long-term are potentially greatest when children are very young.

¹ Esping-Andersen, G. (2006) *A Welfare State for the Twenty-First Century* in Pierson, C. and Castles, F. (eds) *The Welfare State Reader*. Cambridge: Polity.

² Cabinet Office, Social Exclusion Task Force (2007) *Reaching Out: Think Family*. London: Cabinet Office.

7. Families will almost certainly benefit from a package of support from conception to five years of age, but only an adequate income will enable families to address the immediate material needs for the basics such as food and accommodation. UNICEF's Report Card 9³, published on the same day as the Frank Field report, showed that income poverty has the greatest impact on child inequality in the UK, pushing the most disadvantaged children further behind European countries such as France and Germany.

Local authorities should improve delivery of foundation years services

8. The Foundation Years is presented as a 'universal' package of support, and some elements of universalism should exist to avoid stigmatisation, in addition to targeting the most disadvantaged. Barnardo's supports the proposal that a range of non state providers should run Sure Start Children's Centres (SSCC) and the services within them, and we welcome the acknowledgement of the effectiveness of voluntary providers.
9. We would support incentives for local authorities to reach out to the poorest children, for example through payment by results schemes. We are concerned; however, that ineffective use of the Government's Early Intervention Grant may result in the closure of SSCCs located in the most disadvantaged communities, if action is not taken to protect them.⁴ Similarly, the Government's commitment to providing 4,200 more Sure Start health visitors is to be welcomed, provided this does not negatively affect the allocation of resources for outreach work to be undertaken with those families most in need.

Schools need to continue the early years efforts to minimise the gap between richer and poorer children

10. We agree with this recommendation however we would like to see the strategy set out policy interventions and targets to reduce the gap at *all* stages of the curriculum, with particular emphasis on key points of transition from pre-school through to higher education.
11. Money from the pupil premium should be invested into school based family support programmes to help improve attendance and educational attainment. In line with the Government's proposal,⁵ this should be available for any pupil who may require additional support, and specified in the 'good practice guidance' for schools. We also recommend that schools extend breakfast clubs and after school clubs, and offer a quiet place where homework can be done to the most disadvantaged pupils.
12. We support the Government's intention to help schools decide how best to use pupil premium money, building on existing evidence about effective ways of narrowing the achievement gap in education. From our experience of working with the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people, access to one to one support (learning and social/pastoral) and catch-up tuition, especially where young people are behind on their functional skills, are particularly important.

³ UNICEF (2010) *The children left behind: A league table of inequality in child well-being in the world's rich countries. Innocenti Report Card 9*. Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre.

⁴ According to new research by The Daycare Trust and 4Children, funding cuts could see the closure of around 250 Sure Start children's centres in England within a year and the Early Intervention Grant will be cut in real terms by 11%. Accessed online on 11.02.11 at <http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk>.

⁵ Department for Education (2010) *Consultation on school funding 2011-12: Introducing a pupil premium*. London: Department for Education.

13. We know that Free School Meals make an enormous difference to families living in poverty. As the Government considers the new criteria for Free School Meal eligibility under the Universal Credit system, we recommend that no children who would receive Free School Meals under the current system fail to be entitled to them under the new system. Government should consider integrating eligibility for Free School Meals into Universal Credit to ensure that overall work incentives remain consistent with the goals of Universal Credit. In addition flexible charging should not be used as an opportunity to lower the eligibility threshold for Free School Meals which currently benefit the poorest children and their families.

New measures of Life Chances should be adopted alongside financial poverty indicators

14. We would like to see a trajectory of progress towards the 2020 targets set out in the strategy, with measures and interim targets that relate to each of the building blocks outlined in the Child Poverty Act 2010. These provide a solid framework within which indicators of children's outcomes can be measured. The strategy should outline how outcomes for the most disadvantaged groups of children and young people will be monitored, including data on groups not included in household surveys.

15. We would like to see details of how the data collected will impact on service provision and how issues raised by the information obtained will be addressed. We are concerned that a) interventions implemented in the early years to raise indicator scores will be removed once this has been achieved, with no safety net or follow up if improvement is not sustained; and b) the long term impact of interventions will not be measured sufficiently to ascertain the effect of interventions beyond the early years.

16. The strategy should show how national and local indicators will be aligned to provide clear evidence of improved outcomes against the indicators set.

17. We believe that each local child poverty strategy should set milestones and targets against each of the building blocks, which should then be reported on alongside the overall child poverty indicator annually to Parliament. This would give a broad picture of progress against a range of outcomes that are important to poor children. It is crucial that the set of indicators allows for progress to be measured, for the Government to be held to account, and to monitor progress towards social mobility targets.

Measures of service effectiveness

18. We agree in principle that measures of 'service quality' should be developed, including cost effectiveness, and that these measures should guide local child poverty strategies. The strategy should also outline how Government plans to add to the very limited data we have on how early investment can result in less intensive and less expensive interventions later in a child or young person's life.

Q2: What are your thoughts on the best way to incorporate early intervention into the child poverty strategy?

19. Barnardo's welcomes Graham Allen's interim report and strongly recommends that the Government's commitment to early intervention translates into action, even as pressures on public finances increase. We accept that this will not be easy, but believe that this is the right moment for central and local Government to work in partnership with the private and voluntary sectors to identify how cost savings can be made whilst improving outcomes. We welcome the Government's

intention to engage the private sector in developing effective models of investment, such as payment by results, and believe this will encourage greater local responsibility for tackling child poverty.

20. The Review highlights the importance of cost-benefit analysis to ensure that savings are made by implementing early intervention programmes that are proven to work. The strategy should incorporate this message by linking measures of service effectiveness to the economic benefits of early intervention. This would provide a basis for local child poverty strategies to do the same.
21. We support Graham Allen's definition of early intervention and agree that it should apply from the foundation years to young adulthood and not just to children aged 0 to 5 years. We recommend that early intervention is incorporated into the strategy by applying it to the building blocks outlined in the Child Poverty Act 2010, as detailed below.

Parental employment and skills

22. The strategy must acknowledge the importance of supporting parents to return to work or training after the birth of a child, as part of the implementation of the proposed Foundation Years Plan. We are concerned that changes to the Job Centre Plus Performance Management Framework will mean less specialist employment support for parents (including lone parents). The consultation document also lacks a clear emphasis or policy to encourage retention and progression in work. The strategy should outline action Government will take to enable more parents to enter, stay and progress in the labour market. This could include measures to provide flexible working patterns and affordable childcare to low income families.
23. We support the recommendation from the Review that a broad all-party review should examine options and cost benefits to move towards Swedish standards of parental leave. The strategy would provide a timely opportunity to include the evidence on this, especially as the Swedish system encourages high levels of labour market participation.

The provision of financial support for children and parents

24. We recommend that the strategy is used as an opportunity to investigate the types of material and financial support that would benefit the most vulnerable parents, so that investment in early intervention programmes is fully realised. We recommend that the strategy assesses the importance of financial support alongside early intervention to ensure that families benefit fully from the intervention offered. For example, we know that insufficient income can cause stress, anxiety, and depression in both parents and children, and these factors will negatively impact on families' ability to engage with support programmes.
25. Insufficient income also seriously limits the range of positive learning and social experiences and activities for children, which impacts negatively on both their present well-being and their future outcomes (including through limiting opportunities for them to acquire and develop 'soft' skills such as communication skills and self-confidence).
26. We agree with the Scottish Government's approach to maximising incomes through greater financial inclusion, for example by supporting families to take greater control of their finances. We agree that access to the right information, advice and financial services and measures to improve financial capability can make significant impacts on the material wellbeing of families. The Scottish Government notes that 'financial capability is the early intervention for financial inclusion, tackling one of the causes of poverty and deprivation rather than struggling to deal with the symptoms. It

plays an important role in achieving wider financial inclusion, alongside income maximisation, debt advice and measures to ensure access to affordable credit'. We believe that the UK child poverty strategy should outline steps that Government will take to address financial inclusion.

The provision of information, advice and assistance to parents and the promotion of parenting skills

27. Parenting programmes are proven to be effective in raising the self-confidence and self-esteem of socially excluded parents; improving parenting skills and positive and sustained parent-child relationships. These benefits are then passed on to their children. There is a clear link between increased confidence and parental engagement with education and training; improvements in children's behaviour, educational attainment and family health. Feedback from our programmes shows that families trust Barnardo's to support and listen to them, particularly as we do not have the negative stigma often attached to statutory services. Barnardo's delivers the Webster-Stratton/Incredible Years Programme. Extensive evaluation shows positive outcomes for children aged two to seven, including improved child readiness for school, parental attitudes and involvement in schools, and reduction in harsh discipline and conflict.⁶
28. It is particularly important that parents are supported at critical times in the child's life and we welcome the Review's recommendation that every vulnerable first-time mother should be able to access a Family Nurse Partnership.

Physical and mental health, education, childcare and social services

29. The Review highlights the need to break down the barriers to provision through closer professional and multi-agency working in health, education and social services. The strategy is an opportunity to examine this further by:
- a) Building on the work from the Marmot Review⁷ on health inequalities which suggested paid parental leave for the first year of life with a minimum income for healthy living;
 - b) Building on the examples in the Graham Allen Review as to how working across professional boundaries is cost-effective and crucial to effective models of early intervention and prevention;
 - c) Setting out the approach the Government will take with clear milestones to 2020.
30. Our services have identified lack of affordable, accessible and flexible childcare as one of the most significant barriers to breaking the cycle of poverty that families face. The tenth annual childcare costs survey from Daycare Trust⁸ found that in England, the cost of a nursery place for a child of two or over has increased by 4.8% since last year - far exceeding the growth rate of 2.1 per cent for the average wage in the same period. Government should incorporate childcare costs into the Universal Credit, taking account of these increases and ensuring that families are better off by moving into work or by working extra hours.

⁶ Brestan, E. and Eyberg, S. (1998) 'Effective Psychosocial Treatments for Conduct-Disordered Children and Adolescents: 29 Years, 82 Studies and 5,272 Kids' in *Journal of Clinical Child Psychology*, vol. 27 pp.180-189.

⁷ Marmot Review Team (2010) *Fair Society, Healthy Lives. The Marmot Review*. London: The Marmot Review.

⁸ Daycare Trust (2010), accessed online on 11.02.11 at <http://www.daycaretrust.org.uk/pages/rapid-rise-in-childcare-costs-adds-to-family-finance-woes.html>.

Housing, the built or natural environment and the promotion of social inclusion

31. Neither the consultation document nor the Graham Allen Review has a specific focus on this building block; however we know that poor housing and a poor home environment can impact negatively on a child's well-being and life chances. Barnardo's year-long study of poverty *Below the Breadline* showed that children living in overcrowded and cramped housing had little communal or safe space to play, nowhere quiet to do homework and a lack of privacy for both adults and children.⁹ In Britain, 1.6 million children live in poor housing affecting their health, educational achievement, and emotional well-being.¹⁰
32. The Independent Commission on Social Mobility¹¹ noted that 'there is clear evidence that living in social housing as a child increases the risk of multiple disadvantage in adulthood, and there can be little doubt that living in a deprived community affects the quality of life for children and their parents'. The strategy should outline how measures against this building block will impact on families living in temporary accommodation and those living in the most deprived communities, including measures to increase those families' access to social support networks.

Q3: Do you agree with our working definition of socio-economic disadvantage?

33. The Child Poverty Act 2010 states that a child experiences socio-economic disadvantage if they live in a household where income falls below one or more of the four income targets. The strategy must reflect this and outline measures to address lack of financial resources for children and parents. These could include measures to support parents into employment and to develop their employability sustaining skills, so that families' household income increases.
34. Section 9(6) of the Child Poverty Act 2010¹² states that the strategy 'must consider which groups of children in the United Kingdom appear to be disproportionately affected by socio-economic disadvantage; and must consider the likely impact of each measure on children within each of those groups'. The strategy should, therefore, identify which groups of children, young people and families are most at risk and outline the specific action required to reduce that risk. The effectiveness of measures to support at risk groups (including very small groups not accounted for by large surveys) should be included in the annual report to Parliament.

Q4: Are these the right areas for the child poverty strategy to cover?

35. The Government must adhere to the building blocks as set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010. These were established following extensive consultation with a wide range of organisations and groups that have considerable experience of what matters to children, young people and families. The decision to focus efforts on these areas was informed by the evidence base about what works to address disadvantage for children. The strategy should set out the progress it expects to make in each of these areas over the next ten years and should outline a monitoring framework to show that all groups have been reached.

⁹ Harris, J., Treanor, M. and Sharma, N. (2009) *Below the Breadline: A year in the life of families in poverty*. Barking: Barnardo's.

¹⁰ Shelter (2010), accessed online on 11.02.11 at

http://england.shelter.org.uk/housing_issues/Creating_better_neighbourhoods/supporting_families_and_children

¹¹ Independent Commission on Social Mobility (2009) *Report from the Independent Commission on Social Mobility*. London: Social Mobility Commission.

¹² *The Child Poverty Act 2010* (c. 9) London: HMSO.

36. We believe that focusing on the building blocks will also go some way to achieving the Government's social mobility agenda, which aims to break inter-generational patterns of poverty, and provide opportunities for the most disadvantaged children to flourish. However, far more sustained action is needed to see any impact on social mobility, and targeting resources only at the bottom 2-3% of disadvantaged families will not be enough to transform the pattern of stalled social mobility in the UK.
37. We support many of the recommendations made by the Independent Commission on Social Mobility¹³ and believe the strategy should outline measures the Government will take to:
- establish a credible, non-arbitrary minimum income standard;
 - increase the availability of affordable credit;
 - develop cross-cutting strategies to reduce the incidence of low birth weight;
 - target resources towards schools with the highest proportion of disadvantaged children;
 - implement direct admissions policies (as recommended in our report, *Unlocking the Gates*¹⁴);
 - expand vocational and work-based learning pathways for young people aged 14-19; and
 - provide high quality, sustained and tailored in-work support targeted at those most at risk of leaving employment.
38. The most recent Households Below Average Income (HBAI) statistics show that almost 60% of children living in poverty have at least one parent in work – this is 1.65 million (over half of all poor children).¹⁵ The child poverty strategy must prioritise these families. A systematic review commissioned by the Department for Work and Pensions showed that across 18 separate studies in the UK, the USA, Germany, Sweden and Australia, wages/household income, employment participation and working hours have the greatest potential to reduce in-work poverty¹⁶.

Q5: Do you agree that the role and the remit of the Child Poverty Commission should be broadened to reflect the new approach?

39. As the Child Poverty Act 2010 had cross-party support we expected the Coalition Government to give priority to the establishment of the Child Poverty Commission, so that the first strategy (which is effectively the 'blueprint' for subsequent strategies and annual reports) could be as well informed as possible. We are extremely disappointed that the Commission will not be able to provide meaningful input to the strategy and concerned that this contravenes the legal requirement as set out in the Act. This expert Commission is vital to guide progress towards the 2020 targets, and must be established as a matter of urgency so that the strategy has wide credibility.
40. The role and the remit of the Commission is set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010 and we believe it should be established urgently to ensure that Government is held to account for progress made. We believe it is essential that a timeline is agreed to show when the advice of the Commission will be sought at various points along the trajectory to 2020, including when and how they will call for witnesses.

¹³ Independent Commission on Social Mobility (2009) *Report from the Independent Commission on Social Mobility*. London: Social Mobility Commission.

¹⁴ Smith, N. (2010) *Unlocking the gates: giving disadvantaged children a fairer deal in school admissions*. Barking: Barnardo's.

¹⁵ Department for Work and Pensions (2010) *Households Below Average Income (HBAI) 1994/95-2008/09*. London: Department for Work and Pensions.

¹⁶ Tripney, J. et al. (2009) *In-work poverty: a systematic review*. London: Department for Work and Pensions.

Q6: What do you think makes the most difference to the life chances of children?

41. Barnardo's gave a detailed response to Frank Field's review into Poverty and Life Chances and provided practice examples of our work to improve outcomes for disadvantaged children. We would like the strategy to take into account of our previous recommendations, and to give significant weight to the importance of education to improving children's life chances.
42. Our work on narrowing the opportunity gap has highlighted that children living in poverty are further disadvantaged by being more likely to leave school at 16 without qualifications¹⁷; less likely to be admitted to the best schools¹⁸; and more likely to be excluded from school¹⁹. The strategy must acknowledge the impact this has on trapping children in the cycle of poverty, and should provide measures to address these issues.
43. In the consultation document the Government acknowledges that on current trends we can expect to find in 2020 that a third of parents in poverty will come from our current population of 16-24 year olds if action is not taken to address education and employment opportunities for this group. Barnardo's Works equips young people of this age group with the skills, experience and opportunities to access independent, sustainable employment. It is delivered in partnership with national and local employers and with local authorities. It targets young people furthest away from the labour market, giving them support to achieve independent employment. The potential for social mobility is a key part of the model, lifting young people out of poverty and increasing their aspirations, potential for increased income and on-going learning and financial security.
44. We welcome the Government's commitment to raising the participation age (RPA) and believe that offering options for full-time education, work-based learning and part-time education and training are crucial to addressing the needs of young people. However attention must also be given to the transition from education to full-time, sustainable employment. Large national employment initiatives for young people, delivered by the voluntary sector, can create meaningful programmes that help to kick start the careers of young people. Barnardo's and the third sector has shown that it has the capacity and expertise to deliver these initiatives on a large scale, working successfully with young people from vulnerable and disadvantaged backgrounds in particular. We would welcome more opportunities to support many more young people to make a successful transition into work, giving them hope and the chance to break inter-generational patterns of worklessness.
45. In addition the strategy should propose measures to address poverty of aspiration, opportunity and ambition in parents and children. We know that poorer children do not have access to the same opportunities as their better off peers and cost-effective solutions exist to address this gap. For example, Barnardo's has developed an achievement coaching programme for vulnerable and disadvantaged children in Scotland to improve children's educational outcomes by offering out-of-school hours coaching. This programme has been designed to unlock children's potential by engaging them in individual, group and family activities which motivate and inspire them to succeed.

¹⁷ Smith, N. (2010) *Lost in Transition: the urgent need to help young school leavers into education or training*. Barkingside: Barnardo's.

¹⁸ Smith, N. (2010) *Unlocking the gates: giving disadvantaged children a fairer deal in school admissions*. Barkingside: Barnardo's.

¹⁹ Evans, J. (2010) *Not present and not correct: Understanding and preventing school exclusions*. Barkingside: Barnardo's; and forthcoming.

46. Children from low income backgrounds are less resilient, but protective factors in the family environment can moderate the effects of financial hardship.²⁰ Researchers identify that there are intrinsic factors of resilience such as a secure base, a sense of mastery and control and self-esteem.²¹ These can be promoted in the home environment with the presence of at least one supportive parent or reliable adult, maintenance of family routines and manageable contributions to the household that promote competencies, self-esteem and problem-solving.²² The strategy should support initiatives to promote resilience in children and young people, including existing programmes such as the Family Nurse Partnership.

Q7: Are there additional measures, compatible with our fiscal approach, which could help us combat poverty and improve life chances?

47. We do not accept that missing the four income targets set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010 is an inevitable consequence of the current financial climate, and believe that the strategy must be a ten year vision of how the Government plans to use its fiscal approach to lift children out of poverty. We urge the Government to outline a downward trajectory to 2020 within the strategy, set in the context of planning for economic growth.
48. The strategy should outline how each of the measures highlighted at section 8.2 of the consultation document will help to eradicate child poverty, including a timeline of key milestones the Government expects to reach over the next ten years.
49. In addition to improving parents' access to employment and skills training, we believe that significant progress towards the 2020 targets can be achieved by better targeting of resources towards vulnerable children and families. Barnardo's has previously proposed credible, costed ideas for saving or recycling public money that is spent for the benefit of children, and we are pleased with decisions to means test child benefit and target child tax credits more effectively towards poorer families. We suggest that additional measures could be taken, such as scrapping winter fuel payments and free TV licences, and increasing Pension Credit to ensure that no poor households lose out. We estimate that this would save £1.4 billion which could be redirected towards the Government's goal of eradicating child poverty.
50. The strategy should also acknowledge the financial benefits of tackling child poverty. Estimates made by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation²³ show that child poverty costs £25 billion a year and that £17 million could be accrued if child poverty were to be eradicated.
51. The strategy should highlight the economic benefits of early intervention. Randomised control group evaluations of models of parenting support programmes such as Incredible Years found that they reduced parental depression, increased parental self-confidence, encouraged positive family communication and reduced conduct problems in children's interactions with parents. Incredible Years, for parents with children with diagnosed disruptive behaviour, costs an average of £1,344 to improve a child's behaviour to below clinical levels of disruptiveness. This is very cost-effective when

²⁰ Hansen, K., Joshi, H. and Dex, S., 'School achievement at age 5' in Hansen, K., Joshi, H and Dex, S. (eds) (2010) *Children of the 21st century: the first 5 years*. Bristol: Policy Press.

²¹ Daniel, B. and Wassell, S. (2002) *The School Years: Assessing and Promoting Resilience in Vulnerable Children*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishing.

²² Newman, T. (2004) *What works in building resilience?*. Barkingside: Barnardo's.

²³ Hirsch, D. (2008) *Estimating the costs of child poverty*. York: JRF.

compared with the extra £60,000 that an individual with conduct disorder has cost public services by the age of 28.²⁴

52. We believe there are cost-effective ways to maximise household resources without significant financial investment, including improving access to flexible savings accounts and direct debit facilities suitable for the needs of low-income households, and providing good quality, timely advice to support families to access affordable credit and take control of their finances.
53. In setting priorities the Government must examine its approach to tackling child poverty in terms of which policy levers will have the greatest impact. For example, is investment in education the most cost effective solution for children living in poverty, or should it be directed at those suffering from poor health or living in unsafe, inappropriate accommodation? Barnardo's forthcoming research into 'levelling the playing field' will allow us to determine the most crucial factors affecting the children, young people and families we work with, and we look forward to sharing our findings.

Q8: What further steps can be taken to help local authorities and partners to reduce poverty and improve life chances?

54. Local Government has an extensive range of statutory duties to protect children's welfare and improve outcomes. The Government needs to consider how spending decisions have impacted the ability of local authorities to carry out their duties to children and families, and monitor the decisions that are being made locally, such as closures of SSCCs. The Child Poverty Act 2010 requires local child poverty needs assessments to be carried out and a joint child poverty strategy for the local area to be developed. The Government must ensure that this legislative requirement is met by implementing an effective system of monitoring and accountability. At present, there are real concerns that local authorities will not be able to meet these duties, and we need to see a clear lead from central Government to ensure that they do.
55. In addition, there is a role for central Government to provide local authorities with the data and analysis which it currently uses itself to assess local need for services. A study found that only a third of local authorities that received the AIDS Support Grant were able to show that they had good knowledge of the local HIV population who were intended to benefit from the grant²⁵. Encouraging local authorities to access and use this information will increase understanding of the needs of their service users better, making for more effective service provision and better value for money. This is particularly pertinent to the Early Intervention Grant so that local leaders are able to make informed choices about where to target resources to have the greatest impact on disadvantaged children, young people and families.
56. The strategy should include steps that the Government will take, through the Child Poverty Unit, The Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People's Services (C4EO) and other networks, to gather and disseminate the latest evidence on effective practice to address child poverty.
57. We agree with Graham Allen that the Government's new arrangements for local health services provide an opportunity to localise early intervention, and that GP consortia and local authorities should work together to commission evidence-based preventive early interventions. We welcome incentives to local authorities to prioritise health inequalities and disadvantaged groups, and

²⁴ Scott et al. (2001) 'Financial Cost of Social Exclusion: follow up study of anti-social children into adulthood', *British Medical Journal* Vol. 323:191.

²⁵ National AIDS Trust (2009) *The AIDS Support Grant: Making a Difference?*. London: NAT.

recommend that targets are introduced to monitor the impact the Health Premium has on reducing child poverty.

Q9: How can the voluntary, community and private sectors contribute most effectively to local approaches to tackling child poverty and improving life chances?

58. Local Government should include the private sector as partners in drawing up local strategies to tackle child poverty so that responsibility is shared. Specific measures within local strategies that should be supported by Government and driven by the private sector include ensuring that parents can access training and employment opportunities; providing a framework for progression at work; and paying sufficient wages. We agree with the Independent Commission on Social Mobility that training providers should work to targets that reward the sustainability of jobs rather than simply securing employment. The Government should encourage the voluntary, community and private sectors to collaborate to support families through employability focused programmes, as Barnardo's does through the Future Jobs Fund.
59. The voluntary and community sectors must be key partners in developing local strategies with appropriate measures and targets for the families with which they work. It is our experience that families trust voluntary agencies to support them, and that our services can provide useful links to statutory agencies. This is particularly true for disadvantaged families who may be resistant due to negative experiences or multiple interventions. We recommend that the Government takes into account the unique role of voluntary agencies when commissioning outcomes based services.
60. In addition to the role of voluntary, community and private sectors, the strategy should focus on how to engage with the public. It should outline the action that will be taken to challenge negative public perceptions of families living in poverty, particularly given the high rate of in-work poverty experienced by families across the UK. Such negative perceptions debilitate families and disadvantage children further. Families should be given the opportunity to be involved in developing local solutions and promote greater understanding of the multifarious causes and effects of poverty.