

Via the online submission webpage at <https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/372/children-in-poverty-measurement-and-targets/>

23 February 2021

Dear Work and Pensions Committee

This is a response from the Walcot Foundation to your call for submissions to the inquiry into children in poverty: measurement and targets.

We are not a research body and claim no expertise in this field. Our submission draws only on our work of 'the relief of poverty' in Lambeth. We are a 17thC endowed grantmaking charity. We make grants of c£2 million each year to fund activity aimed at helping Lambeth citizens under 30 who are affected by poverty improve their whole-life prospects. More information about our work can be found at walcotfoundation.org.uk.

HOW SHOULD CHILD POVERTY BE MEASURED AND DEFINED?

We accept that measuring child poverty is not as easy as many might imagine.

1. We favour an approach that measures relative rather than absolute poverty.
2. We see an AHC (after housing costs) formula as being the most valuable, not least because it can reflect regional differences in living costs.
3. We believe the 60% of median income is as good a measure as any and allows comparisons.

THE MEASURES OF CHILD POVERTY CHANGED IN 2016. WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT?

4. The four income-based measures of child poverty set out in the Child Poverty Act 2010 were clear and workable. The changes in 2016 as part of the Welfare Reform and Work Act were regarded as many in the sector and not being an improvement.
5. Overall, our impression is that child poverty measures that focus on income and material deprivation are the most valuable, not least in communicating the scandal of child poverty to a general audience.

WHAT WERE THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF HAVING A SET OF TARGETS FOR REDUCING CHILD POVERTY?

6. The former targets served the function of encouraging concerted and co-ordinated action. We believe they had value and should be restored.

OTHER COMMENTS

7. Given that an estimated 72% of children in poverty live in working families (source CPAG), we see limited value in a measure focused on children being raised in 'workless' families.

8. Because of the adverse impact of poverty on educational performance think it important to gather comparative data about the educational attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged pupils.
9. The impact – human and economic – of child poverty on individuals and society is well rehearsed. In our view, it is also a scandal.
10. We share the view that poverty at home is a strong statistical predictor of how well children do in school and has direct implications for whole-life success.
11. We see no drawbacks but only advantages to a cross-government child poverty strategy.

We wish the committee every success in addressing this important issue.

Yours faithfully

A yellow rectangular box redacting the signature of Hugh Valentine.

Hugh Valentine
Director