THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTHAMPTON

Article

Title: What next for children's services? Can policy at a local or national level have any significant impact on the outcomes for children and their families?

Creators: Kakabadse, N. K., Marzec, N. and Rose, R.

DOI: 10.1080/02673843.2012.709173

Example citation: Kakabadse, N. K., Marzec, N. and Rose, R. (2014) What next for children's services? Can policy at a local or national level have any significant impact on the outcomes for children and their families? *International Journal of Adolescence and Youth.* **19**(1), pp. 84-98. 0267-3843.

It is advisable to refer to the publisher's version if you intend to cite from this work.
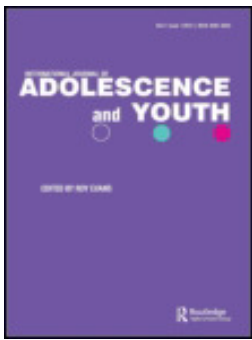
Version: Published version

Note:

http://nectar.northampton.ac.uk/4450/

What next for children's services? Can policy at a local or national level have any significant impact on the outcomes for children and their families?

Nada K. Kakabadse, Nicci Marzec & Richard Rose

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

What next for children's services? Can policy at a local or national level have any significant impact on the outcomes for children and their families?

Nada K. Kakabadse[a]*, Nicci Marzec[b] and Richard Rose[c]

[a]*The University of Northampton Business School, Northampton, UK;* [b]*Northampton Borough Council, Northampton, UK;* [c]*School of Education, The Univeristy of Northampton, UK*

In England at both strategic and operational levels, policy-makers in the public sector have undertaken considerable work on implementing the findings of the Every Child Matters report and subsequently through the Children's Act 2004. Legislation has resulted in many local authorities seeking to implement more holistic approaches to the delivery of children's services. At a strategic level this is demonstrated by the creation of integrated directorate structures providing for a range of services, from education to children's social care. Such services were generally under the management of the Director of Children's Services, holding statutory responsibilities for the delivery of services formally divided into the three sectors of education, health and social services. At a national level, more fundamental policy developments have sought to establish a framework through which policy-makers can address the underlying causes of deprivation, vulnerability and inequality. The Child Poverty Act, 2010, which gained Royal Assent in 2010, provides for a clear intention to reduce the number of children in poverty, acknowledging that 'the best way to eradicate child poverty is to address the causes of poverty, rather than only treat the symptoms'. However, whilst the policy objectives of both pieces of legislation hold positive aspirations for children and young people, a change of policy direction through a change of government in May 2010 seems to be in direct contrast to the intended focus of these aims. This paper explores the impact of new government policy on the future direction of children's services both at the national and local levels. At the national level, we question the ability of the government to deliver the aspirations of the Child Poverty Act, 2010, given the broad range of influences and factors that can determine the circumstances in which a child may experience poverty. We argue that poverty is not simply an issue of the pressure of financial deprivation, but that economic recession and cuts in government spending will further increase the number of children living in poverty.

Keywords: child poverty; Children's Act; Every Child Matters; young people; social justice

Introduction

Since the introduction of Every Child Matters (Department for Education & Skills, 2003) and the responses to the Children's Act 2004 (Barker, 2008), there have been significant developments in the shape of children's services across local authorities in England and Wales. In particular, many responded to the holistic approach to the creation of services that focused on the needs of children and their families by integrating services into a single service lead by the statutorily required position of Director of Children's Services.

---

*Corresponding author. Email: nada.kakabadse@northampton.ac.uk

In many authorities, such structures primarily saw the integration of traditional service directorates for education with children's social care functions, and in some cases extended to broader services for young people including youth services, youth offending teams and early years provisions.

Within local authority areas the concept of integrating services extended beyond the strategic policy and organisational context of a single service directorate and was reflected in operation delivery with the creation of integrated multi-disciplinary teams, often focused on geographical areas, to improve the synergy between services to children and families (Department for Children, Schools and Families [DCSF], 2008b). The driver for such integration in service delivery was often modelled on the concept created through 'Sure Start' in 1988 for early years provision to improve the coordination of services, pre and post natal, to support improved longer-term life-chances for children in more deprived neighbourhoods (Belsky, Barnes, & Melhuish, 2007), modelled on the Head Start 1965 programme in the United States (Currie & Thomas, 1995) and comparable with Australia Head Start (NSW Commission for Children and Young People, 2004) and Ontario's Early Years Plan (Ontario Ministry of Child & Youth Service, 2001).

Challenges of integrated services

A Centre for Social Justice Report (2011) highlights the challenges of integrated working that have been reflected in the plethora of studies and approaches to overcoming the boundaries of professional specialisms and the different management structures and approaches across different disciplines and organisations (Reder, Duncan, & Gray, 1993; Brown, Crawford, & Darongkamas, 2000). The centre's advisory council includes Sir Kevin Tebbit, Former Director of GCHQ and former Permanent Under Secretary of the Ministry of Defence, and a merchant bank CEO, William Hague, a prominent figure in British politics and society (Centre for Social Justice, 2012). The challenges identified within this report echo some of those expressed by Shaw et al. (2009), who emphasised that the well-established pathway of assessment, planning, intervention and review that has been at the heart of services supporting children has traditionally been founded upon systems developed by the individual services (education, social services, health) and that professionals have needed to be persuaded of the value of developing new approaches that do not necessarily accord with those that have been long established.

The initiative of integrated children's services was enshrined in government policy in the Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy (DCSF, 2008a) and recognised:

> the diversity of professions and occupations that comprise the children and young people's workforce – from police officers to paediatricians, social workers to sports coaches – is a key part of its strength. That's why this strategy includes actions we will take to address the specific challenges faced by different sectors, including new commitments to address current challenges facing the social care and early years and childcare workforce and to improve support for senior leaders and managers in children's services. (DCSF, 2008a, p. 2)

The challenges of Every Child Matters (Department for Education & Skills, 2003) are evidenced both in the investment in work with professionals at a local and a national level to support more integrated working and to address the perceived barriers inherent in policy and procedure between different professions and organisations, often focused on differing approaches to information-sharing (Anning, Cottrell, Frost, Green, & Robinson, 2006) These were not issues that were readily resolved, particularly within middle management structures where one could perceive the barriers to integration as protecting the preserve of specialist professions.

The change of government in May 2010 has, in a short space of time, seen some radical changes in policy for public services (HM Treasury, 2010), and more specifically for services to children and families. This poses a potential threat to the further integration of services and the fruition of nearly a decade of investment in the development of children's services.

At an aspirational level, the principles of Every Child Matters (Department for Education & Skills, 2003) may have been retained by the coalition, and the Department of Education website proclaims continued support for the five principles. However, the Department of Education has re-designated the approach to partnership and integrated working as 'Early Support', and implicit within that it has scaled back in its approach to focus on intervention in early years, thus reflecting a return to the principles of 'Sure Start' (Belsky et al., 2007) rather than across the broader scope of all services to children and young people.

It is perhaps ironic that, whilst at a policy level the principles may have been retained, one of the first acts of the new Coalition Government was the re-designation of the DCSF, the removal of the rainbow logo from departmental buildings and the immediate creation of a Department for Education that had no clear focus on the wider role of the family in children's lives (Shepherd, 2010). In this case, symbols were used not for reconciliation but more to highlight the demise of structure, or in Bourdieu's (1991, p. 24) language to impose 'symbolic violence' on a vulnerable part of civic society.

The Coalition Government then rapidly implemented a raft of policy decisions that would impact both directly and indirectly on children and young people. Cuts in public-sector funding both at a national level and in direct funding allocations to local government did not preclude impact on services to children and young people; rather, some more specifically targeted them:

> In his emergency budget on 22 June 2010, Chancellor George Osborne promised a Budget that would be 'tough but fair' as he announced an increase in VAT from 17.5 per cent to 20 per cent, a two year pay freeze for public sector workers, a three year freeze on child benefits, a tightening of housing benefit entitlements and on eligibility for child tax credit among other austerity measures. (McKendrick, Mooney, Dickie, & Kelly, 2011, p. 7)

Further measures included the removal of Child Trust Funds and government contributions to them, changes to parental child benefit entitlement, proposed changes to Education Maintenance Allowances, removal of funding for playwork and non-renewal of contracts with Play England that expired on 31 March 2011. However, proposed cuts to local authority budgets pose perhaps one of the greatest threats to services for children and young people with significant up-front reductions in revenue settlement grants to local councils, but with local determination on where the axe should fall in terms of service reductions.

We cannot overlook the significance of the cuts for local authorities and their scale, which means that services to children will not be immune from both immediate reduction and longer-term scaling back. Non-statutory services have been amongst the first casualties with youth services and the youth services provider, the Connexions service, responsible for supporting young people into employment amongst the hardest hit, whilst cuts to other community-based services such as public transport and library services will also have an impact on children and young people (Barker, 2008).

The national context

As the basis of a survey of OECD economies on child welfare, the following UNICEF child well-being measure was made:

whether children are adequately clothed and housed and fed and protected, whether their circumstances are such that they are likely to become all that they are capable of becoming or whether they are disadvantaged in ways that make it difficult or impossible for them to participate fully in the life and opportunities around them. (UNICEF, 2007, p. 39)

At the head of this list are the Netherlands, Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Spain, Switzerland and Norway. However, less effectiveness is suggested for countries with neo-liberal economies and shareholder models of governance. This includes Hungary, United States and the United Kingdom. In fact, UK statistics illustrate that children's rights continue to be denied in the United Kingdom (Children's Rights Alliance for England, 2009):

- 3.9 million children (approximately one-third of children) are living below the poverty line (household income that is 60% or less of the average [median] British household income).
- Whilst one in 10 children have a diagnosable mental health problem, only around 25% have access to the treatment they need.
- At any given time in England and Wales there exist 60,000 'looked-after' local authority children as a result of not having parents and families who can look after them – just over one in 200 children (DCSF, 2006).
- In England and Wales approximately 3000 young people under the age of 18 are taken into custody (Children's Rights Alliance for England, 2009; Child Rights Information Network, 2002). Their stay is on average of four and half months, so roughly 8000 children are in custody each year (Child Rights Information Network, 2002).
- The United Kingdom has the second-worst infant mortality rate of the 24 wealthiest countries in the world.

It is generally agreed that we need to better understand poverty and in order to do so need to appreciate the nature of typical living standards in society (Child Poverty Action Group, 2010). Further it is a widely held view that individuals, families and groups in a population lie in poverty when 'they lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities, and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or are at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong' (Townsend, 1979, p. 31). In 2010, the Fiscal Studies research centre (for supposed social justice) study (Brewer & Joyce, 2010) predicted that between 2010/11 and 2013/14 average income is to stagnate and that absolute and relative poverty amongst children and working-age adults will rise. A further 2011 Institute for Fiscal Studies study found that the median British household suffered the biggest three-year fall in real living standards since the early 1980s (Browne, 2011). The interpretation of this situation given by the Governor of the Bank of England was that 'the squeeze in living standards is the inevitable price to pay for the financial crisis and subsequent rebalancing of the world and UK economies' (The Economist, 2011, p. 87). His failure to recognise that in addition to financial hardship there would be an impact upon the social welfare of the most vulnerable groups should be a cause for concern.

The government's low-key but continued support for the five themes in Every Child Matters would seem to be at odds with many of the policy decisions to cut services for children and young people both directly and indirectly through fiscal policy decisions. A further seeming anomaly also emerges in relation to wider policy decisions and the implications that they will have on child poverty.

Far from repealing the Child Poverty Act (2010) that gained Royal Assent on 31 March 2010, the Coalition Government has restated the aims of the Act to reduce Child Poverty

by 2020. Children's Minister Sarah Teather, launching a new consultation on approaches to reducing child poverty in December 2010, stated:

> The best way to eradicate child poverty is to address the causes of poverty, rather than only treat the symptoms. Frank Field's independent report on poverty and life chances, published earlier this month, is a welcome reminder of how important early years childcare and education is to setting a child on the road to success and out of poverty. (Department for Education, 2010a, p. 1)

One can restate the aim, but the solution, again focusing on early years and the principles of Sure Start and education, do not necessarily adequately reflect the multi-dimensional nature of poverty and its many and varying influences over time, which can impact childhood experiences and the likelihood of continued poverty in adulthood. The government's Opportunities for All report, published annually from 1999 onwards, has continued to review progress towards the aim of ending child poverty in a generation, to break cycles of deprivation by improving the quality of education for all and to promote work as the best form of welfare for removing the barriers people face in improving their social and economic status (Department for Work and Pensions, 2006).

A multitude of studies have determined that poverty is not just about financial pressure and that income is only one determining factor that can cause strain in the short term and can impact in the longer term in the form of lack of material resources. For example, a UNICEF (2007) study shows that higher government spending on family and social benefits is associated with lower child poverty rates. Moreover, there is no OECD country that devotes 10% or more of gross domestic product to social transfers that has a child poverty rate higher than 10% (UNICEF, 2007). Clearly there is a need to exercise caution when using the term poverty, which has been subject to a number of definitions (Alkire & Foster, 2011). In particular, it is necessary to consider the multi-dimensional factors that impact upon the lives of families as emphasised within the Millennium Development Goals. As Alkire and Foster (2011) have argued, a simplistic focus upon quantitative factors associated with income and consumption needs to be considered alongside those qualitative variable that include the perceptions of individuals around personal and family security and competence in areas such as literacy and educational attainment. For many families at risk, their own ability to control those factors that shape their lives appear limited and they find themselves increasingly disenfranchised by the pertaining socio-economic and political climate of the day. The implications of both economic recession and government policies to cut public-sector funding are likely to have an instant impact on poverty as well as implications in increasing vulnerability in later life (Tomlinson & Walker, 2009).

The concept of poverty, banished by Margaret Thatcher, was resurrected by the Labour Government in 1999 (Dickens, Gregg, & Wadsworth, 2003; Shaw, 2007). Thatcher's belief that the government should reduce public spending and that privatisation and markets are intrinsically superior to public provision still dominates British politics today (McElwee & Tyrie, 2001). In general terms, poverty rose rapidly whilst Thatcher was Prime Minister (1979–1990) (Shaw, 2007; Van der Putten, 2005). Prime Minister David Cameron embraced the goal of ending child poverty and the targets associated with it, yet individual policy objectives set within current government departments would seem to have little reference to a cohesive approach to tackling the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, its causes or consequences (Tomlinson & Walker, 2009). Policies aimed at welfare reform, whilst espousing the values of equality through universalism, are unlikely in reality to result in increased financial capability for many families who are dependent on benefit support. Equally, policy objectives aimed at reducing the number of people claiming specific benefit

types by encouraging a return to employment are at odds with an economic environment that is seeking to reduce costs and increase efficiency.

There is no guarantee that employment will lead to affluence. The minimum wage, whilst offering a limited guarantee of income for the individual, does little to offer sufficient financial security to support dependents without reliance on additional benefits and tax credits to boost earnings to an agreed minimum for the family unit. It is therefore debatable whether employment in itself is an incentive with which to entice people out of dependency despite the ancillary benefits of socialisation, self-esteem and confidence for both the individual and their family. As Marx argued, 'it is not the consciousness of [people] that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness' (1977, p. 26). In the United Kingdom, the commonly used measure of inequality in the distribution of family income and/or wealth in a country, the Gini index (Gini, 1936), has been steadily rising. The Gini coefficient can range from zero to one as an objective measure of income inequality, where a coefficient of zero means that all individuals share income equally and a coefficient of one indicates that one person within the population has all the income and everyone else none (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010; Gini, 1936). The index was 0.31 in the mid-1970s, 0.39 in the mid-1980s, 0.41 in the early 1990s, 0.42 in the mid-1990s and 0.43 in the early 2000s. It fell back to 0.41 in the mid-2000s (Postles, 2011). Only modern America, which comes after the United Kingdom on child well-being measures, scores worse at 0.45, with some areas such as Fairfield County, Connecticut, with an alarming 0.54 (Central Intelligence Agency, 2010), and England of all OECD economies (Children's Rights Alliance for England, 2009) shows a Byzantium level of inequality. According to the Central Intelligence Agency (2010), the Gini index above 0.45 is an indicator of forthcoming social unrest and political strife.

Some argue that poverty is not a constant that we can eradicate simply through a more dynamic economy as increasing wealth within society as a whole raises the expectations of acceptable basic living standards for all. Therefore:

> since greater wealth serves to increase the threshold distinguishing poor people from all others, it is necessary to redistribute resources between the two groups, meaning that a more affluent portion of the population will need to forego income, or increases in income, in order to lift others out of poverty. (Tomlinson & Walker, 2009, p. 9)

However, the reduction of poverty creates the need to accept the premise that incomes for the more affluent cannot continue on an upward trajectory without impact on expectation and aspiration across the whole of society, or on the relative gaps between affluence and poverty. This has created ideological and policy challenges for successive governments.

The ideological challenge is perhaps the greatest barrier and one that the current party political system, with inherent conflict between government and opposition, is ill-placed to address. First, it is necessary, in the process of defining poverty, to produce an objective measure of acceptable standards of living that families should have if they are to be respected as members of society. Second, the more complex challenge is then to build a consensus across political ideologies to tackling the defined problem over a sustained period in which change can have a positive effect.

The current approach of government to such multi-faceted problems is in itself detrimental to its ultimate aims because the need to evidence the value of investment, or disinvestment, must be in some way measurable in order to justify it within the political context. Consequently, there is a need to adopt multiple indicators against which we can assess progress, reflecting the range of dimensions underpinning the issue, but with a tendency to require targets that are often specifically focused on a single aspect of

poverty that serves to polarise both the issue and the debate. The focus on a dependency on welfare benefits is a common area on which the spotlight falls, which has been described as:

> a system that pays people more to live in idleness than to take a job is a rotten one, which undermines the social fabric … there are five million people on out of work benefits, and nearly a third of them have been living on benefits almost all their adult lives. (*Telegraph View*, 2011, p. 2)

Successive governments have articulated the problem and acknowledged the increasing burden on the taxpayer. They have, however, failed to reach consensus on how to address this problem. Creating incentives or attempting to coerce or force people into paid employment in order to reduce the burden of welfare benefits on the taxpayer has yet to significantly impact either the taxpayer or the levels of poverty, in its widest definition, within society. Dorling (2011) would refute that the welfare state can have a positive impact of poverty for those on low incomes, and argues that 'social exclusion cannot be ended by complex schemes of tax credits, child benefits and local area funding when those with most are allowed to accrue even more' (2011, p. 26).

Attempts to address wider causal factors that contribute either to a propensity to poverty or the opportunity to escape from it have also had somewhat limiting results. The Labour Government of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century introduced a range of initiatives to improve the opportunities for young people through educational reforms, the creation of academies, Private Finance Initiatives, the Building Schools for the Future programme and programmes of school closures to 'Fresh Start' failing schools (Kakabadse, Kakabadse, & Summers, 2007). Yet despite increasing numbers of young people leaving school at Key Stage 4 with GCSE passes at grades A∗–C, heralded by teachers and young people alike as a success for schools, the increasing gulf between those with qualifications and those without basic skills continued to grow (CBI, 2011). Grundy and Holt (2001) suggest that whilst the clear gulf of financial security potential between individuals with academic qualifications and those who leave school without qualifications is an indicator of the importance of formal education in addressing poverty, it is most clearly delineated when comparing those who have undertaken post-compulsory education with those who leave school and enter immediately into employment or benefit. Conlon (2002) is largely in accord with this statement. Basing his assertions upon the National Child Development Study, a continuing longitudinal study that follows the lives of all individuals who were born between 3 March and 9 March 1958 in the United Kingdom, Conlon demonstrates how even those who have vocational qualifications lack the earning potential of individuals with higher academic attainment.

The Coalition Government response to educational reforms marks a trend towards the creation of free schools and parent and community-led initiatives to respond to the needs of local communities to help underperforming children and to respond to a lack of available school places in certain parts of the country. Yet despite assertions that the policy will open up opportunities for children in poorer working-class families, 'analysis of the catchment areas of the first 24 free schools approved by the government shows that they are skewed towards the middle class and that white, working class pupils will be under-represented' (Vasagar & Shepherd, 2011, p. 1). It is perhaps more realistic to presume that the concept masks the return to policies; for example, the creation of grant-maintained schools, which sought to liberate well-performing schools from the influence of the local authority and in many cases resulted in admission criteria that introduced full or partial elements of selection (Levinson, Cookson, & Sadovnik, 2002).

The concept that poverty, and those experiencing it, exerts a negative influence within society is a recurring theme throughout history that social policy responses often reflect in addressing the issue. 'Disadvantaged populations have long been seen as distinctive from the "rest of society" … and underpins how some among the non-poor and, in particular, politicians, policy makers and the media think, talk and act towards "the poor"' (McKendrick et al., 2011, p. 10). The riots across the country during August 2011 have served to polarise the opinion of those groups, and wider groups among the 'non-poor' in society as a whole, towards many of the participants directly. The indirect consequence, however, has been a resurgence of public opinion against certain groups within society, which we perceive as the harbourers of those who participated, and a level of response at a policy level that, one could argue, is excessive when we compare it with the reality of events.

Many have heatedly debated the underlying causes of the riots, which was initially blamed on the shooting of Mark Duggan by the Metropolitan Police in Tottenham (Barkham & Healey, 2011). This has led to further debate about social values, poverty, crime, disaffection and social exclusion. The role of technology and social networking in precipitating rioting behaviour in parts of the country has also been the subject of much debate, as has the character of the rioting activity, which saw looting and criminal damage as predominant rather than purely anger and aggression against the establishment as traditionally manifested in confrontation between protesters and the police.

Whilst there is some evidence to suggest a link between those involved in the rioting and deprivation, at a political level there is no clear consensus about the causes. Research carried out for the *Financial Times* suggests that:

> more than an third of suspects charged with offences related to the riots in London last month live in the poorest fifth of the city's areas. Overall, two-thirds of all suspects live in neighbourhoods with below average income, and only three per cent hail from the wealthiest 20 percent of areas. (Gainsbury & Culzac, 2011)

However, the Justice Secretary Kenneth Clarke has publicly acclaimed a different stance, stating:

> It's not yet been widely recognised, but the hardcore of the rioters were in fact known criminals. Close to three quarters of those aged 18 or over charged with riot offences already had a prior conviction. That is the legacy of a broken penal system – one whose record in preventing reoffending has been straightforwardly dreadful. In my view, the riots can be seen in part as an outburst of outrageous behaviour by the criminal classes – individuals and families familiar with the justice system, who haven't been changed by their past punishments. (Lewis et al., 2011)

It is not only the underlying cause of the unrest that is under debate; the role of children and young people is also the subject of differing views and responses:

> Although three-quarters of those charged are reported to be over 18, the response has involved a raft of policy announcements that will affect children and families. Prime Minister David Cameron called for 'an all out war' on gangs and set up a taskforce led by Home Secretary Theresa May and Work and Pensions Secretary Iain Duncan Smith. (Puffett, 2011, p. 1)

The conflict of views on how to approach the issue would seem to extend to the joint task force leads, with Iain Duncan Smith advocating a longer-term approach based on the Dying to Belong report that the Centre for Social Justice issued, whilst the Home Secretary would seem to be looking for a more rapid response to demonstrate government action to restore public order (Werran, 2011, p. 1).

The local dimension

We can explain the difficulties that government faces in tackling poverty, and specifically child poverty, in part by the long-term nature of the problem as incompatible with the

short-term focus of political policies shaped by a changing socio-economic environment framed by 'hesitant political leadership in the context of limited popular support' (Child Poverty Action Group, 2010, p. 11).

If this is the challenge at a national level, what impact will this have at a local level where political imperatives are equally governed by media interest and lack of popular support, but where finances are even more restricted and the opportunity to influence the causal effects of poverty are significantly limited?

The Child Poverty Act (2010) places duties and responsibilities on a range of partners at local level to 'cooperate with a view to reducing and mitigating the effects of child poverty in their areas'. The act also requires partners to prepare and publish local child poverty needs assessments and to develop joint child poverty strategies (Department for Education, 2010a, 2010b). However, there is no clear direction from the government about the focus of activity that these organisations should carry out at a local level. Instead, they are to apply the principles of localism in response to needs assessment information:

> Local authorities (LAs) and their partners know the challenges their residents face better than anyone else, including central government. This knowledge allows them to shape their services to fit the needs of their residents and use their resources most effectively. (Department for Education, 2010a, p. 1)

Local needs assessments may be a critical tool in identifying the specific problems and issues in the locality. The more critical question is whether the capacity exists at a local level, politically, financially, environmentally, economically and socially, in order to achieve significant change. The challenges, in addition to the obvious need to raise the general income level in low-income households, include the provision of school-based activities, regeneration of deprived and rundown neighbourhoods, provision of low-energy affordable homes, safer streets and more green spaces with child-friendly spaces for supervised play, and more cohesive communities with activities for children and families (Cooke & Lawton, 2008; Department for Work & Pensions, 2007; Department for Work & Pensions & Department for Education, 2011; Dickens et al., 2003). However, many of these challenges are not achievable in the short term and the aspiration for significant change by 2020 may be too ambitious (Hirsch, 2006).

Whilst at one level there is a recognition that many poorer communities are in need of investment and regeneration, politically this often represents a significant 'trade-off between giving priority to highly disadvantaged areas, which are not regarded by local politicians or more affluent residents as more deserving, reducing local taxes and providing cultural amenities for the wider community' (Cooke & Lawton, 2008, p. 41). In an era of increasing financial pressure, the need to prioritise resources and justify investment to an increasingly disaffected electorate in itself presents a challenge (Electoral Commission, 2005). Research suggests that:

> disadvantage is strongly associated with place and a look at the 10 lowest turnout constituencies suggests a link between social context, including urbanity and deprivation, and turnout. A cursory look at the relationship between dimensions of social exclusion and turnout levels, illustrates an apparent correlation between social exclusion and a person's capacity or inclination to vote. (ODPM, 2004)

At an organisational level, the greatest short-term pressure for most public services is undoubtedly financial. The impact of government funding cuts on revenue settlement grants, but also a range of other funding streams that have contributed to service delivery, will have significant impact on the provision of services, particularly those that are non-statutory (Richardson, 2011). Within children's services there exists an inherent tension

between statutory safeguarding obligations and the increasing acknowledgement that preventative services, often of non-statutory provision, can have a positive impact on the life-chances of children and young people. Studies that demonstrate the cost-effectiveness of early intervention can make a case for the intervention approach both in terms of longer-term investment and in positive outcomes for children and families (Easton, Gee, Durbin, & Teeman, 2011), yet for individual public-sector organisations these costs can be difficult to quantify and relate specifically to service or organisational budget pressures.

Surveys involving the National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (NCLSCS) and the Association of Directors of Children's Services from April 2011 confirmed reports that the average level of in year savings in children's services was approximately 13%, with savings on front-line services mainly affecting youth provision, school improvement and early years – all areas where government grants have either been reduced or ceased (Association of Directors of Children's Services & NCLSCS, 2011). Pressure to maintain frontline services generally, with savings found from within back office and management structures has potential impacts for both the organisational structure of children's services and the role of the Director of Children's Services within those structures.

Research has indicated that the Director of Children's Services role, essentially established to oversee the provision of children's services as defined by the Children's Act 2004, has in many cases expanded to include responsibility for other services including aspects of adult provision, housing, communities or leisure (NCLSCS, 2010). The research further highlights that even where the role of the Director of Children's Services in terms of responsibility for children's services has remained relatively unchanged, greater involvement in the exercise of corporate responsibility within the organisational management team remains (NCLSCS, 2010).

The survey results also report changes in models of service delivery, with the most significant and predominant change being a move towards commissioning services rather than providing them directly in-house. Whilst this would seem to reflect the national government's view that there is potential for increased efficiency through alternative means of provision in the private and community sectors:

> there is still a significant level of scepticism about whether this will either save money or lead to improved service delivery. A particular concern that has been exercising DSCs [Directors of Children's Services] in authorities taking an interest in commissioning on a large scale is about accountability, particularly for high-risk services such as safeguarding. (Association of Directors of Children's Services & NCLSCS, 2011, p. 4)

Whilst the approaches that local governments take to making savings vary significantly from authority to authority, the general principle that they must economise financially, either at a service, a directorate or an organisational level, is a common theme from which there seems to be no protection for children's services. The probable consequence, therefore, is a reduction in some of the services available to children and families that, given the non-statutory nature of many early intervention and prevention services, is likely to result in the greatest reductions in these areas in order to preserve the statutory specialist and intervention services.

Conclusion

What next for the future of children and children's services? It would seem difficult to suggest that the future looks anything other than bleak as organisations at all levels seek to

manage within increasingly tight financial constraints that must consequently impact on the provision of services, to children, young people and families alike.

Rhetoric suggests that it is idealistic and aspirational for us to expect organisations to drive required efficiencies through more effective commissioning, reductions in direct delivery, efficiencies in management and back office support services that will enable the continued provision of front line services. In actuality, those working in the public sector are increasingly facing the reality of budget and job cuts as organisations grapple with the need to deliver further savings year on year. Often organisational approaches to delivering financial savings are inconsistent with the holistic approach that they require to deliver an end service to children and young people as envisaged by the principles of Every Child Matters.

In reality, the pressures on local authorities in particular will continue to mean a focus on costly specialist services despite a general acknowledgement amongst professionals at both operational and strategic levels that early investment in prevention can, over the longer term, have a positive impact on children and families. The difficulty will be in making savings in intervention in the 'post-Baby Peter' (Jones, 2008) economy of children's social care, where councils are struggling with dramatically rising numbers of child-protection referrals, more kids on the protection register and hundreds more youngsters being taken into care. The effect of that, however, will be to tighten the screw on remaining 'non-core' children's services: this could mean cuts of up to 30% in early intervention projects aimed at tackling problems in high-risk families before they spiral out of control (Butler, 2010).

The rationale may seem clear – early investment in prevention can reduce the cost of specialist services in the longer term – but the reality would seem to be that the model, the subject of many pilots and studies over the past few years, is as yet sufficiently untested to be able to influence the financial decision-makers to make fundamental changes to the way that they invest in children's services. The risk to disinvestment in child protection to enhance investment in early intervention and prevention services, whilst likely to be a more effective and a value for money investment over the longer term, is a step that most will not dare to take in any meaningful way.

There may be cursory token gestures towards prevention in the short term, a partial recognition that we should preserve the positive benefits of Every Child Matters in some form whilst the current storm blows over, but in reality these cuts, along with others across the range of public services, will impact those children and families who are most vulnerable in society.

A further irony is the lack of connectivity between policy and funding at local and national levels, which is clearly demonstrated in the government announcement that the Communities Secretary will be discussing plans to earmark a budget specifically targeted towards the country's most problematic families with programmes of intensive intervention (Winnett, 2011). This follows cuts to a range of initiatives, including government-funded ones but also locally administered intensive intervention programmes focused on the same cohort of families. Even more ironic is that the proposed head of the troubled families unit, which the government will task with addressing the problems in Britain's 120,000 most problematic families, is Louise Casey, previously known as Tony Blair's 'respect tsar' who led the Labour Government programme on anti-social behaviour, parenting and problem families (BBC, 2011; Wintour, 2011). Whilst Casey herself may have an outspoken approach and a determination to cut through the bureaucracy between both central government departments and central and local government, her return to the fore to essentially resurrect, in the wake of the summer riots (BBC, 2011), an approach that the Coalition Government previously cut demonstrates the vagaries of politics, but perhaps

more importantly the possibility that this is a societal problem that requires longer-term investment.

However, if the future looks bleak for the provision of children's services, what then for the challenge of addressing the multiple causal factors that influence child poverty? Dorling (2011) argues that the current coalition policies are no more likely to address the underlying causes of social injustice than those of New Labour or the Thatcher years previously. Evans (2011) has similarly asserted that the current economic reasoning behind the steps taken to address the budget deficit have been ill-conceived in terms of understanding the impact upon those now charged with delivering services to vulnerable populations. In the short term the need to scale back investment across the whole of the public sector, combined with the wider impacts of economic recession across the country as a whole, would suggest that the holistic investment that we require to really tackle such a broad challenge is unlikely to be a realistic priority or achievement in the medium term and suggest that rising unemployment and other social factors will continue to have a negative impact on the future opportunities available to a significant number of children and young people for some years to come.

Notes on contributors

Nada K. Kakabadse is head of the Doctoral Programme at Northampton Business School.

Nicci Marzec is the head of Partnership Support at Northampton Borough Council and a member of the Northamptonshire Children and Young People's Partnership Board.

Richard Rose is director of the Centre for Education and Research (CeSNER) in the School of Education, The University of Northampton.

References

Alkire, S., & Foster, J. (2011). Understandings and misunderstandings of multidimensional poverty measurement. *Journal of Economic Inequalities*, *9*(2), 289–314.
Anning, A., Cottrell, D., Frost, N., Green, J., & Robinson, M. (2006). *Developing multi-professional teamwork for integrated children's services*. Reading: McGraw Hill.
Association of Directors of Children's Services & National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services. (2011). *New futures: What is happening to children's services*. Nottingham: ADCS & NCLSCS.
Barker, R. (2008). *Making sense of Every Child Matters: Multi-professional practical guidance*. Bristol: Retrieved September 5, 2011, from http://www.everychildmattersbook.co.uk/every-child-matters-and-the-alliance-government The Policy Press.
Barkham, P., & Healey, J. (2011, August 8). Mark Duggan: Profile of Tottenham police shooting victim. *Guardian*. Retrieved from http://educationandskills.cbi.org.uk/media/press_release/00375/.
BBC. (2011). Riots: Louise Casey – Blair's respect tsar – to aid PM. Retrieved February 20, 2012, from http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-14819727.
Belsky, J., Barnes, J., & Melhuish, E. (2007). *The national evaluation of Sure Start: Does area-based intervention work?* Bristol: The Policy Press.
Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and symbolic power*. Oxford: Polity Press.
Brewer, M., & Joyce, R. (2010, December). *Child and working-age poverty from 2010 to 2013*. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.
Brown, B., Crawford, P., & Darongkamas, J. (2000). Blurred roles and permeable boundaries: The experience of multidisciplinary working in community mental health. *Health and Social Care in the Community*, *8*(8), 425–435.
Browne, J. (2011, March). *Living standards during the recession*. London: Institute for Fiscal Studies.

Butler, P. (2010, September 8). How the coalition's cuts are affecting public services. *Guardian*. Retrieved September 26, 2011, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2010/sep/08/how-are-cuts-affecting-public-services.

CBI. (2011, 25 August). CBI responds to this years GCSE results. Retrieved September 6, 2011, from http://educationandskills.cbi.org.uk/media/press_release/00375.

Central Intelligence Agency. (2010). *CIA – The World Factbook*. Retrieved July 20, 2010, from https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/.

Centre for Social Justice. (2011). *Making sense of early intervention: A framework for professionals*. London, Cabinet Office.

Centre for Social Justice. (2012). Advisory Council. Retrieved February 8, 2012, from http://www.centreforsocialjustice.org.uk/default.asp?pageRef=46.

Child Poverty Act. (2010). Retrieved February 20, 2012, from http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/9/contents.

Child Poverty Action Group. (2010). What is poverty? Retrieved February 15, 2012, from http://www.cpag.org.uk/povertyfacts/index.htm.

Children's Rights Alliance for England. (2009). Children's rights part of UK law. Retrieved March 20, 2011, from http://www.crae.org.uk/protecting/uk-law.html.

Child Rights Information Network. (2002). *Rethinking child imprisonment: A report on young offender institutions*. London: CRIN.

Conlon, G. (2002). *The determinants of undertaking academic and vocational qualifications in the United Kingdom*. London: Centre for the Economics of Education London School of Economics and Political Science.

Cooke, G., & Lawton, K. (2008). *Working out of poverty: A study of the low paid and the 'working poor'*. London: IPPR.

Currie, J., & Thomas, D. (1995). Does Head Start make a difference? *American Economic Review*, *85*(3), p. 341.

Department for Children, Schools and Families. (2006). Childcare and Early Years Providers Survey – Out of school providers. Retrieved September 26, 2011, from http://www.education.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/RRP/u015275/index.shtml.

Department for Children, Schools and Families. (2008a). 2020 Children and Young People's Workforce Strategy. Retrieved September 6, 2011, from https://www.education.gov.uk/publications/eOrderingDownload/CYP_Workforce-Strategy.pdf.

Department for Children, Schools and Families. (2008b). Leading and managing children's services in England: A national professional development framework. Retrieved September 26, 2011, from http://www.virtualstaffcollege.co.uk/downloads/national_cpd_framework.pdf.

Department for Education. (2010a, 1 December). The Child Poverty Act. Retrieved September 7, 2011, from http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childpoverty/a0066302/the-child-poverty-act.

Department for Education. (2010b, 1 December). Support to meet the local duties of the Child Poverty Act. Retrieved September 7, 2011, from http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childpoverty/a0066610/support-to-meet-the-local-duties-of-the-child-poverty-act.

Department for Education and Skills. (2003). Every Child Matters., Green Paper. Retrieved September 6, 2011, from www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/_files/.

Department for Work & Pensions. (2006). *A new deal for welfare: Empowering people to work*. London: Department for Work & Pensions.

Department for Work & Pensions. (2007). *Working for children*. London: HM Stationery Office.

Department for Work & Pensions & Department for Education. (2011). *A new approach to child poverty: Tackling the causes of disadvantage and transforming families' lives*. London: HM Stationery Office.

Dickens, R., Gregg, P., & Wadsworth, J. (2003). *The labour market under New Labour: The state of working Britain*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Dorling, D. (2011). *Injustice: Why social inequality persists*. Bristol: The Policy Press.

Easton, C., Gee, G., Durbin, B., & Teeman, D. (2011). *Early intervention, using the CAF process, and its cost effectiveness: Findings from LARC3*. Slough: NFER.

Electoral Commission. (2005). Social exclusion and political engagement., Research report. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/63835/Social-exclusion-and-political-engagement.pdf.

Evans, K. (2011). 'Big society' in the UK: A policy review. *Children and Society*, *25*(2), 164–171.

Gainsbury, S., & Culzac, N. (2011, September 4). Rioting link to deprivation revealed. *Guardian*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/236110aa-d716-11e0-bc73-00144feabdc0.html#axzz1XAfEVozR

Gini, C. (1936). On the measure of concentration with special reference to income and statistics. *Colorado College Publication. General Series No. 208* 73–79.

Grundy, E., & Holt, G. (2001). The socioeconomic status of older adults: How should we measure it in studies of health inequalities? *Journal of Epidemiological Community Health*, *55*, 895–904.

Hirsch, D. (2006). *What will it take to end child poverty? Firing on all cylinders*. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

HM Treasury. (2010). *Spending review 2010*. London: HM Stationery Office.

Jones, S. (2008, November 12). Sixty missed chances to save baby 'used as a punchbag'. *The Guardian*. Retrieved October 20, 2011, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2008/nov/12/child-protection-crime-baby-p.

Kakabadse, N., Kakabadse, A., & Summers, N. (2007). Effectiveness of private finance initiatives (PFI): Study of private financing for the provision of capital assets for schools in the UK. *Public Administration and Development*, *27*(1), 49–61.

Levinson, D., Cookson, P.W., & Sadovnik, A.R. (2002). *Education and sociology: An encyclopedia* (pp. 215–218). New York: Taylor & Francis.

Lewis, P., et al., (2011, September 6). Kenneth Clarke blames English riots on a 'broken penal system'. *Guardian*. Retrieved from http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk/2011/sep/05/kenneth-clarke-riots-penal-system.

Marx, K. (1977). *A contribution to the critique of political economy*. Moscow: Progress Publishers.

McElwee, M., & Tyrie, A. (2001). *Leviathan at large*. London: CPS.

McKendrick, J., Mooney, G., Dickie, J., & Kelly, P. (Eds.). (2011). *Poverty in Scotland 2011*. London: Child Poverty Action Group.

National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services. (2010). *International approaches to children's services leadership and leadership development*. Nottingham: NCLSCS.

NSW Commission for Children and Young People. (2004, February 26). *A Head Start for Australia: An early years framework*. NSW Commission for Children and Young People: Sydney.

ODPM. (2004). 2004 index of multiple deprivation: measuring multiple deprivation at the small area level. Retrieved February 20, 2011, from http://www.nsomerset.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/0900712C-5E28-4F68-956694C28E2AE3C0/0/document_20040601_IndexOfMultipleDeprivation2004.pdf.

Ontario Ministry of Child and Youth Service. (2001). Early Years Plan: understanding the Early Years Initiative. Retrieved October 20, 2011, from http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/topics/earlychildhood/oeyc/index.aspx.

Postles, D. (2011). Inequality of wealth in the early sixteenth century. Retrieved February 20, 2011, from http://www.historicalresources.myzen.co.uk/ehscfinal.pdf.

Puffett, N. (2011, August 23). Coalition sets out policy response to riots. *Children and Young People Now*. Retrieved September 6, 2011, from http://www.cypnow.co.uk/Youth_Work/article/1085832/coalition-sets-policy-response-riots.

Reder, P., Duncan, S., & Gray, M. (1993). *Beyond blame: Child abuse tragedies revisited*. London: Routledge.

Richardson, J. (2011). *From recession to renewal: The impact of the financial crisis on public services and local government*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Shaw, J. (2007). Eradicating child poverty. *Economic Review*, *24*(4), 1–3.

Shaw, I., Bell, M., Sinclair, I., Sloper, P., Mitchell, W., Dyson, P., Claydon, J., & Rafferty, J. (2009). An exemplary scheme? An evaluation of the integrated children's system. *British Journal of Social Work*, *39*(4), 613–626.

Shepherd, J. (2010, May 13). Goodbye department for curtains and soft furnishings. *Guardian*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/may/13/dcsf-new-name-department-education.

Telegraph View. (2011, February 17). Dependency cannot be a lifestyle choice. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/8331776/Dependency-cannot-be-a-lifestyle-choice.html.

The Economist. (2011). Marx, Mervyn or Mario? What is behind the decline in living standards? *The Economist*, *398*(8726), p. 87.

Tomlinson, M., & Walker, R. (2009). *Complexity: Coping with complexity of child and adult poverty*. London: CPAG.

Townsend, P. (1979). *Poverty in United Kingdom: A survey of household resources and standards of living*. London: Penguin Books and Allen Lane.

UNICEF. (2007). *Child poverty in perspective: An overview of child well-being in rich countries* (Innocenti Report Card 7). Florence: UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre. Retrieved February 20, 2011, from http://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/rc7_eng.pdf.

Van der Putten, R. (2005, October). *The anglo-saxon model: A critical view* (Conjoncture, Economic Research). Paris: BNP Paribas.

Vasagar, J., & Shepherd, J. (2011, August 31). Free schools built in mainly middle-class and wealthy areas. *Guardian*. Retrieved September 5, 2011, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2011/aug/31/free-schools-middle-class-areas.

Werran, J. (2011, August 23). Ministers at war over leadership of gangs strategy. Retrieved September 6, 2011, from http://www.localgov.co.uk/index.cfm?method=news.detail&id=102402.

Winnett, R. (2011, October 17). Problem families face daily visits from officials. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved October 17, 2011, from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/politics/8830574/Problem-families-face-daily-visits-from-officials.html.

Wintour, P. (2011, October 12). David Cameron appoints Louise Casey to lead government response to riots. *Guardian*. Retrieved October 17, 2011, from http://www.guardian.co.uk/society/2011/oct/12/david-cameron-louise-casey-riots.