



## **Report**

What Works in Supporting  
Children and Young People to  
Overcome Persistent  
Poverty? A Review of UK and  
International Literature

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# Executive Summary

This review was undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on behalf of the Office for the First Minister/Deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland (OFMDFM) between February and September 2012. The review was undertaken as part of OFMDFM's Research Strategy, which is designed to enhance the information and research base upon which equality, social need and good relations policies are developed and evaluated in Northern Ireland. Although the Research Strategy seeks to inform policy development in Northern Ireland specifically, this review was commissioned to consider literature relating to persistent poverty more broadly – at an international level.

The NFER review was initially commissioned, as part of the Research Strategy, to explore the question: *What works in supporting children and young people to break the intergenerational poverty cycle?* On the basis of scrutiny of the literature, and in agreement with OFMDFM and the review's expert panel, the title of the review has been adapted to: *What works in supporting children and young people to overcome persistent poverty?* Sub questions addressed throughout the review are:

- What factors and interventions might work to help poor children achieve a positive outcome in adulthood?
- What factors enable some children born into poverty to 'buck the trend' in terms of their predicted life trajectories?
- What strategies and practices can support the development of resilience among poor children and young people?

## **The concept of intergenerational poverty**

The terms 'intergenerational poverty', or 'intergenerational poverty transmission' (IGT) are typically associated with the notion of a 'culture' of worklessness or welfare dependency – behavioural traits and dispositions among specific families that are 'transmitted' from one next generation to the next. However, our review finds little compelling evidence of the existence of IGT, with many authors strongly rebutting the concept. For example, Boyden and Cooper (2007) argue that the nuclear family is not the only influence on behaviours and dispositions, while Kintrea *et al.* (2011) find little evidence of low aspiration amongst poor children. Furthermore, Shildrick *et al.* (2012), investigating the prevalence of IGT in Glasgow and Middlesborough, were unable to find any families in which nobody had worked for three or more generations. In conclusion, Gordon (2011, p.2) states that '*...poverty is not a disease and it cannot be caught. All creditable evidence shows that it is not 'transmitted' to children by their parents' genes or culture...*' Given these findings, we find the supposed concept of IGT an unhelpful term of reference for this review.

## **Alternative definitions of poverty**

A number of authors argue that simple 'point in time' measures of poverty can be misleading, and can reduce the extent to which the nature of poverty is truly understood. For example, poverty can be characterised as chronic, severe, persistent, recurrent, transient or experienced throughout both childhood and

adulthood. The literature emphasises the need for policy makers to appreciate that the experiences of poverty can vary widely, as can the causes and, inevitably therefore, the solutions. In spite of these challenges, researchers have attempted to identify some of the major causes of poverty. Most commonly, they identify causes which are structural in nature, relating to weak labour markets, poor resources, discrimination, and failing services. There is recognition that 'high and persistent capability deprivation' can also have profound effects on young people's outcomes, and some explanation for this can be placed with families and parents specifically. However, there is no suggestion within this, or any other source reviewed, that this results from a 'culture' of neglect.

There is clear evidence that the life outcomes of those experiencing chronic or persistent poverty in their youth are considerably worse than of those experiencing recurrent or transient poverty. Given the severe implications for children growing up in persistent poverty, there is a need to understand more about what can be done to alleviate or mitigate this negative experience. In many ways, a focus on IGT is a distraction from this very important policy issue. Lloyd *et al.* (2009) maintain that more needs to be done to alleviate the impact of persistent poverty on children's lives, and that policy should be more closely tailored to the particular circumstances of those living in persistent poverty than at present. It is for this reason that we have altered the focus of this review to investigate: *What works in supporting children and young people to overcome persistent poverty?*

### **Factors that support positive outcomes for poor children**

The debate over the primacy of structure or agency is apparent in the literature and while most sources focus on external factors that influence or limit the choices and opportunities available for families living in, or at risk of, persistent poverty, some others focus on internal factors and the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make free choices. The majority of the literature considering structural factors identifies the importance of multiple investments at a financial or environmental level, which can help overcome barriers faced by the persistently poor.

#### **Financial factors**

The majority of the evidence refers to the importance of fiscal approaches to poverty reduction and income maximisation. Suggestions include adequate social protection for families (for example, harmonising the working tax credits and benefit systems, and ongoing deployment of youth targeted income transfers such as 'hardship funds'). Some authors advise caution however, and suggest that there is a trade-off between providing generous assistance to the poor and improving incentives for people to work and provide for themselves (Adema and Whiteford, 2007).

A number of items promote the need to reduce the complexity of the benefits system to ensure that those living in, or on the margins of poverty, are receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled. Some authors also suggest an increase in the National Minimum Wage (particularly directed at Northern Ireland given the low-wage economy there), while others encourage support for community economic development initiatives (such as local credit unions).

### **Additional structural factors**

A range of other factors can impact upon the alleviation of persistent poverty. These include: supporting families into work, and supporting employment stability (many studies note that children in households with one or, especially, two people in continuous employment are the most protected); ensuring that childcare is affordable and of good quality; and supporting access to health care and wider services.

### **Individual/family-level factors**

In contrast to the findings on structural influences on poverty, there is a limited evidence base relating to individual or 'internal' enabling factors. A number of the items reviewed consider resilience as a useful concept for examining the ways in which some individuals are able to overcome the negative impacts of poverty and prevent its persistence within families. Specific enablers associated with resilience can manifest themselves in individuals as traits, strengths, competencies, values and self perceptions. To this end, strategies which employ mentors, courses activities and counselling have been found to be effective.

Aside from the issue of resilience, a vast proportion of the literature points to education as an important factor in protecting individuals from persistent poverty. Educational protection can be achieved (at the practice level) through school-based and whole-family measures to reduce barriers to learning. Authors note that strategies to support and maintain disadvantaged young people's engagement with education and learning have been widely introduced at the policy and practice levels. However, due to a lack of longitudinal studies assessing the longer-term impacts of such interventions, it is currently unclear whether or not a child is less likely to go on to experience persistent poverty in the long term after receiving such support.

There is a significant interplay between structural factors and those operating at the individual or family level. This suggests that the policy response to persistent poverty must be multi-dimensional, focusing on income supports, combined with measures that support employment, education and accessibility of services such as childcare and health. Moreover, timing is pivotal and early intervention is a key to success.

### **Key messages for policy and practice**

The enabling factors discussed above have various implications for policy making and for practice:

#### **Messages for policy makers**

There is a 'trade off' for all governments between providing social assistance to the poor through redistributive measures, and providing incentives for families to become self supporting. In making judgements, governments will need to be mindful that work is not always a viable option for all families at all times, and that there needs to be genuine work opportunity if families are to become self supporting. There are calls within the literature for improvements to the National Minimum Wage (NMW) and for various policy responses to ensure that parents are able to access employment (related to the income disregard on benefits and to childcare provision, for example). Away from economic policy, there is also evidence that developing programmes to

support and maintain the engagement of disadvantaged young people with education and learning can have positive impacts on life trajectories. Similarly, intervening early in young people's lives, and with families, can have beneficial effects.

It is also crucial that there is a coordinated, multi-agency approach to poverty reduction. There need to be improvements in the accessibility of universal services so that any 'stigma' for families is reduced, and all targeted provision needs to be appropriately tailored and supported, ideally via a key worker. It is important to work with local employers to ensure an adequate supply of suitable employment, and much can be done, through community development initiatives, to protect families from debt. It is important that local families are supported to claim all the benefits to which they are entitled.

### **Messages for practitioners**

Building family capacity to cope with adversity can be an important protector against poverty although, alone, it is not a 'cure'. Some features of effective resilience-building approaches include: mentoring; goal setting; counselling; experiences for young people outside of the norm; and practical help with finances. Schools can also do much to help poor young people achieve highly and 'close the gap' in outcomes. Mixing children from different backgrounds and abilities in classes, ensuring that the curriculum is accessible, and covering all the costs of education can have beneficial impacts on poor young people's outcomes. Interventions that seek to involve parents in their child's education can also contribute to closing the gap in outcomes.

### **Conclusions**

This review provides compelling evidence of a range of structural, individual and practice-level factors that can enable families to escape from persistent poverty. These factors operate at different levels and will need to be taken forward by a range of stakeholders. There must be an integrated approach so that priorities are understood and acted upon at UK government and devolved administration levels, and implemented effectively by practitioners, with adequate and appropriate resources.

It is in the interest of policy makers to develop a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that link successful family intervention strategies and outcomes to the ultimate alleviation of persistent poverty. Additionally, there is still work to be done to determine the exact combination of factors (structural, individual and practice-level) that have optimum effect in overcoming poverty in a range of differing circumstances.

Critically, it seems that policy must adopt a dual focus on the removal of structural inequality and on capacity building among families. Interventions are likely to have the greatest effect when they tackle external obstacles and nurture internal resilience simultaneously.

### **A note regarding the situation in Northern Ireland**

The Northern Ireland Child Poverty Strategy (Northern Ireland Executive, 2011) reflects a strong grasp of these issues, and focuses on the need to promote a fair

context in which young people can flourish and access opportunity. The strategy pays particular attention to wider family circumstances, pledging to: ensure that poverty and disadvantage in childhood does not translate into poorer outcomes for children as they move into adulthood; support parents into work that pays; ensure the child's environment supports them to thrive; and target financial support to be responsive to family situations. Within these key strategic priorities are a raft of action areas which reflect a number of the messages from this review (for example, the need to: make childcare more affordable; support re-engagement into education and training; intervene early; grow the local economy; and improve financial competency).

Northern Ireland policy makers may wish to consider, however, the extent to which the strategy identifies and responds to the different challenges posed by the very many and varied measures of child poverty. Currently, the strategy makes reference to and reflects on the four measures of poverty outlined in the Child Poverty Act of 2010 (Great Britain. Statutes, 2010). However, this review has shown there are a host of measures which could be promoted to better understand the 'type' and extent of poverty experienced by a child, and in turn, contribute to a better understanding about how to approach or devise policy in response.

# 1. Introduction

This review was undertaken by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) on behalf of the Office for the First Minister/Deputy First Minister in Northern Ireland (OFMDFM) between February and September 2012. The review was undertaken as part of OFMDFM's Research Strategy, which is designed to enhance the information and research base upon which equality, social need and good relations policies are developed and evaluated in Northern Ireland. The Strategy has six key aims related to:

1. Enhancing understanding of inequality and social exclusion.
2. Gaining better access to data.
3. Assisting understanding of public attitudes towards inequality.
4. Promoting improvements in the economic policy response.
5. Assisting departments to comply with their statutory duties.
6. Promoting policy-relevant research.

## 1.1 Focus of the Review

The NFER review was initially commissioned, as part of the Research Strategy, to explore the question: *What works in supporting children and young people to break the intergenerational poverty cycle?* On the basis of scrutiny of the literature, and in agreement with OFMDFM and the review's expert panel, the title of the review has been adapted to: *What works in supporting children and young people to overcome persistent poverty?* The reasons for this change of emphasis are outlined in Section 2 of this report. Sub questions addressed throughout the review are:

- What factors and interventions might work to help poor children achieve a positive outcome in adulthood?
- What factors enable some children born into poverty to 'buck the trend' in terms of their predicted life trajectories?
- What strategies and practices can support the development of resilience among poor children and young people?

These foci contribute to OFMDFM's key Research Strategy aims 1, 4 and 6:

- **Aim 1** – The review adds to an existing knowledge base around intergenerational and persistent poverty, assisting in building an understanding of the causes and nature of inequality and social exclusion in developed countries.
- **Aims 4 and 6** - The review provides evidence that can help lead to improvements in the economic policy response regarding the implementation of the key principles within Northern Ireland's anti-poverty strategy. In particular, it makes recommendations for policy makers, and for service providers, on how best to support children and young people to overcome the impacts of cyclical poverty. It identifies vignettes of promising or proven good practice, and articulates where there are currently gaps in the evidence base.

It is important to note here that although the Research Strategy seeks to inform policy development in Northern Ireland specifically, this review was commissioned to consider literature relating to persistent poverty more broadly – at an international level.

Section 2 of the review discusses a range of definitions of poverty and explores the validity of the concept of intergenerational poverty. Section 3 provides evidence of factors that can enable persistently poor children to achieve a positive outcome in adulthood, while Section 4 outlines some key messages for policy and practice. It concludes with an overall assessment of the question: *What works in supporting children and young people to overcome persistent poverty?*

## 1.2 Research Method

This report is based upon a systematic review of relevant UK and international literature related to intergenerational and other forms of poverty. The review is underpinned by a systematic process for item searching, selection, screening, coding, appraisal and synthesis. Details of the systematic search that was undertaken for this review are provided in Appendix A. Following the search, the review team adopted a four-stage process to filter the search results. This process is outlined in detail in Appendices B and C, but in brief, it consisted of the following:

- **Screening** – all identified items were uploaded into an Eppi Reviewer<sup>1</sup> database, then ‘screened’ for relevance on the basis of information provided in abstracts.
- **Coding** – based on a detailed coding frame, all items included as a result of the screening exercise were ‘coded’ in detail to establish whether or not they should be included in the review. 36 ‘key items’ were identified as a result of this.
- **Appraisal** – Using a detailed appraisal template for each selected item, the review team read and summarised each item under a number of key headings related to research design, study findings, and relevance to the review.
- **Synthesis** – involved analysing the reviewed data in order to draw out emerging themes and key messages. The synthesis was guided by the research questions outlined in Section 1.1 above.

The review was greatly assisted by the support of an expert panel,<sup>2</sup> which steered and supported the work at all stages. The panel provided suggestions of potential literature for review (in addition to NFER’s own search results), was consulted about the key items selected, and helped to steer the content and focus of this report, based on a presentation of headline findings discussed in August 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> Eppi Reviewer is software developed for the upload, screening and coding of literature.

<sup>2</sup> Details of members of the expert panel are provided in the acknowledgements to this report.

## 2. Poverty definitions

### 2.1 Intergenerational poverty

During the 1970s and early 1980s, Sir Keith Joseph (then Secretary of State for Social Services), commissioned a programme of research to assess the causes of poverty. While his working party concluded that there was no simple explanation of deprivation, Joseph gave three speeches on the theme in the early 1970s, during which he noted that in a proportion of cases, the problems of one generation appeared to replicate themselves in the next. He argued that although the process was not fully understood, a number of studies bore out the view of some practitioners that there was a 'cycle of deprivation' influenced strongly by behavioural factors (Such and Walker, 2002; Welshman, 2007). This notion of a 'passing' of poverty or deprivation from one generation to the next, often via parents who are described as 'troubled' or 'problematic', continues to underpin much current UK-level policy making in the arenas of child poverty, social mobility and welfare reform (HM Government, 2011a; HM Government, 2011b).

The term 'intergenerational poverty' is typically associated with the notion of a 'culture' of worklessness or welfare dependency – a set of behavioural traits and dispositions among specific families that are 'transmitted' from one generation to the next. The argument is that the cycle replicates itself across at least three, and possibly more, generations of the same family. In this context it is often referred to as 'intergenerational poverty transmission' (or IGT). Outlining the theory, Shildrick *et al.* (2012) explain that: '*Over time these cultures of worklessness become entrenched and are said to explain the persistent, concentrated worklessness that can be found in some British towns and cities*' (p. 5). Poverty is thus viewed as an attribute (and those that perpetuate it as a **cause** of societal problems) rather than as a **consequence** of socio-economic factors or structural inequality.

It is within this context that the current literature review has been commissioned, with a view to establishing, firstly, the degree to which intergenerational poverty is a valid concept, and secondly, the factors that might contribute to overcoming it, if and where it exists.

#### 2.1.1 Intergenerational poverty – a flawed concept?

It is fair to say that little research has been conducted specifically investigating the existence of intergenerational poverty using the definition outlined above (hereafter referred to as IGT). Rather, IGT is typically taken as a 'given', or its true meaning is misunderstood in various research studies that have sought to understand the **persistence** of poverty across generations or communities.

We have appraised a small number of research studies that have been developed to investigate the prevalence of IGT. In each case, these studies find little compelling evidence of its existence, and in consequence, their authors strongly rebut the concept. Boyden and Cooper (2007), for example, through a secondary analysis of

existing data, argue that the notion of IGT is crude, taking for granted the family structures and relationships through which poverty transmission allegedly occurs. They argue that there is an assumption that the nuclear family has a large amount of impact on a child's developing behaviour and dispositions, whereas in many instances, children learn and are influenced by a much wider range of individuals – especially where alternative family forms and care arrangements are in place.

This finding is borne out in studies that have explored whether the children of poor parents necessarily have low aspirations. Kintrea *et al.* (2011), via primary research across Glasgow, Nottingham and London, find little evidence of low aspiration. Rather, they find evidence of high aspiration among young people but note that this is often unrealised because of *'the various barriers erected by inequality'* (p.7). Shildrick *et al.* (2012) find similarly, that there is no shortage of work ethic among young people, who are often spurred on to achieve because of the difficult circumstances in which they see their parents having to manage. Additional work by Shildrick *et al.* (2010) found that the experience of recurrent poverty – that is of families 'cycling' in and out of poverty through engagement in short-term, seasonal, or unstable work interspersed with short periods of unemployment – is much more common. The researchers found that it was a desire to work, rather than to claim welfare, that often drove these families into poorly paid or unstable employment.

Ludwig and Mayer (2006), investigating the impact of family structure on poverty outcomes in the USA found that, even if policy makers were able to ensure that all children had married, working or religious parents, there would be a limited impact on poverty rates. There is little good evidence showing that parental behaviours such as marriage, work or religious adherence have strong causal effects on children's long-term economic success. The authors conclude that, while encouraging positive social behaviours in parents may be a worthwhile goal in its own right, policymakers should recognise the limits of this strategy for long-term poverty reduction.

Research undertaken by Shildrick *et al.* (2012) specifically investigated the prevalence and experience of IGT in some of the most deprived communities within Glasgow and Middlesbrough. Working alongside frontline practitioners to identify relevant families for in-depth interview, the research team undertook 'deep searching' in localities that had experienced high rates of unemployment for decades. The result of this search was an inability to identify **any** families in which nobody had worked for three or more generations. In response to this challenge, the research team 'relaxed' their criteria to focus on families in which two generations of the same family (typically a middle aged parent and a child aged teen to twenties (but not necessarily their siblings)) had never experienced work.

Even then, families were incredibly difficult to locate and the authors are keen to stress that the resulting sample is extremely unusual and not typical of working-class people in Glasgow and Teesside. They outline social statistics showing that the proportion of workless households with two generations who have never worked is very small (around 0.5% of workless households). Therefore, they explain that if third generation workless families exist: *'logically they will be even fewer in number than*

those estimated to have two-generational worklessness (Shildrick *et al.*, 2012, p. 3). Their point is that these figures are potentially so small as to be an inappropriate basis for policy formation. In conclusion, they state:

*The evidence collected in this research project, from families most likely to fit the thesis, leads us to conclude that the phenomenon is more imagined than real (p. 47).*

In similarly robust fashion, Gordon (2011) states:

*The idea that poverty is 'transmitted' between generations is an old libel, which is entirely without foundation or supporting evidence...poverty is not a disease and it cannot be caught. All creditable evidence shows that it is not 'transmitted' to children by their parents' genes or culture...Despite almost 150 years of scientific investigation, not a single study has ever found any large group of people/households with any behaviours that could be ascribed to a culture or genetics of poverty (p.2).*

### 2.1.2 Intergenerational poverty - terminology

While it is true that the evidence for an intergenerational transmission of poverty from generation to generation via specific behaviours or attributes is very weak, a number of research studies continue to allude to, or attempt to explain the reasons for what they term 'intergenerational poverty'. In many cases, this illustrates some confusion around terminology. References to 'intergenerational poverty', the 'intergenerational transmission of poverty' and 'life-course poverty' are often made interchangeably by one author, but are presented as having quite different meanings by another.

For example, while there is a considerable body of quantitative research evidence showing that poverty can span a 'life course' (that is, that children born into poverty are statistically more likely than those who are not to become poor adults), the authors of these studies (Blanden and Gibbons, 2006; France, 2008; Gordon, 2011; Gray, 2010; Moore, 2005) do not typically term this phenomenon 'intergenerational poverty'. This is because life-course poverty describes how poverty affects one individual over a long period of time, rather than whether, how, or why poverty might be 'passed' from one individual to another. Other researchers however (for example Grant *et al.*, 2011; Jenkins and Siedler, 2007; and Whelen, *et al.*, 2011) describe a phenomenon that they call 'intergenerational poverty' using evidence of life-course poverty.

In these cases, the term appears to be used without suggestion of the behavioural underpinnings usually associated with it. Further authors have attempted to 'redefine' intergenerational poverty, broadening it to encompass factors additional to those that are cultural or behavioural. One such example is the work by Hulme *et al.* (2001) which provides a framework for considering the question: What exactly might we expect to be transferred across generations such that poverty is transmitted? Hulme *et al.* base their framework of intergenerational poverty around five identified forms of 'capital'. These are summarised in the table below.

**Table 1: Five forms of capital (Hulme *et al.*, 2001)**

<b>Financial/material capital</b>	e.g. assets or debt inheritances. France (2008) contends that young people from wealthier homes have greater economic resources and support which enable them to make smoother transitions to adulthood than those from materially deprived backgrounds. Bird (2008) notes that systematic discrimination (for example on the basis of ethnicity or gender) can increase the likelihood of poverty being irreversible.
<b>Natural/environmental capital</b>	e.g. degradation of environment or natural resources due to structural decline, conflict or vandalism, which can adversely affect the livelihood of future generations. Cole (2011) states: <i>'the effect [of poverty] is at its most extreme for those living in deprived neighbourhoods, where the multiple negative impacts of their local environment, alongside other social and economic factors, can have an impact on their outcomes for physical and mental health and education'</i> (p.2). Horgan and Monteith (2009) add that in Northern Ireland the most disadvantaged wards are those that have been most affected by conflict. Evidence suggests that conflict feeds on poverty and that this undermines the potential of those living in poverty to escape it.
<b>Human capital</b>	e.g. parental time and financial investment in a child's education and health/nutrition; parental knowledge and skills; and inheritable capabilities such as intelligence. Bird (2008) notes that different families experience different investments in human capital due to varying distributions of leisure and labour time. Conflict, illness or drug dependency, among other things, have an impact on the development of human capital.
<b>Socio-political capital</b>	e.g. position in community and access to key decision makers, which can influence coping strategies and resilience. Gray (2010) cites literature by Nolan <i>et al.</i> (2006, p.125) which states that <i>'even in circumstances of multiple disadvantage individuals shape their destinies through coping strategies that involve mobilising personal and social resources.'</i>
<b>Socio-cultural capital</b>	The possibility of a 'culture of poverty' whereby some are considered unable to support themselves for 'invalid' reasons (the 'languishing poor'). Hulme <i>et al.</i> (2001) point out that here is little evidence of the validity of this concept (as we have already discussed in Section 2.1.1 above).

Table 1 provides a number of different explanations for the development of poverty. Interestingly, the first two types of capital are what, in most other contexts, would be referred to as 'structural' or 'external' factors – factors that are, broadly speaking, outside of the control of individuals. Relating these to a concept of 'intergenerational poverty' or to discussions of poverty 'transmission' (especially given the implications of the term) is somewhat unhelpful. The authors largely dismiss the concept of socio-cultural capital, although they include it in their model because, as discussed in Section 2.1 above, the theory has formed a basis for historical and current policy making around approaches to tackling poverty.

This leaves two forms of 'capital' that are of potential interest to a discussion of poverty – 'human' and 'socio-political'. These are closely related to, respectively, issues around: parenting capacity; and family and individual resilience in the face of adversity (what Bird (2008) refers to as an individual's *'asset bundle'*). Both of these themes, as well as the themes of financial and environmental capital are taken forward in Section 3 of this report, where we consider the factors that can help to enable persistently poor children to achieve a positive outcome in adulthood.

## 2.2 Alternative definitions of poverty

Although Hulme *et al.* (2001) attempt to broaden the definition of ‘intergenerational poverty’, the implied meaning of the term (as espoused by Sir Keith Joseph in the 1970’s and reiterated in some current policy making) is so closely tied to a notion of a ‘culture’ of worklessness or welfare dependency, and so contested within the literature, that we find it an unhelpful term of reference for this review. This is not to say that Hulme *et al.*’s forms of capital are not a useful means of understanding some of the causes of poverty, but we believe that these are best investigated separately from the notion of ‘intergenerational poverty’. This following section describes some alternative measures of poverty, and suggests a refocus for the review.

### 2.2.1 Poverty measures

The identification and measurement of poverty is a complex affair, with different countries and regions using a variety of measures, and engaging in debates over what does, and does not, constitute poverty or disadvantage. Poverty can be measured: in relative terms; by its severity; by its longevity; or by its recurrence, for example. The table below contains a summary of some of these measures.

**Table 2: Some types and measures of poverty**

<b>Relative Poverty</b>	There is no consensus on how the poverty threshold should be measured internationally, although the agreed EU measure is equivalised household disposable income below 60% of the national median equivalised household income (Jenkins and Van Kerm, 2011). This measure is generally that used in the UK, the main measure within the Child Poverty Act and the basis of most policy formation.
<b>Severe poverty</b>	Save the Children (Phillips <i>et al.</i> , 2011) suggest that the measure should be income below 50% of the median (after housing costs) where both adults and children lack at least one basic necessity, and either adults or children or both lack at least two basic necessities.
<b>Chronic poverty</b>	A means of examining the durational aspects of the intensity of poverty. Governments’ most often used indicator is an income below 60% of median income for three or more years of any four year period (Barnes <i>et al.</i> , 2009).
<b>Persistent poverty</b>	The agreed EU measure is those who are currently poor (according to the above EU poverty measure) and who were additionally poor in two of the preceding three years (Jenkins and Van Kerm, 2011).
<b>Recurrent poverty</b>	Those falling below the income poverty threshold more than once but not for more than two years in any spell (Nolan <i>et al.</i> , 2006).
<b>Transient poverty</b>	Those falling below the income poverty threshold for only one spell of no more than two years.
<b>Life-course poverty</b>	One who lives in poverty in both their childhood and their adult life (Moore, 2005).

There is a tendency for many of the above measures to be taken at a fixed 'point in time'. A number of authors point out that this can be highly misleading. For example, while some countries or regions have higher levels of relative poverty prevalence than others, and therefore display high poverty rates at any given time point, other countries or regions may experience higher levels of persistent or recurrent poverty, the latter of which can be lost in a 'point in time' measure (Frazer and Devlin, 2011; Mendola *et al.*, 2009).

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given the complex and diverse nature of poverty experiences across countries and regions, the conclusion within most of the literature is that poverty is multi causal. Even at the level of each individual measure, it is challenging to pinpoint either a single cause, or even a unique combination of causes. Moore (2005) contends that multiple interacting factors operate at a number of levels to determine the level and extent of poverty experienced. She is supported by Gray (2010), who states that: '*outcomes such as poverty are determined by a multiplicity of factors*' (p.19). This serves further to illustrate the problems associated with a single socio-cultural explanation for the persistence of poverty, without due reference to a range of other factors.

In spite of these challenges, researchers have attempted to identify some of the major causes of poverty. Two examples are provided below. Moore's (2005) model is summarised in Table 3<sup>3</sup>, while Horgan and Monteith (2009) identify the key causes of high levels of persistent poverty in Northern Ireland (Table 4). These examples do not provide exhaustive lists – they are simply illustrative of the range of potential factors that can culminate to create poverty.

**Table 3: Causes of poverty (taken from Moore, 2005)**



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<sup>3</sup> While most of the author's explanations are applicable across different contexts, some are specifically relevant in the context of the developing world and hence are not discussed in detail here.

Picking up on the themes discussed in Section 2.1.2 above, most of these ‘causes’ of poverty are structural in nature, relating to weak labour markets, poor resources, discrimination and failing services. There is recognition that ‘high and persistent capability deprivation’ can also have profound effects on young people’s outcomes, and some explanation for this can be placed with families and parents specifically. However, there is no suggestion within this, or any other source reviewed, that this results from a ‘culture’ of neglect. Rather, the capacity of parents to support their children effectively is often seriously impacted by their own experiences of disadvantage and social exclusion (see Shildrick *et al.* (2012)).

The following table provides some reasons why poverty can become persistent or chronic (that is, where people experience poverty over an extended period of time). The example given is of Northern Ireland, where, according to Horgan and Monteith (2009), 21 per cent of the population were living in persistent poverty compared to only nine per cent in Great Britain.<sup>4</sup>

**Table 4: Causes of persistent poverty in Northern Ireland (Horgan and Monteith, 2009)**

- **High levels of worklessness** (31 per cent of Northern Ireland’s working-age population is not in paid work – this is six percentage points higher than the Great Britain average).
- **In-work poverty** is highly prevalent in Northern Ireland because of low median wages and the promotion of Northern Ireland as a low-wage economy. Additionally, the majority of jobs are in the poorly-paid service sector.
- **Living in a lone-parent family** – three out of four children in persistently poor families live in one-parent families in Northern Ireland. This is tied to the point below.
- **Childcare is relatively expensive** compared to the Great Britain average and quality childcare is hard to come by in the most deprived wards. This limits the capacity of parents, especially lone parents, to work.
- **Mental health issues** are inordinately higher than in Great Britain due to the high rate of poverty and the legacy of the troubles. Many people are suffering psychological stress – a sizeable proportion of the population is essentially ‘too ill to work’.

There are some similarities between the factors in the two tables – the main commonalities being the impact of structural inequality, or of external factors such as conflict or poor service provision, on wellbeing. Grey areas are around the issues of worklessness and lone parenthood.

There will always be debate around the extent to which such experiences are ‘caused’ by a culture of dependency and lack of personal ambition, or are

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<sup>4</sup> On some measures (for example, the proportion of children living in poverty after housing costs), there seems to be a higher rate of poverty in some British regions than in Northern Ireland. However, investigation of the percentage of children living in poverty for 3-4 years out of the past four years (i.e. those in persistent poverty), shows that the figures were much higher in Northern Ireland than in Great Britain (21% compared to 9%).

'experienced' as a result of external factors culminating to disadvantage or exclude certain communities, groups or individuals. In relation to the latter argument, the literature certainly shows that once in poverty, an individual becomes more vulnerable to further bouts of poverty (Blanden and Gibbons 2006; Moore, 2005; Phillips *et al*, 2011). In normal circumstances, negative experiences may have little impact on an individual, but once in poverty, the impact is strengthened and multiplied. Moore (2005) states that with fewer collective assets to fall back on, individuals are more susceptible to 'shocks'. With ineffective institutional support, the situation can worsen.

Shildrick *et al.* (2010) also claim that: '*people [already experiencing poverty] simply do not have the resources to cope easily when things go wrong*' (p.6). Whether or not an individual can escape from this increased level of risk, or 'buck the trend', is very much determined by the combination of poverty factors experienced, the strength of personal or structural factors, and the effectiveness of interventions designed to help lift them out of poverty. These issues are discussed in more detail in Section 3 of this review.

### 2.2.2 Persistent poverty

The original remit for this review was to establish: *What works in supporting children and young people to break the intergenerational poverty cycle?* The reason for interest in this topic is a deep-seated concern, both in Northern Ireland and internationally, not just about of the incidence of relative poverty,<sup>5</sup> but also about the increasingly entrenched nature of poverty in some communities. There is clear evidence that the life outcomes for those experiencing chronic or persistent poverty in their youth (see Table 2 above for definitions) are considerably worse than for those experiencing recurrent or transient poverty. For example:

- Persistently poor families are more likely than temporary poor families to have difficulties saving regularly, paying household bills, or making money last (Barnes *et al.*, 2008).
- There is evidence that those who experience poverty for a sustained period of five years or more in their youth are 90 per cent more likely to remain poor than other young people who experience poverty (Hulme *et al.*, 2011).
- Children from persistently poor families are more likely than children in temporarily poor families to be suspended or expelled from school, to be in trouble with the police, to live in sub-standard housing or to face multiple negative outcomes (Barnes *et al.*, 2008).
- Children living in persistent poverty are at higher risk of poor educational, health, housing and crime outcomes than temporarily poor children (Horgan and Monteith, 2009). Only 26 per cent of children in persistent poverty achieve 'good school achievement rates' compared to 40 per cent in episodic poverty and 60 per cent of those never in poverty (Kiernan and Mensah, 2010).

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<sup>5</sup> Although rates of poverty have, until quite recently, been rising across the UK, a world-wide recession, and falling average incomes, mean that the rate of **relative** poverty has begun to fall.

Given the severe implications for children growing up in persistent poverty, there is clearly a need to understand more about what can be done to alleviate or mitigate this negative experience. In many ways, a focus on intergenerational poverty/IGT is a distraction from this very important policy issue, which is likely to require a response at many levels – by UK government and devolved administrations; by local councils/boards; by practitioners; and by neighbourhoods, families and individuals. Lloyd *et al.* (2009) maintain that more needs to be done to alleviate the impact of persistent poverty on children’s lives, and that policy should be more closely tailored to the particular circumstances of those living in persistent poverty than at present. More knowledge is needed about the opportunities that do, or do not, exist for these families, and the barriers that prevent them from taking up opportunities. It is for this reason that we have altered the focus of this review to investigate: *What works in supporting children and young people to overcome persistent poverty?*

### 3. What factors enable persistently poor children to achieve a positive outcome in adulthood?

Given the severe implications for children growing up in persistent poverty, there is a need to understand more about what can be done to alleviate or mitigate this negative experience. This chapter explores the factors identified in the literature that enable persistently poor children to ‘buck the trend’ and achieve a positive outcome in adulthood. The evidence presented largely focuses on the enabling factors that lift people out of poverty or offer protection from poverty. However, given that these often mirror the situations and events that trigger and increase the risks of entering poverty, some of the findings relate to risk factors that if addressed, are likely to be effective in overcoming long-term poverty in the future.

Across the literature, factors considered ‘enabling’ vary according to whether poverty is viewed as a cause of societal problems, or a symptom of structural inequality. The debate over the primacy of structure or agency is apparent and while some of the literature focuses on external factors which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available for families living in, or at risk of, persistent poverty, others focus on internal factors and the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make free choices. The literature also draws on the interplay of these internal and external factors and the extent to which one element can influence another.

The following chapter sets out the evidence relating to overarching enabling factors at the structural and individual/family level. Additionally, across the selected literature, a number of specific interventions or strategies to overcome persistent poverty have been identified and evaluated. These are referenced throughout this chapter as illustrative boxed examples.

#### 3.1 Structural factors

The majority of the literature identifies the importance of multiple structural investments at a financial or environmental level, which can help overcome barriers faced by the persistently poor. The following table presents the main external structural factors identified in the literature. These are discussed in greater depth in the following sections.

**Figure 1 Overview of structural factors identified as offering protection from persistent poverty<sup>6</sup>**

Financial factors	Environmental factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increases and reforms to social protection (e.g. child benefit, working tax credit and non-contributory pensions)</li> <li>Maximising efficiency of benefit delivery (e.g. one stop shops, unified benefit systems)</li> <li>Support for additional costs associated with employment (e.g. childcare, clothes, transport)</li> <li>Welfare rights and advocacy work (e.g. benefit take-up campaigns)*</li> <li>Increases in national minimum wage/paying a 'living wage'</li> <li>Reforms to charging and debt recovery procedures*</li> <li>Community economic development initiatives (e.g. local exchange and trading schemes and credit unions)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reducing joblessness and increasing earnings among families</li> <li>Promoting flexible working</li> <li>Equal work opportunities and tackling discrimination in the work place*</li> <li>Available, affordable, high-quality childcare</li> <li>Affordable housing and local amenities*</li> <li>Access to transport*</li> <li>Access to health care support</li> <li>Access to wider services (e.g. childrens centres)</li> <li>Access to leisure, social and cultural activities (free at the point of use)*</li> <li>Multi-agency partnerships to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach*</li> <li>Community involvement in decision making and service delivery</li> </ul>

### 3.1.1 Financial factors

A range of financial factors are evidenced in a number of studies as having the potential to mitigate persistent poverty. The majority of this evidence refers to the importance of macro-economic and fiscal approaches to poverty reduction and income maximisation. Some examples are provided below.

#### **Social protection**

Adequate social protection for families is integral to combating persistent poverty. Evidence points to the potential to alleviate persistent poverty through increases in, and reforms to, income transfers such as child benefit, working tax credit and non-contributory pensions (Frazer and Devlin, 2011). For example, in order to support those moving in and out of work without financial disruption there is recognition of the need to harmonise the working tax credits and benefit systems as far as possible (Phillips *et al.*, 2011). There is also a need to ensure the ongoing deployment of youth targeted income transfers such as 'hardship funds', to ensure that structural or individual difficulties do not push a young person out of secondary, tertiary or vocational education, or to support re-entry into the education system (Moore, 2005).

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<sup>6</sup> \* denotes that only a passing reference has been made in the selected literature to a particular enabler, rather than there being a significant body of research evidence.

The ongoing social protection of families moving into employment is highlighted as an enabling factor, particularly the need for assistance with the additional costs associated with work. These include, for example, childcare, clothes and transport costs which can have a significant impact on their likelihood of remaining in work (Whiteford and Adema, 2007; Philips *et al.*, 2011). Similarly, Phillips *et al.* (2011) found that parents expressed concerns about the reduction in entitlement to housing benefit if they started earning a wage. The security of the family home was a prime consideration in the financial assessment of entering employment for many parents.

According to Gordon (2011), '*eradicating child poverty by income transfers is a good long-term investment for a society to make*' (p. 4). The author suggests that the income transfers required to eradicate child poverty are sustainable and will eventually more than pay for themselves. Blanden and Gibbons (2006) provide further evidence of the potential impact of redistributive policies in overcoming persistent poverty. They analysed two national datasets, the National Child Development Study (children born in 1958) and the British Cohort Study (children born in 1970) to examine outcomes for two cohorts (teens in 1970s and teens in 1980s). For teenagers in 1980s (i.e. those in early middle age today), low income had a direct effect on chances of ending up in poverty as an adult, even when controlling for family background characteristics such as education level and employment status. The authors suggest that: '*this provides some grounds for suggesting that redistribution could have had a beneficial impact for those growing up in the later cohort*' (p.3). However, they also find enough evidence of multi-dimensional causes of adult poverty, including for example, poor skills, and low employment, to recognise that policy should not be focused on income transfers alone. Others also suggest some caution, acknowledging that although there is a fairly strong correlation between the effectiveness of tax and benefit redistribution in reducing poverty and the level of family joblessness, there is a trade-off between providing generous assistance to the poor and improving incentives for people to work and provide for themselves (Whiteford and Adema, 2007).

### **The efficiency of benefit delivery**

In addition to having in place social protection, it is important to ensure that those living in, or on the margins of poverty, are receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled. There are many complexities in benefits administration, which can result in delays to new claims, late payment or overpayments leading to financial crisis for families (Grant *et al.*, 2011; Gordon 2011; Phillips *et al.*, 2011; Harris *et al.*, 2009). Qualitative research by Shildrick *et al.* (2010), examining the lives of people living in some of the most deprived wards in England echo these findings and highlight cases where individuals who found benefit claims to be an awkward and frustrating process did not access them at all. As a result, they became part of a group whom the authors describe as 'the missing workless', not receiving financial support or support from employment services during periods out of work. The impact of this for families living in severe poverty is outlined in a study by Stewart (2011), which explores the use of anti-poverty services. The research found that parents feared the bureaucracy of the benefits and tax credits system and the transition from living on out-of-work benefits to receiving a wage (and possibly in-work financial support), which resulted

in them being without essential income for some weeks. A range of measures and initiatives are recommended, including one-stop-shops for benefit advice and support, targeted welfare rights and advocacy work, benefit take-up campaigns and unified benefit systems.

### **National Minimum Wage**

Several of the reviewed items note the importance of paying all workers a 'living wage' and call for increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW) in the UK in order to help overcome persistent poverty (Shildrick *et al.*, 2010). Authors focusing on youth poverty, for example, note the need for changes to the NMW sliding scale, where 16-17 years olds currently receive very low wage levels compared to 18-21 year olds and adults, serving to perpetuate the poverty cycle, particularly for those living independently (France, 2008). According to Horgan and Monteith (2009), avoiding in-work poverty is particularly difficult in Northern Ireland due to low median wages, the region being promoted as a low-wage economy and the majority of jobs being in the poorly-paid service sector, consisting of mainly part-time work typically filled by women. The suggestion is that Northern Ireland needs to 're-promote' itself as an attractive employment destination in order to increase median wages.

### **Support for community economic development initiatives**

Other financial enablers include local employment and trading systems or local energy transfer systems (LETS or LETSystems). These democratically organised, not-for-profit community enterprises provide a community information service and record transactions of members exchanging goods and services by using the currency of locally-created credits. Other low-cost borrowing options such as credit unions (member-owned financial cooperatives, providing credit at competitive rates and other financial services) can be beneficial for the persistently poor. However, there are concerns about the current lack of sufficient geographical coverage and variability in loan eligibility criteria which may limit their effectiveness. Some families, unable to access mainstream credit, resort to the home credit market and doorstep lenders with very high interest rates. In order to help these families there needs to be further reform to charging and debt recovery procedures (Harris *et al.*, 2009).

### **3.1.2 Environmental factors**

In addition to the financial factors set out in Section 3.1, there are a range of other 'external' factors, often related to specific financial enablers that can impact upon the alleviation of persistent poverty. These include:

- work and worklessness
- employment stability
- affordability and quality of childcare
- access to health care support
- access to wider services.

## Work and worklessness

Children in workless families are identified among those most vulnerable to persistent poverty. This is evidenced in research by Barnes *et al.* (2008) which finds that half of lone-parent families and two-fifths of couple families who experience persistent worklessness, also experience persistent poverty. A wealth of literature therefore points to the importance of reducing joblessness and increasing earnings among families, as dominant factors in triggering exits from, and protecting against entry to, poverty (Smith and Middleton, 2007; Frazer and Devlin, 2011; Mason *et al.*, 2011; Horgan and Monteith, 2009). The rationale for this is twofold. Non-employed families are typically the most economically disadvantaged and increasing their employment will assist those who are among the poorest in society. Furthermore, an increase in employment among the population is likely to be a pre-requisite for public and political support for more effective redistribution of benefits to the poor (Whiteford and Adema, 2007). Despite the wealth of evidence recognising the need to increase employment opportunities in order to overcome persistent poverty, this remains a challenge in the UK given the current economic climate.

*All countries with very low levels of child poverty (under five per cent) also have relatively low levels of joblessness and relatively low market income poverty, together with tax and transfer systems that are very effective at further reducing child poverty, usually through high levels of spending rather than through targeting (pp. 35–36).*

In their assessment of approaches to combating poverty and social exclusion among children, Frazer and Devlin (2011) highlight the high risk of poverty for children in lone-parent families and in families where there is low work intensity, and thus the need to increase the proportion of income that families with children derive from work through working hours or pay. The findings suggest that this will involve, among other things, increasing the proportion of women with children who are in work, promoting flexible working, and addressing the issue of poverty associated with part-time work. Research by Barnes *et al.* (2008) has also shown that temporary, or short-term, work is important in reducing a family's propensity to experience persistent poverty when compared to a family where no adult is in work. Encouraging women and/or single parents into work is of course dependent on a range of other factors, not least the availability of affordable and quality childcare (as described below). Without it, this will remain difficult to achieve.

Having only one worker in a household does not always protect couple families from persistent poverty and other studies highlight the importance of increasing the number of full-time workers in the child's household. Evidence suggests that having two parents in the home that work is more important for poverty exit than an increase in the wages of household members. For example, in their review of poverty dynamics in the UK, Smith and Middleton (2007) found that households moving from having one earner to having two earners had a greater probability of escaping poverty than households moving from having no earners to having one earner (p. 10). Echoing this, in their analysis of what works best in reducing child poverty, Whiteford and Adema (2007) suggest that reduced household joblessness and an

increase in dual-income families will be particularly effective in the UK and note that policy choices require a balanced approach that encourages increased employment among parents while simultaneously increasing the rewards of paid work. In contrast, however, findings relating to individual and family-level enablers, set out in Section 3.2, recognise the importance of parenting, particularly parental involvement in their child's education, as a factor that helps to buck the trend. There is a tension between these two factors, and finding a balance between income maximisation and time maximisation is likely to be paramount.

### **Employment stability**

Many studies note that children in households with one or, especially, two people in continuous employment are the most protected. Creating sustainable employment opportunities is therefore key, particularly in light of the findings of Adelman *et al.* (2003), which suggest that children in households with no workers are at less risk of poverty than those in households where people have moved out of, or in and out of, employment. It is likely that in this case, the households with no workers are receiving consistent welfare support and this stability serves as a protective factor for children. As noted in the section on the efficiency of benefit delivery, where families 'churn' in and out of work and do not claim benefit in the interim this can lead to additional issues placing them at further risk of remaining persistently poor (Shildrick *et al.*, 2012). Indeed, Smith and Middleton (2007) highlight the challenges of social policy which focuses only on poverty exit, and not on keeping people out of poverty, noting that successive waves of resources are devoted on many of the same individuals, many of whom still return to poverty. They suggest:

*The need for policy to broaden its perspective from one from which change is viewed simply as transitions between fixed states (e.g. poverty to non-poverty or unemployment to employment). Instead, a dynamic policy perspective is required to address poverty dynamics, one which views change as processes in the context of the life course (pp. 12-13).*

In their review of approaches to tackling child poverty in Northern Ireland, Horgan and Monteith (2009) highlight the need to increase the supply of well-paid, good quality jobs in the country and put an end to the promotion of the region as a low-pay economy. The authors suggest that the Government needs to work with employers to encourage a change of attitudes to the quality of employment available, including wage level, progression opportunities and flexible working hours. Research by Barnes *et al.* (2008) however, suggests some caution, noting that employment does not always protect families from persistent poverty, particularly where there is only one worker in the household. The author concludes that policy must seek to increase work in households where work is possible and appropriate, but also recognise that work is not always possible for all parents at all times, particularly during periods of ill health or during concentrated times of childcare.

### **Affordability and quality of childcare**

A number of studies highlight the importance of supporting families with the costs of childcare in order to facilitate their transition into work and ongoing retention in employment (Phillips, 2011; Frazer and Devlin, 2011). Childcare interventions and the provision of associated services can have a wide range of benefits, not least the positive developmental benefits for young children reinforced by the income effects of having working parents (Grant *et al.*, 2011). Referring specifically to the context in Northern Ireland, Horgan and Monteith (2009) suggest the following improvements to childcare that are likely to lead to more local jobs in the short term and improved labour market participation in the longer-term. These include: extending the hours of subsidised childcare provided to all 3-4 year olds; bringing two-year-olds into the offer; expanding Sure Start childcare provision to 20 hours per week; committing to providing a children's centre in every community and; revisiting the extended schools initiative to ensure that policy reaches its full potential for wrap-around care.

### **Access to health care support**

There is evidence that the duration of poverty experienced by children is affected by the health status of their parents (Grant *et al.*, 2011; Layte *et al.*, 2006; Horgan and Monteith, 2009; Moore, 2005; Frazer and Devlin, 2011). Moore (2005) notes that a human is most sensitive to the negative effects of poverty (expressed as insufficient health and nutrition) in the womb and during the first few years of life:

*The growth and development, especially of the brain and immune system, that occur during these sensitive foetal and early childhood periods can lay the groundwork for future cognitive and physical capacity and, possibly, more socioculturally dependent qualities such as behaviour (p.17).*

The focus on preventing ill health and descents into long-term poverty caused by ill health is essential to avoid the passing on of poor nutritional and health status. This includes the need to maintain universal free health care and to foster child health and nutrition (Moore, 2005). In addition to support for physical health, Horgan and Monteith (2009) note that in Northern Ireland there is a particular need to ensure the effective delivery of mental-health provision due to high rates of poverty and the legacy of the troubles. This has resulted in a significant proportion of the population suffering from psychological distress who are reportedly 'too ill to work'.

### **Access to wider services**

There is a need to improve the accessibility and quality of all universal public services to people living on low incomes and to minimise the stigma associated with receiving support (Gordon, 2011; Grant *et al.*, 2011). This includes, for example, access to early years' interventions such as children's centres, and access to leisure, social and cultural activities for families living in poverty. In particular, it includes increasing opportunities for children in deprived communities to participate in sporting and recreational activities, both after school and during school holidays, through investments in youth services, for example (Frazer and Devlin, 2011; Horgan and Monteith, 2009).

*In many contexts, it may be the case that after prevention of harm through maternal and early childhood interventions, providing socio-economic opportunities and support to youth may be the most effective means of avoiding and interrupting intergenerational and life-course poverty (Moore, 2005, p. 20).*

#### **A Family Intervention Project (FIP) developed for families with complex needs**

As part of their evaluation of the Child Poverty Unit's Child Poverty Pilots on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions, Evans and Gardiner (2011) outline the important role played by FiPs for families with complex needs living well below the poverty line. FiPs reflect the appreciation that a minority of families in poverty have particularly complex needs and face barriers in accessing support services. The types of problems highlighted include mental health or drug and alcohol dependency and long term worklessness. Such families are likely to have low employment prospects, with long durations in deep poverty, indebtedness, a higher likelihood of benefit sanctions and other complex needs. The family intervention model seeks to integrate service delivery around intensive family-level provision based on a key worker.

Below is a case-study example of one FIP:

- **Aim of the pilot project:** To help children's and adults' services in England to establish new and effective practice that delivers sustained outcomes for the poorest families who experience multiple problems that make it more difficult for them to work. This is a holistic family-based human and social capital intervention rather than an attempt to get parents into employment in the short to medium term.
- **Inputs:** Long-term intensive casework intervention from key workers who have relatively low caseloads of around five families and who coordinate the work of other agencies.
- **Expected outcomes:** Improved access and up-take of services leading to improved health outcomes; improved parenting and family functioning leading to better cared for children with improved life chances; increased levels of independent living; and parents becoming work ready and some helped into work.

While the FiPs provide some lessons about family capacity building it is important to note that the type of deep intervention discussed here will not be necessary, or appropriate, for all families living in persistent poverty (Evans and Gardiner, 2011).

It is essential that there is a coordinated approach to ensure effective delivery of local services. This is typically achieved through the development of multi-agency partnerships to ensure a coordinated and integrated approach at locality level to the delivery of support to children and families at risk that is tailored to their needs (Frazer and Devlin, 2011). Related to this, community involvement in decision-making and service delivery is recognised as pivotal in prevention and overcoming the effects of persistent poverty. The report of the commission on poverty,

participation and power in the UK, for example, produced a set of guidelines on how this might be achieved. It recommended that local administrations set up a taskforce made up of those with direct experience of poverty and those with experience of participatory ways of working, to draw up recommendations on ways to ensure that people experiencing poverty can participate in decision-making processes affecting their lives. Strategies employed include: devolved decision making at the community level; widening community participation in decision making processes; building community capacity; resourcing and developing community and voluntary groups and broadening participation to include young people and marginalised groups (Gordon, 2011).

### **Supporting and engaging persistently poor families through anti-poverty services**

In their study of how families living in severe poverty engage with anti-poverty services, Phillips *et al.* (2011) conclude that further consideration should be given to adopting the principles and learning from programmes that parents have previously engaged with. Effective features of support services for families living in severe poverty include: starting from 'where parents are'; supporting parents over the long term; operating a multi-disciplinary approach; and working towards soft outcomes (rather than short-term targets). Employment, advice and other support services (e.g. housing, benefits advice, debt services, health and education) should be delivered in a personalised and customer-focused way. This can be achieved through key worker approaches, or by giving families a named individual to work with, and by delivering services in the locality, through the use of drop-in centres for example. Recommendations for local service providers include:

- Maximise the use of 'trusted' individuals who work in the community, such as midwives and health visitors and community organisations to provide information and deliver services.
- Celebrate positive engagement with parents and communicate this within communities to help address misinformation (Phillips *et al.*, 2011).

## 3.2 Individual and family-level factors

This section sets out the characteristics and experiences of individuals and families who are persistently poor and the internal factors that can help them to break the poverty cycle. It also draws out evidence on approaches and interventions that are used to support individuals and families to 'buck the trend'. In contrast to the findings on the structural influences that enable children and families to overcome persistent

poverty set out in Section 3.1, there is limited evidence relating to individual or ‘internal’ enabling factors. In the most part, this is due to the challenge of identifying the enabling characteristics of individuals. There is also some scepticism regarding the influence of internal or individual factors in overcoming persistent poverty, given the substantial reported impact of structural inequality on the persistently poor.

The following table presents the main enabling individual/family-level factors identified in the literature. These are discussed in greater depth in the following sections. Figure 2 Overview of individual and family factors identified as offering protection from persistent poverty<sup>7</sup>

Individual/family-level factors	Practice-level factors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resilience and coping strategies present within individuals and families</li> <li>• Raised aspirations and family/individual capacity to deal with adversity</li> <li>• Changed perceptions and value systems relating to norms of (benefit) entitlement*</li> <li>• High levels of engagement with children’s education (supportive home learning environment)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Supporting the educational attainment of parents and children (e.g. through conditional cash transfers, family literacy programmes)</li> <li>• Creating school cohorts with a varying mix of advantaged/ disadvantaged pupils</li> <li>• Reducing early school drop-out*</li> <li>• Delivering personalised support through key workers and ‘trusted’ individuals</li> <li>• Family and social service assistance aimed at proactively addressing parent’s employment, educational and self-sufficiency needs*</li> <li>• Delivering services in a localised way (through drop-in centres etc.)</li> </ul>

### 3.2.1 Resilience and coping strategies

A number of the items reviewed consider resilience as a useful concept for examining the ways in which some individuals are able to overcome the negative impacts of poverty and prevent its persistence within families (Houston, 2010; Boyden, and Cooper, 2007; Lloyd *et al.*, 2008; Abelev, 2009; Evans and Gardiner, 2011; Angulo-Macias, 2008). In the case of resilience, specific enablers are not observable in the same way as structural factors (outlined in Section 3.1). Rather, they are manifest in individuals as traits, strengths, competencies, values and self perceptions. In combination, the capabilities of individuals and their power to exercise agency, help

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<sup>7</sup> \* denotes that only a passing reference has been made in the selected literature to a particular enabler, rather than there being a significant body of research evidence.

shape their life course and that of their families (Boyden and Cooper, 2007; Houston, 2010; Angulo-Macias, 2008). Nolan *et al.* (2006), for example, note:

*Outcomes such as poverty are determined by a multiplicity of factors and even in circumstances of multiple disadvantage individuals shape their destinies through coping strategies that involve mobilising personal and social resources' (Nolan et al., 2006, p. 125).*

In order to 'buck the trend' (that is, to avoid the poverty in adulthood that might have been expected based on their exposure to poverty in childhood), there is some evidence to suggest that children and families can be supported to raise their aspirations and improve their capacity to deal with adversity. For children lacking home support, Angulo-Macias (2008) noted the critical influence of role models, including teachers, neighbours and community workers, in helping to safeguard against poor outcomes.

In a qualitative study examining the views of adult educators who were raised in poverty, Houston (2010) identifies specific enablers that helped those individuals to develop resilience and break away from a potential cycle of disadvantage. One of the key features was the presence of mentor or caring adult, who recognised potential or intervened to provide active support with the achievement of goals. Other facilitating factors included: providing at-risk children with positive coping skills through study courses, activities, and counselling; providing opportunities to at-risk children such as field trips to colleges; and sharing information about higher education scholarships and grants, and supporting applications. Research by Abelev (2009) identified that financial support, and the networks opened up by a middle-class mentor were key to nurturing resilience. However, this was heavily context specific and some caution is needed in suggesting that resilience can be nurtured without adequate mentoring support. Similarly, other appraised research acknowledges that while there may be some merit in looking to build on the experiences of 'resilient families' when seeking to support others to overcome persistent poverty, there is still some uncertainty about whether such traits can be learned.

### **Exploring the concept of resilience among at-risk children in poverty who went on to buck the trend**

Life story interviews with 15 participants were used to explore factors for promoting resilience in response to poverty and adversity. All of the participants in the study were persistent in getting an education because they wanted to change their lives. They displayed self-efficacy, which is the belief that one is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain specific goals. These factors empowered interviewees to realise opportunities, achieve and gain college degrees and jobs. All of the interviewees felt that children with an outgoing temperament and an ability to rally support could develop resilience. A mentor or caring adult, who recognised their potential or intervened to provide active support with achieving their goals improved their odds. Having future goals and parents with high expectations was identified as important. Peer groups were also influential in helping the interviewees to 'figure out how to be successful'. The following contextual markers have been identified as helping to promote resilience among young people in response to poverty and adversity:

- high expectations
- social support
- emotional support
- future goals
- cultural expectations
- family support
- positive personal relationships (Houston, 2010).

### 3.2.2 Educational achievement

A number of the reviewed items point to education as an important factor in protecting individuals from persistent poverty, suggesting that poor education serves as a mechanism for the continuation of disadvantage among families (Blanden, 2006; Layte *et al.*, 2006; Smith and Middleton, 2007; Mendola *et al.*, 2009; Horgan and Monteith, 2009; Goodman and Gregg; 2010, Gray, 2010; Gordon, 2011). Angelo-Macias (2008), for example, notes that positive outcomes from school experiences have been found to last well into adulthood. This is demonstrated in other research which shows that childhood poverty is associated with lower educational attainment, which in turn, is associated with low income in adulthood (Smith and Middleton, 2007).

*Growing up in disadvantaged households significantly increases the risk of exposure to poverty in adulthood, and individual educational attainment comprises one of the principal mechanisms through which poverty is transmitted [sic] across the generations (Nolan *et al.*, 2006).*

*The impact of childhood circumstances on current poverty operates partly but not entirely through the individual's own education level (Layte *et al.*, 2006).*

Much evidence suggests that **enhancing the educational attainment of parents and children** can help to mitigate persistent poverty. This can be achieved (at the practice level) through school-based and whole-family measures to reduce barriers to learning. A number of the items appraised refer to the importance of early intervention in relation to improving educational outcomes. These highlight the need for time-sensitive or age-appropriate strategies to assist children in mastering key developmental tasks that are required to prevent potentially irreversible harm to their future wellbeing (Yaqub 2001). Goodman and Gregg (2010), for example, note that decisions, investments and attitudes experienced in the early years are the main drivers for educational attainment in the teenage years. This is particularly important in light of the findings of Mendola *et al.* (2009) that the longer the time spent in education the lower the chance of poverty in later life. Strategies to support and maintain disadvantaged young people's engagement with education and learning have been widely introduced within the UK. These include, for example, Sure Start children's centres and Family Intervention Project (FIP) programmes which work directly with individuals and families living in some of the most deprived localities (Blanden 2006, Grant *et al.*, 2011; Evans and Gardiner (2011). Given the lack of longitudinal studies assessing the longer-term impacts of such interventions, however, it is currently unclear whether or not a child is less likely to go on to experience persistent poverty in the long term after receiving such support.

#### **The use of a family literacy programme to break the cycle of poverty and low literacy for low income families in the USA**

A family literacy programme in Colorado, USA has been developed to break the cycle of poverty and low literacy for low-income families. The goals of the programme are to a) help parents improve their literacy skills and become full partners in educating their children, and b) to assist children in reaching their full potential as learners. Provision is typically centre-based (usually in a school) where families come to participate. The programme involves adult basic skills, general education development, examination preparation, English as an Additional Language (EAL) classes, parenting sessions and job-skills training. While this is going on, children are usually being educated either in a pre-school setting, or via homework clubs if they attend school. During the session, parents and children come together for literacy activities. The families also receive tailored home visits (Anderson, 2006).

Other education-related mechanisms that can support children and young people to overcome persistent poverty include:

- **Creating school cohorts with a varying mix of pupils from both advantaged and disadvantaged backgrounds.** Research suggests that poor children who attend school with more socially-advantaged children than themselves can benefit educationally and socially, and that mixed-ability classes are associated with a higher probability for poor children of bucking the trend, especially for boys (Blanden, 2006).
- **Increasing curriculum accessibility,** with the development of new teaching methods to enable disadvantaged pupils to improve their attainment. This includes methods to increase the relevance of the curriculum to their lives and seem less 'boring'. Essential to this is the need to ensure that school budgets provide for **all** the costs of education, including books, school trips and after-school activities, so that children living in poverty do not get left behind, ostracised or miss out on crucial learning and social activities (Horgan and Monteith, 2009).

The literature recognises that intensive programmes that focus on helping small numbers of children most in need tend to have the strongest evidence of effectiveness. However, Goodman and Gregg (2010) remind us that educational disadvantage affects a very large number of children from low-income families, but with lower intensity than those at the extreme. This finding suggests that by focussing solely on delivering support to the most extreme cases, families with lower level needs who are persistently poor can be overlooked. It is important, therefore, that policy achieves an appropriate balance between the provision of universal and targeted services.

There is also evidence that **enhancing parents' engagement with their child's education** can help to mitigate future persistent poverty. Studies have shown, for example, that a father's level of interest in his child's education has a large influence on sons' academic achievement, and that a mother's level of interest is most important for daughters (Blanden, 2006). This suggests that parental engagement acts as protective factor and that by receiving support with their education, children are able to achieve better and hence have more capacity to avoid poverty in later life. In their assessment of the mediating role of parenting and the interrelationships between parenting, poverty and family resources, Kiernan and Mensah (2010) find that while 44 per cent of children who had not experienced poverty had parents with high parenting scores<sup>8</sup>, only 11 per cent of children living in persistent poverty had parents with such scores. Results of their analysis indicate that half of the effect of poverty on children's achievement may be explained by parenting, and around 40 percent of the effect of family resources on children's achievement may be explained by parenting. They conclude:

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<sup>8</sup> Parenting scores relate to a parenting index, which takes account the following: engagement in activities to promote learning; relationship with child; family organisation; nutrition; disciplinary practices and observations of parent-child interaction during a cognitive assessment task (Kiernan and Mensah, 2010).

*The inclusion of [positive] parenting improves the odds of children in different poverty categories attaining a good level of achievement, but poverty and the persistence of poverty still matter...It is clear that children who have experienced persistent poverty have the lowest odds of having a good level of achievement (p. 324).*

Attainment scores taken at age five have been shown to be a strong predictor of a child's chance of bucking the trend and there is evidence that parental interest can contribute to improving such scores. This suggests that early interventions such as those provided by Sure Start and early-years settings, which encourage parents to become more involved in their child's education, can have an important long-term effect (Blanden, 2006). In spite of this knowledge, there are still uncertainties around the mechanisms and processes by which poverty and disadvantage can hinder positive parenting. Goodman and Gregg (2010) suggest that strategies to improve parenting skills and home-learning environments will not eliminate the gap but could have short- and long-term benefits.

#### **The use of a Conditional Cash Transfer Programme (CCT) to alleviate future poverty**

A CCT programme operating in Mexico provides cash payments to families that are conditional on children regularly attending schools and on family members visiting health clinics for check-ups. When compared to a control group of families, there is some evidence that the CTC intervention has a significant positive impact on school grades in the longer-term (i.e. over 6 years). Young people with 18 months greater exposure to the programme also accumulated significantly more schooling. The longer-term impacts of the programme appear positive with important increases in schooling attainment, and for older youth, some higher rates of working and a shift away from agricultural to non-agricultural work. The program impacts on schooling attainment increase approximately linearly with the duration of exposure to the program (Behrman *et al.*, 2010).

### 3.3 Overview of influencing factors – what balance is needed?

This chapter has discussed the structural and the individual/family factors that enable persistently poor children to ‘buck the trend’ and achieve a positive outcome in adulthood. There is a significant interplay between structural factors and those operating at the individual or family level. For example, educational achievement, which is considered to be an important factor in protecting individuals from persistent poverty, can be influenced by structural factors, including the school curriculum, and by individual factors, such as pupil competencies and levels of family support.

As a number of factors affect the poverty experienced by children and families, the policy response to persistent poverty must be multi-dimensional, focusing on income supports, combined with measures that support employment, education and accessibility of services such as childcare and health. It is, however, difficult to assess the precise balance of factors that will lead to the best outcomes. A factor is likely to have most impact where it operates both internally and externally. For example, in the case of employment, individuals require the willingness to work and the appropriate skills to do so, whilst at the same time, there needs to be sufficient employment opportunity alongside other enablers such as transport and childcare facilities. Moreover, timing is pivotal and early intervention is key. Strategies that successfully intervene early can have a cumulative effect in terms of later success.

The literature also acknowledges that poverty is still commonly viewed from a point-in-time perspective, which treats the poor as a homogenous group. As a result, strategies, policies and practice are often developed at a generic level, and are not always effective in alleviating the plight of persistently poor families. It is likely that specific interventions tailored to the needs of individual families, within the context of an overall policy approach to removing structural inequality will have the greatest benefit. Whiteford and Adema (2007) express this as follows: ‘*The challenge for policy is not one of choosing between alternative strategies, but finding the optimum combination of approaches*’ (p. 8). Such approaches are likely to include:

- increasing and reforming social protection
- maximising the efficiency of benefit delivery
- reducing joblessness, increasing earnings and promoting flexible working
- improving the availability, affordability and quality of childcare
- ensuring access to health care support and wider services
- involving local communities in decision making and service delivery
- supporting the development of resilience within individuals and families
- supporting the educational attainment of parents and children
- engaging parents with children’s education
- delivering personalised support through key workers and ‘trusted’ individuals.

### 3.3.1 A note regarding Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland Child Poverty Strategy (Northern Ireland Executive, 2011) reflects a strong grasp of these influencing factors, focusing on the need to promote a fair context in which young people can flourish and access opportunity. The strategy pays particular attention to wider family circumstances, pledging to: ensure that poverty and disadvantage in childhood does not translate into poorer outcomes for children in adulthood; support parents into work that pays; ensure the child's environment supports them to thrive; and target financial support to be responsive to family situations. Within these strategic priorities are a raft of action areas which reflect a number of the messages from this review (for example, the need to: make childcare more affordable; support re-engagement into education and training; intervene early; grow the local economy; and improve financial competency).

Northern Ireland policy makers may wish to consider, however, the extent to which the strategy identifies and responds to the different challenges posed by the very many and varied measures of child poverty. Currently, the strategy makes reference to and reflects on the four measures of poverty outlined in the Child Poverty Act of 2010 (Great Britain. Statutes, 2010). However, this review has shown there are a host of measures which could be promoted to better understand the 'type' and extent of poverty experienced by a child, and in turn, contribute to a better understanding about how to approach or devise policy in response.

The following sections consider the influencing factors outlined above as they relate to policy and practice, in order to identify some of the next steps that need to be taken to ensure that there is a sustainable response to the challenge of overcoming persistent poverty.

## 4. Key messages for policy and practice

The following figure summarises the key messages for policy and practice. These messages are discussed in greater detail in the sections that follow.

**Figure 3 Overview of steps that can be taken by policymakers and practitioners to overcome persistent poverty**

Policy makers	Practitioners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There needs to be genuine work opportunity if families are to become self supporting.</li> <li>• There needs to be adequate social protection for those who cannot work, or who are in part-time or low-paid work.</li> <li>• Work must be made accessible for parents (through income disregards on benefits, and quality childcare provision, for example).</li> <li>• Improvements are needed in the NMW.</li> <li>• National programmes supporting the engagement of disadvantaged young people with learning can have positive impacts.</li> <li>• Intervening early in young people's lives and with families has beneficial effects.</li> <li>• A coordinated, multi-agency approach to poverty reduction is crucial.</li> <li>• Universal services need to be accessible to reduce 'stigma'.</li> <li>• All targeted provision needs to be appropriately tailored and supported, ideally via a key worker.</li> <li>• Local councils need to work with local employers to ensure an adequate supply of suitable employment.</li> <li>• Community development initiatives can help to protect families from debt.</li> <li>• Local families must be supported to claim all the benefits to which they are entitled.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building family resilience is an important poverty protector although alone it is not a 'cure'.</li> <li>• Effective resilience-building approaches include: mentoring; goal setting; counselling; and practical help with finances.</li> <li>• Schools can help poor young people achieve highly and 'close the gap' in outcomes, by:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ mixing children from different backgrounds and abilities in classes</li> <li>➤ ensuring that the curriculum is accessible</li> <li>➤ covering all the costs of education.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Interventions that seek to involve parents in their child's education can also contribute to closing the gap in outcomes.</li> </ul>

## 4.1 Messages for policy makers

This review has identified a large number of factors with the potential to impact on the poverty experienced by children and families. This suggests that any policy response to persistent poverty will need to be multidimensional. While much of the literature points to fiscal and redistributive measures to address income poverty, governments will also need to give consideration to employment, educational, health and childcare priorities.

### 4.1.1 Macro-economic/fiscal levers

#### **Social protection**

There is evidence that redistributive policies (for example, income transfers and/or greater harmonisation of working tax credits and child benefit systems) can have positive impacts on alleviating persistent poverty by reducing the impacts of income poverty. However, decisions also need to be made about the 'trade off' between providing assistance to the poor and improving incentives for families to become self supporting.

In a sense, there is a spectrum of intervention, and different national governments are placed at different points along it. The UK Government, for example, is focusing its energies around measures to incentivise work, and to reward those who 'do the right thing' by becoming self supporting (HM Government, 2011a). However, the literature reminds us that work is not necessarily a viable option for all families at all times (during periods of illness or concentrated childcare, for example). It also reminds us that work opportunities are not always available, at the right levels, for those individuals who are seeking them. In this context, there remains a need for adequate social protection to mitigate the worst effects of persistent poverty. There is also an argument that ongoing social protection is required for families as they move into employment. It is critically important that loss of entitlements does not act as a disincentive to work, for example.

#### **National Minimum Wage**

The literature also points to the importance of promoting the concept of a 'living wage' for all citizens in work in order to tackle the growing issue of in-work poverty. Related to this point are calls for increases in the National Minimum Wage (NMW), and for specific consideration to be given to the impacts of a low level of NMW for 16-17 year olds, particularly those who are living without family support. In the context of Northern Ireland, Horgan and Monteith (2009) express particular concern about the implications for persistent poverty of the region promoting itself as a 'low-wage' economy. All of these priorities are, of course, challenging to implement within the context of economic recession.

#### **Work and worklessness**

Evidence suggests that two of the most effective means of reducing the persistence of poverty are to increase opportunities for paid employment, and to increase average family earnings. Where two parents are in work, children are more likely to

be lifted out of income poverty than where only one parent is working. If this is to be achieved, policy action will be required on a number of fronts including:

- development of sufficient and flexible national and local work opportunities enabling adults to fulfil their potential in the labour market
- support for women and/or single parents to enter and remain in the labour market, especially through funding for adequate childcare (see section 4.1.2 below). It is important that if a parent works and leaves their child with a provider, that the childcare is of high quality and has positive developmental benefits for the child, compensating for or enhancing the time that would otherwise have been spent with the parent
- a mechanism for ensuring that individuals do not lose all of their entitlement to benefits if they take up part-time work.

Employment also needs to be sustainable. The policy focus must not be only on getting people into work, but also on retaining their employment in order to reduce the longer-term persistence, or recurrence of poverty. In the context of Northern Ireland, Horgan and Monteith (2009) suggest that the region needs to 're-promote' itself as an attractive employment destination in order to increase median wages and employment retention.

#### 4.1.2 Non-economic levers

There is less evidence of non-economic policy approaches that can positively impact upon persistent poverty. However, those that have been identified within the literature include the importance of:

- developing programmes to support and maintain the engagement of disadvantaged young people with education and learning, and to nurture positive parenting. There is evidence that enhancing the educational achievement of parents and children, and involving parents in their children's education can have positive effects on children's life-course trajectories (and ultimately on the persistence of poverty)
- maintaining a commitment to free universal healthcare and having a policy focus on child health and nutrition (see sections 4.2 and 4.3 below)
- ensuring that the timing of interventions is appropriate. Early years and early interventions have considerably greater impact than 'just in time' interventions.

Specific suggestions made in the context of Northern Ireland supporting single parents and low income families to enter or remain in work include: extending the hours of subsidised childcare to all 3-4 year olds; bringing two year olds into the offer; expanding Sure Start provision to 20 hours per week; committing to providing a children's centre in every community; and revisiting the extended schools initiative. Each of these commitments have the potential to increase the feasibility of work for parents and to guard against the persistence of poverty.

As most evaluations of social and economic policy demonstrate, there also needs to be a coordinated approach to ensure that there is effective delivery of services. This is typically achieved through multi-agency partnership working, often via co-located

teams who seek to ensure that families receive timely access to all the services that they need, tailored to their specific circumstances.

### **Service provision**

Evidence suggests that there needs to be improvement in the accessibility and quality of all universal public services (for example, early years services; youth services; sporting, recreational and cultural facilities; and drop-in centres), with a key focus on the reduction of stigma for families living in poverty. One means of achieving this can be to promote community involvement in decision making and service delivery, in order to build community capacity and resources. It is particularly important to draw on the experiences of disadvantaged members of the community or marginalised groups when developing local-level services.

When it comes to more targeted services and/or provision, it is important to ensure that the provision is personalised and to accept that 'one size will not fit all' families experiencing persistent poverty. Types of approach that have been found to be particularly effective include those utilising a key worker - one individual who works closely with a family and, over a period of time, builds trust and brokers access to a range of services. Utilising known and trusted individuals such as midwives/health visitors can be a very effective strategy.

### **Employment and debt management**

It is important to work with local employers to ensure that there is an effective supply of jobs that can draw on the skills of the local workforce. In the context of Northern Ireland, there are calls for a change in attitude regarding the nature and type of work available for local communities (currently focused largely around the poorly-paid service sector), and calls for better wage-level progression opportunity and greater flexibility in working hours.

Greater consideration should also be given to community economic development initiatives (such as LETS or LETS systems and credit unions) to protect vulnerable families from the problems of personal debts spiralling out of control, exacerbated by reliance on unlicensed moneylenders. Where such initiatives are in place, there is often insufficient geographical coverage and variability in loan eligibility criteria. This is something that local councils and boards may wish to address by working in partnership with other localities.

### **Welfare campaigns**

It is important that there are active campaigns to ensure that families are claiming all the benefits to which they are entitled. This will require, among other things, for the stigma attached to claiming welfare among certain groups to be addressed. In particular, families with 'churning' workers (those who have periods of work interspersed with periods of unemployment), and who have been found generally to deplore claiming benefits while out of work, run the risk of periods of concentrated family poverty, followed by debt once working again, if their financial needs are not met. Processes need to be streamlined so that application procedures are not confusing, bureaucratic or frustrating. At the local level, practice approaches that

have been found effective in supporting families with welfare claims include one-stop-shops for benefit advice and support, and targeted welfare rights and advocacy work.

## 4.2 Messages for practitioners

Inevitably, the work of practitioners working with children and families tends to be focused on building some of the individual-level factors discussed in Section 3 above. Much work in the social-care arena, for example, focuses upon family capacity building and the development of resilience.

### 4.2.1 Resilience/capacity building

There is evidence that building family capacity to cope with adversity can be an important protector against some of the worse effects of persistent poverty. It is important to recognise that family capacity building is not a 'cure' for poverty in its own right (unless income levels are simultaneously raised), but rather a means of mitigating some of its worse effects. Raising individual and family resilience also has the potential to generate individuals with the personal strength to change their personal circumstances in future (although evidence is mixed as to the impact that this can have on persistent poverty). It is also worth noting that there is disagreement over the extent to which resilience can be learned or acquired. Resilience tends to be very context specific. Therefore, what works in one situation will not necessarily transfer to another. In spite of these caveats, the literature highlights the following factors, which can assist in the development of resilience, particularly among children and young people:

- A mentor or sponsor with the ability to recognise potential and to provide active support for goal realisation.
- Study courses and/or counselling focused on coping skills.
- Opportunities for children and young people to experience opportunities beyond their normal experience (such as college trips or higher education scholarships).
- Practical help for children and young people with applications for grants or funding.

Other practice-level approaches with the capacity to make a difference to the persistence of poverty include those related to raising educational achievement and reducing barriers to learning. A range of school-based and whole-family measures are identified in the literature.

### 4.2.2 Raising educational achievement

Evidence points most strongly to the successes of intensive programmes working with the small numbers of children/families most in need. But additionally, there is evidence of universal approaches that can make a difference to the achievement of poor children. It is important to remember that not all children living in poverty will require the intensive support reserved for families in need of, for example, parenting interventions.

Evidence-based interventions at the school level that can make a difference to the outcomes of persistently poor children include<sup>9</sup>:

- ensuring that children are educated in mixed cohorts of socially advantaged and disadvantaged, and mixed ability children. This is likely to become more of a challenge as the education system becomes more autonomous, and as schools gain a greater level of control over admissions criteria, for example
- ensuring that the curriculum is accessible for all (both in terms of subject content and teaching and learning style). In England and Wales the current moves towards a more academically-focused education and examinations system means that schools will need to remain aware of, and responsive to, the needs of their less advantaged students
- ensuring that **all** the costs of education are covered so that poor children do not get left behind or miss out on opportunities to engage in the full educational experience.

#### 4.2.3 Whole-family measures

Early interventions such as those provided by Sure Start, which encourage parents to take an active role in their child's education and to offer positive parenting and home-learning environments, can have important benefits for children's achievement. There are still uncertainties around the mechanisms by which poverty and disadvantage can potentially hinder positive parenting, and it is very important to recognise that one does not necessarily lead to the other. It is also something of a 'leap' to state that improvements in parenting will impact on long-term poverty reduction. Indeed, few evaluations have been undertaken to explore such impacts or the mechanisms by which they might be achieved. Nevertheless, many of the reviewed items indicate that involving parents in their children's education is an important step in the right direction towards closing the gap between poor and affluent children's achievement. Reductions in this gap may, in turn, provide some children with the opportunity to achieve and to 'buck the trend' of their childhood poverty in later life.

### 4.3 Conclusions

This review has drawn on a wide body of robust evidence, which is largely strong or moderate in nature (see Appendix D). The review has explored the concept and validity of the term 'intergenerational poverty' and has concluded that the concept is unhelpful as a basis for this review. We have found little credible evidence of a widespread 'culture' of worklessness or welfare dependency that is 'transmitted' from one next generation to the next. Nevertheless, there is recognition that chronic/persistent poverty (poverty that is measured as long term and uninterrupted in duration) has particularly deleterious impacts on individuals' life chances. Given the severe implications for children growing up in persistent poverty, our review has

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<sup>9</sup> There are a range of additional educational interventions, such as reading recovery, which one might expect to be relevant here. However, none of the reviewed sources provided evidence of the link between such interventions and the reduction of persistent poverty.

shifted its focus to answer the question: *What works in supporting children and young people to overcome persistent poverty?*

The items reviewed provide compelling evidence of a range of factors that can enable families to escape persistent poverty. We recognise that there is a wider body of research literature focused on the factors that can support families to improve their outcomes.<sup>10</sup> However, this literature is outwith the scope of this review, as it typically does not deal with poverty alleviation explicitly. For this review, our search and selection strategy was focused specifically on identifying items of literature that centred on definitions of intergenerational, persistent, and other forms of long-term poverty, and those factors that can help to overcome this particular challenge.

Even in the literature reviewed for this report, evidence of the links between some of the identified child or family outcomes (such as enhanced educational achievement) and ultimate poverty alleviation is somewhat tenuous. Part of the reason for this is a lack of longitudinal research evidence, particularly in relation to the impacts of individual and family-level enabling factors on a child's ability to 'buck the trend' and to sustain this into later life. It is in the interest of policy makers to develop a deeper understanding of the mechanisms that have the potential to link successful family intervention strategies and outcomes to the ultimate alleviation of persistent poverty. Additionally, this review has demonstrated that there is still work to be done on determining the exact combination of factors (structural, individual and practice-level) that have optimum effect in overcoming poverty in a range of differing circumstances and situations.

Although it might not be possible to specify the exact combination of factors that work best in reducing persistent poverty, this review illustrates that any approach to overcoming persistent poverty will need to be multi-dimensional. At the very least, it will need to comprise a number of the following features:

- **Structural level factors** – adequate social protection; maximised efficiency of benefit delivery; review of NMW levels; support for families to access and remain in employment; support for community and economic development initiatives; adequate and affordable childcare; and access to health care and wider support services.
- **Individual/family and practice level factors** – involving local communities in decision making and service delivery; nurturing family resilience and coping strategies; supporting educational achievement; enhancing parents' involvement with their child's education; and delivering personalised support through key workers and trusted individuals.

The above factors operate at a number of different levels and will need to be taken forward and acted upon by a range of stakeholders. There must be an integrated approach to policy formation so that national (UK and devolved administration-level)

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<sup>10</sup> These include, for example, research into: parental engagement; educational engagement/achievement and closing the gap; health interventions; employability and skills; early intervention; and multi-agency service provision, among others.

priorities are understood and implemented effectively, with adequate and appropriate resources, by practitioners. This is critical if effective, joined-up, approaches to overcoming persistent poverty are to be developed and implemented, both now and in the future. Additionally, it is important to ensure that any policy action to address persistent poverty adopts a dual focus on the removal of structural inequality and on capacity building among families. Interventions are likely to have the greatest effect when they tackle external obstacles and nurture internal resilience simultaneously.

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## Further reading

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## Appendix A: Search strategy

This appendix contains details of the search strategy adopted for the review and of the search results. The search was informed by the following review parameters, which were agreed with OFMDFM at the outset of the study:

<i>Publication date:</i>	Work published from the year 2006
<i>Geographical scope:</i>	United Kingdom (including separate jurisdictions) or international
<i>Language:</i>	Published in English
<i>Study type:</i>	Empirical research and/or evaluation; published literature (peer and non-peer reviewed)

The search used four types of source to ensure thorough coverage of the evidence base:

- A range of general bibliographic databases.
- Websites of key organisations.
- Reference lists of previous reviews.
- Recommendations from the review's expert panel (which were subject to NFER's screening and coding criteria (see Appendix B).

The first stage in the process was for the NFER's information specialists to match database keywords to the review's objectives and agree the search strategy with OFMDFM. The keywords are itemised in the detailed search strategy that follows.

The next stage in the process was to carry out searching across various databases and web resources. These websites were searched on main keywords and/or the publications/research/policy sections of each website were browsed as appropriate. References were extensively harvested from previous reviews and subject experts.

### Database searches

A brief description of each of the databases searched, together with the keywords used, is outlined below. The search strategy for each database reflects the differences in database structure and vocabulary. Smaller sets of keywords were used in the more specialist databases. Throughout, the abbreviation 'ft' denotes that a free-text search term was used, the symbol \* denotes truncation of terms.

## Applied Social Sciences Index and Abstracts (ASSIA)

(searched via CSA 8/03/12)

ASSIA is an index of articles from over 500 international English language social science journals.

- #1 Poverty
- #2 Children
- #3 #1 and #2
- #4 Poor children (ft)
- #5 Poor people (ft)
- #6 Dynamics of poverty (ft)
- #7 Poor families (ft)
- #8 Free school meal\* (ft)
- #9 Children at risk (ft)
- #10 Young people at risk (ft)
- #11 Families at risk (ft)
- #12 Social deprivation
- #13 Disadvantaged young people (ft)
- #14 Disadvantaged children (ft)
- #15 Family support (ft)
- #16 Family income (ft)
- #17 Welfare benefits recipients (ft)
- #18 #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17
- #19 Poverty strateg\* (ft)
- #20 Poverty intervention\* (ft)
- #21 Poverty approach\* (ft)
- #22 #19 or #20 or #21
- #23 (#3 or #18) and #22
- #24 Intergenerational poverty (ft)
- #25 Third generation poverty (ft)
- #26 Cross generational poverty (ft)
- #27 Generational poverty (ft)
- #28 Abiding poverty (ft)
- #29 Deep poverty (ft)
- #30 Absolute poverty (ft)
- #31 Severe poverty (ft)
- #32 Lasting poverty (ft)
- #33 Cultural poverty (ft)
- #34 Cycles of poverty (ft)
- #35 Poverty cycling (ft)
- #36 Persistent poverty (ft)
- #37 Recurrent poverty (ft)
- #38 Poverty trap (ft)
- #39 Welfare trap (ft)
- #40 Benefits trap (ft)
- #41 #24 or #25 or #26 or #27 or #28 or #29 or #30 or #31 or #32 or #33 or #34 or #35 or #36 or #37 or #38 or #39 or #40
- #42 Resilience (ft)
- #43 Social mobility (ft)
- #44 Intergenerational mobility (ft)
- #45 Income mobility (ft)
- #46 Geographical deprivation (ft)

- #47 Geographical deindustrialisation (ft)
- #48 Structural inequality (ft)
- #49 Structural unemployment (ft)
- #50 Structural poverty (ft)
- #51 #42 or #43 or #44 or #45 or #46 or #47 or #48 or #49 or #50
- #52 (#3 or #18) and #51

### **Australian Education Index (AEI)**

(searched via Dialog Datastar 15/03/12)

AEI is Australia's largest source of education information covering reports, books, journal articles, online resources, conference papers and book chapters.

- #1 Child poverty (ft)
- #2 Poverty
- #3 Poverty factors (ft)
- #4 Dynamics of poverty (ft)
- #5 Understanding poverty (ft)
- #6 Poor families (ft)
- #7 Poor children (ft)
- #8 Poor young people (ft)
- #9 Low income families (ft)
- #10 Low income groups
- #11 Children at risk
- #12 Young people at risk (ft)
- #13 Families at risk (ft)
- #14 Economically disadvantaged
- #15 Socially disadvantaged (ft)
- #16 Socioeconomic status
- #17 Disadvantaged young people (ft)
- #18 Disadvantaged children (ft)
- #19 Disadvantaged environment
- #20 Free school meals (ft)
- #21 Deprivation (ft)
- #22 Family support (ft)
- #23 Family income
- #24 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20 or #21 or #22 or #23
- #25 Strateg\* (ft)
- #26 Intervention
- #27 Approach\*
- #28 #25 or #26 or #27
- #29 #24 and #28
- #30 Intergenerational poverty (ft)
- #31 Third generation poverty (ft)
- #32 Cross generational poverty (ft)
- #33 Generational poverty (ft)
- #34 Abiding poverty (ft)
- #35 Lasting poverty (ft)
- #36 Cultural poverty (ft)
- #37 Cycles of poverty (ft)
- #38 Poverty cycling (ft)
- #39 Absolute poverty (ft)
- #40 Severe poverty (ft)

- #41 Intergenerational worklessness (ft)
- #42 History of worklessness (ft)
- #43 History of unemployment (ft)
- #44 Intergenerational unemployment (ft)
- #45 Persistent poverty
- #46 Recurrent poverty (ft)
- #47 #30 or #31 or #32 or #33 or #34 or #35 or #36 or #37 or #38 or #39 or #40 or #41 or #42 or #43 or #44 or #45 or #46
- #48 Resilience (ft)
- #49 Social mobility (ft)
- #50 Intergenerational mobility (ft)
- #51 Income mobility (ft)
- #52 Geographical deprivation (ft)
- #53 Geographical deindustrialisation (ft)
- #54 Structural inequality (ft)
- #55 Structural unemployment (ft)
- #56 Structural poverty (ft)
- #57 #48 or #49 or #50 or #51 or #52 or #53 or #54 or #55 or #56
- #58 #24 and #57

### **British Education Index (BEI)**

(searched via Dialog Datastar 16/02/2012)

BEI provides information on research, policy and practice in education and training in the UK. Sources include over 300 journals, mostly published in the UK, plus other material including reports, series and conference papers.

- #1 Child poverty (ft)
- #2 Poverty
- #3 Poverty factors (ft)
- #4 Dynamics of poverty (ft)
- #5 Understanding poverty (ft)
- #6 Poor families (ft)
- #7 Poor children (ft)
- #8 Poor young people (ft)
- #9 Low income families (ft)
- #10 Low income groups
- #11 Children at risk
- #12 Young people at risk (ft)
- #13 Families at risk (ft)
- #14 Economically disadvantaged
- #15 Socially disadvantaged (ft)
- #16 Socioeconomic status
- #17 Disadvantaged young people (ft)
- #18 Disadvantaged children (ft)
- #19 Disadvantaged environment
- #20 Free school meals (ft)
- #21 Deprivation (ft)
- #22 Family support (ft)
- #23 Family income
- #24 Welfare benefits recipients (ft)
- #25 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20 or #21 or #22 or #23 or #24
- #26 Poverty strategies (ft)

- #27 Strategies (ft)
- #28 Poverty intervention\* (ft)
- #29 Intervention
- #30 Poverty approaches (ft)
- #31 Escaping poverty (ft)
- #32 #26 or #27 or #28 or #29 or #30 or #31
- #33 #25 and #32
- #34 Intergenerational poverty (ft)
- #35 Third generation poverty (ft)
- #36 Cross generational poverty (ft)
- #37 Abiding poverty (ft)
- #38 Lasting poverty (ft)
- #39 Cultural poverty (ft)
- #40 Cycles of poverty (ft)
- #41 Poverty cycling (ft)
- #42 Intergenerational worklessness (ft)
- #43 History of worklessness (ft)
- #44 History of unemployment (ft)
- #45 Intergenerational unemployment (ft)
- #46 Persistent poverty (ft)
- #47 #34 or #35 or #36 or #37 or #38 or #39 or #40 or #41 or #42 or #43 or #44 or #45 or #46
- #48 (#25 and #47) not #33
- #49 Resilience (ft)
- #50 Social mobility (ft)
- #51 Intergenerational mobility (ft)
- #52 Income mobility (ft)
- #53 Geographical deprivation (ft)
- #54 Geographical deindustrialisation (ft)
- #55 Structural inequality (ft)
- #56 Structural unemployment (ft)
- #57 Structural poverty (ft)
- #58 #49 or #50 or #51 or #52 or #53 or #54 or #55 or #56 or #57
- #59 (#25 and #58) not (#33 or #48)

### **Education Resources Information Center (ERIC)**

(searched via Dialog Datastar 16/03/12)

ERIC is sponsored by the United States Department of Education and is the largest education database in the world. Coverage includes research documents, journal articles, technical reports, program descriptions and evaluations and curricula material.

- #1 Child poverty (ft)
- #2 Poverty
- #3 Poverty factors (ft)
- #4 Dynamics of poverty (ft)
- #5 Understanding poverty (ft)
- #6 Poor families (ft)
- #7 Poor children (ft)
- #8 Poor young people (ft)
- #9 Low income families (ft)
- #10 Low income groups
- #11 Children at risk

- #12 Young people at risk (ft)
- #13 Families at risk (ft)
- #14 Economically disadvantaged
- #15 Socially disadvantaged (ft)
- #16 Socioeconomic status
- #17 Disadvantaged young people (ft)
- #18 Disadvantaged children (ft)
- #19 Disadvantaged environment
- #20 Free school meals (ft)
- #21 Deprivation (ft)
- #22 Family support (ft)
- #23 Family income
- #24 Welfare benefits recipients (ft)
- #25 #1 or #2 or #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13  
or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20 or #21 or #22 or #23 or #24
- #26 Poverty strategies (ft)
- #27 Strategies (ft)
- #28 Poverty intervention\* (ft)
- #29 Intervention
- #30 Poverty approaches (ft)
- #31 Escaping poverty (ft)
- #32 #26 or #27 or #28 or #29 or #30 or #31
- #33 #25 and #32
- #34 Intergenerational poverty (ft)
- #35 Third generation poverty (ft)
- #36 Cross generational poverty (ft)
- #37 Abiding poverty (ft)
- #38 Lasting poverty (ft)
- #39 Cultural poverty (ft)
- #40 Cycles of poverty (ft)
- #41 Poverty cycling (ft)
- #42 Intergenerational worklessness (ft)
- #43 History of worklessness (ft)
- #44 History of unemployment (ft)
- #45 Intergenerational unemployment (ft)
- #46 Persistent poverty (ft)
- #47 #34 or #35 or #36 or #37 or #38 or #39 or #40 or #41 or #42 or #43 or #44 or  
#45 or #46
- #48 (#25 and #47) not #33
- #49 Resilience (ft)
- #50 Social mobility (ft)
- #51 Intergenerational mobility (ft)
- #52 Income mobility (ft)
- #53 Geographical deprivation (ft)
- #54 Geographical deindustrialisation (ft)
- #55 Structural inequality (ft)
- #56 Structural unemployment (ft)
- #57 Structural poverty (ft)
- #58 #49 or #50 or #51 or #52 or #53 or #54 or #55 or #56 or #57
- #59 (#25 and #58) not (#33 or #48)

## **Idox**

(searched online 9/03/12)

The IDOX Information Service covers all aspects of local government. Key areas of focus include public sector management, economic development, planning, housing, social services, regeneration, education, and environmental services.

- #1 Poverty
- #2 Children or Young people
- #3 #1 and #2
- #4 Poverty factors
- #5 Poverty strategies
- #6 Poverty interventions
- #7 Intergenerational poverty
- #8 Third generation poverty
- #9 Cross generational poverty
- #10 Abiding poverty
- #11 Lasting poverty
- #12 Cultural poverty
- #13 Cycles of poverty
- #14 Poverty cycling
- #15 Persistent poverty
- #16 Recurrent poverty

## **ORB Children's Database**

(searched online 9/03/12)

The purpose of the children's research database is to provide the central source in Northern Ireland for research on all aspects of children's lives

- #1 Poverty or Welfare

## **PsycINFO**

(searched via Ovid SP 9/03/2012)

PsycINFO contains references to the psychological literature including articles from over 1,300 journals in psychology and related fields, chapters and books, dissertations and technical reports.

- #1 Poverty
- #2 Children (ft) or Young people (ft)
- #3 #1 and #2
- #4 Poverty factors (ft)
- #5 Poor families (ft)
- #6 Poor children (ft)
- #7 Poor young people (ft)
- #8 #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7
- #9 Strategies (ft)
- #10 Interventions (ft)
- #11 Approaches (ft)
- #12 #9 or #10 or #11
- #13 #8 and 12
- #14 Intergenerational poverty

- #15 Third generation poverty
- #16 Cross generational poverty
- #17 Abiding poverty
- #18 Lasting poverty
- #19 Cycles of poverty
- #20 Persistent poverty
- #21 Recurrent poverty
- #22 Poverty cycling
- #23 #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19 or #20 or #21 or #22

### **Social Care Online**

(searched 08/03/12))

Social Care Online is the Social Care Institute for Excellence's database covering an extensive range of information and research on all aspects of social care. Content is drawn from a range of sources including journal articles, websites, research reviews, legislation and government documents and service user knowledge.

- #1 Child poverty
- #2 Children and Poverty
- #3 Intergenerational poverty
- #4 Third generation poverty
- #5 Cross generational poverty
- #6 Abiding poverty
- #7 Lasting poverty
- #8 Cycles of poverty
- #9 Persistent poverty
- #10 Recurrent poverty
- #11 Poverty cycling
- #12 Absolute poverty
- #13 Severe poverty
- #14 Deep poverty
- #15 #3 or #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14

### **Social Policy and Practice**

(searched via Ovid SP 8/03/12)

Social Policy and Practice is a bibliographic database with abstracts covering evidence-based social policy, public health, social services, and mental and community health. Content is from the UK with some material from the USA and Europe. Searches were carried out across the descriptors, heading word, title and abstract fields, to enable retrieval of terms both as keywords and free text.

- #1 Poverty
- #2 Children (ft) or Young people (ft)
- #3 #1 and #2
- #4 Poverty factors (ft)
- #5 Poor children (ft)
- #6 Poor people (ft)
- #7 Dynamics of poverty (ft)
- #8 Poor families (ft)
- #9 Free school meal\* (ft)
- #10 Children at risk (ft)

- #11 Young people at risk (ft)
- #12 Families at risk (ft)
- #13 Social deprivation
- #14 Socioeconomic factors
- #15 Disadvantaged young people (ft)
- #16 Disadvantaged children (ft)
- #17 Family support
- #18 Family income (ft)
- #19 Welfare benefits recipients (ft)
- #20 #4 or #5 or #6 or #7 or #8 or #9 or #10 or #11 or #12 or #13 or #14 or #15 or #16 or #17 or #18 or #19
- #21 Poverty strateg\* (ft)
- #22 Poverty intervention\* (ft)
- #23 Poverty approach\* (ft)
- #24 #21 or #22 or #23
- #25 (#3 or #20) and #24
- #26 Intergenerational poverty (ft)
- #27 Third generation poverty (ft)
- #28 Cross generational poverty (ft)
- #29 Generational poverty (ft)
- #30 Abiding poverty (ft)
- #31 Deep poverty (ft)
- #32 Absolute poverty (ft)
- #33 Severe poverty (ft)
- #34 Lasting poverty (ft)
- #35 Cultural poverty (ft)
- #36 Cycles of poverty (ft)
- #37 Poverty cycling (ft)
- #38 Persistent poverty (ft)
- #39 Recurrent poverty (ft)
- #40 Poverty trap (ft)
- #41 Welfare trap (ft)
- #42 Benefits trap (ft)
- #43 #26 or #27 or #28 or #29 or #30 or #31 or #32 or #33 or #34 or #35 or #36 or #37 or #38 or #39 or #40 or #41 or #42
- #44 Resilience (ft)
- #45 Social mobility (ft)
- #46 Intergenerational mobility (ft)
- #47 Income mobility (ft)
- #48 Geographical deprivation (ft)
- #49 Geographical deindustrialisation (ft)
- #50 Structural inequality (ft)
- #51 Structural unemployment (ft)
- #52 Structural poverty (ft)
- #53 #44 or #45 or #46 or #47 or #48 or #49 or #50 or #51 or #52
- #54 (#3 or #20) and #53

## Website searches

Organisation	Website	Number selected
Barnardo's	<a href="http://www.barnardos.org.uk">http://www.barnardos.org.uk</a>	2
British Educational Research Association	<a href="http://www.bera.ac.uk/">http://www.bera.ac.uk/</a>	0
Bristol University Centre for Market and Public Organisation	<a href="http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmpo/">http://www.bristol.ac.uk/cmpo/</a>	0
Centre for Intergenerational Practice	<a href="http://www.centreforip.org.uk">http://www.centreforip.org.uk</a>	0
Centre for Longitudinal Studies	<a href="http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/">http://www.cls.ioe.ac.uk/</a>	0
Child Poverty Action Group	<a href="http://www.cpag.org.uk">http://www.cpag.org.uk</a>	5
The Children's Society	<a href="http://www.childrensociety.org.uk">http://www.childrensociety.org.uk</a>	0
Chronic Poverty Research Centre	<a href="http://www.chronicpoverty.org/page/index">http://www.chronicpoverty.org/page/index</a>	10
Church Action on Poverty	<a href="http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/">http://www.church-poverty.org.uk/</a>	0
Combat Poverty Agency	<a href="http://www.cpa.ie">http://www.cpa.ie</a>	4
Department for Education	<a href="http://www.education.gov.uk">http://www.education.gov.uk</a>	3
Department for Work and Pensions	<a href="http://www.dwp.gov.uk">http://www.dwp.gov.uk</a>	4
End Child Poverty	<a href="http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk">http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk</a>	1
Eurochild	<a href="http://www.eurochild.org/en/index.html">http://www.eurochild.org/en/index.html</a>	2
Institute for Fiscal Studies	<a href="http://www.ifs.org.uk/">http://www.ifs.org.uk/</a>	0
Institute for Social & Economic Research, University of Essex	<a href="http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/">http://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/</a>	2
Joseph Rowntree Foundation	<a href="http://www.jrf.org.uk">http://www.jrf.org.uk</a>	14
LSE Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion	<a href="http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/">http://sticerd.lse.ac.uk/case/</a>	0
National Children's Bureau	<a href="http://www.ncb.org.uk">http://www.ncb.org.uk</a>	1
National Institute of Economic and Social Research	<a href="http://www.niesr.ac.uk/">http://www.niesr.ac.uk/</a>	0
Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network	<a href="http://www.niapn.org">http://www.niapn.org</a>	0
OECD	<a href="http://www.oecd.org/">http://www.oecd.org/</a>	2
The Poverty Site	<a href="http://www.poverty.org.uk">http://www.poverty.org.uk</a>	0
Save the Children	<a href="http://www.savethechildren.org.uk">http://www.savethechildren.org.uk</a>	3
Social Market Foundation	<a href="http://www.smf.co.uk">http://www.smf.co.uk</a>	1
Sutton Trust	<a href="http://www.suttontrust.com/home/">http://www.suttontrust.com/home/</a>	0
Townsend Centre for International Poverty Research	<a href="http://www.bris.ac.uk/poverty">http://www.bris.ac.uk/poverty</a>	1
UNICEF	<a href="http://www.unicef.org.uk/">http://www.unicef.org.uk/</a>	0

# Appendix B: Screening and coding strategy

## Screening strategy:

On completion of literature searching (See Appendix A for search strategy and results), all the identified items (138) were uploaded into Eppi Reviewer. The review team, in agreement with OFMDFM, developed screening criteria to help make an initial assessment of the relevance of each item, based on its abstract (or where unavailable, on the basis of the full item). The screening criteria applied were:

- **Include – definitions** (items not focusing on strategies but useful for helping to define intergenerational poverty and a range of other measures of persistent poverty)  
(66 items fell within this category).
- **Include – strategies or ‘what works’?** (items discussing enabling factors in overcoming poverty and/or specific strategies or interventions that have been evaluated)  
(75 items fell within this category).
- **Exclude – irrelevant content** (items not related to intergenerational poverty, other measures of persistent poverty, or strategies to overcome poverty)  
(15 items fell within this category).

As some items were relevant both for definitions and strategies, they were screened into both categories. Hence the numbers outlined above sum to more than 138.

## Coding strategy:

Once the screening process was complete, we developed a detailed coding frame to help us further assess the items relevant for both definitions and strategies selected during the screening process. This coding frame is provided below:

Figure B1 - Coding Frame

<p><b>A.1 Coder initial</b></p>	<p>A.1.1 XX A.1.2 XX <b>A.1.3 XX</b></p>
<p><b>A.2 Coded on abstract? (single)</b></p>	<p>A.2.1 Yes and adequate (<i>adequate enough to make decisions about its relevance</i>) A.2.2 No, coded on full report A.2.3 No, abstract and full report not available</p>
<p><b>A.3 Relevance to research aims (single)</b></p>	<p>A.3.1 Content relates to definitions [<b>COMPLETE A.4</b>] A.3.2 Content relates to strategies [<b>COMPLETE A.5</b>] A.3.3 Content relates to both definitions and strategies [<b>COMPLETE A.4 AND A.5</b>] A.3.4 Content relevant for context only (<i>e.g. about recent policy developments; or about impacts of poverty and how this feeds into an ongoing cycle</i>) A.3.5 Inadequate information, but could be relevant A.3.6 Irrelevant content – exclude</p>
<p><b>A.4 Definitions – item focuses on (multiple):</b></p>	<p>A.4.1 Poverty in general (<i>e.g. not specific to intergenerational/long-term poverty; or discusses a range of poverty measures</i>) A.4.2 Intergenerational/3<sup>rd</sup> generation/transmitted poverty (<i>including family structure; cultural/ structural issues</i>) A.4.3 Persistent/recurrent/chronic poverty (<i>e.g. family or individual that is poor in 3 out of 4 years, or that ‘cycles’ repeatedly in and out of poverty</i>) A.4.4 Poverty factors (<i>e.g. what contributes to poverty? – socio-economic, structural, cultural factors etc.</i>) A.4.5 Poverty in context (<i>e.g. incidence/rates of poverty; international comparisons; policy climate etc.</i>)</p>
<p><b>A.5 Strategies – item focuses on (multiple):</b></p>	<p>A.5.1 Strategies that help to overcome intergenerational/3<sup>rd</sup> generation/transmitted poverty (<i>including policy-level approaches and specific named interventions</i>) A.5.2 Enabling factors in intergenerational/ 3<sup>rd</sup> generation poor families (<i>what enables some children/families to buck the trend? e.g. family/personal resilience; environmental factors</i>) A.5.3 Strategies that help to overcome persistent/recurrent/ chronic poverty (<i>including general factors and specific named interventions</i>) A.5.4 Enabling factors in families facing persistent/recurrent/chronic poverty (<i>what enables some children/families to buck the trend? e.g. family/personal resilience; environmental factors</i>) A.5.5 Strategies/factors that help to overcome poverty in general (<i>e.g. not specific to intergenerational/long-term poverty</i>)</p>
<p><b>A.6 Country/area involved (multiple) Please select country. Enter area in text if applicable</b></p>	<p>A.6.1 UK/Great Britain (generic) A.6.2 England A.6.3 Scotland A.6.4 Wales A.6.5 Northern Ireland A.6.6 Europe (additional to UK – including Eire) A.6.7 USA</p>

	<p>A.6.8 Canada  A.6.9 Australia  A.6.10 New Zealand  A.6.11 Other (non-European)  <i>Please give details in A.6</i>  A.6.12 Inadequate information</p>
<p><b>A.7 Other country (non-European)</b>  <i>Please give details</i></p>	<p>A.7.1 Please give details</p>
<p><b>A.8 Type of literature (single)</b></p>	<p>A.8.1 Evaluation report  A.8.2 Research report  A.8.3 Academic research article  A.8.4 Other research article  <i>(e.g. in practice journal)</i>  A.8.5 Literature review  A.8.6 Meta analysis  A.8.7 Policy document  A.8.8 Opinion/discussion/Think Tank piece  <i>(e.g. presents an opinion or makes an argument from media source or professional journal)</i>  A.8.9 Other  <i>(please enter details in A.7)</i>  A.8.10 Inadequate information</p>
<p><b>A.9 Other type of literature (please enter details)</b></p>	<p>A.9.1 Please give details</p>
<p><b>A.10 Research design (make a judgement on best fit - could be multiple but aim for single)</b></p>	<p>A.10.1 Quantitative  <i>(e.g. RCT, QED comparison group, baseline and follow-up survey)</i>  A.10.2 Qualitative  A.10.3 Mixed-methods  A.10.4 Literature review  A.10.5 Other research design  <i>(please enter design details in A.11)</i>  A.10.6 Not research  A.10.7 Inadequate information</p>
<p><b>A.11 Other research design Please enter brief description of other design (NB not specific methods)</b></p>	<p>A.11.1 Please enter design details</p>
<p><b>A.12 Research methods (multiple) Main methods used</b></p>	<p>A.12.1 Survey  <i>(incl. web and telephone surveys/CATI)</i>  A.12.2 Interviews  <i>(i.e. face-to-face or telephone or via web)</i>  A.12.3 Observation  A.12.4 Secondary analysis  <i>(i.e. new analysis/presentation of data collected for a previous study)</i>  A.12.5 Document/content analysis  A.12.6 Literature review/scoping study  <i>(as a main method, not just a few references to theory/research)</i>  A.12.7 Other method  <i>(please give details in A.11)</i></p>

	<p>A.12.8 Not research</p> <p>A.12.9 Inadequate information</p>
<p><b>A.13 Other research methods</b>  <i>Enter brief description of methods if not included in list</i></p>	<p>A.13.1 Describe other method</p>
<p><b>A.14 Study population (single)</b></p>	<p>A.14.1 Please enter details  <i>(only applies to research projects - e.g. number, age and key characteristics of study population. For example: 'Study of 50 children aged 5 and 6 all eligible for free school meals' - who has been studied?)</i></p> <p>A.14.2 Not research</p> <p>A.14.3 Inadequate information</p>
<p><b>A.15 Identify as key item (single) Is this one of the 40 most relevant items?</b></p>	<p>A.15.1 Yes – Key <u>strategies/ enabling factors</u> item only (use for definite 'yes')  <i>This item has a robust research design and provides strong evidence of (in order of preference – A.5.1/A.5.2 – first choice; A.5.3/A.5.4 – second choice) and should be considered for inclusion in the review as one of up to 40 key studies.</i>  <b>Note: please order the full text</b></p> <p>A.15.2 Yes – Key <u>definitions</u> item only (use for definite 'yes')  <i>This item will help contribute to a discussion within the report about the measurement and incidence of intergenerational poverty. The item may also provide useful definitions of other forms of long-term poverty that we can use as a basis for reporting where there is scant evidence of intergenerational poverty. It should be considered for inclusion in the review as one of up to 40 key studies.</i>  <b>Note: please order the full text</b></p> <p>A.15.3 Yes – Key strategies <u>and</u> definitions item (use for definite 'yes')  <i>This item meets both of the above criteria and should be considered for inclusion in the review as one of up to 40 key studies.</i>  <b>Note: please order the full text</b></p> <p>A.15.4 Possibly - Key strategies item (use if item fits in some of 'yes' but not all)  <i>This item may be important to include as a key item (e.g. has a weak link to intergenerational poverty, but is about strategies to improve poverty across at least one generation – e.g. fits into A.5.5 above).</i>  <b>Note: consider ordering a full copy - you will need this if you are to summarise it in the review</b></p> <p>A.15.5 Possibly – Key definitions item (use if item fits in some of 'yes' but not all)</p> <p>A.15.6 Possibly - Key strategies <u>and</u> definitions item (use if item fits in some of 'yes' but not all)</p> <p>A.15.7 No (use for definite 'no')</p> <p>A.15.8 Inadequate information</p>

Still working within Eppi Reviewer, and using the above coding frame, the review team coded each of the screened items, on the basis of abstracts (or full text for items where no abstract was available). We extracted data on the relevancy of the studies to the review topic, the research methods used, the sample size (where relevant) and the country of origin. As part of our quality assurance processes, a second member of the review team checked ten per cent of coding decisions. This ensured that the coding was being carried out in a consistent manner.

As a result of the coding, a list of 'key items' and a supplementary list of 'possible key items' were developed and shared with our panel of experts. As a result of this consultation, we agreed upon a final list of 36 items for review.

# Appendix C: Appraisal and synthesis strategy

Once our 36 key items for review had been selected and ordered, the review team began the process of appraising and synthesising the literature in preparation for reporting.

## Appraising the literature

The review team used the following template to assist the process of appraising (summarising) each item of literature. This ensured that each item was appraised in a systematic fashion.

### Figure C1: Literature appraisal template

\*All direct quotes from the literature should be in italics and include page numbers.

<b>Full reference</b>	
<b>Research summary/overview</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <b>Research aims</b></li> <li>• <b>Key findings</b></li></ul>	
<b>About the source</b>	
<b>Purpose of the literature</b> (e.g. key strategies and AND definitions, key strategies ONLY, definitions ONLY)	
<b>Type of literature</b> (e.g. research report; journal article; literature review; meta analysis;	

opinion piece; statistical analysis; review of local needs)	
<b>Country/area involved</b> (e.g. England, Scotland, Wales, <u>Northern Ireland</u> , Europe, USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Other. If regional or local level – state name of area)	
<b>Study population</b> ( <u>only applies to research projects</u> - e.g. number, age and key characteristics of study population.)	
<b>Research design/method</b> (e.g. quantitative; qualitative; mixed; lit review, etc. State if not research.)	
<b>Information relevant for background/context on poverty</b>	
<b>Findings relating to definitions of poverty</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Intergenerational/3<sup>rd</sup> generation/transmitted poverty</b> (including family structure; cultural/ structural issues)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Persistent/recurrent/chronic poverty</b> (e.g. family or individual that is poor in 3 out of 4 years, or that 'cycles' repeatedly in and out of poverty)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poverty factors</b> (e.g. what contributes to poverty? – socio-economic, structural, cultural factors etc.)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poverty in context</b> (e.g. incidence/rates of poverty; international comparisons; policy climate etc.)</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Poverty in general</b> (e.g. not specific to intergenerational/ long-term poverty; or discusses a range of poverty measures)</li> </ul>	
<b>Findings relating to strategies and enabling factors</b>	
<b>(Add other terminology where necessary and provide details of strategies/enablers under specific headings where possible.)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strategies that help to overcome intergenerational/third generation/transmitted poverty</b> (Including policy-level approaches and specific named interventions)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enabling factors in intergenerational/ 3<sup>rd</sup> generation poor families</b> (What enables some children/families to buck the trend? e.g. family/personal resilience; environmental factors)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strategies that help to overcome persistent/recurrent/ chronic poverty</b> (including general factors and specific named interventions)</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Enabling factors in families facing persistent/recurrent/chronic poverty</b> (What enables some children/families to buck the trend? e.g. family/personal resilience; environmental factors)</li> </ul>	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Strategies/factors that help to overcome poverty in general</b> (e.g. not specific to intergenerational/long-term poverty)</li> </ul>	
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**Review of evidence**

<p><b>Overall item relevance rating:</b></p> <p><b>highly relevant</b> = strategies/enablers in overcoming intergenerational poverty – or helpful definitions re intergenerational poverty</p> <p><b>mostly relevant</b> = strategies/enablers in overcoming persistent poverty – or helpful definitions re persistent poverty</p> <p><b>of some relevance</b> = strategies/enablers in overcoming poverty in general – or helpful definitions re poverty in general</p> <p><b>limited relevance</b> = not about strategies/enablers or not helpful for definitions</p>	<p>Highly relevant <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Mostly relevant <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Of some relevance <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Limited relevance <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p><b>What is the strength of the evidence base for this item?</b></p>	<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Tick as appropriate</b></p>
<p><b>Strong</b> (e.g. large scale quantitative study with adequate sample sizes to allow scope for statistical analysis – ideally an RCT or a QED such as baseline/follow-up; or a comparison group design, or in-depth case studies that cover a range of institutions and a wide range of stakeholders, where views are triangulated; or a local-level report that is based upon a detailed cross-sectoral analysis of local labour market needs)</p>	
<p><b>Modest</b> (quantitative or qualitative studies with smaller sample sizes, or covering only a small number of institutions. Qualitative studies that do not cover a full range of stakeholders; or local-level reports that are based on specific sectors or skills types only)</p>	

<b>Impressionistic</b> (based on observation or opinion, or on one case-study, or the views of one person, for example )	
<b>References cited in the text</b> (please add details)	
<b>Reviewed by:</b>	

When appraising the quality of each literature item, members of the review team were mindful of:

- distinctions between different kinds of evidence, such as: quantitative evidence qualitative evidence; well-established trends; and emerging findings
- the validity or trustworthiness of individual studies' findings according to a range of criteria, including the research design, sample size, methods of data collection and data analysis, theoretical approach, and relationship between claims made and evidence presented. The appraisal was sensitive to different genres of research, such as quantitative and qualitative work.

## Synthesising the literature

Once all key items of literature had been appraised, the research team began the process of analysing the reviewed data in order to draw out emerging themes, patterns, and key messages. The synthesis was guided by the key research questions outlined in the introduction to this report.

We adopted a best available evidence approach to determining the weight given to each piece of literature within the review (the most weight given to the best evidence). The primary focus of this review is to report the findings on the subject topic: *What works in supporting children and young people to overcome persistent poverty?* However, we also describe and comment on the nature of the evidence base. This will hopefully help the reader to understand where the evidence base is strongest and weakest, and will assist future commissioning of primary research into the review topic.

# Appendix D: Assessing the strength of the evidence base

This review appraised evidence sources on the basis of the following criteria. Only sources deemed to be based upon strong or moderate evidence were included in the review.

## D.1 Strong evidence

Studies that are sufficiently large in scale (for example adopting adequate sample sizes to enable robust statistical analysis), or are based on sufficiently in-depth case studies to allow a full explanation of findings. Typically, 'strong' evidence includes:

- **Quantitative research** - complex statistical analyses of secondary datasets, or surveys of various stakeholder groups that have good sampling designs and large-enough samples to enable effective statistical analysis to be undertaken.
- **Qualitative research** - The most reliable studies are those that have conducted a number of in-depth case studies, across a number of locations, drawing on the views of a wide range of stakeholders, and 'triangulating' those views in order to assess the degree of agreement, or dissent, among different individuals in varying locations.

As well as an item being 'strong' in its own right, the 'weight of evidence' is strong where there are a number of robust studies that concur in their findings.

## D.2 Moderate evidence

The same types of evidence as those cited above are included in this category. The distinction between a theme being described as having a 'strong' or a 'moderate' evidence base is related to the following points:

- **The weight of evidence** – themes with 'moderate' evidence are likely to have only a small number of (typically two to three) studies that concur in their findings. There may also be some studies that present a contradictory view.
- **The quality of evidence** – themes with 'moderate' evidence may include studies with rather small sample sizes (for example, a survey conducted with a small number, or subset of, school pupils), or qualitative studies that have drawn on the views of certain, but not a full range of, stakeholders.

## D.3 Impressionistic evidence

As this title suggests, this category includes evidence that is based on the observation or opinion of those with an interest in the topic, or upon a case-study in one organisation only, for example. Very often, we find impressionistic evidence of one particular benefit within a study that was established to evaluate an entirely different benefit. Such findings cannot be dismissed entirely, but they tend to be anecdotal, subjective or descriptive in nature.

# Providing independent evidence to improve education and learning.

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