Submission to the Scottish Parliament’s Social Security Committee in response to consultation on the Child Poverty (Scotland) Bill.

1. This submission is provided by Professor Brigid Daniel, University of Stirling, on behalf of the research team for the Nuffield Foundation funded research project:


Professor Daniel is the lead for the Scottish element of the study. The Principal Investigator is Professor Paul Bywaters, University of Coventry who would be available for further details on the project findings if required (hsx056@coventry.ac.uk). The Child Welfare Inequalities Project (CWIP) set out to study the relationship between area-based inequalities and child welfare intervention rates. By ‘rates’ we mean how many children are in care or whose names are on the child protection register (on child protection plans) per 10,000 child population (see www.coventry.ac.uk/cwip for detailed briefings on the findings in each UK country and a comparative overview).

2. Our findings are most relevant to the first and sixth bulleted areas for views and we will confine our comments to these areas.

3. We firmly agree that statutory child poverty targets should be re-introduced for Scotland. We base this on the clear evidence gathered in our study for the association between poverty and rates of child protection registrations and compulsory supervision orders at home and away from home in all UK nations. In Scotland, children in the most deprived 10% of small neighbourhoods are 20 times more likely to be looked after away from home than those living in the 10% least deprived and 18.5 times more likely to be named on the child protection register. There is a strong social gradient in rates of intervention in all the countries, including Scotland. Each step increase in deprivation is accompanied by an increase in
children’s chances of being a looked after away from home or named on the child protection register. Associations between poverty and poor educational and health outcomes are well recognised, but children’s chances of state intervention because of child welfare concerns have, to date, not been accorded the same level of attention. This adds an additional component to the weight of evidence for the urgency of reducing child poverty in Scotland.

4. We note that a reduction in child maltreatment is not included as a metric in the Child Poverty Measurement Framework for Scotland. By the same token, the child protection and looked after children statistical returns collect no information about family circumstances. Whilst having regard for the need to craft messages about the association between poverty and child maltreatment very carefully to avoid stigmatising poor parents, we suggest that the existing Child Poverty Measurement Framework and its 37 indicators, should be augmented to include the reduction of child maltreatment as a metric of success. We have separately recommended in response to consultation on the Data Strategy for Looked After Children that the national Children Looked After Children Scotland statistical return (CLAS) be augmented to include details of the family socio-economic circumstances.

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