

“Mind the wealth gap?: Can we afford current levels of inequality in our society?”

A child poverty perspective

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John Dickie
Head of CPAG in Scotland
jdickie@cpagscotland.org.uk
www.cpag.org.uk/scotland

Why child poverty matters

- poverty kills – twice as likely to die in infancy
- poverty undermines learning
 - nine months behind by age three
 - gap widens as go through school
- poverty damages childhoods
 - less likely to enjoy a holiday
 - less likely to be able to celebrate birthdays
 - less likely to be able to visit friend and family
- poverty undermines life chances
 - More likely to be unemployed as adult
 - If working more likely to be low paid
 - More likely to be the parents facing poverty in the future

Poverty in Scotland may be “relative” but its impact on children is absolute

Promises, promises

“Our historic aim, that ours is the first generation to end child poverty forever ...It’s a 20-year mission, but I believe it can be done”

Tony Blair, 1999

“the justice for me is concentrated on lifting incomes of those that don't have a decent income. It's not a burning ambition for me to make sure that David Beckham earns less money.”

Tony Blair, 2001

“we are intensely relaxed about people getting filthy rich”

Peter Mandelson, 1998

A decade on...

- 600,000 fewer children in poverty (100 000 fewer in Scotland)... but;
 - 2010 target to halve child poverty likely to be missed by 700,000
 - Falls in child poverty to date occurred before 2005, child poverty rose between 2005 and 2007
- Income inequality risen and now equal to highest ever level (since records began in 1961)
- So progress on child poverty stalled.....and little if any progress on inequality
- Redistributing income through child tax credit was key policy behind falls before 2005.
- When Government does less poorer families fall behinddue to underlying inequality.

In conclusion

- If we are serious about ending child poverty we do need to “mind the wealth gap”
- Experience of last ten years and international comparison point to underlying inequality as key driver of child poverty
- Child poverty undermines, too often destroys, childhoods and life chances
- It costs all of us £25billion a year picking up the pieces and in lost revenue
- We, and our children, really can't afford current levels of inequality in our society