



10 years: what we have learned about children, parents and disadvantage

Naomi Eisenstadt

Issues to cover

- **A few key developments in family and parenting policy**
- **The changes to children's services**
- **What it has taught us about social exclusion**
- **How we use that knowledge**

Family policy: a busy time

- **1998 Supporting Families Green Paper**
- **1999 Sure Start**
- **1999 NFPI established**
- **2002 Integration of all early years and childcare services**
- **2003 Every Child Matters**
- **2004 Choice for Parents, the best start for Children**
- **2006 Schools White Paper**
- **2007 Aiming high for children: supporting families**
- **2007 Every Parent Matters**
- **2007 Reaching Out, Think Family**
- **2007 Children's Plan**
- **2008 21st Century Schools**
- **2008 Families in Britain: an evidence paper**
- **2009 Next Steps for Early Learning and Childcare**
- **2010 'new approach'**

Government, parents and families

- **Are parents:**
 - Consumers?
 - Clients?
 - Pupils?
 - Co-producers?
- **Are parents really mothers?**
- **Are fathers providers? Male role models? Benefits cheats?**

Government, parents and families cont

- **Structural change: children's social care, family policy move to DfES**
- **Emphasis on early identification, joint working across agencies, and agreement on shared responsibility for outcomes**
- **Single accountability for children within local authorities**

But

- **Difficult debates in dept on where parents/families sit**

And

- **Huge progress since 2003: increasing both financial investment and policy capacity on parents/family issues in DCSF**
- **Increasing awareness of and emphasis on the role of fathers**

New Approach

- **Concentration on neediest, anti-poverty approach through ensuring work pays, renewed interest in evidence base (Allen Review)**

The Role of Government: supporting parents and parenting

Reduce pressures

- Rights and legal protection
- Financial support
- Support in kind
-
- Access to maternity and paternity leave
- Flexible working and flexible childcare
- Targeted benefits

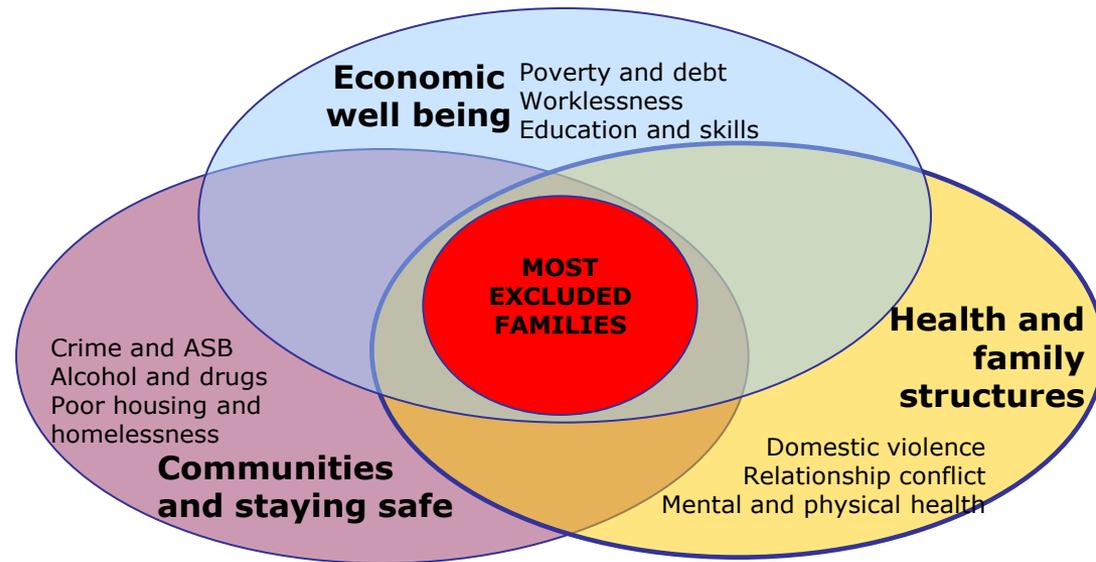
Enhance capabilities

- Information and guidance
- Skills and training
- Intervention
-
- Before and after birth, midwife and health visitor support
- Parenting initiatives
- Family Intervention programmes, and Family Nurse Partnerships

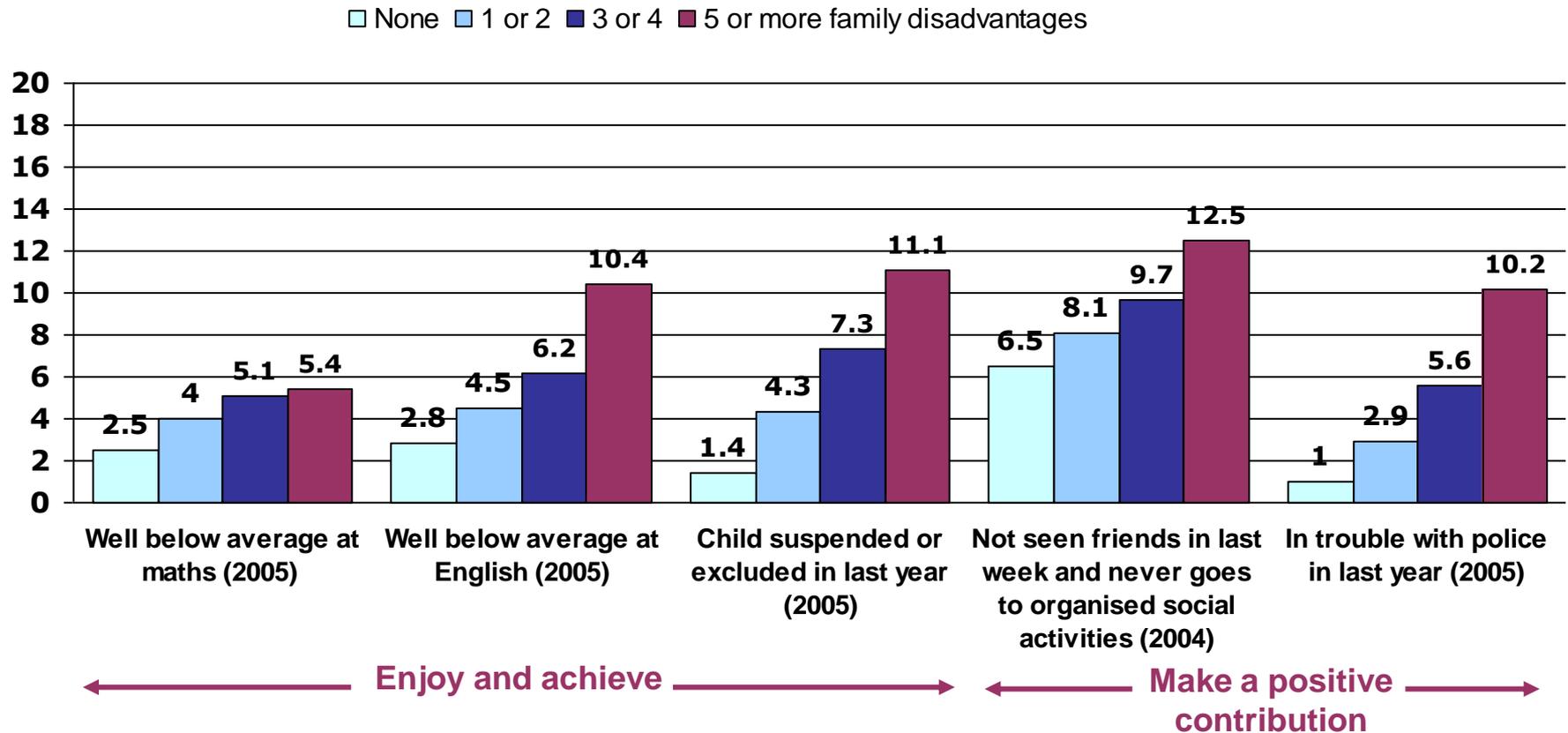
Intervening to safeguard children

Parents are individuals in their own right: their problems have huge impact on their children

- Homelessness increases the risk of being on the Child Protection Register from 1% to 12%
- **63% of boys with convicted fathers go on to be convicted themselves**
- Parental alcohol misuse is a factor in **>50% child protection cases**
- Parental disability or mental health problems **strongly associated with poor outcomes for children**
- **1:4 children witnessing domestic violence have serious social and behavioural problems**
- **Strong association between parental income and child's future income as an adult**
- **Strong association between mother's educational qualifications and child's future earnings**
- **Children from workless households are much more likely to become poor and workless adults**



Outcomes for children: Children from families facing multiple disadvantages are at greater risk of a range of negative outcomes



The challenge of narrowing the gap in outcomes; parents are hugely important, but not the only factor.....

Individual characteristics	Social factors	Systems issues
Gender Genetics Ethnicity	Parental education Parental engagement Peer influences Community norms and aspirations Behaviour and lifestyle Family income	Housing Employment Working conditions Transport Health care
Least amenable to change	Mix of amenable and fixed characteristics	most amenable to govt interventions

What have we learned

- **Community based programmes shift the curve but often miss out on the most disadvantaged;**
- **User satisfaction is essential but not sufficient; the hardest thing is changing behaviour;**
- **Programmes must address the needs of the whole family, both as individuals and in the composite effects on each other;**
- **The most promising interventions need rigorous evaluation, and are sometimes hard to scale up;**
- **The common feature of all successful programs is the quality of staff: well trained, motivated, and clear in their purpose. Staff investment is least appealing, delivering more or new is often more attractive than delivering better.**

Tensions in policy making, ongoing dilemmas

- **Universal or targeting.**
- **Community designed, manualised, or standardised from Whitehall.**
- **How will new emphasis on local fit with evidence based approach.**
- **‘interventions’ or ‘system reform’.**
- **Structural solutions, workforce solutions, cultural change.**
- **New opportunities to work together at local level, when money is tight, collaboration vital.**