

JRF Child Poverty Programme

Evaluation Report

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CONTENTS

Executive summary	i
1. Introduction	1
2. Key findings	4
2.1. Was the target audience reached?	4
2.2. Were documents read by the target audiences?	10
2.3. Were the reports useful to and used by the target audiences?	13
2.4. Did the research influence targeted individuals?	22
2.5. Did the research influence the wider child poverty agenda/debate?	26
2.6. Added value of JRF child poverty research publications	38
2.7. Way forward	44
3. Conclusions and recommendations	50
ANNEX A List of organisations consulted	55

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The JRF child poverty programme, which ran between 2005 and 2009, aimed to provide robust evidence of the causes, effects and ways of tackling child poverty and to enable other actors to use this evidence to promote action on child poverty. This evaluation aimed to assess to what extent these objectives were reached and what the overall impacts of the JRF child poverty programme were. The research methodology included:
 - A start-up meeting and one-to-one discussions with JRF programme staff;
 - Desk research including a review of press coverage for the JRF child poverty programme; analysis of traffic on the JRF child poverty website; and a review of the Child Poverty Bill parliamentary proceedings and publications by the Centre for Social Justice;
 - An online survey of recipients of the JRF child poverty email alerts; and,
 - Telephone interviews with 50 child poverty stakeholders.

2. The key findings of the evaluation are as follows:
 - The programme is well-known and respected among the target audiences who often are full of praise for the programme and the organisation. JRF is referenced as a credible and independent voice on child poverty – “*no single collection of research publications has been as important*”. JRF staff and authors are described as “*inspiring speakers*”.
 - The reach of the programme is impressive, with just over 3,000 email addresses registered for email alerts and an estimated 8,000 unique visitors to its website between July 2008 and August 2010. Press coverage for the programme resulted in about 15 million ‘opportunities to view’ (an indicator of the number of mentions in the media).
 - Familiarity with the research is high, if more mixed among senior people. More than 9 in 10 of respondents to the online survey had read at least one of the main JRF research publications; most had read 3 or 4. Even if there is probably a bias in the profile of respondents, this is an encouraging figure.
 - There is a multitude of examples of people using the research findings, mainly in ‘case-making’: the research is less likely to influence audiences as such, but gives individuals the evidence and language to use in briefings to Ministers, advocacy work and capacity-building work on child poverty with local authorities. Stakeholders comment that JRF evidence validates and offers a quality control for their own views and experience, confirming that the direction of travel is the right one. Case-making happens mainly in terms of giving people arguments as to why it is important to tackle child poverty. The £25 billion cost estimate in

particular – the cost of child poverty to society – appears to have had wide and lasting appeal as a tool to get others on board with the child poverty agenda.

- There are a number of examples of people commenting that they have been influenced in their thinking by the JRF research, but people find it difficult to pin down exactly what this influence consists of. JRF policy arguments are reported as having been aligned with thinking going on elsewhere. In the online survey, the most common impacts quoted are that people have learnt new facts about child poverty and have broadened their perspective about child poverty (alongside giving them arguments to make their case about child poverty).
- Officials in the devolved administrations are more likely to have been influenced in their thinking than policy-makers in central Government Departments who in turn are more likely to have been influenced than local officials. The research papers on child poverty in Scotland and in particular Northern Ireland and Wales appear to have directly influenced the child poverty strategies in those nations. Stakeholders in Scotland and in particular Northern Ireland and Wales suggest that the JRF research filled a gap in so far that little other research evidence on child poverty directly relevant to their national contexts was available. Some central Government officials explicitly recognise that they are insufficiently aware of what is happening on the ground which may mean that there is more scope for influencing: local officials often have first hand experience of initiatives aimed at addressing child poverty in their area; the JRF research findings confirm and validate what they already know from their day-to-day work; findings may be more likely to offer new insights to central Government officials.
- JRF evidence tends to be only one of a number of different sources on child poverty. However, most feel that the JRF child poverty programme stands out among the different sources, because of its credibility and independence, its accessibility, its policy relevance and its interconnectedness – the research was influential because it was a systematic programme of research, offering one point of easy access to information on a range of issues relating to child poverty.
- According to some, however, its impact and in particular its scope for actually influencing people's thinking on child poverty, was diminished by staying too close to the Government's child poverty agenda, taking a 'statist' approach to the child poverty challenge and remaining within a relatively narrow pool of independent, but left-leaning researchers working on the issue of child poverty. The JRF research helped strengthen the 'mainstream' arguments as to why and how to tackle child poverty but did not explore in any depth 'unorthodox' positions, including for example the argument that there is an economic rationale for having a low-wage element in the economy and its implications for the child poverty agenda and arguments around individual responsibility and family characteristics.

- The research explored to what extent the 2006 cost estimate that it would cost £4 billion to halve child poverty by 2010 using tax credits, influenced the UK Government's decision to invest an additional £1 billion in tax credits in the 2007 budget (and again in the 2008 budget). There appears to be a consensus that the figure as such did not influence officials and politicians: internal modelling and discussion about the need to do something in the run-up to 2010 were already ongoing before the JRF publication; policy-makers knew the order of magnitude of investment that was required. The difference the JRF publication made was that the figure was publicly available. The figure was used extensively by the End Child Poverty coalition in their lobby work and the charities are quite clear that having the £4 billion figure made it easier for them to do the lobbying: you need messages to lobby and the £4 billion figure gave them "*one clear ask*" which they had not had before.
- The Child Poverty Act, including its building blocks, were not directly influenced by JRF – charities and in particular One Parent Families are seen as having been much more influential, as were different UK Government Departments and think-pieces commissioned by the Child Poverty Unit (including one by Donald Hirsh) on key topics linked to the child poverty agenda. Stakeholders remember that JRF inputted into the consultation process and during seminars, but no detailed contributions were seen as standing out. The recollection is that JRF comments were aligned with what others were saying – JRF acted as a kind of quality control; an indication that they were on the right track. JRF evidence was also used for case-making in the parliamentary proceedings.
- It proved slightly more difficult to get key stakeholders to talk about the impact of JRF child poverty research on Conservative Party policy on child poverty. The general view is that, in terms of research evidence, the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ) has been paramount. CSJ publications clearly show that JRF findings are used, for example in discussions on the UK benefit and tax credit system not being fit for purpose. Influencing of key Conservative party stakeholders appears to have been similar to the kind of influencing going on elsewhere: JRF evidence is aligned with, confirms and provides an external evidence base to support existing views on child poverty. This appears to have played in particular with regard to the argument that income does not present the full picture and that income transfers (alone) are not the way forward – for example in the context of the Child Poverty Bill parliamentary proceedings.
- People think that child poverty should remain on the JRF radar – this is not unexpected, but the strength of people's feelings and their choice of words are still striking: stakeholders suggest that they would be "*upset*" if JRF would stop its programme, because this would imply that child poverty is not longer important. Arguments used for a continuation of the research programme are mainly linked to the need to keep child poverty on the agenda; unless prompted, few individuals refer to specific research questions that remain unanswered. There is even a sense that the sector knows what they need to know and that the challenge now is applying this knowledge at local level and in practical terms.

- The success of the JRF child poverty research appears to lie at least partially in its ‘programme’ approach: child poverty was tackled in a comprehensive and deliberate programme of research as opposed to through separate research assignments, establishing JRF as the place to go to on child poverty. A second critical success factor appears to be the fact that the programme, especially in its cost estimate work, managed to hit upon research questions that were widely seen as highly relevant and important but that had not yet (publicly) been raised or answered by anyone else.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation's (JRF) child poverty programme was a programme of research launched in 2005; it ran until the end of 2009. The purpose of the programme was (i) to provide robust independent evidence of the causes, effects and ways of tackling child poverty and (ii) to enable other actors to use this evidence to promote action on child poverty. The aim of this evaluation was to assess to what extent these objectives were reached and what the impacts of the child poverty programme have been.
- 1.2. Let there be clarity from the outset: assessing the impacts of the JRF child poverty research, as of any research programme or advocacy activity, is challenging. The total readership of research is difficult to estimate: there is information about the number of people who registered for the JRF child poverty email alerts and about the number of times a particular page on the JRF child poverty website was viewed, but this does not say much about whether or not the email alerts were read or how many unique users (as opposed to repeat users) visited that particular page.
- 1.3. It is possible to ask target audiences about their views and perceptions. However, individuals may have read a particular publication but not remember it; they may be aware of a particular finding of the JRF child poverty research but not associate this finding with JRF. Specific policy developments, such as for example the introduction of the Child Poverty Act, may have been influenced by the JRF child poverty research, but stakeholders may find it difficult to recall the policy development process in sufficient detail to isolate the JRF contribution from other influences.
- 1.4. In other words then, assessing the impacts of research is an art rather than an exact science. It deals with probabilities rather than absolutes. The research team needs to work with the evidence that is available, even if this evidence is not as comprehensive, detailed or objective as we would like. This does not, however, in any way, mean that assessing the impacts of research is impossible. Estimates of reach can be developed and the perceptions of enough key stakeholders *can* be compared and contrasted to come to an informed view as to whether and how research influenced a particular policy

process – which is what this evaluation has done. The resulting evaluation report will be explicit throughout about methodologies used, sample sizes achieved and possible limitations of these methodologies and sample sizes, clarifying to the reader at every step the relative robustness of the evidence base behind each of the conclusions.

1.5. The evaluation took place between May and September 2010. The research methodology consisted of:

- A start-up meeting and one-to-one discussions with JRF programme staff;
- A review of press coverage of the JRF child poverty programme (collated by JRF and analysed by the evaluation team);
- A review of traffic on the JRF child poverty website;
- A review of the Child Poverty Bill parliamentary proceedings and publications by the Centre for Social Justice to explore use of JRF child poverty materials in these two contexts;
- An online survey of recipients of the JRF child poverty email alerts (achieving a response rate of 195 out of 3,094 or 6%). The invitation to participate in the online survey was sent out by JRF, in a JRF format and with a clear JRF logo, so it is important to assume that the people who responded will be those individuals who are more likely to read JRF email alerts in the first place. Survey respondents may also be more engaged with JRF generally than those who might have read the invitation to the online survey but chose not to respond;
- Telephone interviews with 50 child poverty stakeholders (and a written contribution from a 51st individual), including 27 Government officials or political advisors (including officials in research posts), 9 researchers (excluding Government officials), 12 third sector representatives and 3 journalists.

1.6. The next chapter presents the main findings of the evaluation. It aims to answer the following key questions:

- Did the JRF child poverty programme reach its target audience?
- Were the JRF child poverty publications read by the target audience?
- Were the publications useful to and used by the target audience?
- What was the impact of the research on individual readers?
- What was the impact on the wider child poverty agenda and debate?
- To what extent did the JRF child poverty research add value to or stand out from other research efforts on child poverty?

- What is the way forward for the JRF child poverty research?

Chapter 3 concludes and aims to suggest a number of recommendations for future work by JRF on child poverty.

2. KEY FINDINGS

2.1. Was the target audience reached?

2.1.1. An indicative and non-comprehensive list of the target audience for the programme was developed by JRF programme staff over the programme lifetime. This list suggests that policy-makers make up half of the target audience, followed by third sector organisations who make up almost two fifths and researchers who represent just over 10%. Staff confirm that policy-makers were indeed the main target audience.

Table 2.1 JRF child poverty programme target audience

Target audience	Nr	%
Policy-makers	132	50%
Third sector	96	36%
Researchers	31	12%
Other	5	2%
Total	264	100%

Source: JRF target audience list and CPC calculations.

2.1.2. Telephone and written feedback from 51 stakeholders (of which 31 were taken from the original JRF list) confirm that most were familiar with the JRF child poverty programme and its publications. The research did encounter a number of individuals who did not feel sufficiently familiar with the programme to comment – mainly more senior people whose remit included but was significantly wider than child poverty alone. This included for example a Director of Children’s Services in local government, a research manager in DWP and a political advisor. The latter explained that she “*would not really associate JRF with child poverty; more with poverty in general*”. This response stood in sharp contrast to responses of other interviewees who often commented that JRF would be the first or one of the main places they would go for evidence on child poverty. The vast majority of interviewees were familiar with the JRF child poverty programme and several commented that their wider circle of child poverty contacts were similarly familiar with the research.

“Local authorities all seem to know about the JRF research”
(Regional Government official, telephone survey)

- 2.1.3. Analysis of the (anonymised) list of JRF child poverty email alert recipients confirms that just over 3,000 individual email addresses¹ signed up for the JRF child poverty email alert. Policy-makers, third sector organisations and research institutions make up the bulk of the recipients. Just over one in five of all email recipients come from the public sector and just over one in seven are research institutions; a similar proportion are third sector organisations. It is impossible to know to what extent higher education email suffixes are linked to staff or students. In the online survey, the ratio of university researchers to students is roughly two to one, but it is difficult to draw any firm conclusions, given sample sizes².

Table 2.2 JRF child poverty email alert recipients

	Nr	%
Public sector, including:	686	22%
- Local government	414	13%
- Central government	125	4%
- NHS	54	2%
- Devolved administrations	48	2%
- Regional government	19	1%
Research, including:	482	16%
- Universities	429	14%
Third sector	476	15%
Private sector	163	5%
Other	1,287	42%
Total	3,094	100%

Source: Anonymised JRF child poverty email alert recipient list and CPC calculations. Just less than 2,000 of the anonymised email addresses contained information about the recipient. The remaining email addresses had suffixes such as gmail.com, yahoo.com or virgin.net. It is difficult to reach firm conclusions on the basis of email suffixes alone, but it appears to be a relatively safe assumption that most of these email recipients would not be professionally involved in child poverty in a Government, third sector or research context (although they may be freelance journalists or consultants involved in child poverty work).

- 2.1.4. Reach of the email alerts across central Government includes 13 different departments, with in most cases only a few officials reached (Table 2.3). Exceptions are the Department for Work and Pensions (27 recipients), the

¹ The actual number of individuals registering may be lower than the number of email address registrations. For example, people moving jobs may have re-registered under a new email address.

² 21 university researchers and 12 students responded to the survey.

then Department for Children, Families and Schools (9), the Cabinet Office (8) and HM Treasury (6). Departments not reached include the Department for Culture, Media and Sport; the Department for Energy and Climate Change, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, the Department for International Development, the Department for Transport and the Ministry of Justice.

Table 2.3 Email alert recipients – central Government

	Nr
Department for Work and Pensions	27
Department for Children, Families and Schools	9
Cabinet Office	8
Department for Education and Skills	6
HM Treasury	6
No 10	3
Department for Communities and Local Government	3
Home Office	1
HM Prison Service	1
Department for Business, Innovation and Skills	1
Department for Health	1
Ministry of Defence	1
HM Revenue & Customs	1
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister	1

Source: Anonymised JRF child poverty email alert recipient list.

Note: The figure for the Department for Work and Pensions excludes 30 Jobcentre Plus email addresses but includes 3 Child Poverty Unit addresses. The figure for the Department for Health excludes 54 NHS email addresses.

- 2.1.5. About 160 different local authorities (or about a third of all local authorities across the UK) and about 125 universities (or about three quarters of all UK Higher Education institutions³) have at least 1 email registration. The main children's charities all have at least 1 member of staff registered on the JRF child poverty email alert (Table 2.4).

Table 2.4 Email alert recipients – charities

	Nr
Save the Children	18

³ The Universities UK website suggests that there are 166 higher education institutions in the UK.

Barnardos	9
Child Poverty Action Group	8
Oxfam	7
Shelter	7
National Children's Bureau	6
Unicef	5
National Council of Voluntary Child Care Organisations	3
Action for Children	3
End Child Poverty Coalition	2
4Children	2
National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty Against Children	1
Railway Children	1
Children 1 st	1

Source: Anonymised JRF child poverty email alert recipient list.

- 2.1.6. Analysis of traffic on the JRF website can give a broad indication of the total numbers reached by the JRF child poverty programme. Between July 2008 and August 2010, there were just over 31,000 unique page views⁴ of the child poverty programme start page. Benchmarking this figure is difficult given that different JRF programmes run over different time periods, but it is interesting to note that 31,000 is the highest number of unique page views for any JRF programme's start page⁵. Next in line are the start pages of the admittedly much more recent 'education and poverty' and 'new insights' programmes' start pages, which secured 14,500 and 12,500 unique page views respectively. The older 'attitudes to poverty' research programme has a start page that ticks off at 10,500 unique page views or about a third of the JRF child poverty programme. A number of individual JRF publications receive quite high scores, but not a single one achieves more unique page views than the JRF child poverty start page. For example, the child poverty start page achieved 50% more hits than the 2009 'Monitoring poverty and social exclusion' report (about 22,000) and more than twice as many as the 2009 'Minimum income standards' report (about 13,000).

⁴ Unique page views are the number of visits during which the page was viewed. The JRF child poverty programme start page secured 31,302 unique page views; the education and poverty start page secured 14,459 unique page views; the new insights start page 12,441.

⁵ Non-programme start pages, such as the start pages for funding and JRF publications achieve more hits.

- 2.1.7. It is difficult to know what the 31,000 unique page views mean in terms of unique visitors to the child poverty website. It may well be that child poverty stakeholders pass the child poverty start page each time they want to access a specific JRF publication, resulting in a higher ratio of page views to unique visitors than is the case for other pages on the JRF website. Typing ‘child poverty JRF’ into Google leads to the JRF child poverty start page; googling ‘monitoring poverty JRF’ directs people to the individual MPSE publications, enabling them to side-step the start page of the monitoring poverty and social exclusion programme. It is only possible to give a broad approximate estimate on the basis of the pattern of unique page views across the JRF website as a whole, which would suggest about 8,000⁶ unique visitors to the child poverty start page over the last two years.
- 2.1.8. Downloading of reports from the JRF website can be tracked from July 2009 onwards. This means that the download data cannot be a reliable source for *total* download figures for the child poverty programme which published its first reports as early as 2006. The download figures also do not give an indication of how many people read the report summaries directly on the JRF website, without downloading the reports. The download data can, however, provide an insight in the download frequency of JRF child poverty reports *relative* to other JRF publications.

Table 2.5 JRF child poverty downloads compared to other downloads

	Child poverty		Other	
	Nr	%	Nr	%
Less than 100 downloads	6	23	625	64
Between 100 and 249	13	50	227	23
Between 250 and 499	7	27	88	9
Between 500 and 999	0	0	25	3
1000 or more	0	0	9	1
Total	26	100	974	100

Source: Google Analytics and CPC calculations.

Note: Percentages for the child poverty publications are only given for ease of reference and need to be used with care, given the small sampler size.

⁶ Across the website as a whole, the ratio of unique page views to unique visitors is 3.823 to 1. Applying this ratio to the unique page views of the child poverty start page (31,302) implies just over 8,000 unique visitors.

- 2.1.9. Only a small number of the 26 child poverty reports for which data is available were downloaded less than 100 times. When excluding the June 2006 reports⁷, only two reports were downloaded less than 100 times: two supporting documents to the 2008 report on ‘Estimating the cost of child poverty’ (Table 2.6). Across the JRF research programme as a whole, almost two thirds of publications are downloaded fewer than 100 times (Table 2.5).
- 2.1.10. None of the child poverty reports achieved the download frequency that the most popular JRF publications such as the MPSE and minimum income standards series achieve (up to several 1,000s downloads) and only one of the child poverty reports makes it into the top 50 of most popular JRF downloads: Can work eradicate child poverty? at number 49, with 451 downloads. Still, the overall impression is one of solid interest in the JRF child poverty programme across all its publications, with a clear majority of reports downloaded between 100 and 500 times. This is true for only a third of other JRF publications.

Table 2.6 JRF child poverty downloads

Title	Nr	Rank
Can work eradicate poverty?	451	49
What will it take to end child poverty?	408	59
Ending child poverty in a changing economy (summary)	384	65
Childcare and child poverty	382	67
What is needed to end child poverty by 2020? (summary)	330	89
What will it take to end child poverty? (summary)	314	102
The effects of discrimination on families in the fight to end child poverty	275	124
Mental health and child poverty	256	133
Estimating the cost of child poverty (summary)	245	137
The cost of child poverty to individuals and society. Literature review	226	156
What is needed to end child poverty in Wales? (summary)	224	158
What can we do to tackle child poverty in Northern Ireland (summary)	194	185
Child poverty in Scotland. Taking the next steps (summary)	192	189
Education and child poverty. Literature review	184	201
Parental qualifications and child poverty	159	230
Ending severe child poverty	158	234

⁷ Prior to the July 2006 publication on ‘What will it take to end child poverty by 2020?’ which constituted the actual and public launch of the programme.

Tackling child poverty when parents cannot work	139	274
Can current policy end child poverty in Britain by 2020?	132	293
Child poverty and its consequences (summary)	110	352
Can current policy end child poverty in Britain by 2020? (summary)	106	365
Public service costs to child poverty	95	401
The GDP cost of lost earning potential of adults who grew up in poverty	48	406

Source: Google Analytics.

- 2.1.11. The programme achieved a total of just under 200 press articles (excluding online coverage) in about 130 different newspapers and broadcasts, presenting almost 15 million ‘opportunities to view’⁸. Roughly a third of this was UK-wide coverage, a third was coverage in regional or local English newspapers and a third coverage in the devolved administrations.

2.2. Were documents read by the target audiences?

Are reports read?

- 2.2.1. The online survey suggests that the different child poverty reports were widely read by interested⁹ parties. More than 9 in 10 of respondents had read at least 1 of the 7 reports referenced in the online survey completely or partially and just less than 1 in 10 had read all 7 reports completely or partially. Even when considering that there is likely to be an element of bias in the profile of respondents, these are encouraging figures. Most respondents had read 3 or 4 of the reports.

Table 2.7 How many of the reports are read?

Read by	
None	6%
1 report	10%
2 reports	15%

⁸ The 15 million figure excludes broadcasts as no information about total viewers is available for the broadcasts concerned. ‘Opportunities to view’ cannot give an indication of actual impact: it does not contain any information about how many people actually read an article or whether reading the article made any difference. Still, it is a fairly standard indicator used in media monitoring and can give some idea of the scale of media coverage.

⁹ Respondents to the online survey are more likely to be people who would read JRF email alerts, given that the survey was sent out by JRF in the format of a JRF email alert.

3 reports	23%
4 reports	27%
5 reports	6%
6 reports	3%
7 reports	10%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The number of respondents ranges from 155 to 166 between the different reports.

- 2.2.2. The 2008 reports on ‘What is needed to end child poverty in 2020?’ and ‘Estimating the cost of child poverty’ were the most widely read reports, read completely or partially by 8 in 10 of respondents. The 2006 and 2009 reports on ‘What will it take to end child poverty?’ and ‘Ending child poverty in a changing economy’ were read by 7 in 10 of respondents.

Table 2.8 Most popular reports in the child poverty programme

Title	Read by
What is needed to end child poverty in 2020? (2008)	81%
Estimating the cost of child poverty (2008)	80%
Ending child poverty in a changing economy (2009)	73%
What will it take to end child poverty? (2006)	71%
Child poverty in Scotland: taking the next steps (2009)	36%
What is needed to end child poverty in Wales? (2009)	26%
What can we do to tackle child poverty in Northern Ireland? (2009)	20%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The number of respondents ranges from 155 to 166 between the different reports.

- 2.2.3. The overall percentages for the reports on the devolved administrations are lower. However, when focusing specifically on respondents who are based in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland respectively, the picture changes: all of the (18) Scottish respondents and all but 1 of the (16) Welsh respondents had read the report relating to their area completely or partially. The total number of Northern Irish respondents is very low (4), but all four Northern Irish respondents had read the Northern Ireland report.
- 2.2.4. About 1 in 7 of respondents referenced other JRF publications they had found useful, although not always referring back to publications in the child poverty programme. For example, respondents referred to the JRF work on minimum income standards and the annual MPSE series. Reports in the child poverty

series that were mentioned include ‘Ending severe child poverty’, ‘Childcare and child poverty’, ‘How can parents escape recurrent poverty’, ‘Can work eradicate poverty’ and ‘Addressing in-work poverty’. A limited number of people commented that they read through the whole child poverty series.

“I read the majority of summary reports and in some cases the full reports of the JRF Child Poverty and Education Programme. I thought this was an excellent series” (Third sector representative, online survey)

- 2.2.5. A slightly more nuanced picture emerges from the stakeholder interviews. Although the vast majority of interviewees were familiar with the JRF research programme, several commented that they had not necessarily read through the reports. Responses varied significantly with some respondents commenting that the JRF child poverty reports were “*something I would make time for*” or had “*read from front to cover*” and others acknowledging that, while interesting, they simply did not have the time for any detailed background reading. Encouragingly, there was some evidence suggesting that reports are read at the highest political level.

“A huge amount of people try to get in touch with you. You have a mountain of information and a lot to do. You do not have a lot of time for reading or reflecting. I would look at the summaries; the reports are analysed in detail by civil servants who will tell me if there is something of importance” (Political advisor, telephone survey)

“I am familiar with them all. I read them all – they would be obligatory in any overview for the Minister” (Senior central Government official, telephone survey)

“I’ve now had three Ministers mention the essays to me” (Senior central Government official, letter to the JRF child poverty team)

Are email alerts read?

- 2.2.6. Only a few of the individuals who responded to the email alert commented that they do not tend to read the email alert, but it is likely that there is a response bias in this respect: individuals who are less likely to read the JRF email alert are less likely to read a JRF email alert asking them to participate in an online survey. The online survey suggests that most people who read the email alerts, skim-read them and read features of interest in detail.

Table 2.9 How do people read the JRF email alert?

	%
I skim-read the alert for relevant topics, reading features of interest in detail	69%
I skim-read the alert for relevant topics, but rarely read anything in detail.	16%
I read the child poverty email alert in detail	14%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The number of respondents is 177 or all respondents who answered that they read the alert.

2.3. Were the reports useful to and used by the target audiences?

Which JRF arguments are used?

2.3.1. Respondents were presented with a number of arguments from the JRF child poverty research programme and asked (i) whether they recognised the argument and (ii) whether they associated the argument with JRF. The different arguments were:

- Not ending child poverty costs an estimated £25 billion per year;
- An additional £4 billion per year would be needed to halve child poverty by 2010 using tax credits;
- In-work poverty needs to be addressed to tackle child poverty;
- Tackling child poverty needs action by Departments other than the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Treasury;
- The benefit and tax credit system needs to be reviewed to become more effective at addressing child poverty;
- Childcare provision needs to be improved to tackle child poverty;
- Quality of work is crucial if work is to be a route out of poverty; and,
- There is a clear link between parental qualifications and child poverty.

2.3.2. Overall, the £4 and £25 billion cost estimates are less likely to be known but more likely to be attributed to JRF than policy arguments. More than 6 in 10 of respondents are familiar with the cost estimates and more than half of these also knew that these estimates originated with JRF. The policy arguments are known to more than 8 or 9 in 10 of respondents, but only about a third of them associate the policy arguments with JRF. The main exception is the argument that in-work poverty needs to be addressed to tackle child poverty, which is recognised as a JRF position by more than half of recipients familiar

with the argument. Recipients were least likely to recognise JRF as the source of the argument that there is a clear link between child poverty and parental qualifications (32%) and that action is needed by Departments other than DWP and HM Treasury (30%).

Table 2.10 Which arguments are familiar? Associated with JRF?

	All	JRF
Childcare provision needs to be improved to tackle child poverty	92%	41%
There is a clear link between parental qualifications and child poverty	92%	32%
In-work poverty needs to be addressed to tackle child poverty	89%	54%
The benefit and tax credit system needs to be reviewed to become more effective at addressing child poverty	89%	35%
Tackling child poverty needs action by Departments other than the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Treasury	88%	30%
Quality of work is crucial if work is to be a route out of poverty	80%	35%
Not ending child poverty costs an estimated £25 billion per year	69%	55%
An additional £4 billion per year would be needed to halve child poverty by 2010 using tax credits	64%	54%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010).

Note: 'All' gives the percentages of all respondents who are familiar with a particular argument. 'JRF' indicates how many of these also knew that the argument originated with JRF. The number of respondents (All) ranges from 182 to 186 between the different arguments.

- 2.3.3. The stakeholder interviews confirm that it is the cost estimates that people associate most clearly with the JRF child poverty programme. UK charities comment that they “*use the figures all the time*” and officials were similarly familiar with them.
- 2.3.4. It is the £25 billion rather than the £4 billion figure that appears to have achieved the wider and more lasting appeal. Whereas the £4 billion was (made into) a specific ‘ask’, useful to charities and campaigners in their advocacy to the UK Government, the £25 billion figure was a more general argument, that could be used by anyone interested in promoting action on child poverty. The £25 billion is recognised more widely: 69% of respondents to the online survey recognise this figure compared to an only slightly lower 64% for the £4 billion figure. However, the £4 billion figure is recognised particularly among third sector respondents: 77% of third sector respondents recognise the figure compared to 61% of non-third sector respondents. The £25 billion figure is recognised across the board: 69% both for third sector and non-third sector respondents. The difference is possibly

even starker when only looking at public sector respondents: 75% recognise the £25 billion cost estimate, but only 56% recognise the £4 billion cost estimate. Even when considering the lower sample sizes for the different sectors, there does appear to be a clear trend.

Table 2.11 Familiarity with cost estimates

	All	Public sector	Third sector	Research
£25 billion	69%	75%	69%	70%
£4 billion	64%	56%	77%	59%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The total number of respondents (All) is 182. Sample sizes for the public, third and research sector are 55, 39 and 37 respectively.

- 2.3.5. Several people commented that they used the £25 billion in case-making and that the figure was quoted back to them, suggesting a wide field of users. A regional stakeholder suggested that “*all local authorities know about the £25 billion figure*” and a charity asking the Child Poverty Unit about cost information was referred back by the Unit to the £25 billion report. Countless examples were given of use of the £25 billion figure in support for more action on child poverty. One official compared the £4 billion and £25 billion figures, suggesting that the £25 billion figure had been the more useful one, because they had not attempted to calculate the cost of poverty to society, whereas they had done the tax credit calculations: “*we had not done that kind of calculation because it was too speculative, but it was still useful to be able to point to the fact that someone had tried doing it*”.

“JRF materials are really useful in trying to engage local authorities ... the cost consequences of child poverty in particular – that is the language local authorities use”
(Regional Government official, telephone survey)

“The research and headline figures have been very helpful, backing what we have been saying – I still use the £25b figure all the time in briefing documents to the government and also in public facing documents – a newspaper article” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

- 2.3.6. Specific examples of use of the £25 billion figure include:

- About 40 mentions in the press (excluding about 100 mentions in online coverage), including references in half a dozen national papers. The £4 billion figure similarly pops up in the JRF collation of press coverage for

the JRF child poverty programme, but not as frequently and almost exclusively in the context of journalists quoting charities who ask for additional investment in tax credit;

- A number of letters to the editor and articles written by child poverty stakeholders, including letters by Labour Councillor Tim Moore; David Bull, Executive Director of Unicef UK; and Paul Nicholson, Director of the Zacchaeus Trust; and a newspaper article by John Battle MP;
- A motion to the Scottish Parliament¹⁰;
- An early day motion in Westminster which secured 178 signatures or more than a quarter of MPs¹¹;
- Use in the London Child Poverty Commission legacy report;
- Use by the Welsh Liberal Democrats to estimate the cost of child poverty to Wales – they put the figure at £6.25 billion per year;
- The Child Poverty Bill process – the £25 billion figure was used “*quite a lot*” by the Government as a way of justifying the bill, but the figure was also quoted back to the Government by MPs. Analysis of the parliamentary proceedings indicates that the £25 billion cost estimate was quoted at 10 different occasions, by 7 different people, including 3 Labour MPs, 1 member of the opposition (SNP) and 3 experts. The figure was used mainly to set the wider context and make a case for the Bill. The £4 billion figure is quoted at 14 different occasions, also by 7 different people, although in this case only including 1 Labour MP – the six other individuals are opposition MPs (4) or experts (2). The figure is used to argue that (i) the Government is not doing enough or conversely (ii) that

¹⁰ The motion by Bill Wilson MSP reads as follows: “That the Parliament notes the report published by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation on 23 October 2008 that estimated that child poverty costs the United Kingdom at least £25 billion a year; notes the unacceptable costs of poverty, both to the UK Exchequer and to the victims of poverty; asserts that poverty, especially child poverty, is a pressing and pertinent issue in the UK and Scotland; considers that the only way to tackle poverty is to redistribute wealth; commends the Scottish Government for attempting to modernise local taxation and relate said taxation to an individual’s ability to pay; calls on the UK Government to investigate methods of redistributing wealth, and notes that these methods could include a citizens’ income and should include the raising of extra funds to fight poverty by ending loopholes that allow the very wealthy to evade taxation”.

¹¹ The early day motion in December 2008 by David Davies reads as follows: “That this House is deeply concerned that there are 3.9 million children living below the poverty line in the United Kingdom, which is one of the worst records in the EU and amongst other wealthy countries; recognises the appalling damage poverty does to children’s wellbeing and life chances; further recognises the strength of public concern, as demonstrated by over 10,000 people at the largest ever event in support of an end to child poverty, the Campaign to End Child Poverty’s recent rally in Trafalgar Square; believes that British children should not have to continue suffering worse levels of poverty than their counterparts in other wealthy countries; notes research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation indicating that social and economic problems resulting from child poverty cost the United Kingdom at least £25 billion each year; believes that the Government should recognise, measure and act on relative poverty; and calls on the Government to eradicate United Kingdom child poverty by 2020”.

enforcing the Bill will be near impossible. The overall impression is that the £25 billion figure was used to make a case for the Bill and the £4 billion figure was used to argue that the Government's approach was not the right one.

2.3.7. It is important to recognise that the £4 billion cost estimate was used extensively by child poverty charities in their political advocacy and media work. Policy-makers were often aware of the figure, but less likely to have used it. Some stakeholders commented that the figure now looks a bit naïve as it included no information on where the additional money would come from and it was also considered not very practical in the current economic climate – “*we would not use those figures now*”. Charities commented that there had been extensive discussion within the End Child Poverty coalition as to whether or not to use the figure – it was seen as too gigantic an ask which would undermine their cause. Section 2.5 will discuss in more detail to what extent the use of the £4 billion ask by charities led to successful lobby outcomes.

2.3.8. The stakeholder interviews confirm that people were familiar with the key policy arguments from the JRF research, including the importance of tackling in-work poverty and addressing childcare issues, but were less likely to associate these findings exclusively with JRF. Even if they recognised a particular argument as a JRF position, JRF was seen as one of a number of sources making this point.

“The £4 billion figure was used to frame the campaign around ... The policy paper was the least accessible and was saying things that other people were also saying” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

“The policy work was less influential. It is quite a tricky balance between research and policy. JRF is one step removed from policy recommendations and the sector did not really take them up. The charity sector is interested in recommendations for the next budget review, not longer term discussion of what needs to change” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

2.3.9. The online survey shows that those who recognised a particular policy argument as a JRF argument were more likely to have used this argument. It is unclear what is cause and effect here – whether people who are more likely to make a case, go to JRF to find arguments, or whether knowing that

something is a JRF argument makes it more likely that the argument will be used. The stakeholder interviews suggest that both scenarios do take place.

Table 2.12 Use of JRF arguments and cost estimates

Argument	All	JRF
In-work poverty needs to be addressed to tackle child poverty	77%	83%
Quality of work is crucial if work is to be a route out of poverty	66%	73%
Childcare provision needs to be improved to tackle child poverty	65%	76%
The benefit and tax credit system needs to be reviewed to become more effective at addressing child poverty	62%	75%
There is a clear link between parental qualifications and child poverty	61%	70%
Tackling child poverty needs action by Departments other than the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Treasury	60%	78%
An additional £4 billion per year would be needed to halve child poverty by 2010 using tax credits	60%	68%
Not ending child poverty costs an estimated £25 billion per year	54%	62%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010).

Note: 'All' gives the percentages of respondents who used a certain argument. The total number of responses is the number of people familiar with the argument, varying between 117 and 170. 'JRF' gives the percentages of respondents who used a certain argument and recognised it as a JRF argument. The total number of responses is the number of people familiar with the argument as a JRF argument, varying between 49 and 89.

- 2.3.10. The open survey question around how the JRF child poverty research was used shows that policy briefings and reports are the most common usage of the findings (24%), following by use in teaching or in essays (14% each). JRF findings are also used in research papers by academics, think-tanks or consultancies (12%), in discussions – which goes from casual discussion with friends to policy discussions with officials or politicians (12%), in presentations and consultation responses (8% each), funding applications or tenders (5%) and media work (4%).

Table 2.13 Use in different contexts

	%
Policy briefings/reports	24%
Dissertation/homework/essay	14%
Lecturing/teaching	14%
Research papers	12%
Discussions	12%
Presentations	8%
Consultation responses	8%
Funding application/tender	5%

Media work	4%
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Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). There were responses to the open question from 111 people, but a number of these responses could not be categorised; conversely a limited number of people gave multiple examples. The sample size for this table is 101.

Use of JRF child poverty reports by devolved administrations

- 2.3.11. The overall impression is that the reports on tackling child poverty in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales were used extensively by stakeholders in these regions. Interviewees were able to give practical examples of how JRF findings were used, including in briefings to Ministers or to the devolved assemblies including in the context of the Child Poverty Inquiry by the Local Government and Communities committee of the Scottish Parliament. A third sector interviewee commented that she had used the findings to raise questions in the Assembly, through a sympathetic member of parliament. An email message to JRF from a WAG official explicitly acknowledged that the JRF report on Wales had been particularly useful.
- 2.3.12. With the exception of the £4 billion cost estimate (which was seen by many as less relevant in a devolved context), JRF findings were more likely to have been used by stakeholders in the devolved nations than in England. The contrast is noticeable in use of the £25 billion cost estimate – which was used by three quarters (74%) of all stakeholders in the devolved administrations who recognised the figure as a JRF figure compared to only half (47%) among English stakeholders. A similar sharp contrast can be seen in the argument that tackling child poverty needs action by Departments other than DWP and HM Treasury – the argument was used by 74% of stakeholders in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales compared to 54% in England. Sample sizes for the devolved administrations are lower and these conclusions must be treated with some caution, but there does appear to be a clear trend, which is confirmed in the telephone interviews.

Table 2.14 Use of JRF findings in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Argument	All	Devolved	England
In-work poverty needs to be addressed to tackle child poverty	77%	89%	72%
Quality of work is crucial if work is to be a route out of poverty	66%	73%	62%
Childcare provision needs to be improved to tackle child poverty	65%	76%	59%
The benefit and tax credit system needs to be reviewed to become more effective at addressing child poverty	62%	72%	57%
There is a clear link between parental qualifications and child	61%	70%	56%

poverty			
Tackling child poverty needs action by Departments other than the Department for Work and Pensions and HM Treasury	60%	74%	54%
An additional £4 billion per year would be needed to halve child poverty by 2010 using tax credits	60%	61%	57%
Not ending child poverty costs an estimated £25 billion per year	54%	74%	47%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The total number of responses (All) is the number of people familiar with the argument, varying between 117 and 170. The total number of Devolved responses is the number of responses familiar with the argument and based in the devolved administrations, varying between 23 and 38. The total number of Other responses is the number of responses familiar with the argument and based in England, varying between 84 and 128.

2.3.13. The online survey also confirms that close to three fifths (58%) of individuals based in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland comment that the JRF research influenced their writings about child poverty (compared to 45% across all respondents). Influence on individual readers will be discussed in more detail in section 2.4.

2.3.14. In Wales and Northern Ireland in particular, it was felt that there simply was not that much other material available. Stakeholders referred to work by charities (in particular Save the Children) but commented that this was not as systematic and that charity research has an obvious agenda. Research focusing in particular on the devolved administrations tends not to look specifically at child poverty and other UK-wide sources on child poverty do not tend to look in detail at the situation in the devolved administrations. People in the devolved administrations were particularly impressed that JRF went beyond the usual ‘annex’ and had delivered research of the same level of depth as the UK wide analysis.

“People appreciate that work was done on Northern Ireland. Very few organisations do that” (Northern Ireland stakeholder, telephone survey)

“Wales does not have any institution specialising in child poverty so JRF is an important source for us” (Welsh stakeholder, telephone survey)

2.3.15. About a third of all press coverage generated by the JRF child poverty programme is coverage for the reports on child poverty in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

- Coverage for the Scotland report is particularly strong: there are more than 60 media references and it includes UK-wide coverage (for example in the Guardian) and broadcasts. Coverage in the Scottish newspapers tends to be particularly detailed: where coverage for other JRF reports in English or UK-wide papers takes up a few paragraphs or a column, the Scotland report secures a few features of several pages in a number of Scottish newspapers. The report was referenced by the SNP Work and Pensions spokesperson.
- The Welsh report gets referenced about 25 times, including in broadcast. A couple of politicians are referenced as having quoted the figures, including Mark Isherwood, Assembly Member for North Wales, during a Child Poverty debate, and the Liberal Democrat spokesperson for children and young people.
- Press coverage for the Northern Ireland report is more limited (6 references). A Sinn Fein Assembly Member and Councillor is quoted as referencing the difference in funding for English and Northern Irish children as problematic.

Presentations by JRF staff and authors

2.3.16. There is extensive evidence of JRF staff and authors being invited to present findings in seminars, conferences, working groups or discuss findings informally, including:

- Presentations at the interdepartmental meetings on child poverty and discussions with individual departments, including the then Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), the Department of Health, the Department for Work and Pensions, the then Department for Children, Families and Schools (DCFS) – this also includes discussions with political advisors;
- Evidence to the House of Commons Public Scrutiny Committee about the Child poverty bill;
- Involvement in the Conservative party child poverty working group;
- A series of invitations to seminars and requests for evidence in the devolved administrations, including evidence to the Scottish Parliament’s Local Government and Communities Committee; evidence on the proposed Children and Families (Wales) measure; a pre-publication seminar on the forthcoming Child Poverty in Scotland viewpoint;
- Presentations at the Yorkshire and Humber regional child poverty forum;
- Involvement in the child poverty advisory group for Centre for Excellence and Outcomes in Children and Young People’s Services (C4EO) and requests for support from the IDEA lead for the Beacon child poverty theme; and,

- Requests for contributions to the Hackney child poverty review and the Hull Council child poverty conference.

2.4. Did the research influence targeted individuals?

2.4.1. Hardly any of the people participating in the online survey commented that the JRF findings did not have an impact on them. The most likely impacts were learning new facts about child poverty (78%), broadening people's perspective on child poverty (67%) and giving people arguments to make their case about child poverty (67%). JRF findings were less likely to influence people's thinking or writings about child poverty but this is still the case for 59% and 45% of respondents respectively. The JRF research programme placed child poverty higher on the agenda of almost a third of respondents (32%) and influenced the decisions and actions relating to child poverty of almost a quarter of respondents (24%).

Table 2.15 Influence of the programme on individuals

	All	Public sector	Third sector
It taught me new facts about child poverty	78%	83%	83%
It broadened my perspective on child poverty	67%	78%	63%
It gave me arguments to make my case about child poverty	67%	62%	83%
It influenced my way of thinking about child poverty	59%	65%	59%
It raised new questions about child poverty	48%	45%	49%
It influenced my writings about child poverty	45%	38%	49%
It placed child poverty higher on my agenda	32%	37%	29%
It influenced my decisions or actions relating to child poverty	24%	27%	27%
None of the above	3%	5%	2%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The number of responses overall is 184. There were responses from 64 public sector stakeholders and 41 third sector stakeholders.

2.4.2. Sample sizes are lower when looking at the different sectors separately, so results must be treated with some caution, but there does appear to be a pattern. Third sector respondents were more likely to say that the JRF research gave them arguments to make their case about child poverty (83% feel that this was the case compared to 67% of all respondents and 62% for public sector respondents). Public sector representatives are more likely to

say that the research broadened their perspective on child poverty (78% compared to 67% for all respondents) and influenced their thinking about child poverty (65% compared to 59% for all respondents). Public sector respondents similarly are more likely to feel that the JRF research placed poverty higher on their agenda (37%).

- 2.4.3. The open question in the online survey on how people were influenced by the research shows that case-making examples are the ones that spring to mind most easily.

“JRF publications are very useful in providing evidence to support arguments in speeches or policy papers. I would not say that it has been influential to me, but rather affirming views and values” (Scottish stakeholder, online survey)

“Clear and concise reference point to back up arguments” (Welsh stakeholder, online survey)

“I have used the 'business case' provided by JRF to reinforce commitment through our local authority's chief officers and steering group of the Children's Trust” (Local public sector practitioner, online survey)

- 2.4.4. There are however other examples, including respondents who refer more generally to the value of JRF research in providing them with an evidence base or specific examples of changes in people's ways of thinking.

“It equipped me with vital facts and information” (Regional public sector practitioner, online survey)

“It made me think about quality of paid work and its relationship to child poverty” (Other stakeholder, online survey)

- 2.4.5. There are also a limited number of examples of practical change as a result of the JRF child poverty programme. This tends to be JRF inspiring people to pick child poverty as a topic of a dissertation or career, but also includes a limited number of policy specific instances:

“The Ending Child Poverty in Scotland report in Scotland led us to do more work on child poverty, to form alliances with other groups, add questions in to our MORI poll re childcare”

and plan our 2010 conference on this theme” (Scottish third sector representative, online survey)

“The research on mini-jobs led me to recommend an increase in the earnings disregard for lone mothers – this has now been taken up by some politicians in Northern Ireland” (Northern Irish stakeholder, online survey)

“Changed the figure I use for the costs of not ending child poverty” (Other stakeholder, online survey)

“Gave me impetus for a credit union project” (Student, online survey)

- 2.4.6. During the telephone interviews, people similarly suggested that they had used JRF findings in case-making rather than having been directly influenced in their own thinking. Individuals often commented that they had been working in the child poverty field for a long time and had significant experience and fairly well-developed views of their own. Third sector representatives felt that JRF arguments tend to be “*aligned*” to the thinking in the charity sector, leaving only limited scope for influencing as such.

“Nothing in the findings was startling new, but I have been working in this field for years. And it was still useful to have the JRF research. It is about additional evidence. It gives you a quality control for your own work” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“Not so much that my own thinking was influenced ... JRF evidence reaffirms and quantifies the hands-on experience practitioners have. These things are known to people with hands-on experience, but it validates our experience” (Regional Government official, telephone survey)

“Not influenced as such in my views – the JRF findings tend to be aligned to [name of charity] positions” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

- 2.4.7. There were, however, clear exceptions. People who had come to the child poverty agenda from a different background often explicitly credited the JRF report series as their main background reading and introduction to the topic.

“It did. When I came to this job, I had no background in poverty and had to read quite a bit of background materials. There was nothing else like it. The JRF materials were the most useful of all the things I read. JRF discussed different

levers and I got a sense that they were where the latest debates were. A sense that Government strategies come afterwards, are derivatives of those types of debates; thinking in Government appears to reflect a consensus rather than debate” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“I now use a more ‘academic’ approach; I will back up my asks with statistics when I work with ministers” (Third sector representative, online survey)

- 2.4.8. The overall impression is that regional and local Government officials were less likely to have been influenced in their thinking than central Government officials or officials who in turn were less likely to have been influenced than officials in devolved administrations. This may be linked to the fact that local and regional officials have a closer knowledge of what is happening on the ground: the research confirms and validates what they already know. One central Government official explicitly acknowledged that not enough was known centrally about actual local practice. Officials in devolved administrations in particular credited the JRF findings with influencing strategic design, in particular in the context of the development of new child poverty strategies. One devolved official commented that the JRF publication had influenced “*the issues*” they were looking at. Another stakeholder referenced wording in the draft child poverty strategy which appeared to have been directly lifted from the JRF report. Central Government officials found it more difficult to suggest specific examples of influence, but rather recognised the JRF research as one of a series of inputs together impacting on overall strategy design. The line between using JRF research for case-making and JRF research influencing strategy design appeared to be more blurred at central Government level.

“Both. We have taken arguments from the JRF publications but it also influences the work. For example, the work on in-work poverty, the paper by Martin Evans, the childcare work. It is a source of evidence but it has also been used in strategy design” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“DWP under Yvette Cooper and No 10 were getting there [in-work poverty] but it was still helpful that JRF pointed the way” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

- 2.4.9. Researchers were generally relatively guarded about influence of the JRF research on their (or their institutions’) research agenda. Think-tanks not directly involved in the programme tended to comment that they were aware

of the programme and broadly familiar with the findings, but that they had not done much work recently on child poverty themselves and that as such there was relatively little scope for influencing their research agenda.

- 2.4.10. Researchers who had been directly involved in the programme were more likely to acknowledge an influence on their research agenda, though not necessarily in terms of their views on child poverty as such. They commented positively on the collaborative research process, referring to the breadth of experience in the room and methodological challenges (and solutions used) being stimulating. One had found the experience of presenting to an audience of people living on low income interesting. A couple did comment that the JRF commission did influence their own research agenda to the extent that policy officials (or charities) followed up with them on their research, asking for a presentation of findings or even a follow-up assignment. Others did not think the work had influenced their research agenda.

“No. The policy area was really in crisis when we did the research but now it has run out of steam. A lot was achieved in terms of child poverty, then it slowed down and now it is moving backwards” (Researcher, telephone survey)

2.5. Did the research influence the wider child poverty agenda/debate?

- 2.5.1. Assessing the impacts of the JRF child poverty programme on individual respondents is, all things considered, still relatively straightforward: we can ask individuals whether they learnt new things or used the JRF findings in their work. More challenging is trying to assess to what extent the JRF child poverty programme had an impact on the wider child poverty agenda. The evaluation team approached this question through two different channels:

- Online survey respondents were asked whether or not they believed that the JRF research findings had an impact on a number of key events or developments, including for example the establishment of the Child Poverty Act or child poverty being put higher on the political agenda. Responses can only ever be an indication of *perceived* impacts but to the extent that these responses reflect *informed* views – the views of people participating in and shaping the child poverty debate – they carry some weight.

- The research zoomed in on a limited number of ‘case studies’ – key events and developments which the JRF child poverty team believed their research may have helped shape. The research tried to cross-reference the views of as many individuals as possible as to whether or not the JRF research indeed played a role, set against the wider context of other influencing factors. Importantly, this included discussions with key stakeholders directly involved in shaping the developments. The three case studies were: (i) the decision by the UK Government to include an additional £1 billion in child tax credit in the 2007 and 2008 budgets; (ii) the establishment of the Child Poverty Act and the development of the child poverty ‘building blocks’ in the Child Poverty Unit and (iii) Conservative Party policy on child poverty. There is fairly robust evidence for the first two case studies, because it has been possible to talk to large numbers of people involved in these two processes and crucially to a limited number of key officials and political advisors linked to HM Treasury, the Department for Work and Pensions and the Child Poverty Unit. It has proved more difficult to talk to stakeholders with sufficient inside knowledge to develop a strong case for the third case study, but it is still possible to draw some more general conclusions.

General perceptions of impact

- 2.5.2. More than nine in ten of online survey respondents assess the impact of JRF research findings as effective (69%) or highly effective (27%). Only 4% of respondents think the research is not very effective and no one thinks that the research is not effective at all.

Table 2.16 Perceptions of effectiveness of JRF research

Highly effective	27%
Effective	69%
Not very effective	4%
Not effective at all	0%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The number of responses is 162.

- 2.5.3. In terms of influencing the wider political context, online survey respondents feel that the JRF research contributed in particular to (i) placing child poverty higher on the political agenda (79%) and (ii) helping increase attention for in-work poverty (64%). The latter is in line with the finding that the in-work poverty argument stands out as the policy argument that is most likely to be associated with JRF work. Respondents are less likely to feel that JRF contributed to any of the other child poverty events or developments. When only looking at Government officials in a senior or middle management

position in policy or research, the sample size (9) is too small to allow for robust analysis. Still, it is encouraging to note that 7 of these 9 individuals believe that the JRF child poverty programme put child poverty higher on the political agenda.

Table 2.17 Overall perceptions of JRF impacts on selected developments

	%
It placed child poverty higher on the political agenda	79%
It helped increase attention for in-work poverty	64%
It contributed to the establishment of the Child Poverty Act	45%
It helped make the case for involving Dpts other than DWP and HM Treasury	44%
It influenced the introduction of the child poverty ‘building blocks’	33%
It influenced child poverty policies in the devolved administrations	30%
It helped secure additional funding for child poverty in the 2007 and 2008 budgets	28%
It influenced Liberal Democrat Party policy on child poverty	14%
It influenced Conservative Party policy on child poverty	11%
None of the above	4%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The total number of responses is 168.

- 2.5.4. Table 2.17 suggests that less than one in three of respondents feel that the JRF programme influenced child poverty policies in the devolved administrations. When only including the responses of Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish stakeholders, the picture changes: half of all devolved stakeholders (49%) believe that there was an influence.

Introduction of £1 billion in additional tax credits in 2007 and 2008

- 2.5.5. The JRF child poverty team believed that the £4 billion cost estimate¹² in the 2006 report on ‘What will it take to end child poverty?’ may well have contributed to the introduction of an additional £1 billion in tax credits in the 2007 budget and again in 2008. The online survey already showed that this report was indeed widely read by interested parties (71% of respondents read it completely or partially) and that about a quarter of respondents felt that the JRF research had contributed to the 2007 and 2008 increase in tax credits. To

¹²

The report suggested that an additional £4 billion per year would be needed to halve child poverty by 2010 using tax credits.

get a more details understanding, senior Government officials and political advisors, as well as key third sector stakeholders, were asked to comment on the process that led to the introduction of the additional £1 billion in the 2007 and 2008.

- 2.5.6. There appears to be a consensus that there were a number of factors at play. Stakeholders report a clear political commitment from senior Ministers and a build-up towards action: people within Government were aware that the 2010 deadline was looming and that the deadline would be missed if nothing was done.

“There was a clear political commitment to do something. There was the 2010 goal and the Government were not going to achieve it without further action” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“Brown wanted to do something, JRF gave the Government something specific but it was one of many. For example, [name of charity] had a winter and summer grant proposal and I know they also modelled those. My impression was that the Treasury was actively looking for things they could do” (Researcher, telephone survey)

“In 2007 in particular we got lucky: the right ministers were in post and there was money available. Also, they hadn’t done anything in a while” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

- 2.5.7. Internal modelling was taking place: ministers were asking the civil service to look into different scenarios for tackling child poverty and officials were developing different models. Few remembered exactly which scenarios had and had not been looked at prior to the JRF research, but there were some suggestions that internal modelling had not taken the comprehensive JRF approach – they had looked at “*low and high cost scenarios*” but not at how much it would cost to reach the 2010 target as such.

“We were already doing internal modelling of options – but we had not had a request to add things up to 2010. We were looking at a smaller set of options – for example, what would it take to take 100,000 children out of poverty. We had not quantified the total it would take” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

- 2.5.8. A couple of stakeholders believed that, when the £4 billion figure first showed up, there had been a request to double-check whether this figure was right. Others similarly reported that this would have been a fairly standard reaction to a high profile political ask.

“If an independent figure is used in a political lobby, a question would be asked whether this was right. We are involved in doing our own modelling and checking whether external figures make sense. I do not remember which of the two happened in the case of the £4 billion” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

- 2.5.9. Irrespective of their views on the exact sequencing of events, officials agreed that the £4 billion figure did not come as a surprise. They knew from their own internal modelling the type of investment that was required: *“I don’t remember the exact figure we had internally, but it was the same order of magnitude”*. As mentioned earlier, one official suggested that the £25 billion figure had been more useful than the £4 billion figure, because they had not attempted the cost of poverty to society calculation, whereas they had done the tax credit calculations. A charity reported a recent discussion with a political advisor of a shadow Minister – who would have been on the receiving end of the lobbying work by the charity during the previous Government – about what had and had not worked in their lobby efforts. This advisor commented that the £4 billion figure had not made an impact: they had been aware of the figure, but it was not used as such, because it was not a Treasury figure. There appears to be a certain consensus that the cost estimate may have changed things at the margin, but that it was not a decisive factor.

“The £4 billion figure may have had some impact but not that much. It was not that different from what our internal models were showing. This is not to say that the JRF research was not a perfectly good piece of research. It is just that we shared common assumptions” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

- 2.5.10. What was new, however, was that the figure was now *“in the open”*. Internal modelling outcomes had not been published which meant they had not been discussed in the press or used by lobby groups. The figure was considered to have been very *“visible”* and had, according to a political advisor, helpful in

reminding Ministers that there was external support for additional investment in tax credits.

“It was useful. You always need new ways of motivating people – this was something entirely new; it did engage Ministers in a different way; it was a different way of having a conversation. Not like yet another organisation sending out a press release ... The figure was visible at the time – it was very powerful, a snippet of information that Ministers can work with. A very simple message – not something about half a standard deviation ... It probably would have happened without it, because there was a very strong commitment to act. But it led to increased certainty ... It kept the idea fresh in policy-makers’ minds” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

- 2.5.11. Officials and political advisors also commented that, while useful as an innovative engagement tool, the cost estimate was *“at the same time actively unhelpful”*. HM Treasury officials reportedly did not dispute the figures but simply reacted that it was impossible to deal with the request financially: *“even before the recession, people gulped”* when hearing the figure. One policy-maker recalled discussions in the final months of the Labour Government where the cost estimate was used by some as an argument against a continued focus on child poverty. Questions were being asked as to whether or not it did not make more sense to tone down the focus on child poverty in the context of recession and need for fiscal prudence.
- 2.5.12. Irrespective of their feelings about the importance of the cost estimate as such, officials did acknowledge that the End Child Poverty lobby had played an important role in securing the £1 billion in additional tax credits¹³. They suggested that the real question was to what extent the End Child Poverty lobby had been able to run a more united and consistent campaign than they would have been able without the cost estimate.
- 2.5.13. It was felt that the £4 billion figure had not been the only factor strengthening the End Child Poverty campaign from 2006 onwards; a change in the

¹³ Charity stakeholders also recalled a breakfast meeting hosted by senior ministers the day after the March 2008 budget when ministers thanked the End Child Poverty lobby for their work and acknowledged its importance.

governance structure of the coalition – the development of working groups where members were able to discuss and agree their approach – was also seen as important. Still, charities were in no doubt that the £4 billion figure had been a key element in their lobby strategy. They suggested that there initially had been a fairly intensive debate as to whether or not to use the figure in the campaign: some feared that it was simply too high and that it would undermine their case. Once a consensus was reached, however, the figure was used “*throughout*”. A number of charities suggested that the JRF research came at exactly the right time: prior to 2006, they had produced a number of policy papers but had not really got a campaign of the ground because they did not have a clear “*message*”; the £4 billion figure provided them with that. It gave the coalition “*something to focus on*”. The cost estimate was particularly useful because it was a credible and external figure and “*not something the charities had come up with themselves*”. It also helped that JRF was able to act as an honest broker in the lobby: “*they were not competing for air time with charities; they are securely funded and well respected*”. In this respect, using a JRF figure was seen as easier than picking a figure of one of the End Child Poverty members.

“We made extensive use of the figures: the 2010 target needs £4 billion and it will cost you £25 billion if you don’t do it. These figures underpinned our campaign” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

“Campaigning would have been harder without the figures: at each budget report and review we put it in context by saying: we need £4 billion. We are now trying to find messages for the next phase of the campaign and it is difficult. We are asking [name of research institute] to do some work. A lobby needs messages; you need to have a case to make” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

“The campaign and research interacted: they both fed into each other. The campaign was wondering ‘what can we say’ and the research gave us something to say... It is not that we did not have messages before; we always had messages, but the figure gave us 1 real ask” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

- 2.5.14. A difficult question is what would have happened to the lobby and the effectiveness of the campaign if the cost estimate would not have been available. Charities generally did feel that the £4 billion figure had made a difference to their ability to campaign, but they were fairly pragmatic in their responses to the question of what would have happened otherwise: they would simply have commissioned their own research – as they later did in the

run-up to the End Child Poverty rally in Trafalgar Square in October 2008. Some charities in the devolved administrations also pointed out that they had not used the £4 billion figure and that this had not prevented them from running a strong and effective campaign.

“A figure is very helpful, but a campaign is more than a figure” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

- 2.5.15. There were some suggestions that the JRF cost estimate and use of it by the lobby had been even more important in the 2008 budget. Stakeholders reported leaks in the press about last minute negotiations within the cabinet around child poverty, which a senior minister reportedly later confirmed as accurate. However, it has not been possible to develop separate logic chains for the events leading up to the 2007 and 2008 budgets. Not enough stakeholders were able to clearly separate the events in the two years in their memory.
- 2.5.16. What comes across very clearly from the interviews with policy-makers and charities alike is the timeliness of the JRF research. There is a strong sense that JRF focused on exactly the right thing at the right time. There was a political willingness to do something and policy-makers were able to take advantage of greater visibility of the need to invest more money if the 2010 target was to be reached. The End Child Poverty lobby was established but actively on the look-out for clear messages. There was a certain serendipity in this process which is less obvious in the other case studies.

Child Poverty Act

- 2.5.17. Key officials and political advisors acknowledged that the idea for the Child Poverty Act came from the children’s charities. A letter by One Parent Families to the Government was credited as having been the trigger for what eventually would become the Child Poverty Act. Third sector stakeholders were similarly quick to give credit to One Parent Families as having taken the initiative.

“Gingerbread ... is the reason why there is a Child Poverty Act. We were quite worried and sceptical at first – we were worried that it would divide the political consensus. JRF did not stand out on this. Save the Children, Gingerbread, CPAG,

Barnardos – the charities were the ones who pushed this through” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

- 2.5.18. Stakeholders also commented that the ‘politics’ were right at the time. Ministers and Labour MPs started to realise that they might not win the 2010 general elections, resulting in growing Government appetite to leave a legacy and hold future Governments to account. A more cynical view was that Ministers wanted to show their continued commitment to tackling child poverty because they realised that they were about to miss the 2010 target, would not be able to commit more financial resources and were keen to “*keep the public and the sector happy*”. No 10 reportedly wished to announce something at the 2008 party conference and the idea for a Child Poverty Act fitted the bill. Welsh stakeholders suggested that Welsh child poverty legislation may have influenced the Westminster initiative but few if any other stakeholders credited the Welsh example (although it must be noted that the research did not explore this opportunity in any detail, but instead kept a focus on the JRF child poverty programme as a contributing factor).
- 2.5.19. JRF was seen as less involved. Child Poverty Unit officials remembered that JRF replied to the consultation and that this reply was taken seriously and considered in detail by different staff in the Unit. However, the JRF response focused more on *why* it was important to have a Child Poverty Act than on *how* to shape the Bill – meaning the scope for influencing the further development of the Bill was reduced. Stakeholders similarly remembered that JRF had participated in meetings, but no particular contributions stood out as having been particularly influential. It was more felt that JRF inputs were aligned to what other partners were putting forward. That being said, stakeholders did feel that the availability of “*strong evidence*”, including JRF evidence, supported the process of getting the Child Poverty Bill through Parliament. Even if JRF inputs were aligned to what others were already saying, the fact that JRF also said it, helped.
- 2.5.20. The same appears to apply to the Child Poverty ‘building blocks’ which were developed as part of the consultation process in the build-up to the Child Poverty Act. JRF was seen as one of many inputs and “*not so drop-dead important*” as in the case of the £4 billion and £25 billion cost estimates. Actual inputs in terms of shaping the choice and content of the building blocks were seen to have come more from children’s charities, other

Whitehall Departments and research commissioned by the Child Poverty Unit. For example, one official recalled that housing and neighbourhood issues were introduced as building blocks as a result of lobbying by the charities. A member of staff of a children's charity was seconded to the Child Poverty Unit to help with the process of developing the Bill. The child poverty unit commissioned a series of think-pieces (including one from Donald Hirst) to inform the different building blocks and a cross-departmental Whitehall group was set up to support the process.

- 2.5.21. JRF involvement in the development process was remembered, but stakeholders mainly recalled that JRF was in agreement with the direction the Child Poverty Act was heading. JRF contributions were seen as having been useful, but particularly in terms of “*quality control*” confirming to officials that they were focusing on the right issues. In a second stage, JRF research was used to validate elements of the Bill and make a case for the Bill as it stood. For example, stakeholders suggested that JRF research helped the Government respond to those in the lobby who were making more radical requests for money transfers – the JRF evidence helped them make the point that addressing child poverty is about more than money transfers alone.

“JRF was a player amongst others; it reflected what all the others were already saying” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

- 2.5.22. As mentioned earlier JRF findings were drawn on quite extensively during the parliamentary proceedings for the Bill, including but not limited to findings from the JRF child poverty programme. This included both Labour and opposition MPs and experts. There were some suggestions that JRF may have contributed to making sure the opposition voted in favour of the Act, but there is insufficient evidence from sources close enough to opposition MPs to confirm (or refute) these suggestions.
- 2.5.23. It is important to note that, while Government officials were rather less likely to attribute the establishment of the Child Poverty Act or its content to JRF research, they were quite explicit in acknowledging JRF influence on the work of the Child Poverty Unit in a wider context. General questions as to whether or not JRF had influenced the work of the Child Poverty Unit mainly received positive responses from key stakeholders. It was only when specific

elements of work were suggested, that staff were more cautious and placed JRF in a broader context of a series of influencing factors.

Conservative party policy on child poverty

- 2.5.24. Only a limited number of interviews with key stakeholders took place, which needs to be taken into consideration when assessing this case study. The general perspective of stakeholders is that the shift in Conservative party thinking on poverty was influenced largely by individual Conservative MPs and advisors including Iain Duncan Smith, Andrew Selous, Maria Miller and Chris Grayling.
- 2.5.25. In terms of research evidence, the general consensus appears to be that it is Iain Duncan Smith's Centre for Social Justice that has been paramount in shaping Conservative thinking on poverty. For example, a central Government official suggested that the current message of Ministers and political advisors to civil servants is to use research evidence from the Centre for Social Justice; stakeholders also evidenced their view by referring to the fact that evidence from the Centre for Social Justice is what they hear Conservative politicians quote.
- 2.5.26. For many respondents, the key question is to what extent CSJ staff use and are influenced by the JRF child poverty programme. Stakeholder interviews confirm and it is clear from CSJ reports that JRF findings are used by the Centre for Social Justice. Five (out of just less than 50) publications on the CSJ website quote JRF child poverty research findings¹⁴. The following JRF arguments are quoted:
- A couple with children where a man is low paid is nearly twice as likely to be poor as a family with a lone mother;

¹⁴ These five publications are the 2009 'Dynamic Benefits' report and four reports from the Breakdown/Breakthrough Britain report series, including 'Breakdown Britain: family breakdown' (2006), 'Breakdown Britain: economic dependence and worklessness' (2006), 'Breakthrough Britain: family breakdown' (2007) and 'Breakthrough Britain: economic dependence and worklessness' (2008). Three different JRF reports are quoted, including the 2006 reports on 'What will it take to end child poverty?' and 'Can current policy end child poverty in Britain by 2020' and the 2008 report on 'Microsimulating child poverty in 2010 and 2020' (which fed into the 2008 report on Estimating the cost of child poverty).

- Only 120,000 of the 700,000 fall in child poverty can be attributed directly to falls in worklessness;
- *“This [benefit increases that would be required to reduce the child poverty rate to 5% by 2020] would make payments to poor families with children look very generous indeed, especially in contrast to benefits for those without children that had been going up only with inflation. For example, a single woman on Jobseeker’s Allowance would receive £55 a week, but if she had a baby and became a lone parent, her income would rise to nearly £200 (not including the temporary baby premium) in 2006 prices.”*
- A working lone parent paying a private sector rent would have to work *“an incredible 76 hours a week at the minimum wage before she could keep more than 10p in the pound of her additional earnings.”*
- Recommendation to align the Working Tax Credit ratio for couples with that of income support as a necessary reform in order to reach the 2020 child poverty target.
- *“Without a rise in take-up, none of [the government’s] policies can abolish child poverty by 2020.”*

2.5.27. The overall impression is one of use of JRF findings in case-making, supporting the wider arguments the publications are trying to make about the benefit system not being fit for purpose and the impossibility of tackling child poverty through benefits and tax credits alone. A similar impression arises from the use of JRF arguments during parliamentary proceedings and from interviews with key stakeholders. The pattern of influencing on Conservative party thinking appears to have broadly followed the line of influencing in other contexts: individuals use JRF materials in case-making and as a confirmation of their own thinking. The JRF argument that appears to have resonated most with Conservative party stakeholders is that income does not tell the whole story and that income transfers alone cannot end child poverty.

“The main thing I remember is the checklist with the list of child poverty indicators. This chimed with our own thinking that income-related indicators are not telling the whole story”
(Stakeholder, telephone survey)

“It is not that Andrew Selous and Iain Duncan Smith were in a mental haze that it was all about money and JRF got them out of it. It was more that they were desperate: they knew all along that it was not just about money, but there did not appear to be anyone who agreed with them. There was no evidence base for their views and policy is about your evidence base. It came as a sense of relief: at least someone from the establishment is saying this” (Stakeholder, telephone survey)

A Welsh case study?

- 2.5.28. The Welsh Assembly Government agreed to a £50 top-up in Child Trust Fund monies, on July 5th 2009, less than 2 weeks after the publication of the JRF report. This development was not reviewed as part of this evaluation, but it is tempting to speculate whether and to what extent the JRF report may have triggered, supported or brought forward the Welsh Assembly Government decision.

2.6. Added value of JRF child poverty research publications

- 2.6.1. Respondents give high scores to JRF child poverty research in terms of its credibility, relevance, accessibility, weight of argument and influence. The credibility of JRF research findings in particular stands out with almost 9 in 10 suggesting that the credibility of JRF child poverty research is better than research by other bodies and more than 6 in 10 describing it as much better. The accessibility of JRF child poverty research and the weight of its argument are considered to be better than research by others by more than 8 in 10 of respondents; just less than 8 in 10 feel the policy relevance of the research is better than other research. The lowest scores are given for the influence of JRF research with still just less than two thirds of respondents feeling that JRF scores better than other research.

Table 2.18 Value of child poverty research – stakeholder perceptions

	Much better	A little better	Roughly the same	A little worse	Much worse
Credibility	65%	24%	11%	0%	0%
Accessibility	55%	27%	17%	1%	0%
Weight of argument	49%	32%	17%	3%	0%
Policy relevance	47%	31%	20%	2%	0%
Influence	26%	39%	29%	6%	0%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The number of responses ranges from 174 to 181 between the different characteristics of the research.

- 2.6.2. Overall, the third sector is more generous in its praise of the JRF child poverty research and the research sector is least likely to be impressed, with the public sector somewhere in the middle. This is probably linked to

different standards of robustness and user-friendliness across different sectors. There are exceptions, however: the third sector and in particular the research sector are more impressed with the accessibility of the JRF child poverty materials than the public sector.

Table 2.19 Value assessment of JRF child poverty research by sector

	Much or a little better		
	Third sector	Public sector	Research
Weight of argument	90%	81%	76%
Credibility	98%	88%	78%
Accessibility	83%	78%	86%
Policy relevance	82%	74%	70%
Influence	65%	63%	56%

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The number of responses ranges from 176 to 181.

Other sources

2.6.3. Respondents quoted a series of other sources they use to get evidence and information related to child poverty, including:

- In-house Government research and discussions with in-house Government researchers, including Government surveys and statistics such as the Index of Multiple Deprivation and work done in different UK Government Departments (e.g. the DCFS website, briefings by the Child Poverty Unit) – “*DWP and increasingly the Department for Education*”;
- Research from and discussions with third sector organisations, including Save the Children, Barnardos, One Parent Families, CPAG, Citizen Advice Bureau, the Daycare Trust, Action4Children, Shelter and Trust for London, in particular its Poverty Profile;
- Findings and reports from initiatives such as the London Child Poverty Commission; C4EO; and the Marmot Review on Health Inequalities in England;
- Think-tanks and research institutions, including the Institute for Fiscal Studies, the Centre for Social Justice, Social Market Foundation, Policy Exchange, the Fabian Society, IPPR, the Centre for Analysis of Social Exclusion at the London School of Economics and the OECD.

2.6.4. Most stakeholders felt that the JRF child poverty research programme stood out from other sources on child poverty, at times using particularly complimentary language – “*no other research has rivalled the JRF work on*”

child poverty”; “it has been the most important research programme [on child poverty] of the last 4-5 years, the most comprehensive and most coherent analysis”; “an authority on child poverty”; “really up there”. One stakeholder felt that, especially early on, JRF had filled the gaps for the Child Poverty Unit, whose briefings and reports on child poverty had only started coming through later. As mentioned earlier, several stakeholders in devolved administrations felt that there was little other research on child poverty with direct relevance to their national context.

2.6.5. Stakeholders gave a range of reasons as to why the JRF research stood out, including:

- First and foremost, its reputation as a credible organisation, offering robust analysis, independent of any (party) political affiliation. Stakeholders spoke about JRF as a respected and trusted organisation. JRF materials are “*ready to use*” – people can quote JRF statistics and findings with confidence; they do not have to check the detail of the methodology. Stakeholders contrasted this with research undertaken by charities and some think-tanks: while also useful, they have to remain alert to the agenda behind the research. One stakeholder described JRF as finding itself in an “*enviable situation where they are seen as impartial while at the same time having a clear agenda and stating their view on ways forward*”. A couple of people felt that JRF came second to IFS in terms of reputation. People commented that it was still important to look at the assumptions and motivations of individual JRF authors. They referred to the diversity of JRF publications, ranging from well-researched publications to less rigorous opinion pieces. One stakeholder called JRF research “*slightly left*” but felt that this was probably true for a lot of work in the area of child poverty and conceded that JRF clearly presents the facts before moving onto policy recommendations. Another stakeholder agreed that there is a fairly limited pool of usually left-leaning researchers who work on child poverty, but felt that JRF could do more to go beyond the usual suspects, actively seeking out fresh blood and achieving fresh analysis.

“They do stand out. They are more known and do not have a political affiliation. This is important because the field is becoming increasingly crowded with organisations that have an affiliation” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“The materials are highly regarded by officials and Ministers – the data cannot be disputed” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

“More independent than IPPR or Policy Exchange, but less credible than IFS” (Political advisor, telephone survey)

“I probably agree with the criticism that JRF is too statist – they are driven by the financial element, they look less at the generational element, the familial element, the educational element. They are not engaged with the non-financial issues which would also be more relevant to the devolved context” (Northern Ireland stakeholder, telephone survey)

“If JRF started talking about the root causes of poverty [for example lone parenthood], then we would sit up and take notice” (Stakeholder, telephone survey)

- The user-friendliness of the publications – stakeholders commented that OECD and IFS materials were as authoritative (or even more so) than JRF publications, but that they could be “*hard going*”. JRF materials instead are “*bite-size*” and easily accessible;
- Their expertise and knowledge of the interconnectedness of the different fields relating to child poverty and the fact that they had invested in a comprehensive programme on child poverty. People commented that the research was influential because it was a programme of research – the whole was more than the sum of the parts.

“They are well-placed to do this type of research because they are extremely plugged in on factors; they have an extremely good overview of the different policy areas and how one affects the others” (Political advisor, telephone survey)

“The strength of the research is that it focuses on the interconnectivity – this is what is hard to do on the ground, but having the research base is getting half way there” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“It was through accumulation that it made a significant impact: the whole of the programme was more than the sum of the parts” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

- Finally, the fact that the research is policy oriented and aimed at providing practical solutions. Officials often felt that even JRF did not go far enough in working out the practical implications of research findings to their day-to-day work, but commented that the policy relevance of JRF research is often better than that of other research publications. A number of stakeholders, however, did not see JRF as the first place where they would go for policy recommendations, seeing JRF instead as a place to go for statistics and hard data. One stakeholder explicitly contrasted the Centre for Social Justice and JRF, suggesting that JRF is a source for factual information and CSJ a source for policy analysis and advice. Stakeholders referred to resistance to JRF findings on the quality of jobs from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and HM Treasury and suggested that officials in these Departments did not think that JRF “*knows enough about policy levers*”. One stakeholder commented that JRF work on the private sector had been “*disappointing*”. Similarly, stakeholders contrasted JRF to some of the work by charities,

again pointing out that they go to JRF for facts and hard data, but seek out work by for example Barnardos to get qualitative information and the view of people living on low income. There was a sense that these ‘stories’ could be more important in getting through to the new Ministers, many of whom are “*constituency politicians*”.

“JRF would be the first place where I go – it is more likely to be policy-relevant” (Devolved Government official, telephone survey)

“There are a million documents commenting about the importance of accessible and affordable childcare; JRF publication is useful in that it goes a bit further and into the how you achieve this. Still, even JRF does not go far enough” (Devolved Government official, telephone survey)

“JRF is a reference source, whereas CSJ is more policy focused, more intervention focused – they are engaged in the political debate, much more engaged in the debate. Running seminars, discussions. This is not the case with JRF who have a very specific research focus” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

- 2.6.6. The vast majority does systematically reference that a publication is a JRF report when quoting statistics or findings. It was felt that this increases the credibility of the quote: the JRF stamp is an indication that the research was rigorous and that the statistics can be trusted to be accurate. Government officials also gave a second, more pragmatic reason for referencing JRF explicitly: they have to make sure that they distinguish between Government data and external data.
- 2.6.7. Most (not all) JRF authors felt that the JRF stamp adds value to their research, because a JRF publication counts as “*grey literature, something quasi academic, more like peer-reviewed research*”. Publication through JRF also holds benefits in that reports benefit from the JRF dissemination infrastructure. There was however a view that the JRF stamp created the impression of a JRF monopoly on child poverty research which was not necessarily always a good thing. At least partially, this comment seemed to reflect an (understandable) desire for stronger name recognition for the host research institute. However, as mentioned earlier, several of the think-tanks not directly involved in the programme commented that they had not done much work on child poverty recently and at least one of them suggested that the JRF programme meant that there was less reason for them to be involved.

In other words, there do indeed appear to be risks involved in the perceived JRF ‘dominance’ on child poverty.

- 2.6.8. Stakeholders did comment that they were not always clear what was JRF research and what was not, referring for example to research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies. One stakeholder commented that they had used the JRF ‘stamp’ until now, but was wondering whether they would continue to do so. She did not think that there was any risk of JRF being seen as anything but independent, but felt that there is a possibility that JRF child poverty research may come to be seen as linked to the child poverty thinking of the previous Government. JRF child poverty research is in danger of becoming seen as out of date because so much of the (perceived) focus was on costing child poverty and tax credit calculations.
- 2.6.9. Regional and local authorities did not think that the national focus of the JRF child poverty research was necessarily a problem. They commented that there was a lot of research ongoing at regional and local level and that it probably made sense for JRF to focus on the national level. Stakeholders tended to feel that national findings were a good starting point, which regional and local partners then need to explore to see how it applies to their own context. When local authorities are doing their local needs assessments “*national needs assessments can give them a good initial sense of what the issues are*”. A London based stakeholder commented that even local (London-wide) data is not sufficiently local for the detailed work that needs to take place within a London borough.
- 2.6.10. That being said, regional and local stakeholders did point out that the national focus of the research did mean that there were limits to the applicability of the JRF research. The JRF research was seen as being more theoretical and esoteric than other research: “*the research we are looking at tends to say: in area A, these are the issues*”. One stakeholder called the JRF evidence what was needed for the “*day one conversation*”, explaining the importance and interconnectedness of the agenda to local partners who were fairly new to the agenda.
- 2.6.11. Stakeholders did not feel that the absence of the perspective of people living on low income was a weakness and those who thought it was possibly a

weakness, did not think it had undermined the effectiveness or impact of the programme. Stakeholders commented that a lot depended on the purpose and aim of a research programme and that there was little point in including people living on low income only for the sake of doing so. They also pointed to other organisations with more experience of giving a voice to people living on low income, commenting that they tend to go to those organisations for this more anecdotal perspective. That being said, some policy-makers did ask for more research presenting the perspective of people living on low income, suggesting in particular that the recently arrived Ministers still very much thought in terms of constituency issues and anecdotes and would be more likely to listen to this type of evidence.

2.7. Way forward

2.7.1. Not unexpected, a clear majority of respondents think JRF should continue to work on child poverty. When asked to score how important they feel it is that JRF continues its child poverty work, more than 8 in 10 of respondents gives scores of 7 out of 10 or higher. A third give the top score of 10 out of 10 and only 3% give a score of lower than 5 out of 10. The average score is 8.2.

Table 2.17 How important is continued JRF research on child poverty?

Score	All	Public sector	Third sector	Research
1/10	0.6%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
2/10	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
3/10	1.7%	5.2%	0.0%	0.0%
4/10	1.1%	1.7%	0.0%	0.0%
5/10	5.6%	5.1%	5.0%	13.5%
6/10	7.2%	10.3%	0.0%	8.1%
7/10	15.6%	22.4%	15.0%	13.5%
8/10	21.7%	19.0%	30.0%	18.9%
9/10	12.8%	10.3%	20.0%	16.2%
10/10	33.9%	25.9%	30.0%	29.7%
Average	8.2	7.7	8.5	8.1

Source: CPC survey of JRF child poverty email recipients (summer 2010). The total number of responses is 180. The total number of responses for the public, third and research sector are 58, 40 and 37 respectively.

- 2.7.2. The third sector is most insistent that JRF continues with the programme with an average score of 8.5 and 95% of respondents giving scores of 7 or higher and no one giving a score of less than 5. The average score is lowest for the public sector but still reaches 7.7 and still has more than three quarter of respondents giving scores of 7 out of 10 or higher.
- 2.7.3. The stakeholder interviews confirm that stakeholders overwhelmingly feel that JRF should continue to work on child poverty. This is the case even when challenged that further activity on child poverty will inevitably come at the expense of investment in other research areas. A number accepted that it did not necessarily make much difference as to whether JRF or another organisation would undertake child poverty research, but they felt that it would be “*odd*” or “*strange*” if JRF were to walk away from child poverty research now, given that they have become such a strong voice on the issue. This might risk giving the impression that JRF no longer felt child poverty was a priority. The credibility and policy relevance of the JRF approach were also given as arguments as to why continued work by JRF (as opposed to another research organisation) was needed.

“Yes, it is important for JRF to stay involved in child poverty. No single collection of research publications has been as important” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“JRF are not the only ones. IFS is also helpful and they will be scrutinising the spending review. You do need someone to look at policy intentions and gaps” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“They have become a champion on child poverty... A very authoritative voice on child poverty. I would be upset if they stopped – would that not be suggesting that it is no longer important?” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

“Politically more than ever a need for a voice on child poverty – we do not have a child poverty strategy yet; no Child Poverty Commission. It would seem odd if JRF would no longer work on child poverty” (Researcher, telephone survey)

- 2.7.4. Stakeholders mainly used the argument that JRF had a role to play in keeping child poverty on the agenda; relatively few pointed to specific research questions or remaining research needs without prompting. Several did feel that the area had been sufficiently researched and that “*we know what we*

need to know” and that the real challenge now was to actually get on and do something about it. Several similarly felt that there might be some scope to move away from a narrow focus on child poverty research to researching poverty more generally. Others however felt that a child poverty focus made sure that the issue would not be “*diluted*”.

“Not so much need for new research questions. It is about applying it to the local level” (Regional Government official, telephone survey)

“I am not certain that there is a need for additional research – a lot of research is already out there” (Regional Government official, telephone survey)

2.7.5. In terms of ways forward, stakeholder suggestions can be broadly grouped in five different categories:

- Temporising for a few months until the course of the new Government is clear.

“That depends entirely on what comes out of the Frank Field review; poverty is not currently being discussed much in Government” (Political advisor, telephone survey)

“Probably wait six months to see what happens with benefit reform. They have not repealed the Act yet, but they might” (Researcher, telephone survey)

- Continuing to make the case for child poverty – a case which is seen as being under threat under the Coalition Government. Stakeholders ask for a programme of monitoring of what is happening, in particular the implementation of the Child Poverty Act, often linked to an explicit request to explore the implications for child poverty of the current climate (Big Society ideas and budget cuts);

“This is such an important debate - you may have to go on saying the same things over and over again until they are listened to” (Local Government official, online survey)

“I think the JRF programme on child poverty has been excellent and given the early indications of the direction of the new government it is essential JRF continues to produce high quality research briefings and works to influence government on ending child poverty” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“It would be extremely useful to get input on how they can avoid an increase in child poverty despite these fiscal constraints” (Third sector representative, telephone survey)

“They need to start thinking about how they can use the Big Society theme. The Place and Society strand of work is already doing that to some extent” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

- A request for more practical, solution-oriented work, possibly comparatively or looking at what ‘works’. Some stakeholders felt that there was a danger in venturing too far in the direction of practical solutions, as research might start sounding more political and undermine their independence. Others accepted that there was a fine line, but wondered: *“if it is not about influencing policy change, why do it?”*

“Original objectives of putting this up the national agenda have been met and it is probably time to move on to other areas or come up with the root cause with practical solutions. There is no need for more problem rehearsal” (Local public sector practitioner, online survey)

“Greater emphasis on specific policy recommendations and workable solutions rather than general think pieces” (Researcher, online survey)

- A request for more grassroot work – work with communities, with children, with people living in poverty. Also a number of suggestions to focus more clearly at the local level. There were requests for working more with local grassroot organisations to make sure that the research is focusing on the right issues.

“Get closer to the ground - you are really removed from policy makers in local government” (Local authority, online survey)

“There are fantastic opportunities given the cuts for research in government circles. External researchers will have an opportunity to influence policy even more... There is good work going on at local level, but national government is not learning sufficiently from what is happening. An independent evaluation would be useful” (Central Government official, telephone survey)

“They were the right topics at the time: it is not just about work and income, but everyone’s business. That’s been done to death now; they should look into social cohesion and inequality – child poverty is also a health and social problem; not purely about economics. Look at gentrification of poverty; more of a community focus” (Researcher, telephone survey)

- Suggestions for specific themes including child poverty in rural areas; child poverty and ethnicity; return on early years intervention; disabled

children; health; in-work poverty; the role of the private sector, the links between housing, work and poverty; and, what happens at the very bottom of the income distribution – are families not claiming the benefits they are entitled to or does extreme poverty tend to be a temporary phenomenon. The focus of the programme on producing cost estimates is generally seen as having been the correct focus, given that this is the language of the Treasury and the language colleagues in other Departments understand. There were a number of requests for more research around the cost of interventions and the benefits of investing. There was a suggestion to bring down the £25 billion calculation to the level of individual Departments – what are the potential savings to different Departments? As mentioned earlier, the tax credit calculations were seen by others as possible less relevant going forward – there was a risk that this kind of research would become seen as out of date.

Dissemination

- 2.7.6. Many stakeholders proactively consult the JRF website or are signposted to JRF publications by colleagues or partners. The JRF child poverty publications appear to have made it onto the word-of-mouth circuit and as such, people felt that dissemination was not an absolute necessity. That being said, stakeholders see great value in seminars and opportunities for discussion. JRF staff and authors in the programme were referenced as “*inspiring speakers*” and stakeholders commented about “*a room full of light-bulb moments*” following a presentation by one of them. Staff and authors were described as accessible and as having become “*strong media figures*”. Stakeholders in the devolved administrations appreciated the opportunity of a local seminar as opposed to only having London-based forums. There were some concerns as to whether or not staff would be allowed to attend seminars in future, as the impact of budget cuts starts to hit. Local stakeholders in particular commented that there were already indications that managers were reluctant to let any staff attend training or seminars.
- 2.7.7. National policy-makers in particular often asked for more chances to sit down with JRF staff or authors. Stakeholders did not see these one-to-one sessions in terms of lobbying or advocacy – JRF do not have lobby asks – but rather as a dialogue about research findings and policy implications. A policy-maker in one of the devolved administrations felt that JRF invested a lot of time in discussing the findings (and was highly appreciative of this) but felt that there may have been some value in having a discussion prior to the research assignment to set up a two-way dialogue about priority research questions. One of the policy-makers commented that they would be happy to work more

closely with JRF on organising and running workshops for colleagues across relevant Government departments.

“We know we can invite the authors if we are interested, but it is true that JRF could be more proactive. It would be useful if JRF would pick up the phone and ask them whether they would like them to come in and talk through the research findings”
(Central Government official, telephone survey)

- 2.7.8. A couple of the interviewees suggested that it would be good if JRF could send out email alerts – suggesting that people are not sufficiently aware of the opportunity to register for these email alerts or do not have the time or inclination to register. No comparison was possible between the target audience list and the list of JRF email recipients, given that the research team only had access to an anonymised list of email recipients. However, JRF staff did screen a sample and only about a dozen of more than 45 names on the target audience list¹⁵ were also registered as recipients of the JRF email alerts.

15

JRF staff screened more than 60 names but this included a number of names that did not appear in the original JRF target audience list. Only about a dozen of these more than 60 names were registered as recipients of the JRF child poverty email alerts.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1. The JRF child poverty programme which ran between 2005 and 2009 has been a successful and influential research programme. More than 3,000 individual email addresses registered to receive research updates and an estimated 8,000 unique visitors visited the JRF child poverty website between July 2008 and August 2010 – the latter significantly more than other major JRF research programmes. The programme did not achieve the number of downloads that the most popular JRF publications (such as the MPSE reports) achieve, but there is a solid interest in the research publications across the totality of the series with between 100 and 500 downloads for all but a handful of child poverty publications since July 2009. Press coverage for the programme achieved about 15 million ‘opportunities to view’. More than 9 in 10 of respondents to the online survey had read at least one of the seven key publications and just less than 1 in 10 had read all seven reports; most had read 3 or 4 reports. Even when considering that there may well be a bias in the profile of respondents, these are encouraging figures. Stakeholder interviews similarly confirm that by and large, the target audience is familiar with the research programme and many (not all) have read through the most relevant publications.
- 3.2. The JRF child poverty research has been used extensively. The most obvious examples are use of the £4 billion and £25 billion cost estimates. The former was mainly used by charities in the context of their advocacy towards the UK Government aimed at securing additional investment in tax credits. It is the latter, however, which has had the widest and more lasting appeal. Whereas the £4 billion cost estimate was made into a campaign ‘ask’ by the End Child Poverty lobby, the £25 billion remained a general argument that could be used by anyone interested in making the case for action on child poverty. The £4 billion estimate currently looks somewhat “naïve” and possibly out of date. The focus on cost estimates and in particular calculating the cost of child poverty of society was the correct one: it is the language HM Treasury speaks. JRF policy arguments were also used, but these arguments were less likely to be associated exclusively with JRF research. Rather, the JRF arguments were aligned to and confirmed what other sources were also saying.

- 3.3. In terms of its cost estimates, the JRF research programme did develop clear responses to a number of key questions. The £4 billion and £25 billion estimates did become accepted and established responses to the question of how much it would cost to halve child poverty by 2010 using tax credits and what the cost of child poverty to society is. HM Treasury officials (and others) may have felt that an investing £4 billion in tax credits was too high a price to pay – and indeed, this price tag was used to argue against tackling child poverty through tax credits – but there is little or no evidence of anyone disputing the £4 billion figure (or the £25 billion figure for that matter).
- 3.4. The main impact of the programme appears to have been that child poverty stakeholders were given arguments to make their case about child poverty. There is not as much evidence of the child poverty research actually influencing people’s thinking on child poverty. The online survey suggests that readers learnt new facts and that the research broadened their perspectives, but responses to open questions and stakeholder interviews suggest that specific examples of impact that spring to mind tend to be ‘case-making’ examples. Officials in central and in particular devolved administrations are more likely to have been influenced in their thinking or strategy development. Central Government officials explicitly recognise that they are insufficiently aware of what is happening on the ground which may mean that there is more scope for influencing – local stakeholders often have first-hand knowledge of child poverty initiatives in their area which means research is more likely to simply validate and confirm what they already know. Stakeholders in Scotland and in particular Northern Ireland and Wales suggest that the JRF research filled a gap in so far that very little other research evidence on child poverty directly relevant to their national contexts was available.
- 3.5. JRF evidence is only one of a number of different sources on child poverty. However, most do feel that the JRF child poverty programme stands out among the different sources, because of its credibility and independence, its accessibility, its policy relevance and its interconnectedness – the research was influential because it was a systematic programme of research, offering one point of easy access to information on a range of issues relating to child poverty. According to some, however, its impact and in particular its scope for actually influencing people’s thinking on child poverty, was diminished

by staying too close to the Government's child poverty agenda, taking a 'statist' approach to the child poverty challenge and remaining within a relatively narrow pool of independent, but left-leaning researchers working on the issue of child poverty. It helped strengthening the 'mainstream' arguments as to why and how to tackle child poverty, but it did not explore in any depth 'unorthodox' positions, including for example the argument that there is an economic rationale for having a low-wage element in the economy and its implications for the child poverty agenda and arguments around individual responsibility and family characteristics.

3.6. The research did play a role in three main policy developments in the child poverty agenda over the last few years, including the UK Government's decision to introduce an additional £1 billion in tax credits in 2007 and again in 2008; the introduction of the Child Poverty Act; and the development of Conservative party policy on child poverty. The role of the JRF research was supportive rather than directive: it mainly gave people external evidence and tools to support their own case or provided a quality control mechanism confirming that the direction of travel was the right one.

- The £4 billion cost estimate did not, as such, influence Government officials and politicians. Internal modelling was ongoing and although the exact figure was not known, stakeholders had been aware of the order of magnitude. What was new, however, was that the figure was now in the open and that the End Child Poverty lobby had a clear 'ask' for its campaign, which had been missing before.
- The Child Poverty Act was triggered and shaped mainly through the actions of children's charities and different UK Departments. JRF contributions were remembered, but mainly as having been aligned to what other partners were saying. The research acted as a useful measure of quality control that the Bill was going in the right direction. When the Bill had been drafted, JRF evidence was used to make the case for the Bill and support the Bill through parliamentary proceedings.
- It is more difficult to reach firm conclusions about the extent to which JRF child poverty research influenced Conservative Party policy, given that only a limited number of interviews with key stakeholders could be held. The impression is that influencing of Conservative Party stakeholders was similar to influencing taking place in other contexts: individuals were confirmed in their views by access to external evidence, in particular linked to their views that income alone is not the whole story and tackling child poverty through income transfers is not the way forward.

3.7. It is difficult to make recommendations as to whether or not JRF should continue working on child poverty: stakeholders generally feel – often strongly – that the organisation should continue with its work, but this seems to be inspired more by a desire to keep child poverty on the political agenda than by specific research questions that still need to be addressed. It is however possible to suggest a number of broader recommendations:

- The evaluation appears to endorse the ‘programme’ approach – the JRF child poverty research seems to have been effective at least partially because it was an attempt to tackle child poverty in a deliberate programme of research as opposed to through separate research assignments. JRF established itself as an authoritative voice on child poverty – JRF became the place to go for stakeholders who were new to child poverty and a source of influence on policy-making not so much because of any specific research findings but because of the availability of an easily accessible comprehensive body of evidence.
- The research offered answers to research questions that were reflecting policy (and advocacy) priorities at the time. This is the case particularly for the cost estimates. The programme appears to have hit upon research questions that were widely seen as highly relevant and important but that had not yet (publicly) been raised or answered by anyone else. This formula suggests a clear recipe for success, but repeating the feat may well prove tricky. The evaluation has shown that stakeholders were able to suggest areas which they felt were under-researched or held promise in research terms, but their suggestions (i) were often linked to a specific personal or organisational priority as opposed to automatically having wider appeal or (ii) were rather ‘obvious’ research questions, such as for example the impact of the spending cuts, which will inevitably attract research efforts from other players as well.
- The evaluation presents a rather mixed picture around the need for active dissemination efforts. Dissemination appears to have been less important as the programme established a name for itself as the place to go for research evidence on child poverty – word-of-mouth, email alerts and proactive screening of the JRF website by child poverty stakeholders appear to have made sure that the JRF child poverty reports were picked up by the target audience. That being said, the many seminars and workshops organised or attended by JRF child poverty staff and authors were much appreciated by participants and there is a clear appetite among policy-makers for (even) more one-to-one informal contact with JRF staff and authors to discuss the implications of research findings.
- A possible challenge for future JRF research lies in the comments around the JRF child poverty research being seen as slightly left-leaning, too exclusively focused on ‘statist’ solutions and too closely aligned with the child poverty thinking of the previous Government. It is important not to overstate the importance of these comments – JRF is seen as an independent organisation, delivering credible and robust research.

Reflecting Government policy and research priorities is also acknowledged as a logical strategy to try securing Government interest in research findings – policy relevance is one of the reasons why stakeholders rate JRF research higher than other research sources on child poverty. Still, if JRF opts to continue working on child poverty, an element of ‘reinventing’ the programme may be needed, to avoid (the perception of) too rigid a focus on past Government priorities.

ANNEX A LIST OF ORGANISATIONS CONSULTED

Policy-makers

- Cabinet Office
- HM Treasury
- Child Poverty Unit
- Department for Work and Pensions
- Department for Education
- Department for Children, Families and School (former employee)
- Department for Business, Innovation and Skills
- House of Commons
- Scottish Government
- Northern Irish Executive
- Welsh Assembly Government
- Government Office for the East of England
- Government Office for the South West
- Government Office for Yorkshire and the Humber
- National College for Leadership of Schools and Children's Services
- Local Government Association
- London Councils
- Greater London Authority
- West Berkshire Council

Third sector

- Save the Children
- Barnardos
- End Child Poverty
- One Parent Families/Gingerbread
- Child Poverty Action Group
- UK Coalition against Poverty
- Bevan Foundation
- Daycare Trust
- Trade Union Congress

Researchers

- Institute for Fiscal Studies
- University of Loughborough
- Centre for Economic and Social Inclusion
- Centre for Social Justice
- Policy Exchange
- New Policy Institute
- Demos
- Institute for Public Policy Research

Media

- BBC
- Guardian
- Children and Young People Now