



Response to The Children's Society

Parliamentary Inquiry into Asylum Support for Children and Young People

Submission from JRF

December 2012

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) is one of the largest social policy research and development charities in the UK. For over a century we have been engaged with searching out the causes of social problems, investigating solutions and seeking to influence those who can make changes. JRF's purpose is to understand the root causes of social problems, to identify ways of overcoming them, and to show how social needs can be met in practice. The Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust (JRHT) shares the aims of JRF and engages in practical housing and care work.

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JRF does not have a particular focus on asylum support for children and young people. However, aspects of our work, particularly on child poverty, are relevant to this inquiry, and we have answered those questions where we have a strong evidence base. Where relevant we have also sought to provide evidence from previous research published by JRF on issues for asylum seekers. The numbering of the questions follows that used in the consultation document.

1. *Is there any evidence of the effects of income poverty on children’s development, well-being and their life chances? If so, what are the effects?*

6. *Does the current system have any impact on children’s long term outcomes and opportunities in the future?*

There is substantial evidence that income poverty has a negative impact on children’s development, well-being and life chances. Recent research findings include:

- Analysis from the Millennium Cohort Study (MCS) which finds that: *“The findings from the analyses of MCS children’s development at age 5 suggest, as found in other studies, that persistent financial hardship undermines cognitive as well as behavioural adjustment of young children at this age, and is thus a significant risk factor for development. ... Children exposed to financial hardship at three interviews [interviewed at ages 9 months, age 3 and age 5] were most severely touched by its effects.”ⁱ*
- American evidence using the Panel Study of Income Dynamics which finds: *“Statistically significant and, in some cases, quantitatively large detrimental effects of early poverty on a number of attainment-related outcomes (adult earnings and work hours).”ⁱⁱ*

The links between poverty and poor outcomes for children are not fully understood, and it is clear that low income is only one causal factor explaining the poor attainment of children who grow up in poverty. However, research suggests that it does have a clear impact:

- A 2008 paper by Gregg, Propper and Washbrook examining the link between poverty and poor outcomes for children concluded that: *“Whilst our results clearly show that lack of income is only one of a host of disadvantages faced by low income children, it would be misleading to conclude that income plays no role in parents’ ability to foster positive developmental outcomes. Indeed, if the income gradient does reflect causality, then in comparative terms low household income must be considered one of the primary drivers behind the deficits - broadly defined - of poor children.”*ⁱⁱⁱ
- There is evidence that increases in parental income may have positive impacts on children’s wellbeing. An analysis of outcomes for children in lone parent families before and after the introduction of Working Families Tax Credit, which increased lone parents families’ employment rate and incomes, found that: *“Half of the gap [between children in lone and two parent families] in self-esteem and unhappiness scores and in truancy, smoking and planning to leave school at age 16 are eliminated after the policy reforms. This strongly suggests that the increases in incomes and employment associated with the reforms have profoundly changed the quality of life children in lone parent families.”*^{iv}

2. The government’s stated objective for the asylum support system is that it provides for the ‘essential living needs’ of those who would otherwise be destitute. In your view is this currently the case?

3. Are the current levels of support provided to asylum seeking children and families adequate in meeting the needs of children and young people?

JRF, together with Child Poverty Action Group, recently published research examining the cost of a child. The research uses the Minimum Income Standard based on detailed deliberation by groups of members of the public, who identify the items a household would need in order to reach a minimum acceptable standard of living that allows its members to participate in society.^v

Using the minimum income standard research for 2012, the research

found that the first child for a couple increases a family's budget by £89 a week and the second child £81 a week, not including housing and childcare costs.^{vi}

Levels of asylum support for children clearly fall well below these levels. Research published by JRF in 2007 into the experience of people living in poverty in Scotland found some qualitative evidence to support the idea that levels of asylum support were causing hardship:

“An asylum-seeker participant felt that her family was experiencing a more extreme form of poverty than that experienced by the families of her child's classmates (although they too were deprived):

Poverty separates us from other Scottish people. It widens the gap and our children can't make friends, and that causes long-term problems. (Asylum-seeker group, Glasgow)

As a result of this, she worried that her child was excluded and unable to make friends with Scottish children. Other asylum-seeker participants said poverty can prevent adults from integrating. Since asylum seekers receive around only two-thirds of Income Support levels, their incomes are often lower than those of many other people experiencing poverty. Asylum-seeker participants felt they constituted a group of more socially-excluded people in Scotland as a result.^{vii}

8. What is the impact on children and parents of the fact that parents are not allowed to work?

JRF research studies have suggested that the fact that asylum seekers are not allowed to work may cut off a route to escaping poverty, and may damage relationships between asylum seekers and those who live in the same community.

The research into poverty in Scotland cited above found that: *“Asylum seekers and refugees stressed the importance of work particularly strongly and both groups said that allowing asylum seekers the right to work on arrival in Scotland was an effective way to avoid poverty in both the long and short term.”^{viii}*

The research also reported the perception that the lack of ability to work could harm relationships between asylum seekers and those

already resident in an area: “Asylum seekers who participated in the research were concerned that the fact they are not allowed to work leads to resentment from other people within their communities, because of the perception that they come to Scotland to take advantage of the benefits system.”

This finding was also reported in research published by JRF in 2005 into efforts to understand communities containing dispersed refugee people seeking asylum. The researchers recommended that: *“Refugee people seeking asylum should have the right to work legally. Refusing people the right to work reinforces images of sections of society who are dependent ‘scroungers’ who need to be controlled. It also creates tensions between groups who have been in areas for different lengths of time and are competing for resources.”*^{ix}

ⁱ ‘Resilience in children’s development’ Ingrid Schoon, Helen Cheng and Elizabeth Jones in Kirstine Hansen Shirley Dex and Heather Joshi – eds (2010) *Children of the 21st Century: The first five years* Policy Press

ⁱⁱ Greg J. Duncan, Kathleen M. Ziol-Guest and Ariel Kalil (2010) ‘Early-Childhood Poverty and Adult Attainment, Behavior, and Health’ *Child Development*, January/February 2010, Volume 81, Number 1, Pages 306–325.

ⁱⁱⁱ Paul Gregg, Carol Propper and Elizabeth Washbrook (2008) *Understanding the relationship between parental income and multiple child outcomes: a decomposition analysis* CMPO Working Paper Series No 08/193

^{iv} Paul Gregg, Susan Harkness and Sarah Smith (2007) *Welfare Reform and Lone Parents in the UK* CMPO Working Paper No 07/182.

^v See Abigail Davis, Donald Hirsch, Noel Smith, Jacqueline Beckhelling and Matt Padley (2012) *A Minimum Income Standard for the UK in 2012* JRF.

^{vi} Donald Hirsch, Liz Sutton and Jacqueline Beckhelling (2012) *The cost of a child in the twenty-first century* CPAG.

^{vii} Mhoraig Green (2007) *Voices of people experiencing poverty in Scotland: Everyone matters?* JRF.

^{viii} Mhoraig Green (2007) *Voices of people experiencing poverty in Scotland: Everyone matters?* JRF.

^{ix} Bogusia Temple and Rhetta Moran with Nadia Fayas, Sysay Haboninana, Frank McCabe, Zeinab Mohamed, Aziz Noori, and Nasima Rahman (2005) *Learning to live together: Developing communities with dispersed refugee people seeking asylum* JRF.