

## Where next for poverty and life chances?

A lot has happened since the last issue of *Poverty* hit your desks. A new prime minister, new ministerial teams, and Brexit on the horizon. We have had only some indications of the direction the new government intends to take. No more social security cuts will be legislated, but we will still see the extensive cuts already made come into force over the coming years, while cuts to local authority budgets are continuing without respite. Selective education may be about to come roaring back. Theresa May has spoken of helping those who are 'just managing' – we must wait to see what this means. A new CPAG book, *Improving Children's Life Chances*, makes the case that any strategy for social reform ought to include evidence-based actions to address disadvantage across a range of services, but that these must be accompanied by steps to ensure that families have enough money. Young people need decent jobs to move into when they grow up – youth poverty is soaring and they will be the next generation of parents.

In this issue, we continue to review evidence on the impact of policy changes made in recent years. Moussa Haddad examines the findings of this year's 'cost of a child' analysis, showing that in spite of a shift in public attitudes to what constitutes a decent standard of living – under austerity, the public seem to have tightened their belts, or at least believe that people on low incomes should do so – a family of four with two parents working full time on the new minimum wage are still £50 a week short of meeting the costs of living. Single parents face a greater shortfall. We also review early evidence of the impact of the 'living wage' in the social care sector, recently published by the Resolution Foundation, which shows that providers have extended pay increases beyond the legal minimum and do not seem to have reduced employee hours to balance their books. This is positive news, but it is nonetheless clear that increasing the minimum wage is not sufficient to secure a sufficient income for families.

Alice Woudhuysen discusses the results of research mapping extended schools provision against what parents and schools would like to see. The conclusion: extended schools tend to help disadvantaged children and also help parents to work by providing childcare, they are popular with schools and parents, but are underfunded. And in our third feature, Sam Ashton assesses the impact of the devolution of council tax support to local authorities, and the reduction in funding, which has meant many low-income households having to pay a contribution for the first time. Three years on, evidence from London is that arrears are rising.

Finally, we hear perspectives from the frontline. Paediatrician Caoimhe McKenna describes how she sees poverty affecting children's health and wellbeing, making it more difficult for parents to care for children with health conditions and leading to more time spent in hospital. Qualitative research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation illustrates the realities of life for some of those 'just managing', or indeed not quite managing, families. And young campaigners in north-east England describe their inspiring work with local government, schools, churches and other young people to tackle the effects of poverty on schooling and holiday hunger. As the new government considers its approach to life chances, it could learn a lot by listening to voices like these. ■

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**Poverty** is the policy journal of the Child Poverty Action Group. It aims to carry articles and features that will inform, stimulate and develop the debate on the nature and causes of poverty in its various forms and on the action required, especially by governments, to relieve and ultimately prevent it. Our objective is to publish material that achieves a high standard of analysis, without sacrificing clarity or accessibility, to specialist and non-specialist alike.

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