



UNIVERSITY of  
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# CHILD POVERTY AND 'HOLIDAY HUNGER'

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BE THE DIFFERENCE

# CHILD POVERTY IN THE UK

3.7 million children living in poverty (more than  $\frac{1}{4}$  of all children).  
1.7 million in severe poverty.

63% are in working families – work poverty

2017 Scottish Health Survey Government - children in areas of multiple deprivation are much more likely to experience food insecurity<sup>1</sup>.

1 in 10 people in deprived areas of Scotland ran out of food before the end of the month,  
Younger adults and those with families hardest hit.

Inequalities are a consistent factor making it harder for children and young people to thrive in our society, and poverty represents a significant risk to children's healthy development.



# HUNGER

Food poverty as an increasing social problem, both in the UK and globally

Holiday deprivation as a significant factor predicting lower attainment and achievement for children from deprived backgrounds

- Food insecurity
- Access to activities, social interaction, cognitive stimulation

Hunger has an impact on concentration (Armstrong 2010)

Food insecurity linked to chronic illness, nutritional deficiencies, obesity, general poor health (Mistry and Wadsworth, 2011)

# CHILDREN IN POOR AND LOW INCOME FAMILIES

Greater academic difficulty

Behavioural difficulties

Social competence difficulties

(Huston and Bentley, 2010)



# POVERTY AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

Reduced physical growth, iodine deficiency, and iron-deficiency anaemia all impact neurological development (Walker et al, 2012)

Environmental deprivation impacts cognitive development through environmental inadequate cognitive stimulation, Walker et al (2012)

BUT remember...

Standardised tests often exhibit class bias. (Kohn 2012)

Task familiarity and class

# GROWING UP IN POVERTY



substandard housing

unsafe neighbourhoods

inadequate schools

Nutritional challenges

Exposure to Adverse Childhood Experiences

# STIRLING HOLIDAY FUN PROGRAMME

The Centre for Child Wellbeing and Protection was approached by Stirling Council to provide an independent evaluation of the Holiday Fun Programme, a programme designed to provide a programme of holiday activities and good quality food for children and young people living in areas of multiple deprivation, within the Stirling Area.

Our research questions for this project were:

- How do children and parents experience the Holiday Fun Programme, and what impact do they feel it has had.
- How do staff delivering the intervention, and teachers referring to the intervention experience the Holiday Hunger programme, and how do they see its impact?
- What are some of the enablers and barriers to the implementation of the intervention?

Interviews with parents

# THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVITIES AND KEEPING BUSY

Interviewer: If they hadn't been part of the holiday fun club, what would they have done instead this summer?

P2: Run about the streets, getting into trouble probably. There's a youth club here, but it's only nights, so there's nothing else really for them to do.

P3 It was really good. Summer holidays are too long and they get so bored. They're used to being at school Monday to Friday, and the holidays are really hard. It gives them somewhere to come, with their friends. And it's still in the school grounds, so it's familiar, and they feel comfortable. When the weather's crappy there's really not much else to do round here.

P8: Just seeing his wee face when I picked him up. It gave him a lot more content, things to do. He was bored and restless at home.



# FOOD CHOICE AND QUALITY

GP1: I asked them about the lunch, so I'd know what she was getting. She was telling me very different things each time. The food was really good, even though she is a bit picky. And they had gluten free which was great.

I: What did you enjoy most about the club?

Boy 1: Just playing. Oh and the food was good!

P5: He's so fussy, and there was a good choice.

P4: Yeah there was a good choice, a good range.

# INTERACTION AND KEEPING IN TOUCH

P4: I thought it was a great idea. I think it's really good, that they get a chance to mix with their friends. I work and that, and she's an only child so to get him to mix a bit with other kids and that, eh, it's a bit of a nightmare, isn't it.

P5 Cause what she was like this morning (referring to challenges at drop off, observed by the interviewer that morning) – she's like that when she goes to school too. So I just thought, keeping her interaction with her friends, and keeping her coming to school would be a good think. I mean she obviously still finds it upsetting, but it's helped her. Like that was the first time she's been like that.

P6: We enjoyed the club, didn't we? Because he liked coming. He was he has selective mutism, and being assessed for that. And if he gets taken away from other kids, well that's always a bit of a struggle. A struggle for us. He does nae interact too great. And he's made a couple of good friends now, in his primary, and that's great because he struggles to make friends in school, but he's managed to make friends here quite easy. I was talking to one of the teachers here and saying he struggles with that at school, so it's really nice to hear that he's made a few friends, eh.

# POVERTY AND PLAY

Play important to all aspects of child development

Learn to cooperate, deal with stress and obstacles, negotiate – in this sense it builds resilience.

Fosters creativity

Facilitates interaction with parents.



# POVERTY AND PLAY

Parent stress

Poor neighbourhoods - lack of access to safe play spaces

Reduced play time in schools

Milteer and Ginsburg (2012)



# PLAY AND RESILIENCE

Being able to play and enjoy high quality interactions with others protective – mediates better pre-academic competencies ([Hamre and Pianta, 2007](#), [Mashburn et al., 2008](#))

Cooperative play and positive social interactions support development of social skills and knowledge, and cognitive skills and learning ([Fantuzzo & Hampton, 2000](#)).



# REDUCING STRESS ON PARENTS AND ON EXTENDED CARE NETWORKS

GP1 Well her Papa would have been run off his feet! Because I always help out over the summer, and I have her while her mum is at work. But those four hours really helped me, and gave me some time to get myself together. Otherwise, I guess it would be volleyball, going to the park, I would have tried to keep them busy. But with this they were really puffed out, and that made the other days easier too.

Interviewer: If you hadn't been part of the holiday club, what would you have done instead this summer?  
Boy 1: Nothing.

Mum: "Getting under my feet!"

P2: If he wasn't here at club, I'd maybe plan one day out, like a trip to the safari park or something. But that's expensive isn't it? The rest of the days, things like going to the park, having a picnic, things that don't cost.

P3 Just days out here and there. When I'm working, his nan and granddad look after him, and they're over 70 now, it's hard for them. This helps them and me. It breaks the day down for them.

P5: Personally for me it was good for them to be apart, because they can be together all the time, and it was good for them to get away from each other, away from home stuff, and not be on top of each other.

# POVERTY AND PARENTING

socioeconomic stress puts the 'emotional labour' of parenting under strain (Yoshikawa *et al.*, 2012).

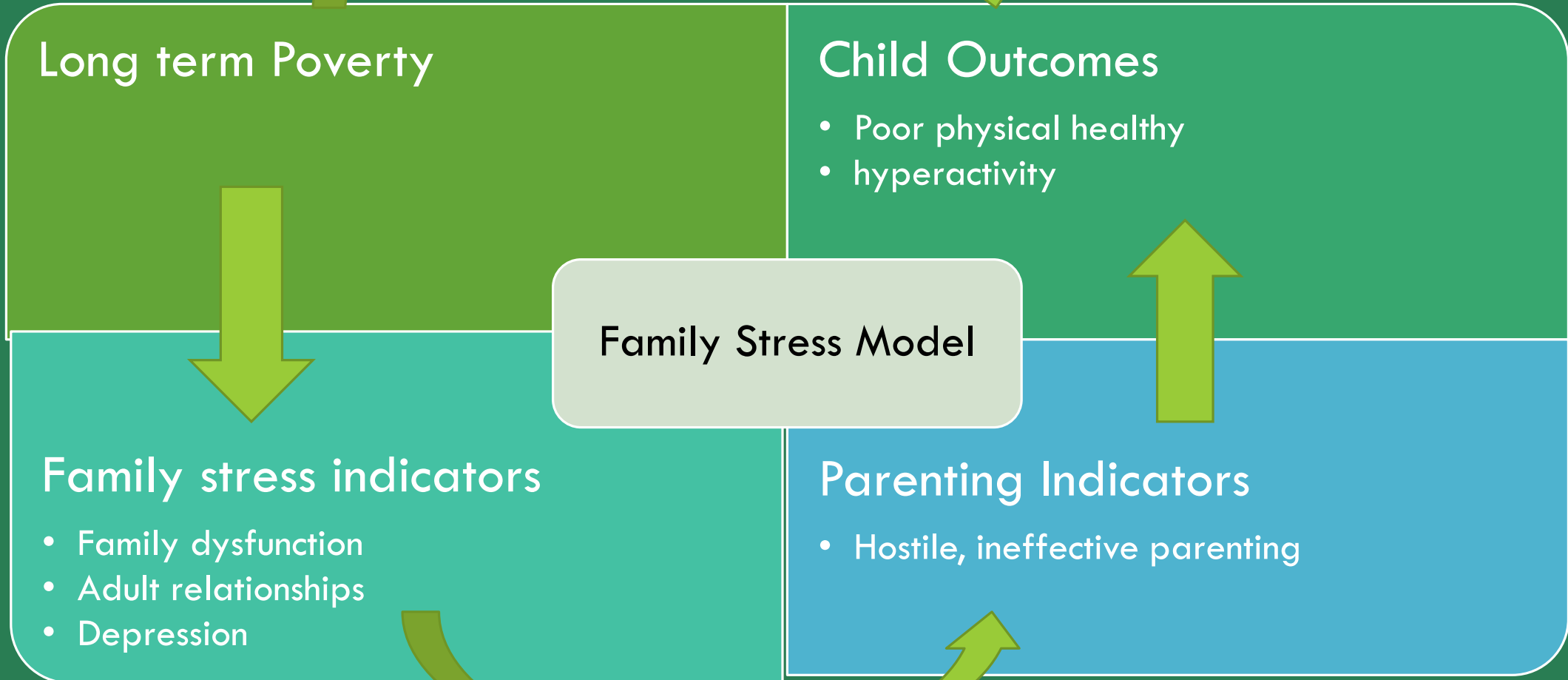
Parents – depressed, irritable, distracted, increased hostile interactions, negative developmental outcomes

Evans (2004)

Maternal wellbeing mediates the impact of poverty on children (Treanor *et al.* 2015)

Parenting stress and compromised caregiving are linked to unstable working conditions, underemployment and income poverty, which puts a strain on wider family relationships (Yoshikawa *et al.*, 2012; Hsueh and Yoshikawa, 2007).

# FAMILY STRESS MODEL (CONGER 2010) -





# EMOTIONAL IMPACT OF FAMILY POVERTY

Young people's perception of family economic difficulties is associated with increased suicide risk, reduced quality of life and difficulties with social adjustment (Dashiff *et al.*, 2009)

Low parental socioeconomic status, family disruption and residential instability predict lifelong increases in young people's risk of depression (Gilman *et al.*, 2003).

Food insecurity is more common in families in poverty living in high poverty neighborhoods (Morrissey *et al.* 2015). What might the emotional consequences of this be?

social conditions strongly associated with negative developmental outcomes and mental health (poverty, poor housing, social exclusion) (Parker *et al.*, 1995; Rogers and Pilgrim, 2014).

# NOT JUST SCHOOL MEALS: STIGMA AND POVERTY

Well, her mother wasn't necessarily sure what they had signed up for. She was put off by the idea – she thought it was a 'free lunch club' and she was really put off by that, that it was like for families on benefits. And I said no, no, it's not that. It's free activities, it's about keeping them busy during the summer, and they get lunch as well. But she was suspicious, of like the stigma of a 'free lunch. She was suspicious of the idea it was no-strings.

“the dominant discourses of strivers and skivers that characterise public debate on benefits and welfare... function to problematise and demonise poverty and dependency” (Callaghan, Fellin and Warner Gale, 2016)

# SERVICE DEPRIVATION: FOOD AND ACTIVITIES ARE NOT ENOUGH...

Children's wellbeing is dependent on

- the prevention of adverse childhood experiences (Ungar, 2015; Anda *et al.*, 2006)
- the social determinants of health (Friedli, 2009; Viner *et al.*, 2012) which mediate family and the community's response to children in adversity.

The Marmot Review of Health Inequalities indicates that, as a result of the localisation of health spending, service cuts have been most severe in regions of the UK that have also experienced the highest levels of socioeconomic deprivation (Marmot *et al.*, 2012).

“This means that young people are subject to multiple layers of disadvantage, as they struggle to cope with the socioeconomic realities of ‘Austerity Britain’, whilst services that historically might have provided support (like CAMHS, Disability Services, etc) have been eroded by health sector cuts.” (Callaghan, Fellin and Warner-Gale, 2016)

# ACES

Poverty is not included in the 'ACES' list

The essentially conservative nature of the politics of 'early intervention'

Adversity is beyond families

Don't let anyone tell you poverty is NOT an adverse childhood experience!