

Children in Scotland

every child - every childhood

6 May 2009

Karen Deeming
UK National Implementing Body
Department of Work and Pensions
2nd Floor
Caxton House
Tothill Street
LONDON
SW1H 9NA

Dear Ms Deeming,

EUROPEAN YEAR FOR COMBATING SOCIAL EXCLUSION AND POVERTY (EY2010) – UK NATIONAL PROGRAMME

Children in Scotland represents over 450 statutory, voluntary and professional organisations concerned with promoting the best interests of children and young people. We welcome the opportunity to comment on the proposed UK National Programme for EY2010.

We agree with the general approach outlined for the UK National Programme. It covers the key themes and offers reasonable flexibility in terms of types of activity that should be considered. However, we have a few comments and suggestions that we think would improve the UK's work in this arena.

First, there is no meaningful acknowledgement of the incidence of poverty among the *working* population. In Scotland, approximately half of children living in poverty are *not* in a workless household. It is important that the EY2010 actions and messages address the reality of insecure, temporary, part-time and low-paid work – and the impact of such economic insecurity upon the well-being and life chances of affected children and young people.

Second, Children in Scotland encourages a heightened UK emphasis upon the theme of child poverty. This could and should highlight the need for greater prevention and early intervention work with children.

For example, as we have noted in recent correspondence with the Chancellor and HM Treasury, greater investment in the early years of life is not only crucial in terms of limiting later demand for high cost interventions, but also as a job-creating and employment-enhancing stimulus measure right now.

Third, given that the EY2010 National Programme involves the UK as a whole, it is important that the relevant realities, policies and strategies of the devolved administrations are included in the document (rather than those applying only in England). Just to cite one small example, the Scottish Government's Social Inclusion Unit sits within the Health and Wellbeing Directorate, not the 'Justice Department' (as stated in the current document).

Finally, we would encourage the EY2010 UK National Programme to include measures and methods of combating poverty extending beyond the purely material/financial. The problems of poverty for children are not limited to material deprivation – and thus, cannot be solved solely by increasing net household income to just above the poverty line. Unsatisfactory outcomes in health, education and overall child well-being are a predictable consequence of poverty. Minimising the negative consequences of poverty upon children is as important as increasing household income. Both higher incomes and better outcomes need to be achieved through the UK's EY2010 National Programme.

Please contact Marion Macleod (0131 222 2435, mmacleod@childreninscotland.org.uk) should you have any questions or wish further information.

Yours sincerely,

MARION MACLEOD
Senior Policy and Parliamentary Officer