

Children and young people



Child poverty: who is at risk?

Addressing child poverty is crucial to the achievement of greater social cohesion and sustainable social and economic development in Europe. Across the EU, 19% of children under the age of 16 are at risk of poverty; some 15% of children leave school without a secondary-level education; the rate of youth unemployment is about twice the average. Children in lone-parent families or large families, those with unemployed parents, from immigrant and ethnic minority families, or children who are disabled are most at risk of poverty or social exclusion.

Entry into force of the Lisbon treaty places the protection of children's rights for the first time among the EU's objectives: ensuring the well-being of European children thus becomes an obligation for all Member States.

Childcare: one response to child poverty

Providing accessible and affordable high quality childcare is a key way to fight child poverty. High-quality pre-school education gives children a good basis for lifelong learning and helps close the 'education gap' for children who are at risk of poverty. Childcare for children of school-going age (between five and 12 years) can play a key role in addressing both child poverty and more general disadvantage. Out-of-school care can help address the social, economic and health issues that disadvantaged households face and can support the social integration of excluded groups. It enables parents to take up employment, improve their financial situation, balance their working and home lives, reduce their stress levels, boost their confidence and enhance their social interaction. Children benefit from such care directly, through greater educational attainment, improved opportunities for social development, better health, and a safe, secure environment; they also benefit indirectly from improved household circumstances. Communities also benefit: in addition to creating employment opportunities, out-of-school care contributes to tackling poverty and problem behaviour.

Families living in disadvantaged areas often have a number of problems that are best addressed in a holistic manner by childcare that works in partnership with other services, such as social services, education and health.



Parental involvement in childhood services

A key element in ensuring high-quality care for children is parental involvement in service provision. Many parents are deterred from becoming involved, however, by lack of time, because they underestimate the importance of becoming involved or because they don't know how best to do so. Early childhood centres can motivate parents to invest in their children's socialisation and learning. Staff in these centres can promote positive attitudes toward children's learning, provide parents with information and referrals to other services, and include parents in the daily life of the centre. In addition, children benefit from the continuity of experience between their homes and the centre, which results from parents and staff exchanging information and adopting consistent approaches to socialisation, daily routines, child development and learning.

Service provision is more successful, and children benefit most, when parents are involved in it.

Further information

This fact sheet forms part of the Eurofound resource pack, *All aboard – leaving social exclusion behind*.

The pack looks at the key issues behind social exclusion and explores initiatives across Europe that seek to create a fully inclusive society.

For a copy of the pack or further information on this topic, please email: integration@eurofound.europa.eu

To view the resource pack online, and all other Eurofound materials on this topic, please visit: www.eurofound.europa.eu/resourcepacks/integration.htm

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