

“Child Poverty, Employment, and Ethnicity in the UK: The Role and Limitations of Policy”

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Abstract:

In 1999, the British Government stated its resolve to end child poverty within a generation. In doing so it recognised both the extent of child poverty in the UK and the moral imperative to do something about it. At around the same time, a government study of ethnic minority employment was undertaken, which was to lead to the establishment of the crossdepartmental ethnic minority employment task force (EMETF) and a Public Services Agreement target for the Department for Work and Pensions on closing the ethnic minority employment gap. Despite apparent overlaps between these two agendas, given that many minority ethnic group families have children, and worklessness is one of the main causes of child poverty (though by no means the sole one), they were not really integrated. Nor has integration between them been seen – or encouraged – in European reporting processes covering topics linked to social inclusion and exclusion.

In 2006, however, a link was made when the EMETF asked for a paper on child poverty to form the background to its work. This article builds on that initial link, discussing the intersection between child poverty and ethnic minority unemployment policy by illustrating the extent of child poverty as ethnically differentiated and exploring the ways in which it is related to aspects of employment. It goes on to consider the policy implications for both employment policy and income maintenance policy more generally, before examining the obstacles to an integrated approach both in terms of knowledge/understanding and the ways in which the two policy areas are conceived.