Our views matter:
Children and young people talk about solutions to poverty

A consultation carried out for the Children's Commissioner's Expert Advisory Group (EAG) on Solutions to Child Poverty

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Why ask children?

1. While we know how many children and young people are affected by poverty, who are most affected and where they live, current information on child poverty in New Zealand rarely includes the views of children and young people themselves. Little has been recorded about how New Zealand children and young people see and experience poverty in their lives (Egan-Bitran, 2010), much less their ideas about solutions. Their experiences are subsumed into the experiences of households and families. It is assumed parents' and other adults' interpretations of children's experience of poverty are the same as those of children and young people themselves.

2. If New Zealand policies and services are to be successful in making things better for New Zealand children and young people through better responses to poverty, it is important to understand what poverty is for them, how they experience it, and to hear and consider their ideas as to solutions to poverty.

3. In order to provide the Children's Commissioners Expert Advisory Group on Solutions to Child Poverty (EAG) with children's perspectives of poverty, two pieces of work have been initiated. The first, the *EAG Working Paper no.7 Children's Voices on Poverty,* is a synthesis of the recent literature on children's perspectives on poverty and disadvantage. The second undertaking was to gather children's views on poverty, and in a broad sense, their views on solutions the EAG are proposing.

4. The first section of this paper synthesises the views of 278 children and young people from seven high deprivation areas throughout New Zealand. It reports on children's everyday experiences of poverty, and the measures they think should be taken at a local and national level to improve children's lives now, and to eradicate child poverty in the longer term. The final section of the paper discusses the implications of what children have told us for the policy and practice of tackling child poverty in New Zealand are also considered.

5. We would like to thank all the children and young people who participated in this consultation and freely gave of their time. We would also like to thank community partners and staff in those schools helping with the research for their time, provision of rooms, expertise, and space to talk.

Summary of Consultations with Children

Our approach to engaging children

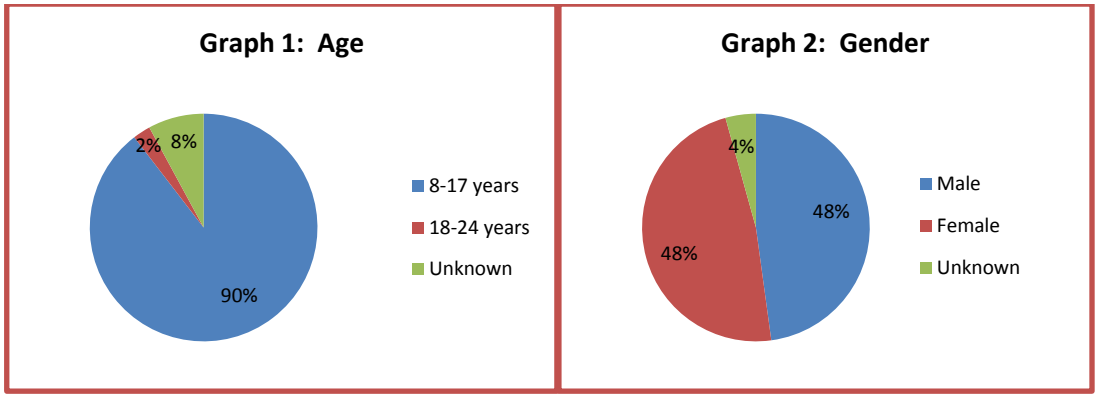
6. Between August and September 2012, the Office of the Children's Commissioner (the Office) consulted with 278 children and young people (including 10 young parents) aged between 9 to 24 years[1] living in low socio-economic communities[2] throughout New Zealand. These included:

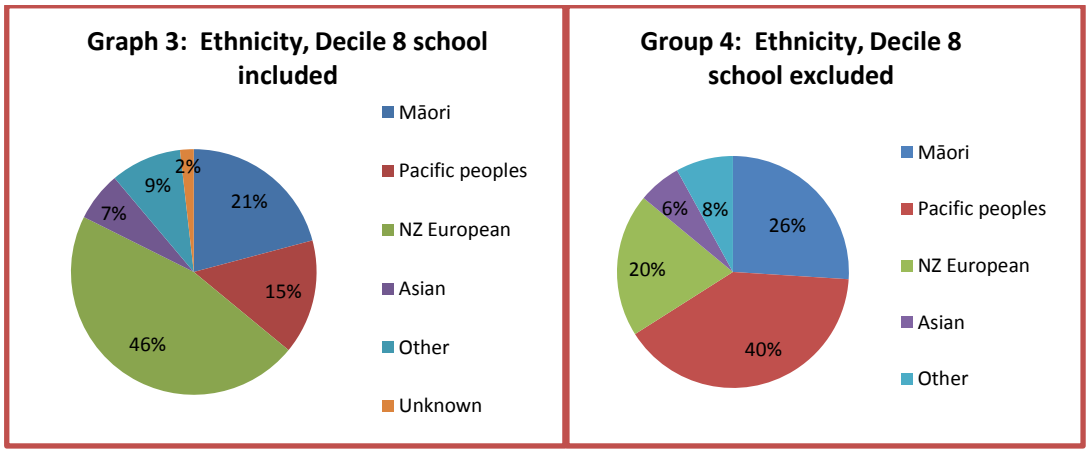
   - Decile 2 primary school, Nelson
   - Decile 1 primary school, Auckland
   - Decile 1 primary school, Lower Hutt
   - Combined group of one Decile 3 and three Decile 1 secondary schools, Auckland
   - Decile 8 secondary school, Whangarei
   - Group of children accessed through Manaia Health-Physician Health Organisation (PHO) 'Adolescent Health Services Project', Whangarei
   - Decile 1 Teen Parent Unit, Porirua City
   - Twelve secondary school students, Waitangirua, Porirua City.

7. There was a mix of Pacific, Māori and other ethnic groups of children and young people represented. Five groups were predominantly Pacific and Māori, reflecting the demographics in their area. There was also a mix of semi-rural and urban children and young people represented.

[1] Of the ten teen parents who took part, one was 18 years, and another 19 years of age. Another five participants were aged 18 years or older. A child in this study was defined as being between 0 to 17 years inclusive, aligned with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC). A young person was defined as being between 18 to 24 years of age, aligned with the upper age of the Ministry of Social Development's definition of young people in the report, '*Children and Young People: Indicators of Well-being in New Zealand 2008'.*

[2] The exception to this was Group 5: Decile 8 Secondary school in Whangarei. This group was only asked what they thought all children needed in order to have a good childhood and what they thought the Government should do to help families and children who don't have much money.





Note:

Graph 3 includes the Decile 8 Secondary school in Whangarei. This group was only asked what they thought all children needed in order to have a good childhood and what they thought the Government should do to help families and children who don't have much money. Graph 4 does not include the Decile 8 school.

The Standards New Zealand approach (as per Census data) has been used. Children and young people were asked to write their ethnicity on their consent forms. Where a child or young person nominated more than one ethnicity grouping, their ethnicity was prioritised in the following order Māori, Pacific Peoples, New Zealand European, Asian, Other, unknown.

8. Together with community partners and principals, teachers or teacher aides within the schools, advisors from the Office worked with the children for approximately two hours. Children's views were sought on the following topics: childhood and poverty; the role of Government and community in supporting children to have a good childhood and to address poverty; housing; health and education; and the role of schools in addressing poverty.

9. Children were invited to take part in one or all of the following activities:

- Participate in a group discussion facilitated by advisors from the Office
- Participate in small focus group discussions facilitated by advisors from the Office
- Fill out a handout questionnaire.

10. Ethical consent for consulting with the children was granted by the Families Commission's Ethics Committee. Informed consent was obtained from school

principals/Board of Trustees, parents/guardians, and the children participating. A process of on-going consent was employed. At the beginning of each session the children were once again informed about the purpose of the consultation, and given a choice about whether or not to participate. The Office advisors explained that the children's responses would be anonymous. The Office ensured that children knew where to find support if they needed to.

11. Following the consultations, ideas were grouped into common categories, and their frequency recorded. These data were coded to generate a set of broad themes outlined in paragraph 13 below. Key quotes, reflecting the themes were selected for this paper.

12. The views expressed in this submission are those of the children, young people and teen parents who took part in the consultation process and are not necessarily the views of the Office. For the purposes of this paper, these views have been summarised by Michelle Egan-Bitran, Senior Advisor who led the consultation.

New Zealand children's perspectives on poverty

13. The following sections summarise the findings from the review and highlight the key messages drawn from listening to children's accounts of their lives and the challenges, demands and pressures that poverty places upon them on a regular basis. The themes that emerged were:

- Children and young people's participation
- Family
- Housing
- Social Connections
- Education, training and employment
- Health
- Fair and adequate resources.

Children and young people's participation

14. The overarching message from the participants is that children and young people want to be involved in the solutions to child poverty[3]. Their comments reflected the importance of listening to children and their communities and valuing their insights, which are based on lived experiences.

"Adults need to listen to children. More than seen and not heard."

"Let children have their say."

[3] Children have a right under Article 12 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCROC) to have their views taken into account and given weight in decisions affecting them.

"Listen to children and the community then decide what action to take."

"Listen to the peoples' voices – be attentive."

15. Listening to children is only one part of meaningful consultation; respecting children's views was seen as essential to effective decision-making to support children's well-being and that of their communities. Respect for children's opinions requires decision-makers to be responsible and ethical:

"Listen to the community and children. Make fair decisions that are good for communities and children. Find solutions that are good for everyone."

"Give youth more say in Government/council decisions on the community so that the decisions for our community benefit our youth as well. Make sure that our voices are heard"!

Family

16. Childhood is a critical period for laying the foundations for life-long health and well-being. The Public Health Advisory Committee (2010) concluded that young children's family environments are so influential that they predict children's cognitive, social and emotional abilities and their subsequent success at school. Factors such as parental income and maternal education are associated with almost every measure of child health and well-being. Good health and developmental outcomes for children depend on how well families' basic needs are met, the strength of families' social and cultural connections, families' access to quality services and facilities, and families' economic security.

Supportive relationships

17. The significance of family and the importance of being supported and encouraged and doing things together were strong themes in the children's narratives. Children also raised the need for greater support for families so that they could move out of poverty and fulfil their potential.

18. "Family", "a great family", "a kind family", "care from your family", "grandparents", and "cousins" were repeatedly used to articulate what made childhood good. Statements like "having a positive relationship with your parents or your parent's partner and with your siblings" indicated that good relationships mattered to children.

"Having nice parents".

"A good upbringing. Raised in a good way. No violence, being with family more often, being supported, encouraged and cared for, healthy and less drinking".

"Love, having a family [extended family] that cares for you and buys food for you when your Mum can't. They share".

19. The importance of support, encouragement and role models were strong themes throughout this dataset (the word "support" featured most frequently). A group of comments included statements such as *"support from friends, family and teachers'; "people who support and stand up for children", "someone to love you",* and *"supporters like family and stuff".*

20. Words like "happiness", "being happy", and just "happy" recurred throughout the data and could be associated with things like "having fun". These ideas were reinforced with comments such as "doing stuff together" and the importance of cultural, sporting and recreational activities. This seemed to be related to family, friends and their wider communities.

"How family and friends get together to have a good time".

"Having fun, hanging out with your family and friends, playing"

21. When asked whether there is anything positive about not having much money the majority of the children were positive and hopeful about their future. They spoke of their gifts and talents and the strength and richness of their communities. The children also suggested that not having much money often meant that families and communities would pull together to help each other.

"If you don't have much money you learn to be more caring".

"It might bring a family closer in love".

"You actually find that a lot of these families [who don't have much money] have a strong family base because they help each other and when they know that someone is struggling they look after one another".

"You still have people on your side who can support you"

22. The children and young people's views on the importance of social support are consistent with research. Social support appears to be one factor that acts as a buffer against the effects of poverty (Bottrell, 2007; Van der Hoek, 2005). Such support may come through relationships with family and/or friends (Attree, 2004) or youth and community networks (Bottrell, 2007). Vinson (2007) argues that social cohesion acts as a buffer against disadvantage. Family relationships are reported as crucial (Attree, 2004). Children explain how their situation is not as bad as it seems because they have such good relationships with family. The close family relationships these children have make their lives enjoyable and meaningful: they feel valued and loved despite living on low-incomes (Roker, 1998). For children living in poverty, the cost of not having good

family relationships is high, with these children appearing the most depressed and pessimistic (Roker, 1998).

Impact of poverty on children's roles within the family

23. A number of the groups talked to us about the roles children and young people often have to take because parents have to work. This includes looking after siblings, cleaning, cooking and other household duties. Consequently some children feel overwhelmed by the adult responsibilities they assume by taking on these roles. Often this means children and young people miss out on school. This potentially marginalises them and reduces their participation in normal social and cultural activities. .

"Eldest having to play PARENTAL – due to parents at work."

"Children taking on higher roles."

"School drop outs to provide for family, unable to further education due to responsibilities, work."

Support for families

24. Children and young people spoke of the need for more support and information to enable them to fulfil their potential but at the same time observed an attitudinal barrier:

"Just cos people are poor doesn't mean that they can't be strong. Support from your family and supporting families helps."

25. They said that support, information and assistance would help them and their families overcome the barriers and obstacles that lie in their path as they work to move out of poverty.

26. Many of the children described the type of support families living in poverty would benefit from.

"Family programmes."

"Parent and children workshops."

"Moral support/advice/information."

"Help with lifelong skills like budgeting."

"Educating parents, support for what they can do for their family so they can get the best, so poverty doesn't carry on through generations."

"Financial support – welfare benefits, education on how to spend money on their kids, companies who will support."

27. A common suggestion was for the school to act as a community hub. These views are summarised by one group of secondary school students who said, *"School is one of the most important places in your life, the schools could provide financial advice to the parents – or provide a space for services to work with families – or provide direction to parents on what services are available".*

28. The children's narratives align with research which shows that integrated services models such as early childhood education hubs are proven strategies for strengthening whānau resilience (Duncan et al, 2006). Services which reconceptualise parent/whānau/teacher/community relationships have been shown to improve outcomes for children's learning and community well-being (Duncan and Te One, 2012). Shifting the focus of education and care towards parent, whānau, and community aspirations encourages participation in early education, develops healthy community networks among parents, promotes community-based solutions to disruptive social issues, and generally enhances community well-being (Ministry of Social Development, 2006).

29. Parent support and development models work to strengthen whānau resilience (Clarkin-Phillips and Carr, 2012; Podmore and Te One, 2008; Te One et al, 2007). When the focus is on deeper engagement with whānau, beyond merely counting enrolment as participation, opportunities for learning increase. Intentional but sensitive relationship building with socially disadvantaged, disengaged whānau improves learning for children (Duncan and Bowden, 2004).

30. Finally, the children and young people said that it is important that the Government and communities create job opportunities and support people who do not have much money into work. This involved more affordable, quality childcare, and after school programmes. One teen parent said:

> *"Young parents should have more support from the Government. Daycare is so expensive it takes one wage! So might as well not work. To live off one wage is ridiculous. Can't pay for food, clothes, rent, power, heating with only one wage."*

Housing

31. Poor quality, inadequate, unfit, and unstable housing is a critical issue for children who experience poverty. Over 70 percent of all children in poverty live in rental accommodation (20 percent in Housing New Zealand Corporation (HNZC) state housing and 50 percent in private rental accommodation) (Perry, 2012). A review of literature shows that while some children in low-income and disadvantaged households are positive about their homes, others revealed significant concerns (Egan-Bitran, 2012). In two New Zealand studies, homes were often described by children as damp, cold, run down, dirty, and in some cases rat-infested and overcrowded (Egan-

Bitran, 2010; Te One, 2012). This is consistent with what the children told us during the consultation.

"Damp houses."

"No money – given the dumb houses, the broken down ones"; "Broken down and you would feel unhappy, whakama."

"You can't afford basic necessities. Can't afford to go to the doctors. Live in shit damp, cold houses."

"If you live in a shit house you can have a shit childhood because you are limited in everything."

32. Many of the groups spoke of the cost of housing, and of families not being able to afford to pay for power, hot water or heating.

"Can't pay for the basics like bills, hot water, rent etc, not enough food."

"No power – can't pay their bills – can't cook, no heating."

"It [not having much money] means if you pay more rent you then don't have choices of heating or food."

"No running hot water, have cold showers"

Overcrowding

33. Consistent with other research (Rice, 2006; Ridge, 2002; Roker, 1998), children in this project talked about the link between poverty and overcrowding. They reported that a shortage of space meant not having any privacy or space to be alone and this causes arguments and tension, which in turn affects family relationships.

"Might have to have a lot of people living in one house."

"Need more rooms – appropriate for the number of people living there"

"Sleep on the floor – wooden floor."

"No money, poor housing, can cause unhappy families."

"Need space for everyone and privacy"

"Parents get stressed – angry with children."

34. Some groups also said that overcrowding and a lack of space also affected their ability to do homework.

Impact of poor quality housing on health

35. All of the groups made the link between poorly maintained, unstable, and inadequate housing, and poor health. This is consistent with New Zealand data which shows that there is a direct link between damp, cold housing and a wide range of illnesses and diseases including respiratory infections, asthma, rheumatic fever, tuberculosis, skin diseases, depression and other mental illness. (Howden-Chapman et al., 2007; *Housing, Heating and Health Study*, 2007).

> *"Get sick 'cause it's cold – can't afford heating."*
>
> *"The house might have mould and damp that sits on a child's chest and affects breathing."*
>
> *"Creates asthma and is not healthy."*
>
> *"Not having much money affects the location, no sun, really damp so my children get sick a lot".*
>
> *"Less and smaller house, smaller environment, squashed – affects your health – brings you down mentally and physically".*

Unstable housing

36. One group of primary school children spoke of significant social and emotional upheaval and loss during and following the demolition of 88 homes within their community. Children experienced dislocation from schools, neighbourhoods, and their friends. They also spoke of feeling unsafe due to the way in which the demolition occurred, and the impacts that the demolition had on the children, families, and the community.

> *"More answers about why we are not safe sometimes – like when the houses were demolished we did not have any answers and we were confused and felt unsafe."*
>
> *"All children should have a house they can call home and that is stable and secure."*
>
> *"When housing is stable my future is stable."*

37. Their views and experiences are highlighted in the '*Rise Up! Pomare: The Pomare Child Health Video Project*' (King and Gough, 2012) where children stated:

> *"Please help the family's that have 2 move away from the places they love."*
>
> *"Would you split your family?"*
>
> *"Please make sure the familys (sic) get great houses."*

"When the houses came tumbling down I felt sad, horrible, gutted. It was dusty, scary. I don't know how I'm going to shift house."

38. A child from another group also told us that a *"loss of house can result in family violence"*.

39. The children's views and experience highlight the importance of stable and secure housing, child and family centred decision-making. Underpinning this is the importance of children and communities being consulted and kept informed about decisions affecting their lives.

40. When asked what they thought that Government and communities should do to make sure that children and families live in good houses, a strong theme was the need for houses to be 'better regulated', for there to be 'stricter rules", and to "make sure that there is a check list that people (landlords/builders/housing department etc) have to pass before they put a house on the market as a rental".

"Make <u>all</u> houses damp free, smokefree, warm and mouldfree. All houses should have a warrant of fitness like cars. Houses should have a WOF – it's somewhere somebody lives, no one lives in a car!"

41. They spoke about the need for "warm', 'dry', 'insulated' and 'heated' houses.

"Warm in winter – insulated and heated, energy efficient e.g. pellet burners."

"A warm fully insulated home where they can bring up their children and future generations. Be a happy family with all the necessities required for bringing up a happy and healthy family."

42. Decisions about housing development and changes to state housing involves consulting with children and their communities. Finally, many children asked that decision-makers consider their views and the best interests of children, their families and the wider community.

Social connections

43. Childhood is an important time for the formation of self and social identities. The ability to make and sustain good friendships and take part in social activities is vital to children's sense of belonging and their well-being.

44. Children in this consultation spoke of the importance of friends in order to have a good childhood. There were often qualifying comments such as "Good friends that are nice to you", and "best friends, special friends to play with and help you".

Bullying and being judged

45. However, being picked on, bullying and social exclusion were significant issues for the majority of the children in this consultation.

"I reckon they are [treated differently] but they should be treated the same. If they are poor, people don't care about them, they get bullied."

"They get called names."

"They get bullied."

"They get picked on."

"Kids have to put up with put down."

"They get mocked by other people for having nothing."

46. This was exacerbated by not being able to wear adequate and suitable clothing or lacking material goods, and childhood possessions, for example, toys and games.

"You get bullied because of your appearance – they look at your clothes and mock you."

"Because of their looks - their clothes, they get judged, backstabbed."

"Yes, hard out. They get looked at 'funny' e.g. clothes they wear, they get judged."

"They are judged by the clothes they wear, the state of their clothes, the house they live in."

"[Children who don't have much money are treated differently] because they don't have a computer or flash stuff."

"Because you can't afford the cool stuff like ipads, phones and they have to have old stuff so you might get teased."

47. The group of teen parents also said that not having much money could mean that "you may not be able to buy your children toys" or "they may miss out on a birthday party".

48. Research shows that a key area of concern for children and young people is the negative impact that poverty can have on their friendships and other social relationships (Egan-Bitran, 2012). Children and young people are particularly worried about being able to fit in and join in what others are doing. This may result in significant anxiety, unhappiness and social insecurity for them (Crowley and Vullimay, 2007; Elliot and Leonard, 2004; Ridge, 2002, 2007; Roker, 1998; Willow, 2001). . Children are often fearful about being singled out or being seen as different – what academics would call 'othering': being 'other' and not part of the group.

49. In addition to being mocked or bullied by other children they spoke of feeling judged more generally.

"[Children who don't have much money are treated differently] Because they are richer and are judging poorness"

"…If a child, or a child's family is really poor they can be teased or abused by those who are rich…"

"They [people who don't have much money] would be mocked by rich people because they like to show off what they have – which is saying that they have better things so that they are better than people who don't have much money. They get a lot of wants and take the needs for granted. They only focus on what they want".

"Don't think the worst of us. We can achieve a lot with a little bit of support and encouragement. People think just because you're from [name of place] your no good, your trouble but we've got lots of ideas, energy, gifts and talents".

50. One group of children felt that children who don't have much money are *"not listened to as much".*

Leisure and community activities

51. Many children also expressed concern about how poverty affects their social lives. Being poor limits their opportunities for leisure and community activities. Children spoke of "trying to interact with family and friends" but "not being able to relate with people around you" because of an inability to take part in the same social and leisure activities. This was due to a range of reasons including the cost of fees, entry or membership fees, and transport as well as the added costs of uniforms or sports clothing and equipment.

"Can't get involved in sports clubs."

"Not enough money to pay for basketball fees/sports."

"Less opportunities – fees, boots."

"Sports equipment, parents can't afford to support young people in sport i.e. soccer boots etc."

"You can't go to the pools and learn to swim."

52. Two groups of secondary school students spoke of the "pressure to fit in" and linked it with the dangers of getting caught up in crime.

"Start doing things that are against your beliefs because you want to get away from the wall of poverty."

"Temptation for things you don't have – results in criminal offences."

"Pressure to buy/to steal."

"Steal other's gear to wear so they can fit in."

53. The above findings are consistent with other research which shows that visible signs of poverty and difference and an inability to take part in the same social and leisure activities as their peers meant that children often experienced bullying and were fearful of stigma and social isolation (Crowley and Vullimay, 2007; Daly and Leonard, 2002; Egan-Bitran, 2010; UK Office of the Children's Commissioner, 2011; Willow, 2001).

Community

54. Participants believed that being part of a safe, connected and supportive community contributed to a good childhood. Responses could be summed up as:

"A healthy community is co-operative, supportive, respectful, honest, and trustworthy, provides services to support, upgrades existing facilities and includes organisations like Youthline."

"A great community where people look after one another."

"Close neighbourhoods."

"Friendly neighbours in the street."

"A good environment, not living in a ghetto place where there are a lot of gangs and gang violations. If my environment is safe I wouldn't be scared to step out the door or speak out."

55. The benefits of supportive and positive community-based relationships were very important to the children, as was caring and reaching out to one another when family, friends or community members needed help or support.

"Welcome residents. Make sure that new people to the community are shown around and help them. Give them a welcome gift when they arrive. If you are a migrant or refugee, people to welcome, like a sponsor, who would help you with reading letters, shopping, finding a house."

"Make muffins for your neighbour."

"Invite people to dinner."

"People in the community could think about what they can do – knit hats to give away, make or donate food, ask people to their house for dinner."

56. When asked what they thought grown-ups in the community should know around what children like to do, comments such as "playing", "community get-togethers/events", "cultural performance", "having concerts", "playing sports",

"family activities", "youth forums", "parents and children workshops" and "youth social opportunities" were predominate answers. A number of the groups said that they wanted the community to know that children like *"food", "eating food – fruit – sharing",* and *"sharing food with poor people".*

57. Two of the groups of children spoke about their community gardens and their school gardening clubs. They talked about food insecurity and the need for healthy foods. They saw the community garden, and *"planting and harvesting*" as providing a sustainable solution for supporting community members who did not have much money and needed food. It was evident that the gardens themselves supported the strengthening of social ties and support in these communities.

> *"We have a garden they [people who don't have much money] can help them self to food if they cannot afford it."*
>
> *"In the community garden – volunteers help grow stuff and anyone who needs food can get it from the garden."*
>
> *"Donate seeds."*
>
> *"Give the poor seeds to grow their own veges."*
>
> *"We need potatoes, we will grow them."*
>
> *"Plant fruit trees."*
>
> *"More planting so people can have food."*

58. It was evident from the conversations with the children from these groups that both schools sat within communities that were working at the street and neighbourhood level, building on, strengthening and utilising existing social networks.

59. The children's responses from these schools reflected the inclusive, proactive and sustainable approach the communities were seeking to create and foster. One of the primary schools is part of a community hub or village and houses early childhood education, Parents as First Teachers, PATHS (Pathways to Health Solutions) Te Hauora O Ngati Rarua's Māori Diabetic Nurse and Men's Health Coordinator. It also offers a wide range of services such as budget advice, adult education, midwives, Plunket Nurse, hearing tests, cervical screening and a homework centre. Rooms in the centre are also used by housing, Child, Youth and Family and Work and Income and other groups.

Community space

60. Public space is social space for children and young people. The Wager et al., (2007) study shows that community space has a far greater significance for disadvantaged children than more affluent children. In particular the use of public space

compensated children for a lack of space at home and reduces opportunities for alternative activities.

61. The quality of space, security and opportunity that children can enjoy within their home neighbourhood is of critical importance for children who experience poverty (Sutton et al., 2007).

62. A number of groups depicted public space as unsafe, degraded and hostile, having to negotiate a range of risks including litter and broken glass. Many children believed that there was a need to upgrade physical environments in order to improve opportunities and well-being. This included clean public spaces and having access to safe playgrounds and recreational facilities.

> *"Clean, smokefree, liquor free, graffiti free playgrounds with swings, slides, tunnels, flying fox, monkey bars and a donut circle. Dogs on leads and pick up after them."*

> *"Safe playgrounds – no glass, no poles, no sharp things, no rough things like bark with no shoes."*

63. Some of the participants referred to areas where they live, or nearby areas as unsafe. Many children characterised their neighbourhoods as 'scary places' and had either experienced or witnessed, drunkenness or harassment by adults or gangs of older youths.

> *"Safer communities – no drinking or gangs in our parks."*

> *"Safe playgrounds – no violence, no drinking, no youth gangs and clean."*

> *"We want a safe place for [name of place] children to play on."*

64. Children would like their local councils to do more for children. The key message was for councils to provide more free activities and facilities.

> *"Not having much money means that children can't go to the pools to learn to swim."*

> *"Free activities (especially in the school holidays) – swimming, sports etc."*

65. Auckland-based children taking part in the consultations spoke of enjoying 'free swimming pools'. This is the result of the Auckland Council deciding to give free access to children 16 years and under to all council-owned swimming pools in order to support children's access to leisure activities, to encourage physical activity and to help teach children to swim. This is one example of the important role local government can play in mitigating the effects of poverty and supporting children's social, emotional and physical well-being.

66. Another plea was for local councils to listen to children and young people and support them in what they were trying to do:

"Listen to people (us and local adults) instead of doing what they want."

"Listen to our ideas and opinions."

Education, training and employment

"School should cost nothing. Everyone needs education not just the rich. Not everyone can get the best for their child/children. If they don't learn they get no more money and the cycle goes on!"

67. Children spend a large proportion of their daily lives in the school environment and it is one of the key services areas that has the potential to improve the well-being of children experiencing poverty and disadvantage. School is an important place for the development of children's skills and capabilities for future, as well as being a key site of social and cultural learning.

68. The following sections represent children's views about schools, teachers, the impact of poverty on education and learning, and the role teachers and principals could play in helping children and families who don't have much money.

69. There were commonalities across all sites that reflected the role of education in helping children and families move out of poverty, the importance of adults encouraging educational aspirations and support to engage with further training and/or employment. Other common themes were the children's concerns about the costs of education and bullying. Participants also spoke of the importance of supporting children's health, well-being and achievement through providing food, health care and support onsite. Children, in general, liked school – the majority of comments about schools and teachers were very positive.

70. Children in this consultation were generally hopeful that children can escape poverty. However, they also recognised that it can be difficult and that much would depend on their ability to gain employment and the type of job they could get. They saw education as being a key determinant in whether people can get a good job.

"Jobs – now days it is hard to find a job. The only time you will get a job is if you get qualifications so that you can supply for your family."

"Opportunities – more open doors."

71. Children spoke of the importance of adults encouraging and supporting educational aspirations.

"Fight for your education – you have to seek it, you have to want it. You need motivators and supporters so that when you are feeling down and want to give up

they are in your mind and help you keep going. You need someone that you love to make them proud. Teachers are key, if they are good and can interact with the students they can help bring out their potential."

72. The relationships children have with teachers have been shown to play an important role in school engagement for some children who experience disadvantage (Taylor & Nelms, 2006). Where co-operative relationships are not developed, children report feeling less in control at school, lacking confidence to perform the tasks required of them, and they may develop negative attitudes to learning (Hirsch, 2007).

73. The children and young people's narratives highlighted the need to provide better training opportunities and actively engage the students in appropriate courses; opening up more work opportunities through apprenticeships or through paid work experience; providing more support to access higher education through grants and sponsorship; offering more incentives to gain work through the likes of free transport; assisting with school costs such as textbooks and subject fees; ensuring adequate family income support; and promoting a healthy balance between students' paid work and study.

"More jobs available for young people – put Gateway into more schools, career expos."

"Encourage to get a good education and get a good job – expand opportunities for young people to get work experience."

Material and social disadvantage

74. Children's accounts reveal that poverty has a damaging effect across all areas of their school lives, including the social and material realm and through apparently exclusionary institutional practices. A common theme across the sites was that children feel under social and material pressure at school and experience economic barriers to participation. Without adequate economic resources, children reported difficulties in paying school fees; missing out on school trips; not being able to afford school uniforms, stationery, books and computers; and not always feeling as though they could take part in sports and other activities due to costs. Many children said that this often caused them to feel a sense of shame, further alienated them from their peers and could be a source of bullying. Bullying and the fear of being seen as different at school has also underpinned children's accounts of school in other studies (Egan-Bitran, 2010; Horgan, 2009; Ridge 2002, Willow, 2001).

"Can't participate, can't pay school fees or go on trips."

"Miss out on opportunities i.e. school balls because of unpaid school fees"

"Money affects what children can do at school, their education and their ability to participate in sports."

"Can't afford school fees, school trips, stationary, uniforms, bus fares."

"Sometimes we miss out on trips because we can't afford it."

75. Children spoke of lacking school uniforms and sports uniforms; not having the correct uniform and of their uniform being in poor condition due to their parents being unable to replace items. A number of students also commented on the impact of teachers' insistence on wearing uniforms in light of this.

"They can't buy a uniform, stationary, children look stupid in bad clothes."

"If you don't have much money you can't buy a school uniform."

"They should give us a free uniform."

"Give them a uniform for less."

"Give them a discount on school uniforms."

"Some parents can't afford a uniform. Students who come to school with the wrong uniform on shouldn't be punished for not having the right uniform."

76. When asked what they thought that schools, community and government can do to help children and families who don't have much money, a number of groups suggested that there should be no school fees or that schools could *"Make some sort of plan with them like making a budget and not having deadlines of payments".*

77. One group of children suggested that schools create "student uniform loans – some schools could loan uniforms to students who don't have one" or that people could "hand in old school uniforms for students to use or buy. Set up a uniform swap at the school, last week of term".

78. Many of the groups also suggested that the cost of stationary should be kept to a minimum or should be given to children of families who don't have much money.

"Make sure that costs/prices are low, such as stationary and trips."

"Supply stationary to help with money conditions."

79. Two groups of children told us that they liked that their schools provided stationary for children if they do not have any. They also said that they liked that their school gives them books.

Access to computers

80. Another common theme in the children's narratives was the impact that poverty has on their ability to access technology and the impact this has on their school work. One primary school student called this "*Computerism' – disadvantaged because you don't have a computer – not able to get the same as others or what you need".*

> *"If a family doesn't have a computer they can't do their work."*
>
> *"They need computers to learn for school work and internet. Help with old computers."*

81. Children spoke of the importance of programmes such as 'Computer in Homes' to help them and their families gain access to a computer and the internet, which in turn positively impacted on their education.

> *"At school there was a Computer in Homes thing and my Mum was in it and we got a computer with internet. It has helped me to do my school work."*

Health

82. Six groups of children were asked what they think children need to be healthy, whether or not having much money affects the health of children, and what they think that the Government should do to help children and families who don't have much money to be healthy.

83. Children's narratives revealed concerns about the cost of healthcare and medicine, difficulties accessing healthcare, and hunger and food insecurity.

Costs of healthcare and medicine

84. Children and young people expressed concerns about the cost of some medicines as they said that it means that poor children and their families who are sick will often go without treatment. This is consistent with research overseas (Crowley and Vulliamy, 2007) and in New Zealand (Egan-Bitran,2010).

85. When asked what they thought that the Government should do to help children and families who don't have much money to be healthy, common responses included: *"Free drs, "free doctors visits", "free access to doctors", "reduce medical costs", "free medicine".*

86. A number of groups called for free primary health care to be extended.

> *"Make doctors free for under 10's for those who can't afford. Give out good quality food parcels. Transport to get to the doctors."*
>
> *"Free healthcare to under 18 years."*

Difficulties accessing healthcare

87. Children also spoke of how difficult it could be to get to hospitals or other treatment centres if you didn't have a car or enough money for a taxi – poor public transport accentuating these difficulties. .

> *"If you don't have much money you can't afford to get there – petrol, public transport and you can't afford to pay the doctor".*
>
> *"You may not be able to get the proper health attention for your child's needs. Also access can be a major factor, not being able to afford transport if your child needs emergency care. You may get into debt with paying any medical treatment".*
>
> *"The Government should make sure everyone has clean houses and clinics in each suburb that's in walking distance. Offer more families places where everyone can access them, places where getting there isn't too difficult. Maybe offer a transport service that can get patients to and from the clinics".*
>
> *"Do more to make houses, clinics, pharmacy closer so you don't have to travel. Also make sure they have the right facilities so you don't have to run around".*
>
> *"People need to come to us children too, because we may not have money for transport, the bus, or petrol or we may not have time because we look after small children".*
>
> *"Have doctors who can do home visits, it can be hard to go to the doctor with a baby or with hardly any money. . Help pay for transport to the medical centre or help pay for the doctors bills/medicine".*

88. The small number of teen parents who participated in this consultation talked about the advantages of being part of the teen parent unit. This included: being supported to gain qualifications while pregnant, and then alongside their child, transport being provided and services that often came to the unit. The young women clearly saw this positively impacting on their pregnancy/child, their well-being and that of their families.

89. A number of the groups also suggested that social services and health services, including, medical, dental and social services be located within schools.

> *"Better knowledge of resources/access to contraception, should happen through school."*
>
> *"Free check-ups – medical check-ups come to school! School dental care."*
>
> *"A school dentist", "Free dentist and doctors in school grounds for the whole family."*

Food insecurity

90. A very common theme across all of the discussion groups was of hunger and lacking nutritional food.

> *"Sometimes not enough money to buy food to fill your tummy."*
>
> *"No lunch."*
>
> *"Kids get mocked, sometimes kids tease kids who don't have lunch or breakfast."*
>
> *"Kids asking for food, beggars in [name of place]."*
>
> *"Scavenging for food just to eat for a night."*
>
> *"We need more food, water, fruit and vegetables."*
>
> *"Families have to turn to cheap food e.g. takeaways. You can't afford to go to the doctors. Can't afford a nice house."*
>
> *"Can't buy food – without food you can't focus and learn."*

91. This is consistent with the findings of Egan-Bitran's (2010) New Zealand consultation which identified hunger, a lack of nutritional food and malnourishment as being issues for many of the participants. It also echoes what children said in consultations on the government's Green Paper for Vulnerable Children (Te One, 2012 and Caldwell, 2012). Similarly, Liz Gibbs (2012) stated that "*children and youth participating in Save the Children's Values Exchange said that hunger was the most pressing issue and food in schools was the strategy recommended by the EAG that was most likely to work*".

92. These findings are not surprising when seen in light of the 2002 National Nutrition Survey that found while about four-fifths of households said they could always afford to eat properly, one in five said they could, "*sometimes afford to eat properly*". Forty percent of households in the lowest socio-economic areas said they could not always afford to eat properly, compared with six percent in the highest socio-economic areas. Families with European children were the most likely to be always able to afford to eat properly (86 percent) compared with 64 percent of Māori families and 47 percent of Pacific families. Households with more than five children were also less likely to always be able to afford to eat properly (Ministry of Health, 2003).

93. When asked what they thought that the government should do to help children and families who don't have much money, children asked for the government to *"Cut the GST on food", "subsidise food, health essentials"; "Lessen the price for fruit and veges" and "give fruit and vegetables to people who can't afford it; "healthy food should be cheaper" and to "swap prices for fast food with healthy food outlets".*

94. One group of children suggested that the government should give families vouchers:

"Give them [families who don't have much money] a fruit or vegetable voucher to get food for less."

"Give them vouchers for fresh vegetables and medication so they can stay healthy."

"Give them a voucher for meat, vegetables and free fire wood."

95. Another group of children suggested that families be given 'food subsidies', 'food coupons' or 'food stamps'.

96. Finally, children spoke about the provision of food within schools.

"There should be fruit in schools. Everyone should just get it so there is not shame."

"It's a good idea [providing hungry children with food in schools] because they won't be starving."

"It's a good idea [providing food to hungry children in schools] because it helps and makes us feel like people care."

"Breakfast clubs – start your day with food in your stomach and energise. Have eating competitions. Have important people come. Make the breakfast club open to everyone so that there is no shame. You could send each house in at different times and staff could participate. It would be important to make everyone feel welcome and that it is open to everyone. They shouldn't have to ask."

97. One group of children suggested that schools should provide *"free fruit - schools start growing their own fruit trees and create school community gardens".*

98. Many of the groups added that it would be important to ensure that any policies and programmes developed are non-stigmatising, and do not cause shame for children and families who need this support.

Fair and adequate resources

"Not having the right resources around you could be a big hazard – not having a car or if you have one but do not have money for gas to get your child to the doctor or able to pay for the medicine. Not having enough money could be a barrier on the type of house you have. Bad housing could mean bad health".

99. 'Equality', 'equal rights', 'children's rights', 'children have the same rights as adults', 'respect from adults', 'no discrimination' and the importance of 'treating everyone the same' were very common answers to the question about what makes a good childhood.

100. There was also a unanimous call for money to be distributed more fairly. Children spoke of the need for fairer distribution of income by lowering taxes and by tackling inequalities in society through reducing wage differentials and taxing the rich more.

"No taxes"; "Less tax" and "raise the minimum wage and lessen the tax code."

"Increase their pay for people on low wages."

"Rich people tax."

"Increase families tax who are too wealthy."

"Higher tax for people who earn more (e.g. millions)."

"Tax higher income families to help pay for welfare workers."

101. Many of the children called for the government to create 'decent' jobs for adults to help families get out of poverty, and two groups called for higher benefit rates recognising that not all parents could work and provide for their families.

102. Children also felt that the government should try and ensure that food, public transport, power, cars and petrol, education and rent are made more affordable.

103. In addition to a fairer distribution of money and resources, children talked about the need to create greater equality through addressing power differentials and negative stereotypes about people living in poverty.

"…negative stereotypes, people being 'high-headed' and judgemental, it always comes down to differences. This results in an attitude of 'us' and 'them' – kids and families who don't have much money, there is a perception that it will always be like that. The change needs to start from the top. They [The Prime Minister and Government] need to break down the barriers rather than taking a divide and conquer approach where they support the 1 percent. They need to look after the whole and make sure that everyone has what they need. They need to show some empathy and compassion. Maybe New Zealanders need to have more empathy and compassion."

"They [children who don't have much money] don't have as many opportunities as more privileged kids. Kids get beaten down by negative stereotypes that they can't achieve as much. There needs to be more publicity around the good things kids are doing, more positive messages about children and young people need to be shown. Kids need to be encouraged to help them think positively. Perhaps programmes are needed to help this."

104. This group went on to explain why they thought that such negative stereotypes exist.

"Negative stereotypes are created so that others can feel better about themselves. Everyone wants power. Everyone wants to look down on someone. They want to dominate so that they can always have power. This keeps them on their high horse."

105. They also went on to say:

"Don't look down on them. Everyone is equal. We have the same potential as everyone else. Don't put barriers in front of us and don't leave us in the ditch. Help and support us, our families and communities. How can they [the Government] expect us to look after this place, New Zealand, in the future if they are looking down on us now."

106. One group of children said that one *way "we can make sure that all children get what they need"* is by making sure that *"People don't get too rich so that they understand those other people who don't have much money. This could make a difference in life".*

107. When asked whether there is anything positive about not having much money, a majority of children told us that when you don't have much money, *"you budget and don't waste money", "you learn to budget for the future", and that "you learn how to be efficient with the money that you have". .*

108. The groups also said that *"you are more appreciative and respectful of what you have", "you are humble", "you are careful about everything"*, and *"you use money more wisely"*. Another common theme was that children felt that children experiencing poverty would not be spoilt.

"You don't turn into a spoilt little person who whines and expects everything!"

"It's not good that children get what they want all the time as they would get spoilt. Kids appreciate what they've got."

"Because they [those who have money] spoil their children and they become little brats."

109. A number of the groups thought that not having much money might be good because it would mean people would be less consumerist in their behaviour:

"You don't splash your money around. You learn what you actually need."

"You can learn to live without posh everything."

"You don't have to have the latest clothes or technology."

"When you're rich you always buy clothes and when you finish with them you throw them away. When you don't have much money you keep using them and you don't waste things."

Implications of Children's Views for Child Poverty Solutions

110. We asked all of the children what should be done to improve the lives of children and families living in poverty, and what could be done to eradicate poverty. A summary of the implications of what the children have told us for the policy and practice of tackling poverty in New Zealand is outlined in the following section. This includes key messages in relation to:

- Children and young people's participation
- Local communities and family
- Housing
- Education, training and employment
- Health

Children and young people's participation

111. The first message from this research is that children and young people can and want to be involved in the solutions to child poverty. The wealth of insights, ideas, and expertise that children contributed through this project confirms that they should always be involved in work on child poverty. Children have to be seen as part of the solution to child poverty and social exclusion; they need to be enabled to be active participants in policy, planning and decision-making, at both the national and local level.

Local communities and family

Local community hubs

112. A number of the groups involved in this research were either part of a community hub or had services operating out of their school. This was seen by the children, teen parents and schools as being helpful and supported their well-being, and that of their families. . Children in particular, spoke of the important role that schools can play in supporting them and their families through parent education, information, advice and providing space for services to work with families. . This is consistent with research which indicates that 'hard to reach' families are more likely to engage with services from within their community, with people and organisations they trust. . The children's views support the EAG's recommendation that the government support the effective delivery of services through local community hubs by:

- providing a clearing house on information and advice on developing hubs, including integrated and co-located models of service delivery, community school hubs, and marae as hubs

- partnering with community leaders, such as iwi, Boards of Trustees and school principals, churches, local government to assess local needs and opportunities for establishing hubs
- fund start-up of feasible hub initiatives.

Leisure and social activities

113. Children stressed the value and importance of leisure and social activities. The accessibility and affordability of leisure and social activities was a major issue for young people. Local programmes aimed at tackling child poverty and social exclusion need to work with children to develop leisure and social activities. Local government need to ensure that urban design, spatial planning and civic services support the social and developmental needs and interests of children and young people. Community-based recreational activities can facilitate and support children's participation in leisure, social and cultural activities with their peers, family and wider community. Local government, in partnership with others, need to ensure that playgrounds and parks are well designed, maintained and are safe and accessible places for children. Finally, consideration should be given to subsidising transport for children during popular activity and/or socialising times.

Housing

Home insulation and heating

114. The overwhelming message from the children was the need for better quality, insulated, warm homes that are affordable to heat. The children's views support the EAG's recommendation that the government extend and target the current subsidy programme for insulating homes known as 'Warm Up New Zealand: Heat Smart' with the longer-term aim of ensuring all the remaining un-insulated or poorly insulated homes (estimated at approximate 700,000) are properly insulated and effectively heated. Specific targeting is needed to incentivise landlords to insulate their rental properties.

Overcrowding

115. Children and teen parents raised concerns about the impacts of overcrowding on their lives and their families. A large proportion of these children identified as being a Pacific person. . Their concerns endorse the EAG's support of the implementation of Housing New Zealand Corporation's (HNZC) 'Orama Nui: Housing Strategy for Pacific Peoples' aimed at improving HNZC's ability to deliver services to Pacific peoples. The remaining children also called for a wider strategy to address overcrowding for all children living in poverty.

Regulate the quality of rental accommodation

116. All participants in this consultation understood the impact of low quality housing on children's health and well-being. . Many of the participants called for the regulation of rental properties through the creation of a 'Warrant of Fitness' so that rental properties would meet minimum health and safety standards. This is consistent with the EAG's recommendation that the government should ensure all rental housing (both social and private sector) meet minimum health and safety standards, according to an agreed 'Warrant of Fitness', such as the 'Healthy Housing Index'. These standards should be monitored and effectively enforced, and gradually increased over time.

Housing development and changes to state housing

117. Children spoke about the impact that insecure and unstable housing has on them, their families and their communities. Children who had been adversely affected by decisions made by authorities regarding housing called for greater consultation with children, their families and communities who could be affected by any proposals. They asked that decision-makers consider these views and the best interests of children and families.

Education, training and employment

Children's education, employment and training

118. Schools were seen by the children as places which have the potential to improve the well-being of children experiencing poverty and disadvantaged. Education was seen as key to gaining good employment. They spoke of the importance of parents, teachers and other adults encouraging them and having high educational aspirations for them. They said that they need to provide better training opportunities and actively engage students in appropriate courses; open up more work opportunities through apprenticeships or through paid work experience; provide more support to access higher education through grants, sponsorship, and training allowances; offer more incentives to gain work such as free transport; assist with school costs such as textbooks and subject fees; ensure adequate family income support; and promote a healthy balance between students' paid work and study.

Developing anti-bullying cultures

119. A very strong theme in the consultation was the stigma and shame of being poor and the repeated reference to the impact of being mocked, judged and bullied. This confirms the need for the Ministry of Education to work in partnership with schools and Boards of Trustees to develop anti-bullying cultures within the school

environment. In 2010, the Office of the Children's Commissioner[4] carried out an inquiry into the safety of students at schools and made a number of recommendations that would be useful to this work.

More inclusionary school practices

120. The visibility of children's poverty is heightened by the cost of school uniforms, stationary, school fees and their exclusion from school trips, school balls, sporting, and other activities. The pernicious effect on children excluded in this way was powerfully evoked by participants, and there is a strong case for schools to explore better and more inclusive ways of administering all these aspects of the school programme.

Access to computers

121. Children in the consultation spoke about the impact that poverty has on their ability to access technology and the impact this has on their school work. They spoke of the importance of programmes such as "Computers in Homes' to help them and their families gain access to this technology. A number of children commented on how this had positively impacted on their education. These views suggest that the government should support efforts to provide children and their families from low socio-economic communities with a computer, an internet connection, relevant training and technical support. This would enable them to become active participants in the online world and access online educational resources from home.

Food-in-schools

122. The children spoke of children going to school hungry and the impact this has on their ability to learn. Their views support the recommendation that the government design and implement a collaborative food-in-schools programme for decile 1-4 schools. Participants in this research and the literature spoke of the importance of any policy and subsequent implementation to be inclusive, and not stigmatise or cause shame. This suggests that it would be important to involve children in the design and delivery of these programmes.

School-based health and social services

123. When asked what schools and the government could do to help children and their families who don't have much money, a common theme was for social and health services, including medical, dental, and social services to be located within schools. Research in New Zealand supports the provision of school-based health and social services for young people. The government is investing additional funding until June 2016 to provide school-based health services to all decile 1 to 3 secondary schools. The EAG has stated that it supports this investment and has recommended that the

[4] Carroll-Lind, J. (2010). School safety: an inquiry into the safety of students at school. Office of the Children's Commissioner, New Zealand, pp.135-137.

government establish sustained funding for youth-friendly health and social services (including mental health, sexual health and contraceptive support) in all secondary schools, commencing with low-decile schools. The children's views support this recommendation.

Expanding Teen Parent Units in low-decile schools and evaluating student outcomes

124. The teen parents in this research spoke of the importance of teen parents being supported to gain qualifications while pregnant, and then alongside their child. They told us that the provision of transport was important for their participation at the unit, and that more generally, transport and time were barriers for them in engaging with health and other services. The young women said that it was also helpful that services came to the unit, supporting the well-being of the young woman, their pregnancy or child and their family. The teen parents' views support the EAG's call for services for young parents provided through Teen Parent Units to be expanded to enable more young parents to continue their education and be supported to access health and other services.

After-school and holiday programmes in low-decile schools

125. The children spoke about the importance of the government and communities creating job opportunities, and supporting people who do not have much money into work. This involved more affordable, quality childcare, and before and after school programmes. This aligns with the EAG's recommendations that the government:

    - progress the current Ministry of Education work programme to raise the quality of Early Childhood education (ECE) services and increase the supply of and access to ECE services to low income families
    - ensures that all schools provide appropriate after-school opportunities for all children living in poverty and disadvantage
    - supports the expansion of before school, after school and school holidays programmes for all children (aged 5 to 13 inclusive) living in poverty and disadvantage.

126. Many of the children identified what they would like to do in before and after school programmes. This included computer clubhouses, homework centres, and other social, sporting and cultural activities. Before and after school programmes have the potential to build social inclusion and support children's access to educational 'tools' such as computers while also providing them with space to do their homework, which some children raised as challenging in overcrowded housing.

127. Given the potential of before and after school and holiday programmes to meet children's needs and support children's development and well-being, it would be important that, where possible, they are involved in the design and evaluation of these services.

Health

Free healthcare for all children

128. The children called for free health care, including free or low cost medicine for children (under 18 years). Some children requested free dental care. The children's views support the Ministry of Health's continued implementation of free primary care visits for all children 24 hours/7 days a week from birth to aged 5 years inclusive, but call for this to be extended in the short term to all children under 18 years of age.

Develop a national plan to improve child nutrition

129. Children in this consultation spoke about hunger, food insecurity, and lacking nutritional food. The children's views also support the EAG's recommendation for a national child nutrition plan. When developing this plan the government could consider the children's ideas for accessing healthy foods. These include removing GST from fruit and vegetables, giving fruit and vegetables to people who cannot afford them, helping communities to produce their own food through initiatives such as community gardens and school gardens. .

Fair and adequate resources

130. Often children's ideas for eradicating child poverty were money-related. . Their ideas included providing financial support to relieve the immediate effects of poverty, and the government helping low-income families more with housing costs and household bills. There was a unanimous call for money to be distributed more fairly across society. Children spoke of the need for a fairer distribution of wealth by tackling income inequalities in society. Suggestions included increasing the minimum wage, increasing benefit rates, lowering taxes for those who don't have much money, and taxing the rich more.

More positive publicity

131. The children also told us that *kids get beaten down by negative stereotypes that they can't achieve as much.* They called for there to be more positive publicity around the good things that children are doing from areas of high deprivation. The media, central and local government, along with local communities, can take an active role in supporting this, and in addition, support children from these areas to achieve and enjoy well-being.

Conclusion

132. Child poverty is one of the most pressing social issues facing children and their families in New Zealand. This is not just an issue of concern for policy makers and community leaders. Children themselves are acutely aware of the issue, experience the impact of

it and have a wealth of ideas on how to improve the lives of children affected by poverty.

133. This consultation shows that by engaging with, and listening to children we have the opportunity to:

- begin to understand some of the experiences and realities of childhood poverty
- gain insight into the issues and concerns that children in low-income households identify as important
- learn how policies and the provision of services impact on children's lives
- gain valuable insights into how we can better meet their needs and in doing so improve their lives.

134. We cannot see the views of the 278 children and young people who participated in this consultation as necessarily being fully representative of how all children and young people experience, and perceive poverty. However, their experiences are very similar to those reported in other studies. The overall message from the children, young people and teen parents involved is that they can and want to be involved in the solutions to child poverty. . It is also clear that the experience of poverty is damaging and is felt in all areas of children's lives from health, economic, material, social, cultural, educational to relational constraints. Of particular significance is the impact poverty has on children's social relationships, social inclusion, school experience, sense of self and future prospects. Deep emotional costs were evident as many of the children struggled to cope with the personal and more hidden aspects of poverty associated with shame, sadness and the fear of difference and stigma.

135. The children and young people involved in this consultation have made useful suggestions for improving the lives of children and families living in poverty now, and for eradicating poverty in the longer term. It is time that decision-makers consider and give weight to what they and other children living in poverty have to say. In doing so, they are more likely to create better policies and services to address poverty.

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