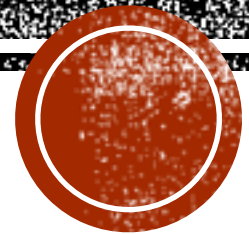


POVERTY CHILD
ABUSE AND
NEGLECT

Time for a new story



STORIES MATTER...

- Stories shape how we understand the world, our place in it, and our ability to change it
- But who tells, who is heard, and whose voice matters?



STORIES AND SYSTEM CHANGE

- Stories, make, prop up, and bring down systems (Saltmarshe, 2018).
- You cannot take away someone's story without giving them a new one. It is not enough to challenge an old narrative, however outdated and discredited it may be. Change happens only when you replace it with another (Monbiot, 2017: 1)



CHILD PROTECTION: THE CURRENT OFFICIAL STORY

- Child abuse and neglect caused usually by acts of omission or commission by parents or carers
- A core part of the professional task is to assess for, and deal with, risk in families
- The home is the primary focus, rather than the street, neighbourhood or city
- Getting the assessment of risk right and sharing information between professionals will save children generally
- Developing procedures and ensuring compliance with those procedures



POVERTY, ABUSE AND NEGLECT: THE CURRENT STORY

- Policy and practice responses have rendered it invisible and/or irrelevant





Child Welfare
Inequalities Project



CHILD WELFARE INEQUALITIES: A UK FOUR NATIONS STUDY

THE TEAM: PROFESSOR PAUL BYWATERS (PI) WITH BRID FEATHERSTONE, WILL MASON, BRIGID DANIELS, JONATHON SCOURFIELD, LISA BUNTING, NUGHMANA MIRZA, GERALDINE BRADY , CALUM WEBB AND JADE HOOPER



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Child Welfare Inequalities Project (CWIP)



The relationship between poverty, child abuse and neglect: an evidence review

Paul Bywaters, Lisa Bunting, Gwyn Davidson, Jennifer Hearnley,
Will Mason, Claire McCartan and Nicole Steels

This report examines evidence on two key aspects of the relationship between poverty and child abuse and neglect: how poverty affects a child's chance of being abused or neglected, and the impact abuse or neglect in childhood has on poverty in adult life.

JRF JOSEPH
ROUNTREE
FOUNDATION

INSPIRING
SOCIAL
CHANGE

- **Three key components:**
- International review of the association between poverty, child abuse and neglect
- Examination of the relationship between CPP or LAC rates with area level measures of deprivation (UK)
- Mixed methods case studies exploring the interplay between family circumstances and social work decision making.



THE EVIDENCE REVIEW

- There is a strong association between families' socio-economic circumstances and the chances that their children will experience CAN. But, poverty is neither a necessary nor sufficient factor in the occurrence of CAN
- Evidence of this association is found repeatedly across developed countries,
- Poverty as a contributory casual factor is supported by evidence from a number of studies – raising the income of families has a statistically significant impact on rates of CAN in empirical studies

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/relationship-between-poverty-child-abuse-and-neglect-evidence-review>



THE NATURE OF THE ASSOCIATION BETWEEN POVERTY AND CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

- We need to talk about inequality
- There is a gradient in the relationship between family socio-economic circumstances and rates of CAN across the whole of society
- It is not a straightforward divide between families in poverty and those who are not
- This finding mirrors evidence about inequities in child health and education
- **Direct effect** – material hardship or lack of money to buy in support
- **Indirect** – through parental stress and neighbourhood conditions
- It's **not** a background factor – it is implicated in all sorts of ways in the decisions made or not made every day



CHILD WELFARE INEQUALITIES

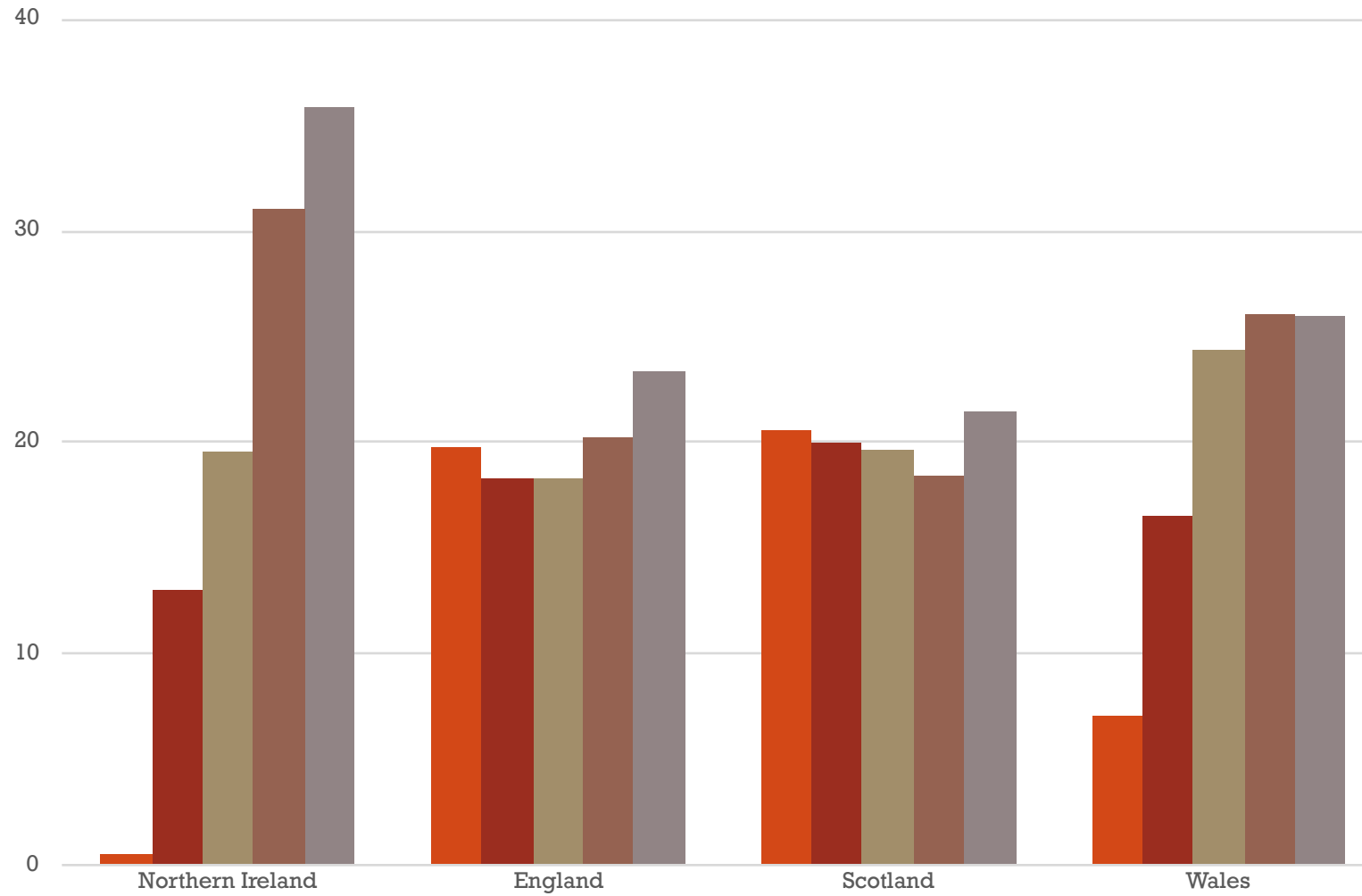
Definition: *inequity occurs when children and/or their parents face unequal **chances, experiences or outcomes** of involvement with child welfare services that are **systematically associated with structural social disadvantage** and are **unjust and avoidable**.*

3 dimensions of inequity

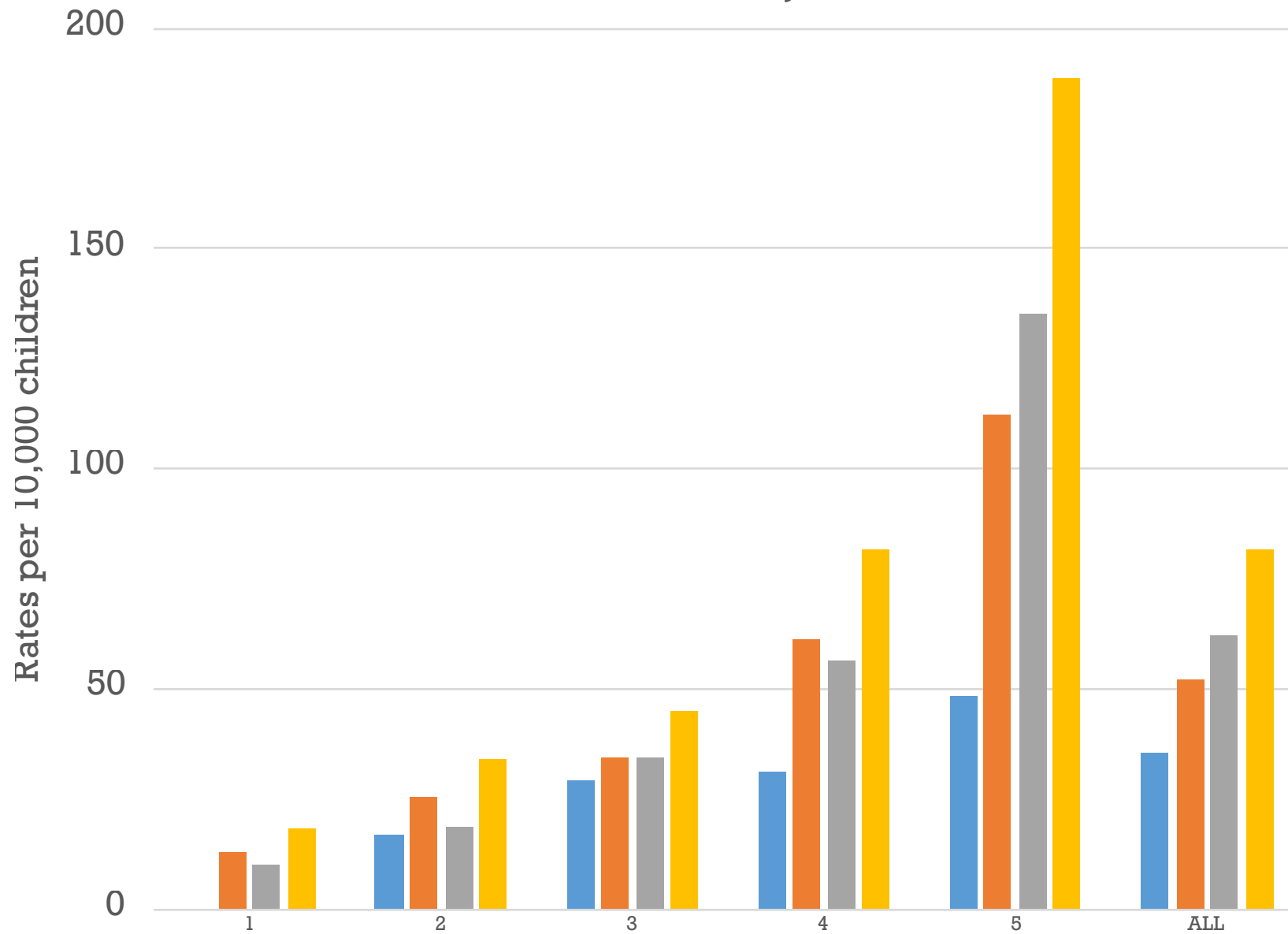
1. In who receives children's services interventions: **chances**
2. In how services respond: **experiences**
3. In childhood and adult **outcomes**

CWIP KEY FINDINGS

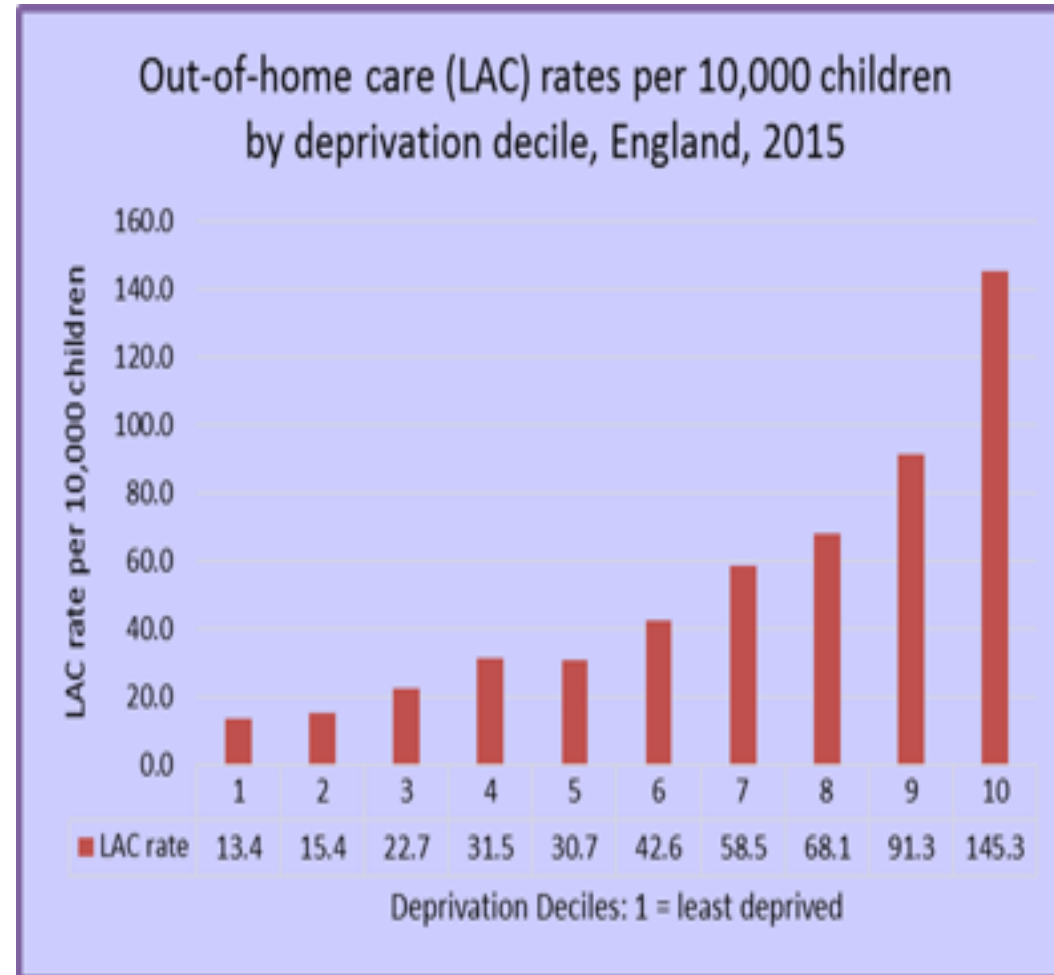
Child Population 0-17: % by Neighbourhood Deprivation



Countries, 2015



HEADLINE FINDINGS: SOCIAL DETERMINANTS AND THE SOCIAL GRADIENT



KEY HEADLINES FROM THE STUDY'S ANALYSIS OF QUANTITATIVE DATA

- Children in the 10% most deprived small neighbourhoods in England are more than 10 times more likely to be CPP or LAC than children in the least deprived 10%.
- A social gradient in children's chances of an intervention not a divide between families in poverty and the rest.
- Each 10% increase in neighbourhood deprivation brings a 30% increase in LAC and CPP rates.



OVERALL...

- In the most deprived neighbourhoods roughly one child in 60 was likely to be in care and in the least deprived part of our country it was one child in 660.
- The differences in terms of rates of removal between children in particular areas map onto other inequalities such as mental health issues and life expectancy rates
- Poverty and the relationship with inequality (Wilkinson and Pickett, 2009)

CASE- STUDY FINDINGS: POVERTY AS A CONTEXT

- Poor localities are the usual sites of social work practice – this is an accepted norm.
- But there is often a lack of connection with the places and contexts in which families live
- Poverty is ingrained, endemic but usually not visible in practice responses and, though there were differences, this was surprisingly consistent across all the sites



SOCIAL WORK RESPONSES

- Social workers don't see anti poverty activity as 'core business' – they say they focus on risk / parenting and that others should be addressing issues of deprivation (food, warmth, shelter)
- Poverty considered 'too big to tackle' in a context of ever diminishing resources
- The availability of services shape and constrain social work analysis
- In their attempts to practice equitably, some social workers consciously disengaged with the social and spatial distribution of social work demand
- Some systems and practices can reinforce the shame and suffering of poverty for family members



CHANGING THE STORY...

- Changing the story isn't enough in itself, but it has often been foundational to real changes. Making an injury visible and public is usually the first step in remedying it, and political change often follows culture, as what was long tolerated is seen to be intolerable, or what was overlooked becomes obvious. **Which means that every conflict is in part a battle over the story we tell, or who tells and who is heard** (Solnit, 2016: xiv, our emphasis).



STORIES NEED TO BE

- Rooted in evidence and values.
- Engender a sense of hope and the possibility of change
- Told by good story tellers!



A SOCIAL MODEL

- The social model has challenged thinking across a range of fields, including disability and mental health, It specifically draws attention to the economic, environmental and cultural barriers faced by people with differing levels of (dis)ability.
- This is a vital project for those concerned with protecting children and young people– what are the economic, environmental and cultural barriers to ensuring they are cared for safely and their relational needs and identities respected?
- New story tellers and marginalised stories become possible



KEY ELEMENTS

- Tackle root causes
- Re-think the relationship between the state, families and communities
- Relationship(S) based practice and co-production
- Embed ethics and human rights in everyday talk and practices



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