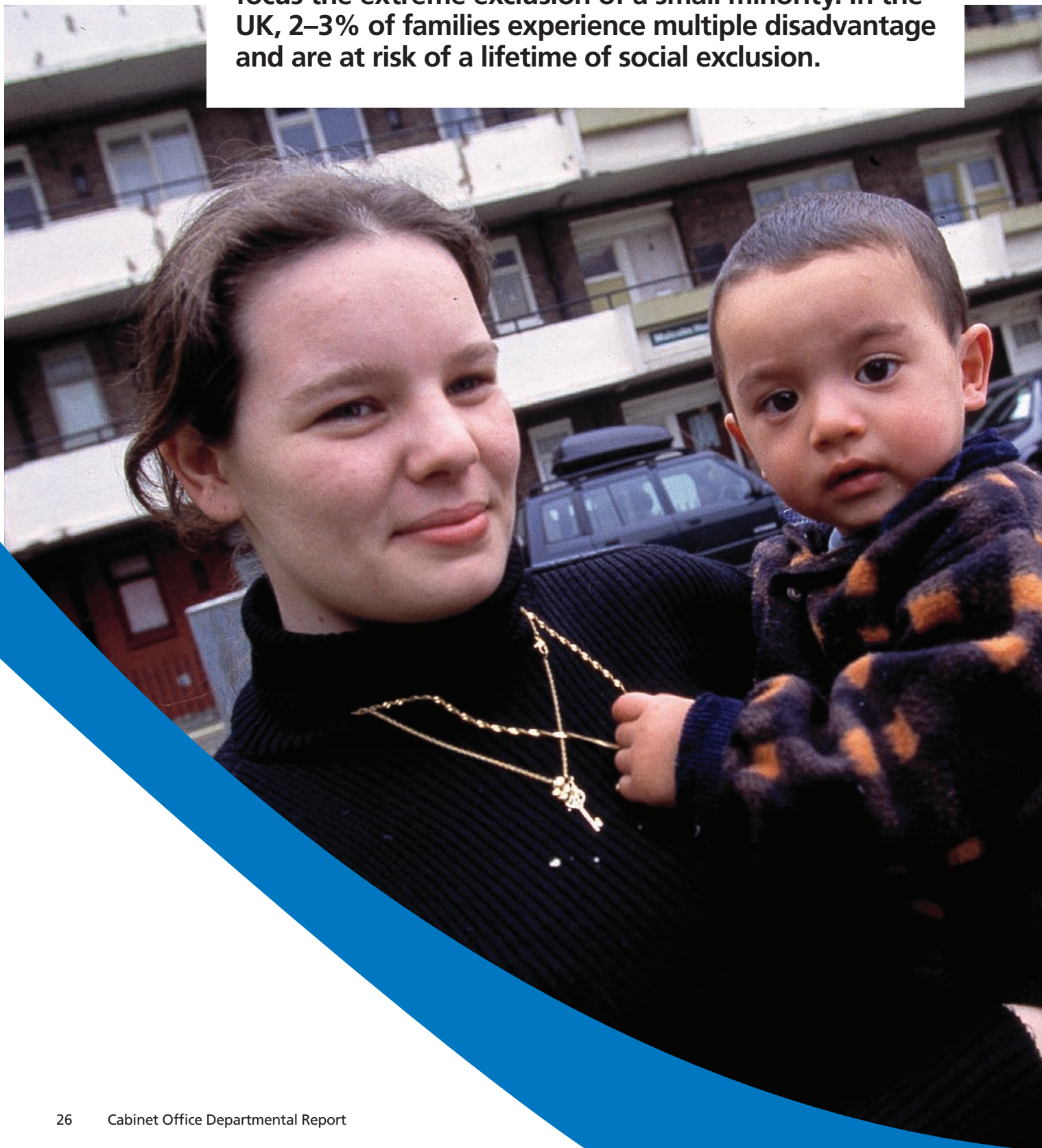


Making government work better by...

# REACHING OUT

Since 1997, we have seen significant success in tackling poverty and exclusion. But this brings into sharper focus the extreme exclusion of a small minority. In the UK, 2–3% of families experience multiple disadvantage and are at risk of a lifetime of social exclusion.



No one should be shut off from the opportunities in life which most of us take for granted; but for a small group of people, turning the curve from persistent failure to success takes concentrated and sustained effort. The core purpose of the Social Exclusion Task Force is to get the systems in place so that support reaches those who need it most.

Since 1997, the number of children living in poverty has fallen by 600,000, more people have been brought back into employment, the number of rough sleepers has fallen by three quarters, and teenage pregnancies are at their lowest level since the mid-1980s. This success needs to be sustained, and more needs to be done to support those most at risk, through early identification and preventative action.

In May 2006, the Prime Minister appointed Hilary Armstrong as Minister for Social Exclusion – the first such Minister at Cabinet level – mandating her to, ‘spearhead a renewed drive to address the most socially excluded in our society’. Hilary Armstrong announced the creation of the Social Exclusion Task Force on 13 June 2006 as the body responsible for driving this agenda forwards across government.

Social exclusion cuts across many issues, including work, health, education and crime. Hence it requires joined-up solutions. This is why the Task Force is based centrally in the Cabinet Office. It supports spending departments by fulfilling a strategic coordinating role on social exclusion policy across government, and works together with many other departments, notably the Department for Education and Skills, Department for Work and Pensions, Communities and Local Government, Home Office, Department of Health, Department for Constitutional Affairs


and HM Treasury, to champion the needs of the most disadvantaged members of society.

The Task Force published *Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion* on 11 September 2006, with contributions from many departments. This document sets out how government will address the most socially excluded members of society. Naomi Eisenstadt, who leads the Social Exclusion Task Force, stressed the main purpose of the plan, ‘It is outcomes on the ground that really matter and the Action Plan gives us the blueprint to make things happen.’

The Task Force has also worked to ensure the plan is reflected and reinforced in a number of other recent government strategy documents, including the local government White Paper, the children in care Green Paper called *Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children and Young People in Care*, and the revised Teenage Pregnancy Strategy.

The Action Plan underlines the Government’s commitment to social justice through policies to expand opportunity and tackle the most deep-seated causes and symptoms of social exclusion.

Chris Cuthbert, who worked on it, referred to it as, ‘an outstanding piece of joined-up government’. He continues, ‘It’s about identifying those who are most at risk, as early as possible and getting agencies to work together to intervene and respond.’



**The Action Plan gives us the blueprint to make things happen.**

Naomi Eisenstadt,  
Director, Social  
Exclusion Task Force

# Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion



As well as the Action Plan and a series of pilot projects, the Social Exclusion Task Force is running a Families at Risk Review to look at how best to provide an effective family support system for excluded and at-risk families. It organised three regional conferences in late March to update stakeholders on progress, gain buy-in from the front line, and gather evidence for the Review.

The Task Force is also currently supporting the Department for Education and Skills in creating a Centre of Excellence for Children's and Family Services.

Going forward, the role of the Social Exclusion Task Force is to work alongside other departments, which continue to have responsibility for delivering social exclusion policies on the ground. Ann Watt, Deputy Director, summarises by saying, 'All our work is collaborative and we are working closely with HM Treasury, and across government, to ensure that the next generation of Public Service Agreement targets addresses the unique needs of the most socially excluded.'

## Identifying and preventing social exclusion – pilot projects

### Health-led parenting

This programme of intensive home visiting, based on a very successful US programme, will test a model of early identification and prevention by engaging the most at-risk families. Positive outcomes from the American programme, which has been running for 27 years, include fewer cases of child abuse and neglect, improved quality of mothers' prenatal diets, fewer arrests and fewer drug or alcohol related behavioural problems when the child is aged 15. 64 local authorities and primary care trusts jointly bid to run these projects. 10 have been selected and work went live in April 2007.

This project is jointly led by the Department of Health and Department for Education and Skills, with active support from the Social Exclusion Task Force.

## Reaching Out: An Action Plan on Social Exclusion



### Improving life opportunities – what's been done so far:

- Over £21 billion has been invested on early years and childcare services since 1997.
- Through tax credits and investment, 600,000 UK children have been lifted out of relative poverty since 1998–99 (both before and after housing costs).
- Early learning partnerships have been running in 19 areas since October 2006.
- We are on track to establish 50 Family Intervention Projects around the country.
- 2.5 million more people are in employment.
- Educational attainment has risen at every Key Stage.
- Rough sleeping has fallen by around three quarters.

### Supporting excluded adults

These 12 pilot projects will test the effectiveness of alternative approaches to improving outcomes for adults facing chronic exclusion. The aims of the pilots are to improve individuals' ability to engage with services; increase the support available to excluded adults with multiple needs; and help people negotiate points of transition in their lives. An invitation to tender for the projects was published in the national press on 14 March 2007. Pilots will be announced by summer 2007 and launched in September 2007.

These projects are led by Communities and Local Government, with active support from the Social Exclusion Task Force, but jointly funded and overseen with the Home Office, Department of Health and Department for Work and Pensions.

### Helping families

'Multi-systemic therapy' is an intensive, home-based intervention for families with children or teenagers who have social, emotional and behavioural problems. Therapists engage family members in identifying and changing individual, family and environmental factors thought to contribute to problem behaviour. Intervention may include efforts to improve communication, parenting skills, peer relations, school performance and social networks. The Department of Health is aiming to select up to six pilot sites by autumn 2007.

This project is led by the Department of Health, with active support from the Social Exclusion Task Force.