



Office of the  
Deputy Prime Minister  

---

Creating sustainable communities

# **A New Direction for The Social Exclusion Unit 2004-2005**

**Improving service delivery  
to the most disadvantaged**

---

**September 2004**



**Social  
Exclusion  
Unit**

The logo for the Social Exclusion Unit, featuring a stylized graphic of three overlapping circles in red, green, and blue above the text "Social Exclusion Unit" in a bold, sans-serif font.

## Background

1. The **Breaking the Cycle** series of reports published by the Social Exclusion Unit in September 2004 provided an opportunity to take stock and assess the state of the national picture on deprivation.
2. The reports show that the Government's investment and reform programme has delivered real progress:
  - unemployment is the lowest it has been for a generation - driven by a more stable economy and the New Deals;
  - some of society's most deep-rooted social problems like rough sleeping have been turned round - made possible by radical new approaches to tackling these persistent problems; and
  - the Government has started to reverse the historic increase in child poverty and are on track to reduce it by a quarter through early years support and an annual £10 billion investment in financial support for children.<sup>1</sup>
3. **Breaking the Cycle** also shows that services need to work harder helping those who are still at risk - often the most vulnerable. And the reports highlight the need for continued action to prevent disadvantage being passed from one generation to another.

## Priorities for the future

4. **Breaking the Cycle** sets out four clear cross-Government priorities:
  - We must work harder to sustain the *progress* to date and break the link between inherited disadvantage and life chances.
  - We must keep up the pressure on the *economic drivers* of social exclusion - building on the employment gains and focusing on areas where there remain pockets of high worklessness.
  - We must follow through on Spending Review 2004 commitments to tackle *four specific priorities*: health inequalities, educational under-attainment, homelessness and areas of high crime.
  - And, in doing all of this, we must ensure our *public services work together* to deliver opportunity for all - including those that are 'hardest to help' and might otherwise miss out from the progress enjoyed by the rest of us. As part of Government's wider drive, we must further personalise public services for the most disadvantaged.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Government has increased financial support for children through tax credits, Child Benefit and other benefits by £10.4 billion since 1997, a real terms rise of 72%. HM Treasury (2004) Executive Summary, Child Poverty Review.

## A new direction - joined-up reform to open opportunity

5. Responding to the new research, the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister have set a new direction of work for the Social Exclusion Unit to improve the life chances of the most vulnerable groups in society.
6. The Social Exclusion Unit will consider how public services, in areas like education, health and housing, could deliver more effectively for the people currently missing out. The Unit will look at the funding, targets and systems that have worked at a national and local level to tackle disadvantage. We will be building on the Unit's past reports to support implementation of past proposals and learn lessons for the future. And it will consider by what means disadvantage can be prevented from being passed from one generation to another, considering both financial and social capital.
7. The Unit will also focus on how innovation in new technology can provide benefits for excluded groups. This work aims to harness the power of new technologies for the good - opening opportunity through joined up service delivery and information sharing to better tackle problems experienced by the most marginalised groups.
8. Put together, this will mean a co-ordinated set of projects looking at how mainstream services could work better to meet the needs of excluded people – linked to the Government's overall work on improving service delivery. As well as looking at crucial services like education, health and housing, we will be looking at how we make sure that people are given the voice they need to run and improve their own communities. The much more comprehensive and integrated approach set out in the ODPM's Sustainable Communities Plan is at the heart of getting this right.
9. This cross-cutting remit builds on the Unit's continuing role, outlined in Spending Review 2004, to "work with departments to narrow the gap in outcomes between deprived groups and the national average".<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>2</sup> A Fairer Society, Stronger Communities, 2004.

## A new joined-up programme of work

10. This broad remit means that the Social Exclusion Unit will deliver a set of linked projects, policy programmes and reports on better service delivery for excluded people, including addressing the specific needs of disadvantaged people for more personalised services.
11. The new set of projects will include extensive research and consultation – both reviewing evidence and local on-the-ground work. They will result in action that will be delivered through a number of government departments. The projects are expected to produce agreed cross-Government action over the next 12-18 months. The detail on consultations will be announced later this year. The projects that will make up part of this overall programme will include:

### **Supporting disadvantaged adults:**

12. People who have poor basic skills, have health problems or physical and mental disabilities or are from certain ethnic minority groups are among the most disadvantaged in the UK.<sup>3</sup> This project aims to take forward reforms of mainstream services, like health, housing and employment services, to reach these most disadvantaged groups more effectively.

#### Key facts:

- adults with poor basic skills are up to five times more likely to be unemployed or out of the labour market altogether;<sup>4</sup>
- 30% of disabled people of working age have no qualifications whatsoever, compared to only 12% of working age adults without a disability;<sup>5</sup>
- infant mortality for children of African-Caribbean and Pakistani mothers is 100% higher than for children of white mothers.<sup>6</sup>

### **Making a successful transition to adulthood:**

13. Some young adults (16-25 year-olds) face acute and combined problems such as homelessness, unemployment and drug dependency. This programme will be the first complete analysis of these multiple complex issues. The project will look at the causes behind some young adult's troubled lives and look to see how services can be improved to prevent these people falling through a gap in support.

#### Key facts:

- young people aged 16-25 are twice as likely to be unemployed compared to their older counterparts in the UK labour market;<sup>7</sup>
- 8% of 16 to 24 year olds in England and Wales used Class A drugs in the twelve months 2002-3;<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> ODPM/SEU (2004) Breaking the Cycle

<sup>4</sup> Bynner and Parsons (1997) It Doesn't Get any Better

<sup>5</sup> Smith, A and Twomey, B, Labour market experiences of people with disabilities (National Statistics 2002)

<sup>6</sup> DWP (2003) Opportunity for All

<sup>7</sup> Princes Trust (2002) Three Year Strategy 2002 - 2005

<sup>8</sup> DoH (2003)

- young people who have been in care are two and a half times more likely to be teenage parents.<sup>9</sup>

### **Better service delivery for excluded older people:**

14. Older people remain particularly at risk of exclusion. Poverty is an issue for some, but so is exclusion from services, community activities, social isolation and discrimination. This project aims to improve the well being and quality of life of excluded older people. It will focus on service provision rather than changes to income, tax and benefits but will assess the broad economic picture and the advantages of preventative services. The project will, for example, look at how excluded older people can have greater involvement in the health, care, education and other services.

#### Key facts:

- pensioner poverty has declined but is still above 20%;<sup>10</sup>
- among women aged 85 and over who live in private households, 71% lived alone in 2001 in Great Britain;<sup>11</sup>
- 40% of the NHS budget and 50% of social services is spent on over 65 year olds;<sup>12</sup>
- two thirds of hospital beds are used by people over 65.<sup>13</sup>

### **Better service delivery for disadvantaged people who move frequently:**

The lives of some disadvantaged groups are characterised by frequent moves from one area to another. While this is positive for some, for others moving can compound difficulties in accessing the basic services they need. The project will look to prevent problems for the people who move, the areas they move to and the services they use. The experience of a number of groups will be considered, including people leaving the care system, prisons or the armed services, homeless people and gypsies and travellers. The project will focus specifically on the impact of frequent moving, building on existing initiatives to support these groups.

#### Key facts:

- around 10% of the population moved at least once during 2003-04.<sup>14</sup> Many moves will bring positive economic benefit, but for vulnerable groups frequent moves can compound social disadvantage;
- there are currently around 97,000 households in temporary accommodation;<sup>15</sup>
- frequent moving in childhood is associated with later homelessness.<sup>16</sup>

Social Exclusion Unit, September 2004

<sup>9</sup> Social Exclusion Unit (2003) A Better Education for Children in Care

<sup>10</sup> DWP (2004) Households below average income 2002/2003 HMSO

<sup>11</sup> Office for National Statistics (2004)

<sup>12</sup> DH (2001) NSF for Older People

<sup>13</sup> DH (2001) NSF for Older People

<sup>14</sup> ODPM, Survey of English Housing Provisional Results: 2003-04

<sup>15</sup> ODPM (2004) Homelessness and Housing Support Directorate, *Quarterly Statistics Release*, provisional data for 1st quarter

<sup>16</sup> Safe in the City (1999) Taking Risks: An analysis of the Risks of Homelessness for Young People in London.