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A Window of Opportunity for Preventive Policymaking? Comparing policies by the UK and Scottish Governments

Chapter 7 - 'Troubled Families' and social policy

A focus on families and children is a central part of the prevention agenda. The UK and Scottish governments appear to describe this task very differently, with the UK's explicit focus on its 'troubled families' (TF) programme rejected by the Scottish Government which promises to focus more positively on the 'assets' of individuals and families.[1] The UK's approach is generally more controversial, following its high-profile relaunch based on a quick and emotional prime ministerial response to the 'people with a twisted moral code' who took part in the London riots in 2011 (Crossley, 2015a; Tyler, 2013)

In that context, there are remarkable similarities in policy and policymaking. For both governments, this field represents a key target for prevention policy as a proposed solution to three crises in politics (chapter 1). Rather than commit to major economic redistribution through taxation and social security spending, governments seek to address inequalities with targeted public services, such as parenting programmes, under the banner of 'early intervention' (chapter 3). Rather than spend a disproportionate amount of resources on expensive reactive care for a small number of people, governments seek to intervene early in people's lives – and, in some cases, before they are born - to ward off future problems. Rather than direct this activity from the 'top down', governments seek to delegate much responsibility to local authorities and partnerships. Further, they face the same need to strike a balance between universal services, which often benefit 'middle class' populations disproportionately, and the expansion of targeted programmes with the potential to address greater need but stigmatise target populations (chapter 5).

Consequently, until 2011, there were fewer explicit rhetorical differences in UK and Scottish Government policy and we identify the same basic 'waves' of policy, prioritising social determinant, punitive, and 'whole family' approaches over time, alongside similar reference points such as Every Child Matters (UK) and Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) (Scotland).

A focus on these common pressures to make and sell policy helps us generate a wider perspective on the face-value differences between UK and Scottish government policy. It also helps qualify the idea that the UK's TF initiative is a classic top-down, evidence-free, and quick emotional reaction. The UK government's high profile reaction to crisis looks different when we consider (a) its longer term origins and progress, which we consider in this chapter, and (b) the limits to 'evidence based policymaking', which Cairney (2016a; 2016b; 2016c) describes separately.

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[1] In this field, the UK government generally legislates for England and Wales, with only some sections of legislation applying to Scotland (and, in many cases, Northern Ireland). The Welsh government has some discretion to use other policy instruments, such as funding and guidance, to go its own way.

We use the structure outlined in chapters 1 and 2 – identifying a relationship between windows of opportunity, the social construction of target populations, and emergent behaviour from complex systems - to examine the direction of travel of families policies, asking:

1. Have the UK and Scottish governments produced a different policy trajectory, and was there a distinctive 'window of opportunity' for the introduction of the TF programme in the UK? We consider the meaning of families policy, trace their common policy histories in the context of a UK-wide tax and social security system (chapter 4), and discuss the extent to which the TF marks major divergence from a Scottish approach.
2. How does each government socially construct target populations, and what is the effect on policy development? We examine the extent to which TF marks a fundamental divergence in the ways in which each government describes their target populations.
3. To what extent has each government relied on local authorities and partnerships to deliver its national agenda, and what outcomes or practices have 'emerged' from local activity? We examine the 'expectations gap' when central governments identify national aims but encourage local discretion in delivery.

Have the UK and Scottish governments produced a different policy trajectory?

To identify a distinctive window of opportunity for the TF agenda, we need to compare it to the UK and Scottish government's previous 'families policies', since we are examining how much of a break from the past TF represents and if the UK Government has suddenly embarked on a different trajectory from Scotland. Yet, we face an immediate analytical problem: it is difficult to say what a 'family' is, and this contributes to problems with defining policy (Wasoff and Hill, 2002; Wasoff et al, 2002). Families policy is a key example of an agenda that represents part of, and is affected by, many other policies such as tax credits, benefits for children, education, social work, housing, disability, and health. It may receive particular emphasis in each policy area, or policy may just so happen to affect particular families (see for example Goodley and Runswick-Cole, 2011 on 'disabled children').

The specific idea of families policy is difficult to contain within a distinct government department or unit, or the department's relatively low status compared to the Treasury or high spending departments may undermine its role in policy coordination. Wasoff et al (2002: 2) suggest that pre-devolution families policies tended largely to be implicit (with exceptions such as family law and the establishment of rights for children), with no single document pulling together all relevant initiatives and a minister with 'children' in their title only a recent invention.

Tracing a detailed common policy history often involves piecing together policies from strategy documents in many areas, and tracking local variations in delivery with the potential for important divergences in practice. If 'families policy' relates to so many activities, directly and indirectly, as analysts we can provide competing narratives of policy from the same body of evidence by describing some initiatives as central and other peripheral (Cairney, 2012; 2013). Similarly, although governments pursue multiple initiatives at the same time, we can

generate different perspectives on the direction of travel from trends that we identify as the most important.

So, can we define a common UK and Scottish Government 'families policy'?

UK and Scottish government families policies - specifically in relation to prevention and early intervention - are identifiable. They share broad elements, driven partly by (a) their common aim to focus on specific target groups within a framework of universal services in areas such as health, education, and social work, and (b) in the context of the UK Government controlling taxation and social security, and overseeing cross-cutting initiatives such as Sure Start, Family Tax Credits (which can be used to help pay for childcare), and paid parental leave (Cornford et al, 2013: 3; Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008: 5). Further, if families policy is everywhere, it is significant that governments emphasise a small number of initiatives and not others.

Focusing on the intersection with prevention policies - targeting inequalities, public service costs, and governance reform – we suggest that families policy comes in waves. Both governments pursue notionally positive and negative agendas simultaneously but placed initial emphasis (from 1999) on supporting individuals to reintegrate within society, then (from the early to mid-2000s) on punishing them for deviant behaviour, before returning to a less punitive focus on 'whole family' and relatively supportive measures. Both governments link families policies strongly to parenting skills (Cornford et al, 2013: 13), reinforcing the 'notion that individual parenting practices can be held accountable for children's future life chances' (Gillies, 2014). We can also identify a more ad hoc sense of attention to child protection after key cases of abuse (Laming, 2003; 2009; Munro, 2011). The *appearance* of an ever-changing mix may reflect the jumble of potentially contradictory ideas on which such policies seem to rely (Parr, 2009: 1258) and the tendency of policymakers to highlight one aspect when the need arises.

The first wave in the early years of devolution: a focus on social exclusion

The Scottish Government appeared to adopt the term 'social inclusion' to distance itself from some of the stigmatising policies of the UK government's past - which often appeared to blame individuals or classes of people for their 'social exclusion' - and focus instead on establishing a positive role for, and more equal access to, public services (Fawcett, 2003; Keating, 2010: 243). This new emphasis was a precursor to the 'assets based' approach to individuals and communities pursued strongly from 2013 (chapter 5).

However, there are common UK and Scottish government themes, including the need for better cross-departmental and public service strategies to focus on multiple indicators of potential inclusion/ exclusion, including: employability (chapter 8[2]), housing, early years and lifelong learning, physical and mental health (chapter 6), addiction, discrimination, community development, and economic regeneration (Keating, 2010: 240; Webster, 2000). While the UK

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[2] PAC – when we have a full draft, we need to check the overlap between chapters. E.g. this one is closely connected to employability chapter (TF has employment as indicator of a family 'turned around', while MH chapter should link to potential problems with employability measures in relation to disability).

Government, under Labour, established a dedicated unit on social exclusion to address its cross-cutting nature, the Scottish Government attempted to 'mainstream' inclusion within government policy as a whole, and to foster Social Inclusion (then Community Planning) Partnerships to coordinate local public body activities (Keating, 2010: 246).

Perhaps the most important comparison regards each government's definition of social exclusion as a policy problem and its solution, combining a notional left wing perspective focusing primarily on the redistributive role of the state and the structural aspects of deprivation often out of the control of individuals, and a notional right wing perspective focusing on the need for individuals to respond more effectively to the market, which (for example) requires the state to remove benefits that provide disincentives to work (Hayden and Jenkins, 2014: 632). The latter may also prompt the identification of a causal connection between poverty and criminality and shift the balance from supporting to punishing individuals (Levitas, 2012: 6; Hayden and Jenkins, 2013: 460).

Each government operated within a welfare state with redistributive elements (chapters 3-5), but explored new ways to understand and address poverty and deprivation, focusing more on reintegrating individuals 'into society and allowing them to make their contribution to economic and social life, to the ultimate benefit of all' (Keating, 2010: 243). This takes place primarily through programmes focusing on 'empowerment' by boosting 'self-belief' and 'the individual's sense of agency and resilience' rather than changing the socioeconomic context in which they operate (Bond-Taylor, 2015: 374). It is difficult to describe this simply as a shift to the right - since a focus on boosting an individual's or self-belief is not necessarily 'neoliberal' - but straightforward to identify similar shifts of emphasis in each government.

The second wave: anti-social behaviour (ASB)

ASB policy involved identifying and punishing deviant behaviour and blaming parents for the anti-social behaviour of their children (Parr, 2011: 719). Each government used legislation to introduce anti-social behaviour orders ('ASBOs'), 'designed to prevent behaviour including theft, intimidation, drunkenness and violence by individuals and families who make life difficult for their communities' (McGarvey and Cairney, 2008: 213; Keating, 2005: 203). It marked a shift of emphasis from the role of social exclusion often outside of the control of individuals, to holding individuals responsible for their behaviour. It also had the potential to undermine the inclusion agenda substantially if, for example, someone subject to an ASBO became vulnerable to reduced entitlement to social housing (Flint and Nixon, 2006: 947-8; Tisdall, 2006: 104; McGarvey and Cairney, 2008: 216).

ASB was a 'recurring theme' of UK Labour Government policy from its election in 1997 (House of Commons Library, 2003: 3). It had introduced ASBOs in the *Crime and Disorder Act 1998*, but 'very little use was made of them at first' (2003: 12). Its White Paper *Respect and Responsibility* (Home Office, 2003; Community Justice Portal, 2003) marked a new phase, designing the *Anti-social Behaviour Act 2003* 'to make the process simpler and easier', and prompt a major rise in their uptake (Flint and Nixon, 2006: 944). It linked ASB to a 'lack of

respect for other people' (Home Office, 2003 in Flint and Nixon, 2006: 939) and used its *Respect* agenda to promote the idea that:

- individuals are responsible for regulating their own behaviour, but
- local authorities, police forces, housing bodies and landlords have the power to enforce norms of civil behaviour, through measures such as tenancy contracts, magistrates'/ Crown applications to restrict behaviour with anti-social behaviour orders (ASBOs), and new powers (some in the *Police Reform Act 2002*) to allow officers to disperse crowds and oblige people to give their names when suspected of ASB (2006: 942-3; House of Commons Library, 2003: 15).

Flint and Nixon (2006: 946; 951) describe ASBOs as a new 'technology of crime control' which: blur the civil/ criminal justice boundary, by introducing a criminal offence pursued by non-Police agencies and subject to less demanding 'civil rules of evidence'; widen the net of criminal behaviour; strengthen the link between entitlement to social security or social housing and individual behaviour; and, extend the role of government in family life, particularly when combined with 'acceptable behaviour contracts' between agencies and parents and 'parenting orders' (POs) issued by magistrates. POs initially require a parent to attend a training course, but some stipulate the actions a parent should take to 'exercise control over their child's behaviour', and the possibility of criminal sanctions (fines) for non-compliance (House of Commons Library, 2003: 17; Burney and Geldsthorne, 2008: 472). The ASB agenda began in housing before being 'swiftly applied to children' (Tisdall, 2006: 104), prompting a shift in social work activity from child protection to ASB (Parr, 2009: 1261-2).

Initial similarities in Scotland

This agenda was high profile in Scotland, and the Scottish Government introduced similar measures (agreements, contracts, orders) to allow public bodies and social landlords to regulate behaviour (Flint and Nixon, 2006; Tisdall, 2006). The new emphasis followed Labour's control of the crime portfolio (held by its coalition partner, the Liberal Democrats, from 1999-2003) and new-found ability to follow its UK counterpart in pursuing a more punitive and populist initiative to tackle 'neds' (the Scottish phrase for 'chavs', and possibly an abbreviation for 'non-educated delinquents'), link the poor behaviour of children to dysfunctional families, and extend the use of ASBOs to children from age 12 (Keating, 2010: 252; McAra, 2007).

This agenda seems more significant in Scotland because key measures brought Scottish and UK Government policy closer together. They did so by reducing Scottish policy distinctiveness, summed up by 'penal welfarism', built on Scotland's: separate criminal justice system (common law) and 'strongly independent judiciary'; central role for social workers in probation and rehabilitation; distinctive 'civic and political culture, with a greater emphasis on the public provision of welfare and mutual support'; and, policy autonomy in key areas before devolution in 1999 (McAra, 2008: 482; 490; 493). Similarly, Smith and Whyte (2008: 19) describe a Scottish 'tradition' characterised by 'a need to cater for children's physical and social needs, prevention rather than cure, [and] a focus on the needs of the child rather than their misdeeds'.

Therefore, the newly-blurred civil/ criminal justice boundary is particularly significant, since the *Antisocial Behaviour etc. (Scotland) Act 2004*, extending the use of ASBOs to children, had an impact on Scotland's distinctive 'children's hearing system' in which the courts did not play a primary role (Tisdall, 2006: 103). The Act allowed the Sherriff court to grant ASBOs and undermined the core principle of the hearing system: 'the child's welfare must be *the* paramount consideration' (2006: 105).

McAra (2008: 491) suggests that this movement from prioritising child welfare to favouring other considerations, such as the risk of youth crime, began before devolution – the *Children (Scotland) Act 1995* – and accelerated after it. After early attempts to fuse social inclusion with community safety, including 'more effective early intervention to promote parenting skills and an increase in (community-based) cultural and sporting programmes to enable young people to fulfil their potential', the Scottish Government adopted the UK's 'harder-edged populist rhetoric' and 'more punitive and exclusionary' ASB policy (2008: 492-4). Similarly, the introduction of POs in Scotland from 2005 (albeit as a 'last resort') represents a reversal of the decision in 1998 for Scotland to opt-out of UK legislation and continue with voluntary measures (Walters and Woodward, 2007: 8). Overall, it represents a shift in emphasis away from social inclusion (2007: 10).

This shift was short-lived in Scotland and there were clear policy differences in implementation. Both the Scottish *and UK* governments criticised local authorities for their lack of take-up of ASBOs (Nixon et al, 2010: 306). However, Scottish local authorities and front-line staff were far more reluctant to use their new powers than their counterparts in England, and the Scottish Government's favoured governance style (to delegate and give some autonomy to local bodies) precluded top-down imposition of national policies (McAra, 2008: 494; Casey and Flint, 2008). Initiatives such as POs were also piloted carefully (Hutton et al, 2007: 1).

By the time the SNP government was elected in 2007, 'there had been no parenting orders, only nine ASBOs for under-16s, 14 dispersal orders, and 67 electronic taggings of under-16s' (McAra, 2008: 494). Then, the SNP rejected the ASB agenda almost as soon as it entered government in 2007 (Keating, 2010: 252-3), presenting instead 'the explicit aim of incorporating a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention to avert misconduct before it occurs rather than relying on enforcement action once ASB has escalated to serious levels' (Nixon et al, 2010: 320; although note that previous government also used 'early intervention' to justify the use of ASBOs from age 12 – Tisdall, 2006: 107).

The third wave: family intervention and parenting programmes

Families and parenting projects represent a third wave, with both governments signalling some movement from the punitive ASB agenda towards '"whole family' approaches and parenting interventions" which represent 'a more balanced approach incorporating measures to address the underlying causes of problem behaviour' and accentuate – at least rhetorically – the assets or strengths of families (Nixon et al, 2010: 305; Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008: 8). In this context, 'underlying' refers primarily to factors affecting parents and parenting

– for example their 'worklessness, poor mental health or substance misuse' - rather than socioeconomic root causes out of their control (2008: 4; Churchill and Clarke, 2010; Kendall et al, 2010). Consequently, key projects 'teach parents basics such as how to parent children and set boundaries, establish routines, provide regular meals and maintain a clean and safe environment for their children' (Casey, 2012: 4).

Both governments have the same reference point, to intervene as early as possible in people's lives, by targeting populations using 'risk factors' such as: 'emotional and mental health problems; disorder in the local community; a lack of extra-curricular activities; school exclusion; having a parent who is an offender; poor relations with parents and/or not spending much time with parents'; and, developing projects to boost their 'resilience factors', including 'enhanced self-esteem, greater levels of school enjoyment and reduced levels of family adversity' (Nixon et al, 2010: 309). The stated aim is to 'break the cycle' of norms of destructive behaviour passed on from parent to child, reflecting:

> a groundswell of opinion that, albeit expensive, properly targeted intensive support has the potential to generate long term public expenditure savings (through preventing the need for eviction and/or family breakup). A growing body of evaluation evidence – particularly in relation to intensive family support projects in England – suggests that such potential gains can, indeed, be realised (Pawson et al, 2009: 1).

Both governments import interventions – such as the Family Nurse Partnership, Triple P, and Incredible Years from the US and Australia, primarily to (a) stabilise families' lives, and reduce ASB, to prevent homelessness and/ or children being taken into care; or (b) improve the life chances of children by intervening in their lives (often before they are born) via nursing or parenting programmes. The reputation of these programmes has been established via multiple randomised control trials (RCTs), and their relative effectiveness is examined systematically by the Early Intervention Foundation (EIF), a UK research council-funded 'What Works Centre' (see chapter 5 on their use in Scotland, and Cairney, 2016c on the evidence).

Both governments also learn from, and seek to 'scale up', experiences in the UK. This approach is exemplified by the *Dundee Families Project* (DFP), established in 1996. The DFP focused on low income, often lone parent, families "who are homeless or at severe risk of homelessness as a result of 'antisocial behaviour'". It provided 24/7 support, including after school clubs for children and parenting skills classes, and treatment for addiction or depression in some cases, in dedicated core accommodation with strict rules on access and behaviour, or via 'dispersed tenancies' or an outreach model (Dillane et al, 2001: v). Its initial development was driven largely by partnerships between individual local authorities and third sector bodies such as NCH Action for Children (which delivered the DFP and subsequent programmes in England), and funded largely by central government (in England, using the 'Supporting People' fund – DCLG, 2006: 3). Then, from around 2006, both governments sought to 'roll out' the DFP models as part of a major commitment to 'Intensive Family Intervention Projects' (IFIPs, or FIPs) (Nixon et al, 2010: 306; Parr, 2009: 1257; DCLG, 2006; Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008: 9).

The Scottish Government supported the intensive Aberdeen Families Project (established in 2005), but also three 'Breaking the Cycle' two-year pilots, from 2006, as 'demonstration projects' to test the effectiveness of its 'outreach support' model (Pawson et al, 2009: 1). Similarly, most FIP projects in England have offered outreach rather than residential services (Nixon et al, 2010: 310; DCLG, 2006: 2-3). They were designed partly to reflect a shift in the ASB agenda from enforcement to a 'twin track' approach including greater support and a reduction in the use of ASBOs (Parr, 2009: 1262). The UK expansion began with 53 'Pathfinder' pilots up to 2008 (Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008) before Labour's proposal for major expansion (Lloyd et al, 2011 report 12850 family referrals and 8000 FIPs from 2007-11).

A window of opportunity for the UK Government's 'troubled families' agenda

This history suggests that the TF agenda is a continuation of past policy, built on the argument that the state has a duty to influence family life and the role of parents, and driven by a dual focus on supporting families and punishing ASB. Key elements of past UK policy include the 'Respect' agenda developed by Labour from the early to mid-2000s and coordinated by senior civil servant Louise Casey, who performed the same role for TF (Nixon et al, 2010: 309; Parr, 2009: 1259).

In 2003, the Labour government made a three-stage argument about troubled families that could have been delivered by Cameron in 2011: there is a small number of families creating a disproportionate amount of 'havoc' in housing estates, particularly in deprived areas; a large part of the problem is 'family breakdown' and a lack of good parenting or parental role models; but, public service professionals do not intervene enough, 'in an effort to remain "non-judgmental"' (Home Office, 2003 in Garrett, 2007a: 205; Parr, 2009: 1259; Danil, 2013: 5-6). In 2005, Prime Minister Tony Blair argued that 'Bad parenting is not simply a private matter' when it leads to ASB and, in 2006, he argued that the state should intervene in the lives of many children of lone mothers 'pre-birth' to prevent them becoming 'a menace to society' (Parr, 2009: 1259; Gregg, 2010: 1).

After piloting FIPs until 2006, it began to roll them out on a larger scale with Prime Minister Gordon Brown promising in 2009: 'Starting now and right across the next Parliament [2010-15] every one of the 50,000 most chaotic families will be part of a family intervention project – with clear rules, and clear punishments if they don't stick to them' (Gregg, 2010: 1). The Coalition government's TF target (2011) of 120000 families was based – albeit speculatively - on previous Cabinet Office estimates in 2006 that about '2% of families in England experience multiple and complex difficulties' (Kendall et al, 2010: 1; Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007: 4; National Audit Office, 2013: 5; Hayden and Jenkins, 2014: 635). Further, the Conservative party's focus on 'Broken Britain' – as a catch-all term for anxieties about the alleged social decline underpinning troubled and troubling families – was consistent with Labour government policy (Gentleman, 2010; Hayden and Jenkins, 2014: 622; Parr, 2011: 720).

A modern twist: responding to the London riots

However, a new frame of reference developed following riots in England (primarily in London) in August 2011. Within one week of the riots, and before announcing an inquiry into them (Crossley, 2015), David Cameron made a speech linking behaviour directly to 'thugs' and immorality - 'people showing indifference to right and wrong…people with a twisted moral code…people with a complete absence of self-restraint' – before identifying a breakdown in family life as a major factor (Cameron, 2011a). Although the development of parenting programmes was already government policy, the riots prompted Cameron to raise it to the top of its agenda:

> We are working on ways to help improve parenting - well now I want that work accelerated, expanded and implemented as quickly as possible. This has got to be right at the top of our priority list. And we need more urgent action, too, on the families that some people call 'problem', others call 'troubled'. The ones that everyone in their neighbourhood knows and often avoids …Now that the riots have happened I will make sure that we clear away the red tape and the bureaucratic wrangling, and put rocket boosters under this programme …with a clear ambition that within the lifetime of this Parliament we will turn around the lives of the 120,000 most troubled families in the country (Cameron, 2011a).

Cameron (2011b) reinforced this agenda in December by stressing the need for individuals and families to take moral responsibility for their actions, and for the state to intervene earlier in their lives to reduce public spending in the long term:

> Officialdom might call them 'families with multiple disadvantages'. Some in the press might call them 'neighbours from hell'. Whatever you call them, we've known for years that a relatively small number of families are the source of a large proportion of the problems in society. Drug addiction. Alcohol abuse. Crime. A culture of disruption and irresponsibility that cascades through generations. We've always known that these families cost an extraordinary amount of money…but now we've come up the actual figures. Last year the state spent an estimated £9 billion on just 120,000 families…that is around £75,000 per family.

Communities and Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles (2011) took this agenda forward quickly, reinforcing the need for quick action on a large scale: identifying relevant families, and the cost and effectiveness of existing programmes, by sharing data across the public sector.

As such, a 'coupling' of problems, policy, and politics during a window of opportunity (Kingdom, 1984) provided by the London riots seems straightforward: UK ministers explained the riots primarily in terms of troubled families, a detailed policy solution was already in place, and ministers had the motive to encourage its immediate expansion as a rebranded 'troubled families' programme.

A further twist: new indicators, quantified aims, and 'payment by results'

However, as we suggest in chapters 1 and 2, such expansions are difficult unless governments find a way to 'operationalise' and expand vague terms such as early intervention. So, the UK

government's distinctiveness comes from: (a) its aim for massive expansion, from a target in England of 117,910 families (rounded up to 120000 in government discourse) during 2012-15 to 400000 from 2015 until an unspecified date; and, (b) its emphasis on three factors - worklessness, crime and/ or ASB, and truancy – to turn a broad policy into a small set of indicators, to be used to expand and fund policy delivery and declare success. It did so via 'Payment By Results' (PBR), in which funding is linked to the number of service users and an estimate of the effectiveness of local programmes.

The TF budget is difficult to establish definitively. Pickles (2011) initially stated that an intervention good enough to 'turn around' a troubled family would cost £14000. The DCLG (2012: 8) reduced the estimate to £10000 and offered to pay 40%, split between an upfront fee to encourage investment and a fee based on success (the proposed split was 80/20 in 2012/13 and 40/60 by 2014/15). Therefore, it estimated the additional cost to central government of £448m, or roughly the number of families times £4000. However, there are other relevant sources of funding, including local authority estimated contributions of £6000 per family, and the Department of Work and Pension's £200m *Families with Multiple Problems* initiative. On the other hand, the additional funding to local authorities for TF accompanied reduced funding in areas that might otherwise be directed at families, producing the sense of *redirected* funding and perhaps reduced funding overall – an outcome that can be framed as preventative spending or a cynical overall cut (Crossley, 2015b: 6; National Audit Office, 2013: 5; Hayden and Jenkins, 2014: 633).

Its outcomes related to a reduction of three aspects of 'troubled families' who: 'Are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour', 'Have children not in school', and 'Have an adult on out of work benefits' (DCLG, 2012: 3-4). The DCLG sent a list, estimating the number of relevant families, to local authorities in December 2011 then asked them to modify the list by identifying households with: (1) at least one under-18-year-old who has committed an offense in the last year, or is subject to an ASBO; and/ or (2) has been excluded from school permanently, or suspended on three consecutive terms, in a Pupil Referral Unit, off the school roll, or has over 15% unauthorised absences over three consecutive terms; and (3) an adult on out of work benefits.

If the household met all three criteria, they would automatically be included (Kendall, 2010: v; Crossley, 2015b: 3; National Audit Office, 2013: 5). Then, the DCLG gave local authorities the discretion to identify further troubled families meeting two of the criteria and other indicators of concerns about 'high costs' of late intervention such as, 'a child who is on a Child Protection Plan', 'Families subject to frequent police call-outs or arrests', and 'Families with health problems' linked to mental health, addiction, chronic conditions, domestic abuse, and teenage pregnancy (2012: 5). Consequently, it expanded a definition of troubled family, with Cameron stressing criminality or ASB, school exclusion, and worklessness, but local authorities able (albeit not necessarily willing) to focus more on health and disability (Portes, 2012). This list would be separate from families already subject to programmes covered by the European Social Fund on employment (£200m), Multi-Systemic Therapy pilots, and Early Intervention Grant (DCLG, 2012: 10).

A final twist: almost complete success

The UK government's declaration of success relates primarily to its need to demonstrate central control, not evidence of changed outcomes. Success 'in the last 6 months' – to identify a 'turned around family' - is measured in two main ways: (1) the child no longer having three exclusions in a row, a reduction in the child offending rate of 33% or ASB rate of 60%, and/or the adult entering a relevant 'progress to work' programme; or (2) at least one adult moving from out of work benefits to continuous employment (2012: 9; Casey, 2014: 61; compare with Danil, 2013 on how families would describe turning their lives around). It was *self-declared* by local authorities in quarterly reports (subject to DCLG 'spot checks' – 2012: 10) and both parties had a high incentive to declare success: local authorities received the £4000 per family payments and the UK government received a temporary way to declare progress without long term evidence (Levitas, 2014; Crossley, 2015b: 6; 2016; Bawden, 2016; Cairney, 2016c; Cook, 2016; see also Hayden and Jenkins, 2014: 641; Bawden, 2015; Levitas, 2014, Crossley, 2015b).

A window of opportunity for Scottish Government divergence?

The UK Government's most recent window of opportunity for TF has no parallel in Scotland. The UK Government is far more likely than its Scottish counterpart to link families policies to a moral agenda in response to crisis, and there is no Scottish Government equivalent to PBR and massive programme expansion. Instead, it continued more modest roll-outs in partnership with local public bodies.

Indeed, a comparison between TF and Scottish initiatives such as the Early Years Collaborative (chapter 5) symbolises a divergence in UK/ Scottish *policymaking and rhetoric*al styles even when they often produce similar policies. Social inclusion was a more regular feature of Scottish debate partly because the Scottish Government paid more attention to a 'justice policy community' which was more resistant to the ASBO agenda (Keating, 2010: 239; 251). Then, from 2007, the Scottish Government developed an approach to family intervention that focused more on 'deep-rooted structural problems' and 'addressing inter-generational deprivation' and less on sanctions for non-participation than the UK (Nixon et al, 2010: 306; 312).

Several accounts relate such differences to a 'Scottish tradition of welfare paternalism' (2010: 319) or 'penal welfarism' (McAra, 2007: 107; 2008: 489; Keating, 2010: 251) in which, for example, Scotland had a distinctive role for social work (which covered probationary services), youth justice remained separate from criminal justice, and there was greater scope to make decisions with reference to the welfare of the child. The Scottish Government is also generally less likely to 'roll out' or 'scale up' a programme such as FIP (2010: 306), preferring instead to learn from pilots and encourage local authorities to adopt best practice, and the punitive rhetoric of ministers seems less likely to be translated into policy (2010: 306).

Yet, there are common policy histories and, for example, the EYC and Early Years framework (from 2008) are recent initiatives that have taken time to deliver. A shift in language is important, but we should not let it mask more enduring rules and practices. Further, we should not accept such rhetorical differences uncritically. As our discussion of social construction

suggests, the Scottish Government has been *less likely but not unlikely* to use the language of problem families and sanctions, and shares key points of reference with the UK.

How does each government socially construct target populations?

We began by noting that families policy is difficult to pin down because the concept of 'the family' is vague. It is also a term that we use so frequently as to take it for granted and assign it an implicit meaning (Bourdieu, 1996). This meaning is descriptive *and* prescriptive: regarding the boundaries between normal and deviant family life, the ways in which individuals and families self-regulate to fit those norms, our identification of families which do not fit the mould, and therefore the ways in which governments might legitimately intervene in a social unit – or encourage practices such as bonding within it - that would otherwise be seen as self-enclosed (1996: 21; Cornford et al, 2013; Gillies, 2014; Featherstone et al, 2013: 10). These prescriptions are not always explicit or coherent. Instead, we can identify several analytically separate frames on which each government draws, albeit often in different ways (for the 'evidence based' frame see Cairney, 2016c).

A common context: helpless children, feckless parents, and 'benign welfarism' frames

State intervention is not straightforward because policymakers are unsure about how to defend such interventions in family life *and* show that they are restricting activity to only some families. For example, for Ingram et al (2007: 102), children are the classic case of *dependents*, a target population viewed relatively positively by policymakers, but without the ability to influence policy directly, while 'welfare mothers' (a US term) are closer to the category of *deviants*, viewed negatively and possessing little influence. Further, a focus on a minority of problem families allows governments to articulate the difference between responsible and deviant behaviour, the limited conditions under which the government is willing to help, and the sanctions for repeat offenders, particularly if they refuse to engage with supportive programmes. Perhaps most importantly, it allows governments to articulate a reason to intervene into 'family life' in some cases when, in the past, it may have been an issue likely to be seen as private (Parr, 2009: 1258-9).

Therefore, a focus on children let down by their parents performs a dual role: to justify state intervention and support for children while focusing on punishment for parents; making support highly conditional on a parent's willingness to change to fit the norm of family life. For example, Pickles (2011) made the child-centred case when launching TF: 'The moment some children are born their life chances are simply written off. From day one their lives are defined by the problems that surround them. Drugs. Alcohol. Crime. Mental illness. Unemployment. They grow up in chaos and their own lives are chaotic'.

The literature also highlights a much longer term reference by the UK government to 'problem families' (Garrett, 2007a: 208) in relation to the idea of an 'underclass (Murray, 1994), with the implicit or explicit suggestion that: they are undeserving of state support because the parents (or mothers) are feckless and should not be encouraged to breed because they provide a "breeding ground for 'juvenile delinquency'"; and/or they should be separated from normal society to reflect their deviance. Such accounts of the individual rather than society or system,

or the 'feckless mother' and absent father, rather than the impacts of poverty or socioeconomic conditions, have endured for decades (Starkey, 2000), but with new variants including a link to 'black mothers' and 'feral' parents after the London riots in 2011 (Allen and Taylor, 2012: 1; De Benedictus, 2012: 1; Welshman, 2012; Bristow, 2013; Butler, 2014: 417; Nixon, 2007: 550). They are accompanied in UK government discourse by the suggestion that, in many cases, problem family behaviour is intergenerational and that children of problem families become problematic parents when they are 'unable to break the cycle' (Casey, 2014: 59; 2012: 1; compare with Crossley, 2015: 2). Such understandings tend to be rejected by key professions such as social work (Parr, 2009: 1258), prompting continuous debates about how to characterise target populations: to be pitied and/ or supported because they are subject to 'structural' factors largely out of their control, or condemned as feckless and unwilling to help themselves.

In this context, broad philosophical and political criticisms of initiatives such as FIPs can still apply to both governments even if the Scottish Government's rhetoric is deliberately less confrontational than the UK government's. Critics suggest that 'the apparent benign-welfarism of family and parenting-based antisocial behaviour interventions hide a growing punitive authoritarianism', in which the state retrains 'families who are unable or unwilling to conform to the moral values of the mainstream' (Parr, 2006: 1260). In this narrative, the state prompts individuals to conform to their image of a competent parent which, in turn promotes social stability and economic productivity. Its most extreme telling is by Garrett (2007a: 210), who compares residential FIPs (described sensationally as 'sin bins') to post-war Dutch programmes resembling Nazi social engineering and criticises social policy scholars for giving them favourable evaluations! Such arguments are unusual - and criticised heavily by Nixon (2007) and Bennister et al (2007; see also Garrett, 2007b; Davies, 2015: 18) – but they remind us that a government's stated intention sits within a wider frame of reference to normality and deviance.

Similar contradictory frames of the anti-social behaviour of children

Tisdall (2006: 101-2) notes that the UK and Scottish governments both constructed childhood in often-contradictory ways when introducing ASBOs. In Scotland, there was a shift between many categories: the vulnerable 'at risk' child in need of state support, to the 'competent' child able to recognise the need to change behaviour or suffer sanctions; the 'normal' child to be protected by her/ his family, to the children failed by their parents and exhibiting ASB, which requires state intervention; or, from "the 'deserving' troubled child" to remain in the children's hearing system, to the "'undeserving' troublesome one" subject to ASBOs. Further, the Scottish Government set the age of competence at 12 to reflect its view that it is consistent with previous laws, such as on the ability of children to instruct solicitors (a position challenged by Tisdall, 2006: 107), but also described the new system as consistent with Scotland's focus on child rights, or as the solution to a small number of cases in which the hearings system did not work. In such cases, if 'undeserving' children do not 'demonstrate responsible behaviour' and 'bad' parents do not 'control their children', the courts will intervene (2006: 113).

Similar criteria to identify relevant families

Despite their focus on the 'assets' of individuals, Nixon et al (2010: 315) identify strong similarities in the deficit-model proxies most likely to be used by the UK and Scottish Governments, or actors delivering national policies on their behalf, to identify families requiring intervention, including: lone parenthood, debt problems, ill health (including disability and depression), and at least one member subject to domestic abuse or intergenerational violence, as well as professional judgements on the 'chaotic' or 'dysfunctional' nature of family life and of the likelihood of 'family breakdown' when, for example, a child it taken into care (see also DCLG, 2006: 2 which highlights 'youth nuisance' as a factor in most cases, and notes that most families in the initial projects were white). ASBOs in England and Scotland were also principally 'targeted at those living in areas of social housing' (Flint and Nixon, 2006: 944).

The family in trouble and needing 'tough love' frame

The idea of families weighed down by multiple problems underpins the funded projects of both governments – and FIPs in particular – but the problem and its solution is articulated most strongly by Casey (2014: 58-9) in relation to TF:

> The data reveal multiple problems but, interestingly, there is no single stand-out issue that might be described as the underlying problem or root cause. Instead a picture is painted of families who are sinking under the weight of multiple problems which are interwoven, feeding each other and often spiralling out of control.

So, the solution is intensive intervention, in which 'family intervention workers' (not necessarily social workers) coordinate the public sector response and a key individual provides *challenge* (to identify the need to change behaviour) and *support* (to teach resilience and parenting skills). In some cases, the key worker states explicitly 'that this approach represents a last chance before children are taken into care or families are evicted' (2014: 60). The latter opens up the possibility that families perceive threat more than support. Although most associated with TF, it is a feature of the DFP experience on which both governments draw. The differences often arise with emphasis, such as when Casey (2014: 60) describes the value of 'tough love' (see also Aitkenhead, 2013).

The same twin-track frame, but with less support and more punishment in England

Both governments fund projects in which families know that support is not conditional, but the UK has become increasingly more likely to emphasise the risk of sanctions from the outset. To address a desire to support *and* condemn certain families, the UK Government developed a 'twin track' approach, to offer support for families to address 'the underlying causes of problem behaviour' *and* threaten 'disciplinary sanctions if families fail to fully engage in the prescribed programme of activities' (Nixon et al, 2010: 306). This doubled-sided approach helps conflate

two meanings of 'problem' family – vulnerable and in need of support, and/ or causing a problem – and provide an often-confusing message about the policy problem to solve.[3]

Or, it gives policymakers the ability to sell interventions to different publics. To the sympathetic, they can highlight the voluntary nature of government support, the effect of 'multiple disadvantages' - including unemployment, poverty, poor housing, and the low educational qualifications, mental illness and/or chronic illness or disability of parents – and a calculation of the costs of non-intervention in relation to the stigma of intervention (Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2007: 4; Levitas, 2012: 11). To the unsympathetic, they can stress poor behaviour linked to parental poverty and unemployment – including the criminality, anti-social behaviour, and/ or truancy of children - and hint at sanctions for non-compliance with 'rehabilitation' programmes (Levitas, 2012: 6; Hayden and Jenkins, 2014: 632-3; Parr, 2011: 719).

Nixon et al (2010: 312) describe the greater UK government emphasis on sanctions than pursued under the original DFP. UK government projects described parents as deserving one final chance before they are subject to stringent measures, and the final chance is not a 'soft option'. The original 'care and support' plan of the DFP became a 'contract' backed by enforcement measures in the criminal justice system, to symbolise the different way in which the Blair-led government viewed its target population and its choice to pursue a 'disciplinary form of technology acting to both contain and control behaviour' with reference to a government-driven definition of 'active members of responsible communities' (Nixon et al, 2010: 313). The UK's agenda was also driven from 2006-9 by the 'Respect Task Force' in the Home Office - an important symbol, since this department deals primarily with crime and policing - before moving to the Department for Children, Schools and Families ('Youth Taskforce') (Parr, 2009: 1259).

These major differences in emphasis endure in the UK government's approach. UK ministers are more likely to described the use of FIPs with strong reference to ASB in families, or the need to intervene in the lives of children, and influence their parents, by combining the offer of support with the threat of sanctions for non-engagement (Nixon et al, 2010: 306; Parr, 2009: 1259; Casey, 2012: 4).

The Scottish Government *initially* followed a similar agenda, with Scottish Labour ministers emphasising the need for sanctions if individuals do not respond well to FIP support (2010: 314). However, Nixon et al (2010: 315-6) detect an explicit shift of emphasis towards root causes of behaviour (such as deprivation and addiction) following the election of an SNP government in 2007, as well as a rhetorical difference between the description of 'Family Intervention Projects' in England and 'intensive family support projects' in Scotland.

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[3] Other variations include families *in* or *from* hell, and "families that have troubles … are 'troubled' … or cause trouble" (Levitas, 2012: 5). See also the distinction, highlighted by the Riots Communities and Victims Panel (2012: 7), between 'troubled' and 'forgotten'. The UK Government now defines troubled families as 'those that have problems and cause problems to the community around them, putting high costs to the public Sector' (DCLG, 2013 in Hayden and Jenkins, 2013: 459).

The doing it with you, not to you frame

The Scottish Government has embedded a focus on the 'assets' of individuals into the 'Scottish Approach', to reject a 'deficit model' of public service delivery (chapter 5). The emphasis is on user involvement in service delivery and the sense of empowerment that goes with encouraging people to make their own choices. It is also a feature of broad UK government prevention strategies (chapter 4), and arises in David Cameron's (2011b) description of TF as the antidote to previously failed attempts to deal with ASB:

> So where it was impersonal - dealing with families like bureaucratic units…we will be human: engaging with families as the messy, varied, living, breathing groups of different people they actually are. Where it was disjointed - with a whole load of state agencies over-lapping…we will have a single point of focus on the family: a single port of call and a single face to know. And where it was essentially top-down and patronising - keeping people sealed in their circumstances with a weekly welfare cheque and rock-bottom expectations…we will be empowering…not making excuses for anyone, but supporting these families to take control of their own lives. The message is this: "we are not coming in to rescue you - you need to rescue yourselves, but we will support you every step of the way

However, TF also seems to come with the sense that there will be 'top down' intervention if families do not engage with family interventions. Much depends on the ways in which we interpret Casey's discussion of the 'consequences' of disengagement: government imposition or an inability of the state to prevent consequences such as eviction. Bond-Taylor (2015: 376-7) suggests that there is a major tension between the positive language of support and negative language of imposition for families who refuse to take responsibility for their circumstances, which feeds into the relationship between support workers and families.

The 'joining up' and 'key worker' frame

Cameron's TF rhetoric is accompanied by another language, regarding the need for joined up public services to address the 'victims of state failure'. This phrase (originally used by David Davis MP) can imply that the state should intervene *less* or *more effectively* in people's lives, and the TF seems to involve both elements. Cameron's narrative on the need for more personal and joined up public services, supporting people to change and punishing them if they refuse, was followed by Casey's (2014: 61) emphasis on the limits to 'joining up' government through multi-agency meetings and the frequent need for:

> some agencies to step away and allow one skilled worker to devote meaningful time and space to work with the whole family on all of its problems, bringing in other services when appropriate. This is sometimes difficult, for understandably risk averse and often siloed public services, to accept. Yet services have become so concerned with

narrow systems and processes that we have been in danger of our efforts not translating to lasting change for vulnerable people[4].

Interestingly, the focus on named individuals providing challenge and support is sometimes more controversial in Scotland, partly because the plan is universal in scope. The TF reinforces the creation of an "'othered' group existing as a 'them' to everyone else's 'us'" (Davies, 2015: 14), which allows the UK government to intervene in the lives of troubled but not untroubled families. The Scottish approach, while not completely comparable (since it also has separate named people for FIPs), shows the potential for outcry when governments try to *not* identify and stigmatise specific families. There has been some controversy over the Named Person scheme which forms part of GIRFEC, in which *every* child (and their parents) may have access to a specific individual – such as a senior teacher – to provide advice and a point of contact for joined up services (Scottish Government, 2016). The scheme is largely a response to the continuous suggestion – made after high profile cases of child abuse or neglect – that children can suffer when no agency takes overall responsibility for their care, but has been opposed as excessive infringement on normal family life and data protection (Nicolson, 2016; on the latter see 6 et al, 2010).

The early intervention frame: urgency driven by rights, neuroscience, and economics

For both governments, subtle-looking differences in language can indicate profound differences in attitude, such as when Featherstone et al (2013: 1; see also Parr, 2011: 721-2) distinguish between the principle of *support*, based on hope in and respect for families, and *intervention*, based on the perception that parents lack key skills and require training and their children need help before it is too late. The latter may be ramped up by a sense of urgency often found in early intervention discourse.

This sense of urgency is summed up by three reports to the UK Government, although one refers to help, not intervention. The Munro Review (2011: 69-70) makes the case for 'early help … an ambiguous term, referring both to help in the early years of a child or young person's life and early in the emergence of a problem at any stage in their lives' in three ways, referring to:

1. the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child to establish the moral case
2. the 'now or never' argument based on limited neuroscientific evidence to stress the profound effect of stress on early brain development (often reinforced by 'attachment theory')
3. the economic case built the sense that early intervention saves money over the long term (producing a 'Social Return on Investment'– Nicholls et al, 2009).

The neuroscientific case – or need to develop social and emotional skills from a young age - is made more vividly by the Allen reviews' (2011a: 1; 2011b: 1), using the now-famous images of the brains of 'normal' and 'extremely neglected' three year old children, and it provides a

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[4] PAC – NB the link to that EPPI review Q on evidence of joining up services (v single worker, v the idea of 'best practice' rather than evidence base – see Aitkenhead).

more in-depth discussion of the economic case in terms of the cost of late intervention and numerical estimation of the value for money or return for early investment.

Although these are UK reviews, the same basic principles are supported equally strongly in the UK and Scottish Governments (at least according to our interviews). The moral weight of the UN's CRC is generally taken for granted. Both governments indicate as much adherence to the 'now or never' imperative linked to the kinds of neuroscientific evidence (measured, for example, by levels of cortisol found in hair samples) that are received far more critically in fields such as social science, neuroscience, and psychology (Rose and Rose, 2016a; 2016b; Bruer, 1999; 2011; Featherstone et al, 2013:5; Gillies, 2014; Wastell and White, 2012; Shonkoff and Bales, 2011).

At times, there is a different emphasis on the economic case. It is made more starkly by UK government departments and reports, while Scottish Government actors are more likely to stress the general principles of prevention. However, the same basic language 'currency' - of investment to produce a return - has taken a similar direction, in which groups seeking government funding have competed to claim a high future return (to the extent that it has become difficult to trust and act on such abstract estimates compared to concrete accounting savings). The UK Treasury is explicitly more in favour of funding projects with relatively proven value-for-money. This may lead it increasingly to support secondary (or in some cases tertiary) prevention based on relatively well identified need rather than using broad risk factors to predict it – a position often reflected in EIF thinking about projects with the most demonstrable cost effectiveness. Indeed, Hayden and Jenkins (2014: 637) suggest that, at least in the cities they studied, TF is a 'tier 3' ('referred') programme, below tier 4 (specialist or acute services) but above 1 (universal services) and 2 (targeted at predicted high risk groups).

In both cases, the early intervention frame may also boost the general economic case for childcare and targeted case for two year old children in vulnerable families. The Scottish Government has made a particular commitment to the expansion of pre-school child care, using the same kind of neuroscientific assumption identified by the Allen reviews (80% of brain development occurs from age 0-3, so young children need an education-rich environment) and one main proxy of need (linked initially to likely entitlement to free school meals, but now directly to indicators of income and employment) to identify the vulnerable two-year-olds eligible for 600 hours per year of free care. The policy originally covered 15% of the population, whose parents/ guardians received one of five benefits (Income support, Jobseekers allowance, Employment and Support Allowance, Incapacity or Severe Disablement Allowance, State Pension Credit), rising in August 2015 to 20% to include further indicators of need relating to Child Tax Credit, Working Tax Credit, asylum support, and Universal Credit (Scottish Government, 2015). UK Government funding for free childcare is similar - 570 hours for 3-4 year olds, with free care for 2 year olds determined by almost identical indicators of need - and its tax credits system can be used to help pay for costs (UK Government, 2016).

The social construction of target populations: key differences with a tangible impact?

Both governments share several common reference points, from a general notion of normal and untroubling family life to the need to intervene early and before it is too late. The key difference relates to the UK's rhetoric on problem or troubled families at risk of sanction, which seems significant enough to filter down to provide the context for local practitioner action.

Do governments rely on local authorities and partnerships to deliver a national agenda? What outcomes or practices have 'emerged' from local activity?

Nevertheless, note just how little anyone knows about the national picture of implementation, for reasons that are predictable from the outset. Families policy is vague and there is a tendency to roll out policy despite high uncertainty about its effect, as well as a mixed attitude to policy delivery in which governments criticise professional inaction but encourage local public bodies to use their discretion when selecting particular interventions (Davies, 2015: 20). Policy is made in a complex system, which makes it difficult to separate new interventions from existing practices, and which produces outcomes which seem to emerge from local practices.

This situation helps produce four main narratives. The first relates to a general sense that governments pursue multiple and often conflicting objectives, such as to direct initiatives from the centre to secure a specific aim but also delegate responsibility for the delivery of broad aims. There exists a language of symbiosis between national and central government initiatives which sounds sensible in political speeches and strategies - let's set a national strategic direction but not interfere too much locally - but is rarely resolved in practice when there are explicit trade-offs to be made (Cairney et al, 2016). Instead, central governments set national strategies but often do not track local delivery systematically.

Consequently, the second narrative, by key bodies such as the EIF (2016) suggests that there is currently no way to generate reliable information about which and how many parenting or family projects are delivered across the UK. They also describe a sense of 'what works' but not a blueprint for action that should or ever could be rolled out nationally. In that context, the third focuses on the extent to which these policies are 'evidence based'. For example, while evaluations of FIPs are generally favourable, they are problematic because they do not demonstrate that families are better off than families not receiving interventions (Parr, 2011: 721; Gregg, 2010; Fletcher et al, 2012; Cairney, 2016c).

The fourth is written generally by scholars raising major concerns about the nature and tone of – *usually* UK - central government policy before describing a tendency for policy to change as is implemented, such as when mediated by social workers maintaining a commitment to their professional values (Featherstone et al, 2013: 7; Morris and Featherstone, 2010; Hayden and Jenkins, 2013: 468; Danil, 2013; Butler, 2014: 420) and conception of 'the family' (Cornford et al, 2013: 2).

In this literature, there is no equivalent to the identification by government of 'empowered practitioners' with the discretion, skills, and resources to 'identify wider needs and to proactively engage families in support' (Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008: 12) or the language of 'dedicated, assertive and persistent workers' (Casey, 2012). Nor does academic research confirm the idea of state intervention to empower families (on the contrary

– Bond-Taylor, 2015: 372). Yet, very few accounts, which describe policy delivery in some depth, identify a direct translation of national policy. Rather, there is (a) a concern about its general implications for social work, including the emphasis on challenge over support, and the more problematic 'boundaries between coercion and care' combined with (b) a recognition of a 'good deal of diversity amongst interventions delivered under the [TF] umbrella' and that 'the methods of delivery … are at least in part recognisable as relationship-based, psychosocial social work' (Davies, 2015: 7-8; 13).

Examples of 'implementation gaps': PO, FIPs, and the TF

The implementation of punitive families policies requires the capacity to do so, including the availability of 'willing professionals'. For example, Burney and Geldsthorne (2008: 479) suggest that the lack of use of POs (in England and Wales) to deal with school exclusions 'reflects the hostility with which this instrument was greeted by the teaching profession when it was introduced in 2003'. They report large variations in approaches to POs taken by local youth offending teams, including a tendency in some areas to see magistrate-enforced POs as a last resort (contradicting the UK Government's tone) (2008: 481).

Parr (2009: 1256) highlights 'the gaps that can open up between political rhetoric and policy effect' when programmes such as FIPs allow social workers greater discretion - than in 'mainstream social work arenas' - to use professional judgement and creativity. Parr (2009: 1265-6) describes practices that we might associate with 'street level bureaucracy' (Lipsky, 1980; see also Crossley, 2016): social workers and 'support officers' have to combine aims associated with very different departments – including the Home Office's focus on ASB in the Respect agenda, and the 'child centred' *Every Child Matters* focus of the (then) Department for Education and Skills – and draw on their professional training to create a culture underpinning multi-agency collaboration. Similarly, although identifying the problematic nature of sanctions-based family interventions, Parr (2011: 732) notes the scope for local actors to provide positive support.

Kendal et al (2010) present a similar picture of 'Family Pathfinder' pilots funded by central government and delivered by local bodies (Cabinet Office Social Exclusion Task Force, 2008). Practitioners recognised the need to avoid characterising people, rather than their behaviour, as 'anti-social', since it went against the self-identity of target groups using intensive support (particularly when they were victims as well as perpetrators of anti-social behaviour), and therefore undermined their willingness to engage in government programmes (DCLG, 2006: 4). This approach was taken largely by local project staff working directly with families than government ministers characterising them in speeches (Garrett, 2007a: 214 notes the high discomfort felt by project staff engaged in supporting vulnerable people within a framework of stigmatising language on ASB). In other words, 'Scrutiny of the empirical evidence about the efficacy of ASB family projects provides an interesting example of how local actors can subvert operational policy specified by the centre' (Nixon et al, 2010: 320). Further, we should not assume that if local actors do *not* subvert central policies that they would if they could but are powerless to do so (Donoghue, 2008: 340).

Implementation in Scotland and England

The lack of rigid implementation brings English practice *somewhat* closer to Scottish, in which POs and ASBOs were almost never used. Further, on the delivery of FIPs in England and Scotland, Nixon et al (2010: 317) describe a tendency of project workers to describe intervention in far more positive terms than central government rhetoric, favouring "service user 'buy in'" – rather than the threat of sanctions - as a precursor to their ability to 'challenge' users on their behaviour. The strong rhetorical focus on sanctions by the UK Government is not reflected routinely in practice (Hayden and Jenkins, 2014: 633).

Further, Hayden and Jenkins (2014: 639-45) describe TF partly as an impetus for service redesign to strengthen 'whole family' approaches, coupled with rebranding exercises (local initiatives tend not refer to 'troubled' families), local discretion regarding their choice of the mix of interventions and approaches, and therefore the opportunity to go beyond a stigmatising rhetoric and ridiculous claims of TF success towards useful local responses.

Yet, these UK and Scottish government differences do not *disappear* during implementation. For example, White el al's evaluation (2008, in Nixon et al, 2010: 316) highlights a greater propensity in England to threaten to use sanctions to gain initial cooperation (including suspensions to housing tenancy, child possession orders, and parenting orders) than in Scotland, in which 'professional ethos' precludes any threat of sanction to gain cooperation (2010: 317-20). They detect in Scotland a greater willingness of central government to leave the commissioning and design of FIPs to local authorities (2010: 320). Further, at the time of intervention, most relevant families already face a stark choice between sanctions such as eviction and FIP engagement (2010: 317-20; Gregg, 2010: 3-4), but the DCLG (2006: 5) has been relatively explicit about the 'optimal point of referral for outreach work … being prior to the commencement of legal enforcement action'.

Consequently, the most we can say is that central government rhetoric and rules underpin professional practice, producing the sense that although levels of discretion are often high, practices in Scotland and England often differ. Central governments recognise their limited ability to 'scale up' the same intervention, often preferring to identify pockets of best practice and encourage learning (Cairney, 2016b), but central direction still matters even if local bodies have some discretion to go their own way.

Conclusion: a window of opportunity for what?

The families policies of the Scottish and UK governments seem different when we compare their most recent initiatives: the UK government is committed to intervening heavily from the centre to turn around the lives of 'troubled families', while the Scottish Government often puts greater stress on avoiding stigmatizing language and encouraging local collaborative working.

However, a comparison of Scottish and UK Government policy histories since devolution, focusing on their agendas, choices, and outcomes, suggests that they have a lot in common. In some cases, they have very similar reference points and choices, and this was particularly true when they shared a party of government (Labour) from 1999-2007. In other cases, the practices

that emerge locally, or the outcomes of policy, seem far similar than their rhetorical differences suggest. Both governments are now encouraging local discretion to develop 'whole' family approaches driven by the experience of projects such as FIPs, the FNP and Incredible Years. Both governments maintain a similar focus, such as on early intervention in the life of the child by supporting individuals to develop parenting skills and/ or secure work, within the context of a common approach to taxation and social security spending to address the socioeconomic context (at least until 2016, when the Scottish Government received some powers in those areas).

This case study raises some interesting issues about identifying 'windows of opportunity'. To all intents and purposes, windows are for key events or the major changes that sum up policy substance or trajectory. Yet, in our case study there is great scope to provide a misleading sense of policy trajectory by focusing only on windows of opportunity for the most high profile or recent events. In our case, we could have associated a new and similar window of opportunity for both governments in each wave of families policy - from social inclusion to anti-social behavior to whole family approaches – to qualify the idea that their policies diverged significantly from 2011. The UK's 'window' for TF, in the wake of the London riots, is distinctive in its problem framing and scale of solution, and has no equivalent in Scotland, but it builds on common elements of policy, and the social construction of target populations found in the policy trajectories of each government.

Further, as we discuss in chapters 1 and 2, a focus on a window of opportunity for a broad policy choice – which *might* produce major longer term change – is incomplete without tracking its longer term effect. In the case of families policy, it is remarkable just how little governments and academics know about – and therefore can control - local practices and outcomes. We can track the roll-out of FIPs and projects like the FNP, Incredible Years, and Triple P to some extent because many are centrally directed (at least initially) and evaluated. However, evaluations of FIPs often give the impression that local professionals use their discretion to shift the tone of interventions, while projects such as the FNP play a small part in the overall provision of public services.

This uncertainty about the effect of central government families policies is caused partly by the decision of both governments to introduce a large element of local discretion in prevention and early intervention strategies. What looks like a centrally directed policy – particularly in the UK – often turns out to be a broad strategic framework, focused on a large number of vague outcomes and small number of quantifiable outcomes, coupled with the local discretion to decide how to proceed. Consequently, evaluations reinforce the sense that we don't know 'what works' in this field partly because we don't know what people are doing.

This is not to say that national policies, and the differences between them, are unimportant. On the contrary: the social construction of target populations can have major and continuously reinforcing effects on the ability of people to engage with public services. This seems particularly important in a field in which there are so many proxy indicators – including poverty, mental ill health, disability, and unemployment – which can be used to encourage public sector support or to stigmatise already-vulnerable populations by suggesting that such

factors cause ASB, crime, or truancy (Levitas, 2012: 6; Hayden and Jenkins, 2013: 460). Rather, such case studies – and policy theories drawing on concepts such as complexity - reinforce the need to go beyond the headlines, and singular windows of opportunity for *potentially* major policy change, towards the empirical study of outcomes.

These experiences of families policies geared towards early intervention also highlight some distinctive elements regarding the 'implementation gap' or 'expectations gap' from the perspective of the 'top' or 'centre'. As we discuss more fully in chapter 10, a basic problem with this focus in the *general field* of prevention and early intervention, is that it is almost impossible to know what government policy really is – and therefore impossible to identify a gap between expectations and outcomes. Further, both governments build into their strategy a commitment to meaningful local discretion and the sense that local actors should be guided by a combination of the evidence of 'what works' and its applicability to local circumstances. In other words, while complexity theorists often focus on emergence despite central attempts at control, in this case it often happens with the blessing of central governments.

On the other hand, central governments have to maintain *some* semblance of control because they know that people will try to hold them to account in elections and general debate. This 'top down' perspective has an enduring effect on implementation and implementation studies because it sums up a dynamic that exists regardless of the commitment of governments to find alternative forms of (delegated) governance. These debates about accountability tend to play out in more concrete policy issues. Although prevention policy is vague, individual programmes such as 'troubled families' contain enough detail to generate intense debate on central government policy and performance. So, they contain elements which emphasise greater central direction and 'muscular, effective government' (Davies, 2015: 17) - including sustained ministerial commitment, a determination to demonstrate early success to justify a further rollout of policy, and performance management geared towards specific measurable outcomes – even if the broader aim is to encourage local discretion.

In such cases, the 'expectations gap' is not the same as an implementation gap: central governments want to stress high certainty and demonstrate success in achieving their aims *and* let go enough to encourage local actors to use their discretion. So, they may be managing the expectations of the *public*, and actors observing their progress, rather than maintaining high internal expectations about their own success. As we discuss in chapter 10, such experiences are fairly normal reflections of the major contradictions caused by the politics of public policy.[5]

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[5] Draw on PAC concluding chapter in PAPPITUK and comparative paper with Tanya H.

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