



## **Family Justice Quality Circle**

### **Family Court Anti-Poverty Practice Statement**

#### **Guiding Principles**

Anti-Poverty Practice is understanding, recognising, and responding appropriately to those experiencing poverty. We recognise that poverty is a trauma. The impacts of poverty are wide-ranging and can be most profoundly felt by those marginalised, discriminated, and vulnerable in our society, for example due to needs (disability) or no recourse to public funds and other intersecting factors such as race and ethnicity.

This statement seeks to set out, in conjunction with the Quality Circle *Culture of Respect* document and the *Anti Racist* statement, the principles and actions we will adopt to respond to people in poverty. This extends to how we work together as colleagues and professional court users, as well as with families and communities.

#### **Practice Approach:**

- Understand the political and economic root causes, context, and impact of chronic poverty.
- Remember that poverty is a national problem and not an individual failing.
- Recognise and challenge the stigma of poverty. Avoid assumptions that families can't manage finances or are making bad choices.
- Distinguish between poverty and neglect
- Recognise that poverty is a trauma. Be curious – seek to recognise and understand the experience of families living in poverty.
- Be aware poverty can be overwhelming and isolating. It can impact on the emotional and psychological well-being of children and adults, creating shame and affecting self-worth and identity.
- Be aware that poverty reduces choice for parents and impacts their ability to parent in the way they would choose.
- Recognise and value the strengths and resilience and resourcefulness required of people in poverty. Individual change will not be enough.
- Be aware of financial differences between families and professionals and the impact this can have.
- Poverty requires a systemic response across agencies.

**Practical Approach:**

- Poverty is exhausting. Listen to parents and fully understand that it can sometimes be too overwhelming to take on new information and tasks.
- Use inclusive non-shaming language to ask how people are managing financially. Use facts and research e.g 'there is a poverty crisis, how are you managing'?
- Offer practical help to access services and entitlements. Don't assume signposting is enough. Offer choice and control.
- Increase our knowledge of the benefits system and community resources, and work closely with other agencies to maximise families' income.
- Include experiences of poverty and finances within court documents including assessments and orders, to inform fair and meaningful intervention. Be clear about the difference between risk related to poverty, and risk related to parenting capacity.
- Be aware of the financial impact of tasks required of parents, e.g. expectation to attend interventions, meetings and court, and possible loss of earnings, childcare and travel costs.
- Consider families practical needs such as clothes, food and transport to court including digital access.
- Learn from the research available into the nature, causes and impacts of poverty. Provide/seek training for practitioners.

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