

# Social Work Online Team Training (SWOTT) toolkit:

# **FACILITATOR NOTES -**

# **CIARAN**

## Child Welfare Inequalities: Poverty

### THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATORS IS:

- To encourage the social workers to share their thoughts about the case study.
- To facilitate discussion to identify the opportunities and challenges of this scenario.

### SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR FACILITATORS TO ASK THE GROUP:

**Question:** Identify at least one instance where poverty could be considered to be 'abusing' the parents and child involved in the case study. What kind of support could prevent this?

**Answer:** Poverty is impacting on the parents' ability to ensure that Ciaran has housing that does not damage his health. This might have been avoided if the council had more available social housing, or more powers to intervene safely with landlords who are failing to maintain their properties.

**Question:** Identify at least one instance where poverty could be acting as a stressor on parenting capacity: what kind of support would prevent this?

**Answer:** We do not know the source of Ciaran's bruises. It may be that the overcrowded housing associated with poverty is resulting in physical conflicts between him and his siblings, or worse, between him and his parents. Ciaran's parents might also have been able to get support from a legal professional more easily if they had a higher income, which might have helped them deal with the mould problem before it became harmful.

**Question:** Identify at least one instance where poverty could be resulting in Ciaran's family coming under greater surveillance. What are the consequences of this surveillance?

**Answer:** Ciaran's bruises may not have been noticed or interpreted in the same way if his stepfather was not at a Job Centre. This is not necessarily a good or bad thing, but it could be unfair/unjust if very similar circumstances are not noticed because the families are not living in poverty.

**Question:** How might income inequality and/or the inverse intervention law affected this case?

**Answer:** Ciaran's clothes and hair might have 'stood out' more in the more affluent area that his college is in. However, his teachers may have been more used to this if they were living in similar places to where Ciaran's family live.



**Question:** How might rationing behaviours have affected this case?

**Answer:** The pressure on the council to save money is clearly reflected in the conversations had by the resource panel. The social work team feels unable to act on housing because it would add to their spending, which would not be permissible to do.

**Prompt:** Identify one recommendation from the Anti-Poverty Practice Guide for Social Work and reflect on how you think it would change the current case (whether you think it would be effective or not).

**Answer:** If there was more community social work practice in place, there may have been more opportunities available to build coalitions in the community to address housing deprivation and provide early support. This might have removed one or two of the serious risk factors that could have been deciding factors in the case moving to a child protection conference. This could also have decreased council spending, if housing problems could be addressed proactively while they are still minor.

**Question:** How could the local authority have provided better support for the social work team in dealing with this kind of case?

**Answer:** The local authority could have created better 'joined-up' thinking in the provisions that families may need, to avoid the 'rationing competition' between departments. The housing and social work teams seem to be working against one another when they should be working together, and this seems to be because of the larger issue to do with council budgets and spending.

**Question:** How could central government have provided better support for the local authority in dealing with this kind of case?

**Answer:** Central government could put in place better legislation to support renters in solving problems with their accommodation; or could invest more in social housing development to ensure that there is adequately sized, affordable housing for families.