Child Poverty: The Child Perspective in a Programme on Comprehensive Follow-up of Low Income Families in Norway

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Despite universal welfare services and rather generous income transfers, the prevalence of child poverty has increased in Norway over the past decade. Currently more than 100,000 children are growing up in poverty. Family-focused social welfare interventions have been less common in the Nordic countries than in the UK and the US. In Norway there are no nationwide programmes specifying how the welfare services for low-income families should be followed up and coordinated. To respond to this lack of attention, the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration has developed a skills-training programme for social work professionals, with the aim of improving the comprehensive follow-up of low-income families. Knowledge about children’s experiences from their daily life is required for assisting low income families. Our aim in this paper is to discuss how children are represented in the program. (whether a child’s perspective is included in this programme). In the governmental strategies and the programme’s manuals the follow-up of the entire family is emphasised. In the social work with the families in general, the children’s situation is mainly followed up through the parents rather than involving the children directly. Through a review and analysis of the various documents of the intervention, (a white paper, the programme theory and the manuals) we will explore how the children’s perspectives on their situation are represented (if the child perspective) in the programme, and we will discuss how a child perspective could be accomplished/developed. We will discuss how knowledge about children’s own understanding of their everyday life can inspire social work with low income families.

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