**Poverty Targets in the UK**

**New labour and Poverty**

*The new labour government from 1997 established a target of eradicating poverty within a generation (household income of less than 60% of the median income). In this regard, it regularly carried out and published poverty audits, which compares the government‘s performance against a set of targets.*

***These targets included:***

* ***An increase in the proportion of working-age people with qualifications***
* ***Improving literacy and numeracy at age 11***
* ***Reducing the proportion of older people unable to afford to heat their homes properly***

***How does the coalition government measure of poverty?***

Child poverty is to be measured by how long children have two birth parents looking after them, the length of worklessness in households and school achievement under controversial new plans to be set out on Thursday.

Iain Duncan Smith, the work and pensions secretary, will downgrade Labour's system of measuring poverty relative to the rest of the population, which he believes can provide a skewed picture of household finances.

A new range of indicators will be introduced including family stability, worklessness and educational achievement. Duncan Smith, in a joint move with the schools minister, David Laws, will say the new measures better reflect the reality of poverty in the UK today.

He will stress the most recent figures, showing that since the coalition was formed in 2010, 300,000 children had moved out of relative income poverty, the number of households living below the median income. But he will point out that this fall is due to a decline in the median income nationally, which pushed the poverty line down, and the children defined as moving out of poverty were no better off in absolute terms than before.

Poverty is currently measured by the number of households living at or below 60% of the median income. Labour set a target to reduce the number of children living in relative income poverty to 1.7 million by 2010-11. This was not met; in 2010-11, 2.3 million children were living in relative income poverty. It also vowed to abolish poverty by 2020 and set this goal in statute.

Duncan Smith will say: "As we saw earlier this year, when the child poverty level dropped by 2%, a fall in the median income may lift a family out of poverty on paper. Yet … real incomes did not rise and absolute poverty was unchanged." For the 300,000 children no longer in poverty according to the official statistics, life was no different.

He will add: "A fixation on relative income, on moving people over an arbitrary line … does little to identify those most in need and entrenched in disadvantage, nor to transform their lives.

"For families across the UK who are income-poor, but more than that, whose lives are blighted by worklessness, educational failure, family breakdown, problem debt and poor health, as well as other problems, giving them an extra pound – say through increased benefits – will not address the reason they find themselves in difficulty in the first place."

The Lib Dem schools minister, David Laws, will say: "Traditionally we have defined poverty simply by income. But this is not enough. The experience of child poverty is about more than whether their family income this week is low."

Chris Wellings, Save the Children's head of poverty, said: "We agree that income is not the only way to measure poverty and that looking at a child's opportunities is critical, but we should be careful not to ditch the internationally recognised measure."

Patrick Wintour, Guardian, November 14th 2012