

## **Previous British-Irish Council Social Inclusion Themes**

The British-Irish Council has previously considered child poverty with a focus on lone parents. The work concentrated on the broad benefits to be derived from improving access for lone parents to employment, education and skills, quality childcare and support services.

Work concentrated on transition points in lone parent's lives and how they are supported through these, bearing in mind how people move in and out of lone parenthood. A focus was also being maintained on the child across all ages, and in the way wider issues of child poverty are addressed. A final report to Ministers, together with a Literature Review and Statistical analysis across the administrations was presented to Ministers at a meeting held in Cardiff in May 2008.

Previously, the Group also considered 'Disability and access to employment, education and training' which was discussed at the Ministerial meeting held in Edinburgh in March 2006. The report presented to Ministers provides examples of best practice in a number of important areas: supporting access to employment for people with disabilities; the role of IT in improving employment prospects of disabled people in co-operation with the BIC Knowledge Economy sector; and how disabled people are involved in policy making in employment, education and training.

Financial inclusion was the focus of the group's first work strand. The report outlined the problems that individuals and communities affected by poverty can have in accessing appropriate financial services. The work strand concluded with a conference for Credit Union professionals, which was held in Wales in February 2005.

At the 2008 Ministerial meeting, Ministers reviewed the work taken forward on child poverty with a focus on lone parents. They agreed to focus on the contribution of the voluntary and community sector in promoting social inclusion as the next work strand over the coming 18-24 month period.