

Child Poverty Bill 21st January 2010

Committee 2nd Day

2pm-Clause 6: Interpretation of terms used in relation to targets-The Earl of Listowel

2.15pm-The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State Department for Communities and Local Government and Department for Work and Pensions [Lord McKenzie of Luton]

The Earl of Listowel: My Lords, I support the drive behind these amendments, particularly what the noble Baroness, Lady Walmsley, said. I want to take this opportunity to hear from the Minister what has been done for Traveller children. The concern is that many of them are not receiving the education that they should receive. Their parents did not get an education either, so they are therefore unable to gain good remuneration in their employment. There is a generational problem of lack of access to education resulting in poverty.

This is an important issue that the Bill should not miss. I look forward to the reassurance that I hope the Minister will offer, particularly on improving the access to education of Traveller children. I know the Government have taken some steps to improve it.

Lord McKenzie of Luton

The noble Earl, Lord Listowel, asked about excluded groups and in particular what support was being given to Traveller families. I shall briefly summarise the position. In terms of the numbers excluded for Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children, in total from the 2008 school census there are more than 3,800 Travellers of Irish descent and more than 8,600 Gypsy and Roma children, although anecdotal evidence suggests that that figure may be underestimating by some 20,000. The PSA 11 target aims to narrow the gap in educational achievement between children from disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers. Children from Gypsy, Roma and Irish Traveller backgrounds are captured by that target. Local authorities are required to set local targets for raising the educational attainment of black and minority ethnic groups, including Gypsy Roma and Irish Traveller children. DCSF initiatives to improve the outcomes for Gypsy Roma and Traveller pupils include the National Strategies managed GRT achievement programme and a range of other things too. If the noble Earl is interested I shall be happy to write to him on that.