

4.1 General context

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Main challenges to social inclusion

The [Monitoring social mobility 2013 to 2020 report](#), published by the Social Mobility Commission examines government action on the Commission's key social mobility recommendations from 2013 to 2020.

It covers several policy areas including:

- early years
- education
- employment
- housing
- health
- transport

It highlights areas of concern and sets out an action plan for the government to achieve greater social mobility in the UK. The report recommends a dedicated unit to coordinate action and ensure recommendations are delivered.

Main concepts

In this chapter, the term 'social inclusion' refers to the process which ensures that people who are at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life, and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It also ensures they enjoy a greater level of participation in the decision making which affects their lives and better access to their fundamental rights. In this context, social inclusion can be considered as a multi-dimensional concept, which combines various factors, including: income and living standards; the need for educational and decent work opportunities; effective social protection systems; housing; access to good-quality health and other services; and active citizenship.

In recent years, the stated aims of the UK Government regarding social inclusion have been to remove barriers, so that everyone whatever their background has equal opportunity to progress.

Child poverty

A key element of promoting social inclusion is a reduction in levels of child poverty. A target to reduce levels of child poverty was first introduced by the Labour Government in office from 1997 to 2010. The [Child Poverty Act 2010](#) fulfilled a commitment to enshrine the child poverty target in legislation. Its provisions include:

- setting 4 child poverty targets to be met by 2020/21
- requirements for the UK Government to publish a regular UK child poverty strategy
- requirements for the Scottish and Northern Irish Ministers to publish child poverty strategies
- creation of the Child Poverty Commission to provide advice
- requirements for the UK Government to publish annual progress reports
- new duties on [local authorities](#) and other 'delivery partners' in England to work together to tackle child poverty.

The House of Commons Library published a [short guide](#) to the Act in 2014.

The role and remit of the Child Poverty Commission has been amended twice since its creation. The [2012 Welfare Reform Act](#) expanded its remit to monitoring and providing advice on improving social mobility. Further changes were made by the [Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#), transforming it into the [Social Mobility Commission](#), an advisory non-departmental public body.

In its most recent [Monitoring social mobility report](#), the Social Mobility Commission identifies areas of major concern:

- An increasing number of children growing up in relative poverty
- A crisis in the early years' workforce
- A greater chance of disadvantaged young people getting stuck in low paid jobs

The Commission also found that, at present, there is no meaningful coordination between departments on the social mobility agenda, and no single force championing social mobility across government.

To start to address this issue, the Commission has established a programme of support and advice to help employers recruit a more diverse workforce. It has also prepared a range of reports to be published over the next year, which will include new recommendations where it believes the government or others need to take further action.