

Challenging Stereotypes: Complexity in White Working Class / Low Income Families

High Achieving White Working Class (HAWWC) Boys



Key Facts

EVIDENCE

- Official figures show that 'White British' boys in low-income groups are the lowest performing ethnic group in the UK and the difference between their long-term, educational achievement and that of their richer white peers is wider than for any other ethnic group.
- The effects of this class and income difference on their learning are apparent well before nursery school age and is starkly evident on entry to primary school.
- White boys from low income families also make less progress than most other groups after entry to school.

BUT

- Some young white low income boys are performing as well as, and sometimes much better than, those from more privileged families.
- Many white young boys are growing up in families facing a wide range of stressful economic and social challenges.
- Parenting can be much more difficult under such

pressures, yet parenting styles and interactions are crucial in supporting early learning and sustaining progress.

- Successful attainment in high achievers appears to be dependent on the early development of exploratory, self-managing attitudes and dispositions of these young children; responsive and supportive interactions and relationships in the home; the nature of talk and other home behaviours and experiences; and collaborative interactions between the home and preschool settings.
- The overwhelming evidence is that early intervention (critically, between birth to three years) makes the greatest long term educative impact on this socially disadvantaged group.
- Focused action supporting parents and early childhood settings is needed to address attainment of young white boys in local income families ensuring school readiness and ultimately greater social mobility.

HAWWC Boys Project Video Blogs



Family Life &
Stresses



Project Findings

Family Marital Status: There are significant numbers of female single parents rearing these young boys but many do have regular contact with the estranged father. Two parent families often share parenting responsibilities.

Social Isolation: Many families have regular contact with a wider, supportive extended family, particularly grandparents, but some are estranged or geographically distant from family and friends and in these families relationships with the HAWWC boy can be intense.

Mental Health: Some parents have mental health problems which impact significantly on their par-

enting capacity and style. Some parents' wellbeing is significantly enhanced by their close relationship with their bright son.

Employment Status: Many low income families, including single parents, are working full time or accessing training. Some parents, however, positively choose to be at home rather than working during the child's first years and because of this

choice suffer financial hardship.

Access to Childcare and Early Education: Many of these low income parents have found funded early education places for their son from two years age. Fewer are accessing childcare prior to two years due either to financial constraints or personal preferences.

More Information

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Action Points

- It is important to recognise and acknowledge the complexity and diversity of 'family' type and circumstances in a non-judgmental way.
- The desire of a parent to be at home with a young boy in the early months of life needs to be acknowledged and supported, as much as the need for support for parental employment.
- Social and emotional support for parents and grandparents is as important as support for boys' learning and development. Learning takes place in a social emotional context.
- The need for childcare for 'under threes' depends on particular family circumstances and preferences and is related to parents' employment. The need for educative intervention for targeted users who are most in need is different. It should be recognised and high quality, flexible, accessible and affordable services should be aimed at supporting both parents and children. Needs can be complex and require integrated responses from a range of agencies.
- In particular, mental health support for young parents needs to be made accessible.
- The case for the educational value of accessing funded early education places for boys from two years is persuasive.