

BLACKBURN WITH DARWEN

ANNUAL REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC HEALTH

2018/19



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FOREWORD

by Professor Dominic Harrison, Director of Public Health



Child poverty is a national issue. It is also one of the most potent drivers of lifelong ill health and health inequalities.

Since 2010, welfare benefits available to families with children have been systematically reduced, disproportionately affecting those who are most disadvantaged.^{1,2,3} (Figure 1). This has particular resonance in Blackburn with Darwen, where it is estimated that nearly half of children are living in poverty.

For many, this means a childhood of insecurity, educational underachievement, and isolation from their peers. Research shows that not only does poverty have an impact on their health and life chances, but it is likely to affect the next generation too, unless we can address the root causes. A United Nations envoy has recently described the levels of child poverty in Britain as:

‘... not just a disgrace, but a social calamity and an economic disaster, all rolled into one’

Prof Philip Alston, UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights⁴

Locally, a lot of excellent work is being done to mitigate the effects of child poverty. There are holiday lunchbox schemes, advice and guidance on financial and welfare matters for parents, mentoring programmes for young people – almost every agency is, in some way, working to reduce the effects of poverty on local families.

However, in Blackburn with Darwen our biggest opportunity lies in developing a model of economic growth that addresses child poverty.

This Public Health Annual Report seeks to outline the scale of the problem of child poverty in Blackburn with Darwen, as well as identifying actions that we can take locally to address the issue. We want to celebrate the work that is already being done, but also challenge ourselves to address the root causes of child poverty, and ameliorate its effects where it is possible to do so.

I hope that this Public Health Annual Report supports the continuation and development of the excellent work already being undertaken in the borough by the local authority and partners, and galvanises us all to take further action to try to eradicate local child poverty for good.

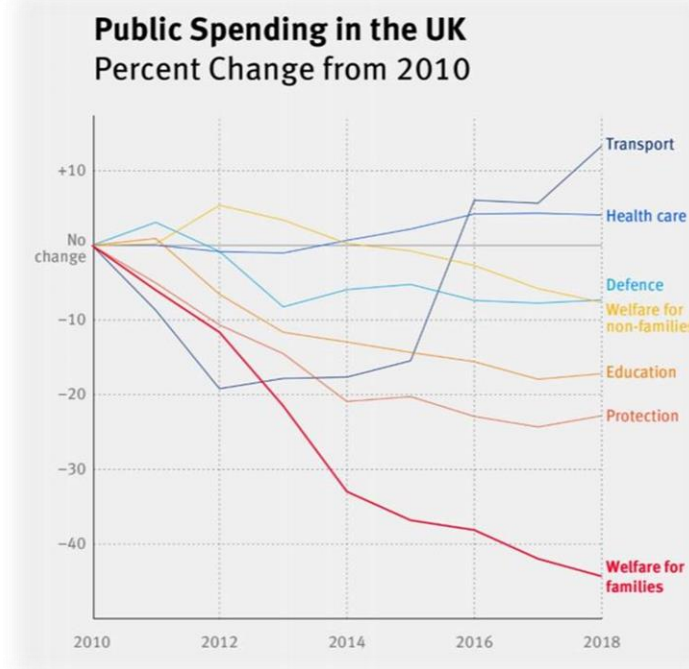


Figure 1 - Fall in public spending on welfare for families
(Figure produced by Human Rights Watch³)

What is poverty?

Definitions

Children are considered to be in poverty if the household they live in is in poverty, but there is no single, agreed way of defining what that means.

Relative poverty

Being in 'relative poverty' means that a person or family has been 'left behind' financially, so that they cannot afford the normal activities and opportunities enjoyed by their peers.⁵

The government's measure of relative poverty starts by looking at median household income. The 'median' is the level which divides the population into two equal halves (Figure 2):

BOX 1 - 'BEFORE' VERSUS 'AFTER' HOUSING COSTS

Household income can be measured 'Before Housing Costs' or 'After Housing Costs'. The 'After Housing Costs' is often preferred when looking at poverty, because households at the lower end of the income scale generally spend a larger share of their income on housing.^{2,6,7}



Figure 2 - meaning of Median Household Income (Figure produced by DWP⁸)

In 2017/18, the official UK median household income was £437 per week (after housing costs).⁹ This relates to a notional type of household (a couple with no children).

In reality, households come in all shapes and sizes, so incomes have to be 'equivalised' to take account of this. For instance, a single person needs less income than a couple (but more than half as much). So the first adult in a household counts as 0.58 of a couple, and the next (if there is one) counts as 0.42. Each child carries 0.2 times as much weight as a couple (Figure 3):



Figure 3 - How household income is 'equivalised'

(Figure produced by DWP⁹, but amended to use 'After Housing Cost' weighting factors)¹⁰

After all these adjustments, any household which has an income of **less than 60% of the UK median** is said to be in 'relative poverty'. Thus in 2017/18, a couple with a weekly income of less than £262 per week after housing costs (i.e. 60% of £437) was in 'relative poverty'. A single person living on less than $0.58 \times £262 = £152$, or a 2-adult 2-child family living on less than $1.4 \times £262 = £367$, would also count as being in 'relative poverty'.

Absolute poverty / material deprivation

The 'textbook' definition of **absolute poverty** is that it means not being able to afford the necessities of life, such as food, heating, clothing and shelter.^{5,11}

However, this is **not** the way the term 'absolute poverty' is used in official publications in the UK. Instead, the government uses it to describe those households whose income now, after adjusting for inflation, is below the '60% of the median' threshold from some fixed year *in the past* (namely 2010/11).^{5,6,11} The government definition of 'absolute poverty' thus provides an answer to the question: 'What proportion of the population would be considered 'poor' today by the standards of 2010/11?'

The government does carry out surveys to assess the level of inability to access key goods and services, but the term they use for this is '**material deprivation**'.⁶

New poverty metric (Social Metrics Commission)

In 2018, a new independent body called the **Social Metrics Commission** (SMC) published what it called 'A new measure of poverty for the UK'.¹² The SMC has representation from bodies such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Royal Statistical Society, and leading universities.



Rather than focusing entirely on income, the SMC measure acknowledges that some people can use savings and other liquid assets to help meet their needs. On the other hand, it factors in a broader range of housing costs than does the official 'after housing costs' measure, as well as making specific allowance for the 'inescapable' costs associated with childcare and disability. The overall number of people deemed to be in poverty under the new metric is roughly the same as for the official 'after housing costs' measure, but the balance shifts away from pensioners, and towards families with children and/or a disabled person.¹²

The new measure has been widely praised, including by the UN's special rapporteur on poverty, Professor Philip Alston.¹³ It has now been announced that the Department for Work & Pensions will develop it further as experimental statistics, the first step towards possible adoption as an official national measure.^{14,15}

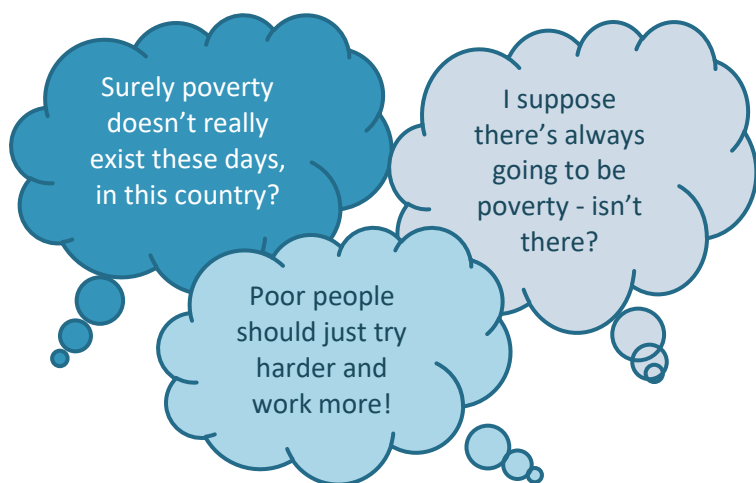


Figure 4 – Common misconceptions about poverty
(from JRF Toolkit¹⁶)

Talking about poverty

There are widely-held misconceptions about poverty, which make it harder to galvanise public opinion and political will to do something about it (Figure 4).

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation has recently published what it calls a 'Framing Toolkit', setting out how it (and we) need to try telling the story of poverty in a new way.¹⁶

The toolkit recommends portraying poverty in a way that appeals to shared common values, and cuts across political divisions (Figure 5):

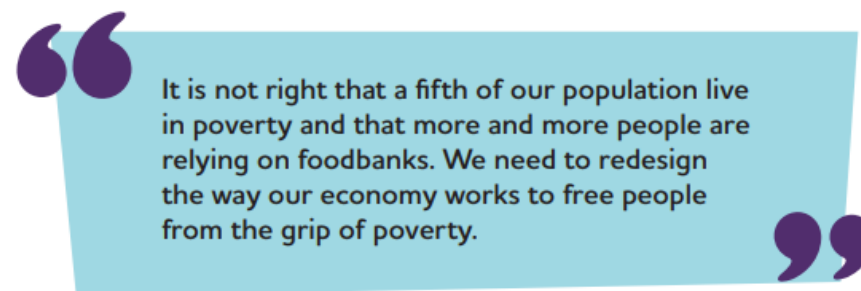


Figure 5 – Example of how to get the message across (from JRF Toolkit¹⁶)

What is happening to child poverty?

Trends and projections

In 2017, the Institute for Fiscal Studies predicted that welfare reforms and other factors would lead to a sharp rise in relative child poverty in the UK, reaching 36% by 2021/22.² The Equality and Human Rights Commission in 2018¹⁷, and most recently the Resolution Foundation in 2019⁷, have predicted even steeper rises. Figures released since then show that child poverty in 2017/18 remained at around 30%. However, this is based on a survey, and is therefore subject to a margin of error. In any case, it is clear that child poverty has been on an upward trend, and is far above the rate for other age-groups (Figure 6):

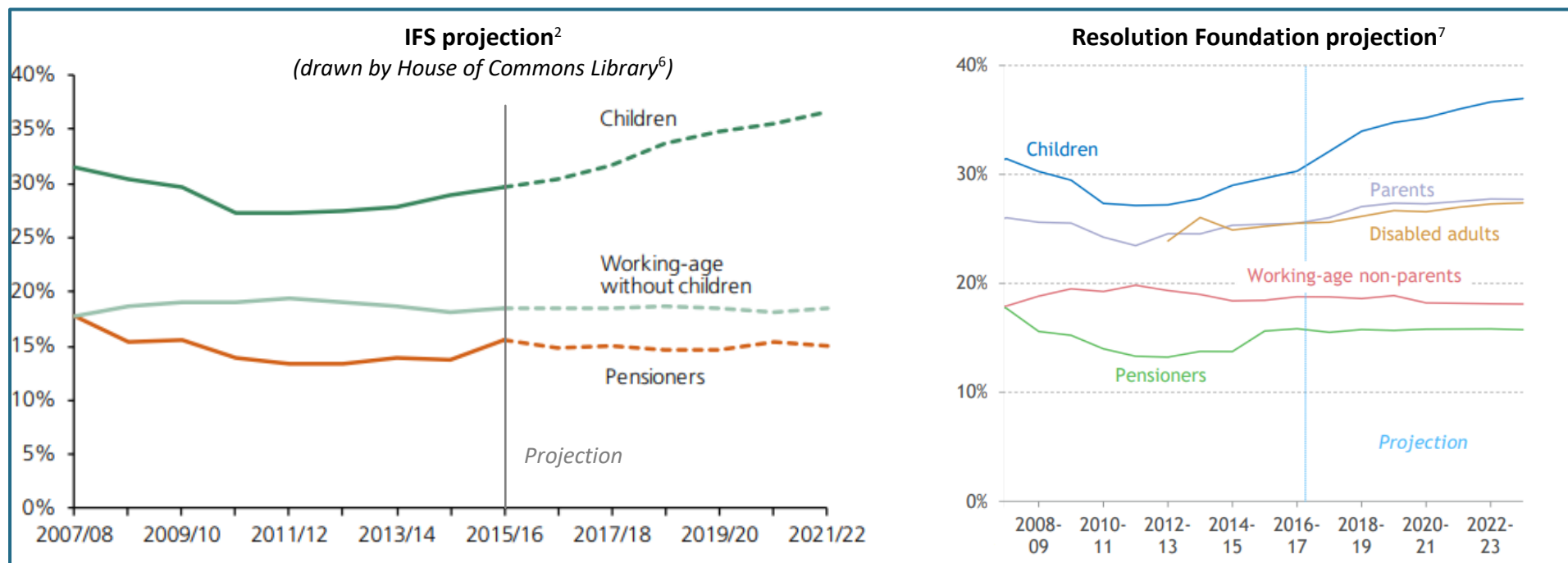


Figure 6 - % of people in relative low income, UK (after housing costs)

At the press conference concluding his investigation into poverty in the UK, United Nations special rapporteur Philip Alston summed it up by saying:

‘The child poverty rates are staggering, and are predicted...to go up significantly’¹⁸

Inequalities

The Equalities and Human Rights Commission produces predictions of child poverty not only for *all* children, but for particular *groups* of children.¹⁷ They anticipate that by 2021/22, 41.3% of all children in Great Britain will be living in relative poverty (after housing costs). However, this rises to 62.1% among children living in one-parent families, 65.9% among children of Pakistani ethnicity, and 51.7% among all those in families of three or more children (Figure 7):

EHRC projections of children in relative poverty, 2021/22

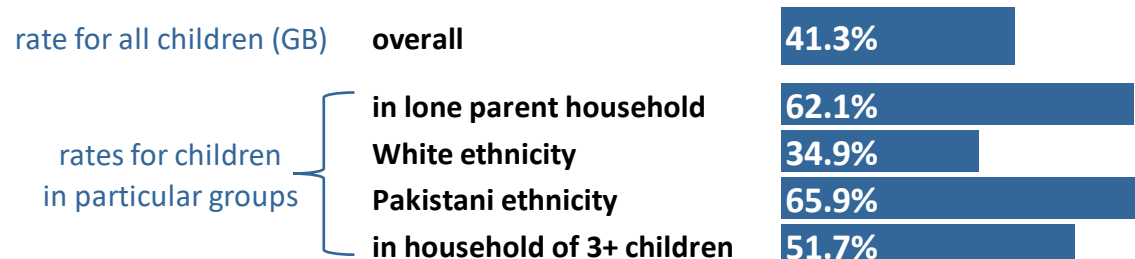


Figure 7 – EHRC projections of children in relative poverty (after housing costs), GB 2021/22¹⁷

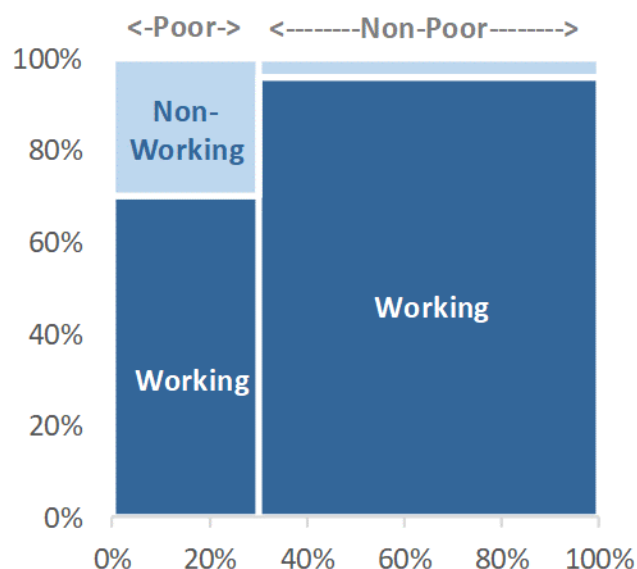


Figure 8 – ‘Poor’ v. ‘Non-Poor’ children (relative poverty, after housing costs, 2017/18) by working status of the family

In-work child poverty

When the 2017/18 estimates came out⁹, showing that 30% of children are in relative poverty, many commentators picked up on the fact that most of those children come from families where at least one adult *is* working:

“Nearly 3m children in poverty despite parents working”¹⁹

“Child poverty in working families on the rise”²⁰

“Work not enough to stop children being trapped in poverty”²¹

Figure 8 shows UK children split into 30% ‘Poor’ and 70% ‘Non-Poor’ (based on relative poverty after housing costs).⁹ Within each group, the darker shading shows the proportion who belong to families where at least one adult is working.²² Even in the ‘Poor’ group, 70% of children come from working families (as do nearly all of the ‘Non-Poor’ children).

It is clear from this that helping parents into employment, while it may be important, will not be sufficient on its own to solve the problem of child poverty.

‘Austerity’ policies

In his investigation into poverty in the UK, United Nations special rapporteur Philip Alston added his voice to the many who consider that government policies are leading to increasing economic vulnerability within households.⁴ The poorest members of society, particularly children, are disproportionately affected by austerity.^{17,23,24} Links between austerity and food poverty are plain to see, and foodbank usage is growing rapidly.^{25,26}

Over the past decade, the general shift in social security spending has been away from families and children.²⁷ The repeal of the Child Poverty Act (2010) – which set in law a commitment to meet four challenging child poverty targets by 2020/21 – removed the accountability of the Government to tackle this problem at a national level.²⁸ Its policies since then have either increased the numbers of children in poverty, or exacerbated the situation for those already in that position:

- Introduction of **Universal Credit** with built in delays from claim to receipt of support; complex calculation system which leaves families out of pocket if their wages fluctuate on a monthly basis; online-only access to claiming
- **Benefits cap** – limits on the amount of welfare support available to family, regardless of individual situations
- **Benefits freeze** (no increase with RPI or inflation from 2016-2020). Putting this into context, JRF calculates that the current, final year of the benefits freeze alone will cost families in poverty an average of £560, which for them is equivalent to three months of food shopping.²⁹
- Removal of ‘**spare room subsidy**’ – i.e. families being financially penalised for having a spare bedroom if they are in receipt of benefits
- **2-child limit** in tax credits, Housing Benefit and Universal Credit (i.e. no allowance made for third or subsequent child)*
- **Minimum wage** being insufficient to survive on, sparking pressure for a National Living Wage

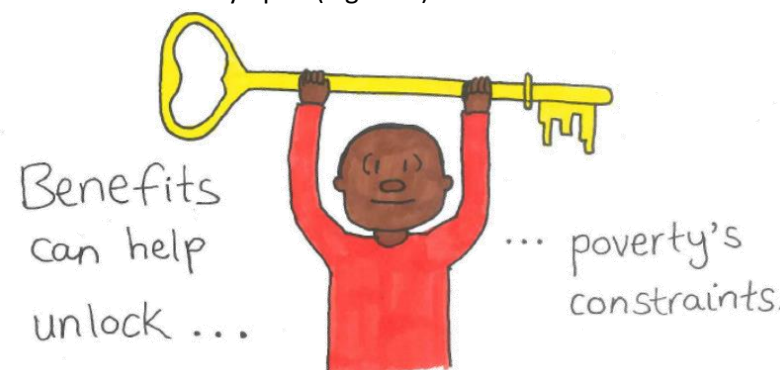
In June 2018, the National Audit Office found that the roll-out of Universal Credit was leading to hardship for many individuals and families. The main problems arose from the 5-week waiting period, fluctuating payments due to calculation methods, and difficulty accessing the benefit due to its online nature.³¹

Talking about benefits

Benefits often get a bad press, especially if their recipients are considered to be ‘undeserving’. This clouds the reality that in a discussion about poverty, benefits should be seen as part of the solution. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation’s ‘Framing Toolkit’ reminds us that benefits exist to help people stay afloat when they are struggling, and should be recognised as part of the broader system of public services that we all value and rely upon (Figure 9).¹⁶

“All of us rely on publicly funded services and support systems like education, roads, railways and the NHS. And our public services are especially important to people who are struggling, such as our welfare system. We need to strengthen these supports to solve poverty and make sure everyone has a decent life.”

Figure 9 – Presenting benefits in a positive light
(from JRF Toolkit¹⁶)



* Partially rolled-back in January 2019, so that the cap will not be extended to families whose third or subsequent child was born before 2017³⁰

Causes and effects of child poverty

Setting the scene

In 1991, Dahlgren and Whitehead published a famous framework setting out the factors that influence health.³² Figure 10 adapts the idea of their diagram to focus on the main determinants of child welfare. It emphasises the central importance of the first 1,000 days of life, roughly from conception to weaning, when lifelong foundations are laid for physical and mental health and wellbeing. However, this is wrapped within several other layers of influence, all helping to determine whether a child will thrive, and all susceptible to the effects of child poverty.

Causes of the causes

It is easy to think that child poverty is primarily driven by the choices that parents make for themselves and their families – how many children they have, their parenting style and aspirations, dependence on benefits or indebtedness. However, any family can fall on hard times and find it difficult to make ends meet.

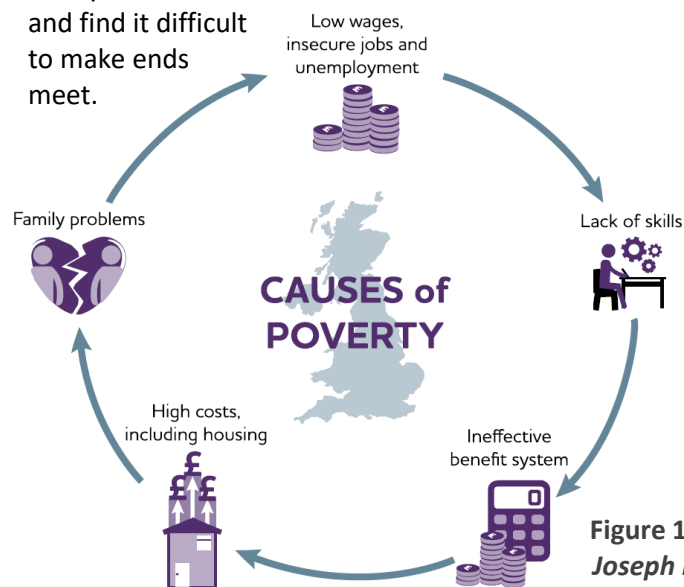


Figure 11 – Causes of poverty
Joseph Rowntree Foundation³³

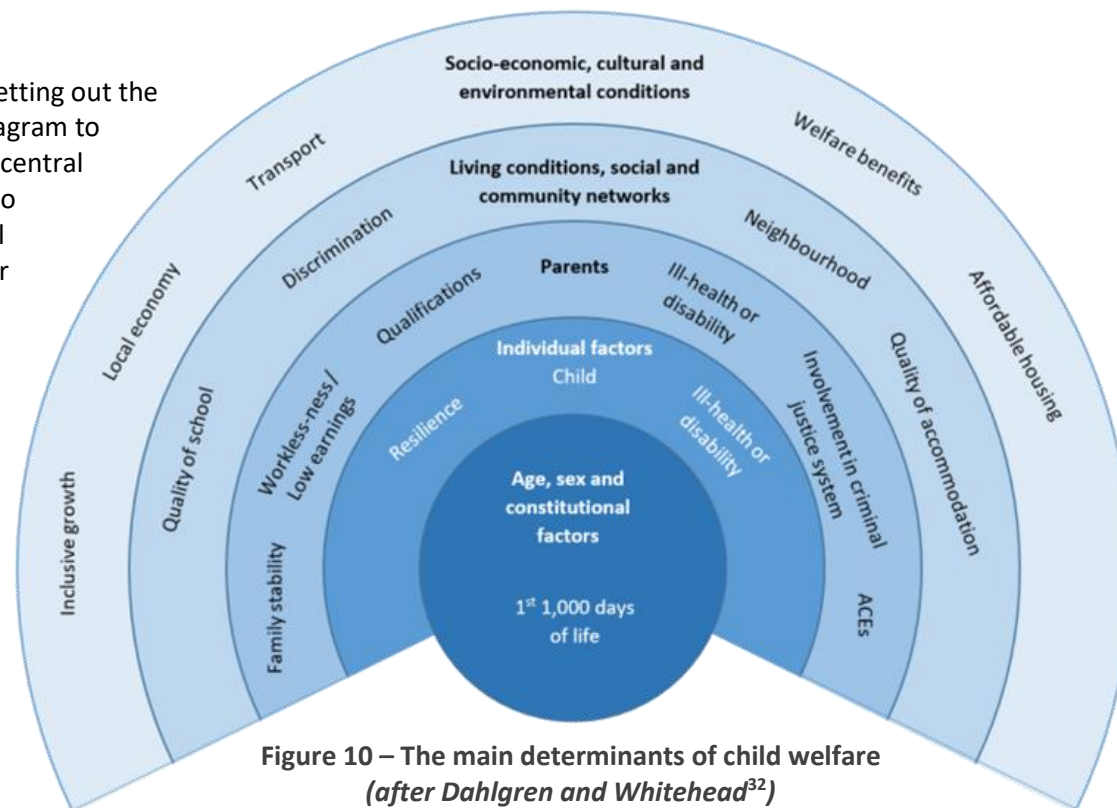


Figure 10 – The main determinants of child welfare
(after Dahlgren and Whitehead³²)

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation reminds us that poverty depends not only on the circumstances, capacities and choices of an individual or family, but also on factors operating at the level of the market and the state – what we might call the ‘causes of the causes’:³³

Market, state and individual: all three matter

Joseph Rowntree Foundation³³

The 'Poverty Premium'



The misery of life on a low income is exacerbated by the '**poverty premium**' - the fact that poor families pay *more* for essential goods and services as a *consequence* of being poor.

Bristol University has estimated that this 'double whammy' adds an average of £490 to the living costs of each low-income household per year (Figure 12).³⁴

Figure 12 – Poverty premium broken down by type
(infographic by Bristol University³⁴)

Figure 13 (below) shows the proportion of low-income families that are affected by each particular type of poverty premium:

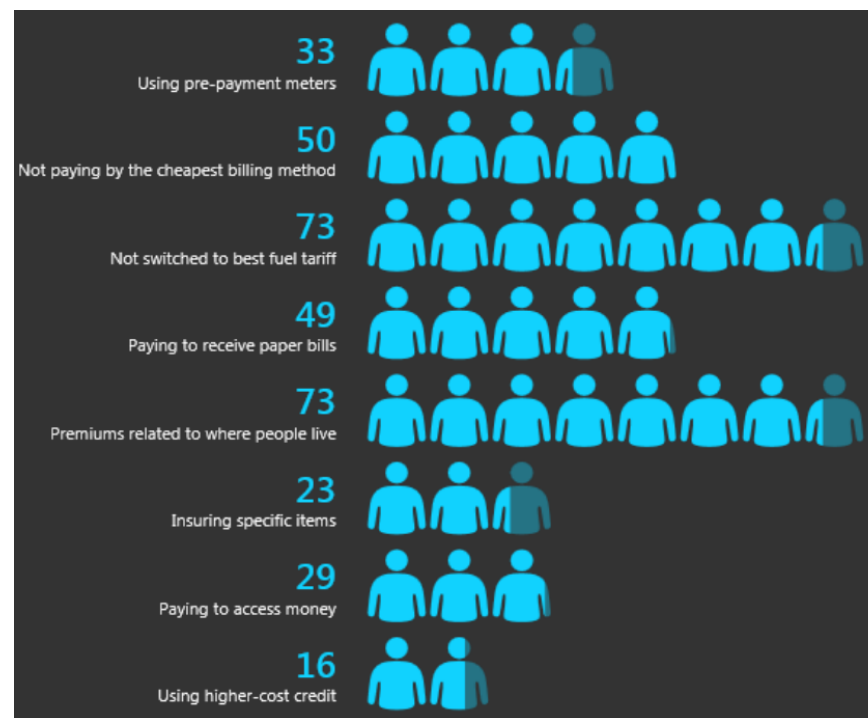


Figure 13 – % of low-income households incurring each type of poverty premium
(infographic by Bristol University³⁴)

Families with no bank account are particularly hard hit. It has been estimated that they suffer a poverty premium of nearly £500 pa for that reason alone.³⁵

Figure 14 – How Poverty Feels to Children (adapted from CPAG³⁹)

Effects of child poverty

On average, a child growing up in poverty experiences worse outcomes than a child from a wealthier family in all sorts of ways, from physical and mental health, to educational attainment and labour market success, to risky behaviours and delinquency.^{36, 37, 41} By age 16-24, they are twice as likely to be NEET (not in employment, education or training) as their better-off peers.³⁸

How it feels

Poor children miss out on the things most youngsters take for granted: warm clothes, school trips, having friends over for tea. Figure 14, adapted from the Child Poverty Action Group³⁹, shows how this makes them feel. There is also new evidence that children in poverty are more likely to be lonely.⁴⁰

Mechanisms

Research at the London School of Economics has confirmed that children living in poverty have worse outcomes *because they are poor*, and not just because of other factors that may tend to go along with that (such as level of parental education, or parenting style).⁴¹

Poverty is believed to exert its effect on children in two main ways (Figure 15, next page):^{41, 42}

- The **investment pathway**. When faced with income shortfalls, poor families are often forced to cut back on essentials such as food and housing. The parents' inability to invest in goods and services that promote child development leads directly to poorer outcomes for the child.
- The **stress pathway**. This theory recognises that poverty in the household can lead parents to become stressed, anxious and depressed, which can in turn have a negative impact on the child. The mental wellbeing of adults in lone-parent household is particularly susceptible to poverty.⁴³

Children raised in poverty may also have poorer employment prospects, and thus transmit the experience to their own children in turn. (Figure 15, next page).³⁶

BOX 2 – ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

- ❖ ACEs are stressful, traumatic events in childhood whose negative impacts may last into adulthood
- ❖ They include abuse; neglect; and parental loss, imprisonment or drug & alcohol problems
- ❖ Higher levels of ACEs are associated with living in a low-income household⁴⁴
- ❖ Growing up in poverty may make it harder to escape the detrimental effect of ACEs⁴⁴
- ❖ The stress of growing up in poverty could be considered to be an ACE in its own right⁴⁴

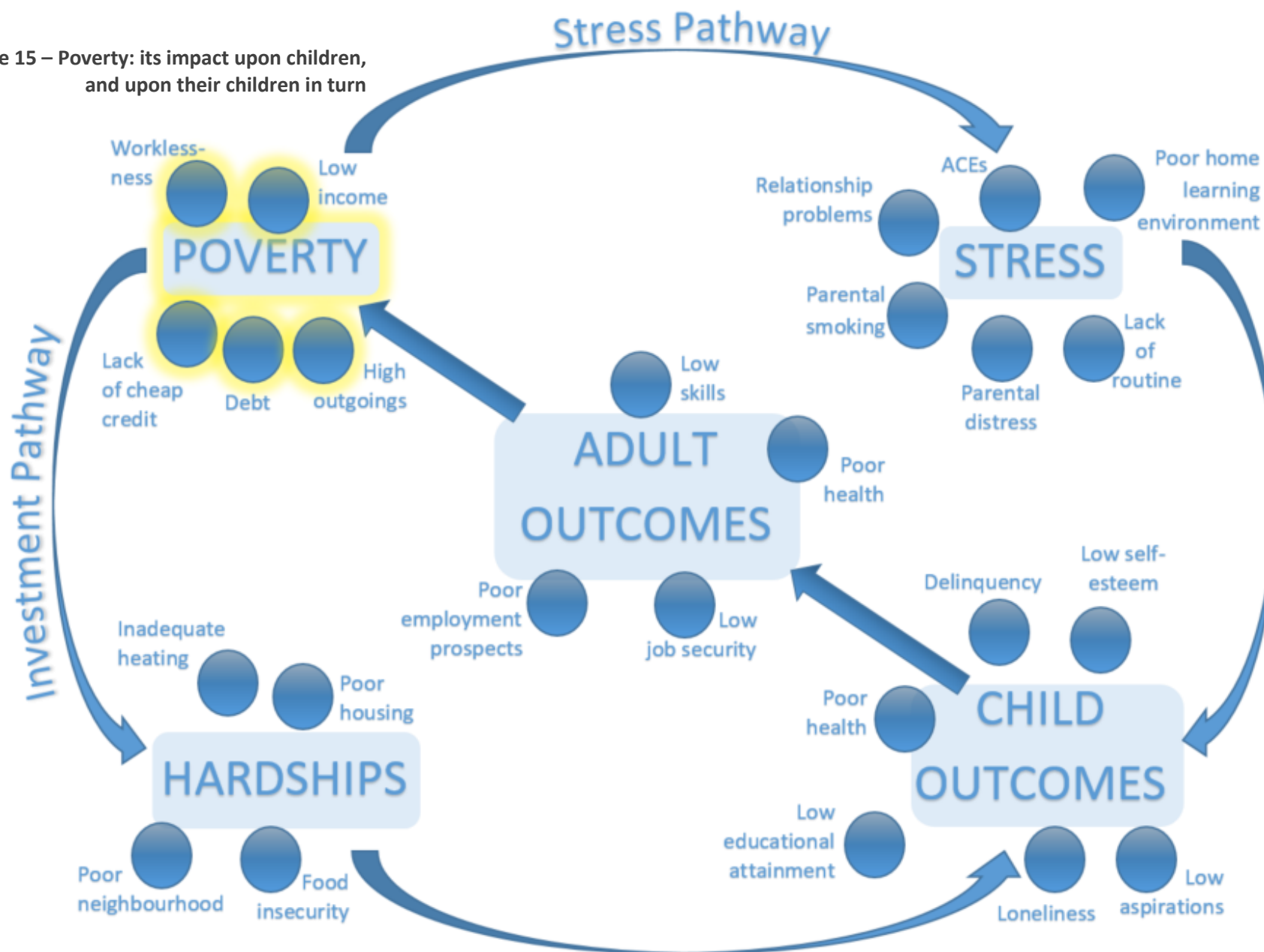
Health impacts

Child poverty is associated with a range of negative health outcomes, including increased infant mortality²³, poor oral health⁴⁵, reduced physical activity^{23, 46} and higher levels of respiratory illness.⁴⁶ The worse the poverty, the greater the impact on health.²³ Persistent early years poverty is linked to lower cognitive development, even after controlling for background characteristics and parental inputs.⁴⁷

Accident and injury rates are higher in low-income areas due to poor housing conditions, lack of safe outdoor play spaces, a lack of safety equipment (such as fire alarms), and living close to busy roads.²³ There is a greater prevalence of child obesity,⁴⁶ compounded by a lack of access to healthy food.^{46, 48} It has been estimated that for the poorest fifth of families, trying to follow the Public Health England 'Eatwell' Guide would mean spending over 40% of their weekly income (after housing costs) on food.⁴⁹

Anxiety, depression and self-harm are inversely linked to income level at all ages – including for children⁵⁰ and their parents.⁵¹ Poverty is also linked to increased levels of domestic violence, and to ACEs (Box 2).⁵²

Figure 15 – Poverty: its impact upon children, and upon their children in turn



Low income in Blackburn with Darwen

Statistics on incomes and earnings generally portray Blackburn with Darwen as a low-wage economy.

Earnings

At £383 per week, provisional median gross earnings for Blackburn with Darwen residents in 2018 were the 8th lowest out of 151 upper-tier authorities in England (Figure 16 on right). Lowest of all was Blackpool with £348, and highest was the City of London at just over £900 per week.⁵³

Household Income

Gross Disposable Household Income (GDHI)⁵⁴ is the amount of money that individuals in households have left to spend after taxes and benefits. In 2017, the Blackburn with Darwen average of £12,623 per head was the lowest in the NW, and 3rd lowest in the UK, after Nottingham and Leicester (Figure 17).

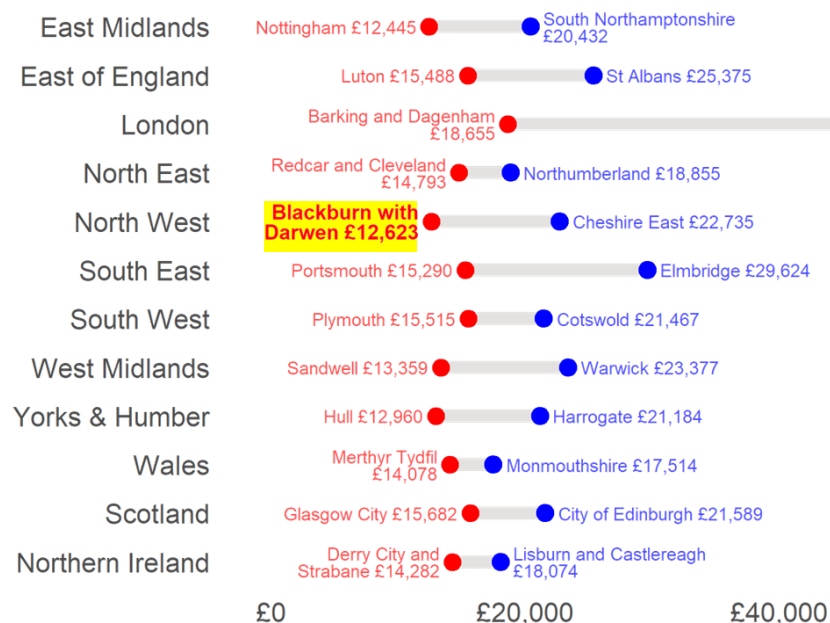
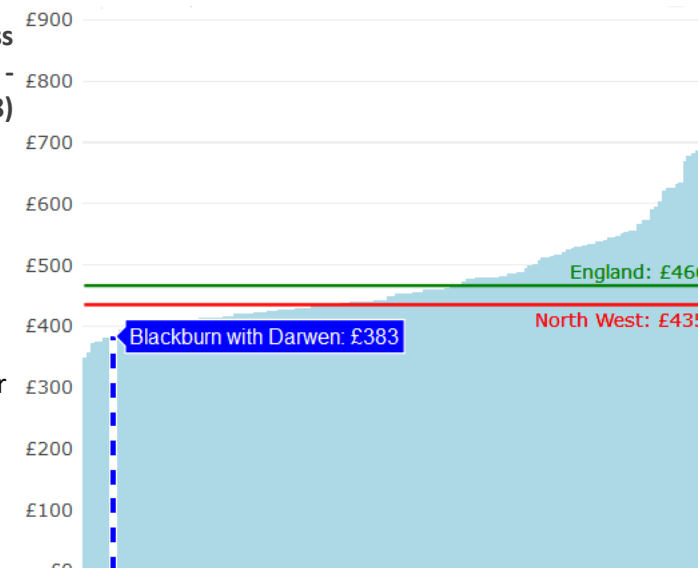


Figure 17 - Gross Disposable Household Income per head (2017, provisional) - lowest and highest per region

Figure 16 - Provisional Median Gross Weekly Earnings of Residents - Upper Tier Authorities in England (2018)



Estimates of household income are also available for small areas.⁵⁵

Figure 18 (on the right) shows how Annual Household Income (before tax) varies across the Borough.

The small shaded areas are called Middle Super Output Areas (MSOAs). Half of Blackburn with Darwen's 18 MSOAs are in the bottom 10% nationally. One of them, roughly equating to Audley, has the third lowest Household Income in England (out of 6791).

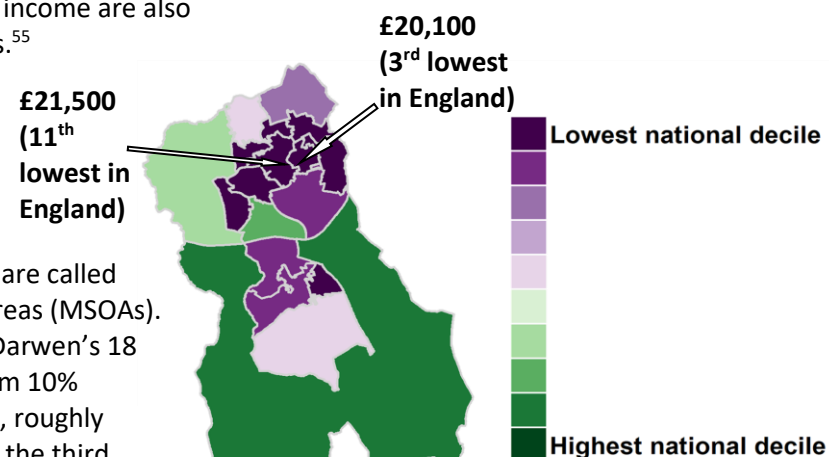


Figure 18 - Estimated Total Annual Household Income (MSOAs, 2015/16) (income per household, not per head)

Child poverty in Blackburn with Darwen

Relative poverty

The surveys used to provide official UK poverty measures do not go down to the local authority level, so we cannot work out a Blackburn with Darwen rate in quite the same way. However, there are two main approximations available for districts and smaller areas. Of necessity, both of these are 'modelled'(or 'synthetic') estimates:

- HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) uses benefits and tax credits data to produce its '**The Children in Low-Income Families Local Measure**'.⁵⁶ This gives an estimate of relative poverty *before* housing costs, and takes a long time to come out.
- Loughborough University produces the '**End Child Poverty**' estimates for the Child Poverty Action Group.⁵⁷ These are more timely, and are available on an *after* housing costs basis.

The latest 'End Child Poverty' figures came out just as this report was being finalised.⁵⁷ They indicated that relative child poverty in Blackburn with Darwen had risen in 2017/18 to **46.9%** of children living in poverty (after housing costs), giving it the fifth highest rate in the UK.

Even more of a shock were the ward estimates. Bastwell was estimated to have *the* highest ward rate in the entire country (**69.6%**), with Audley third highest (Figure 19):

Inevitably, this has prompted media interest. An item on the BBC website asks:⁵⁸



The article portrays Bastwell as a quietly respectable area, whose BAME community does not like to ask for help, but where the loss of services as a result of funding cuts has had a big impact.

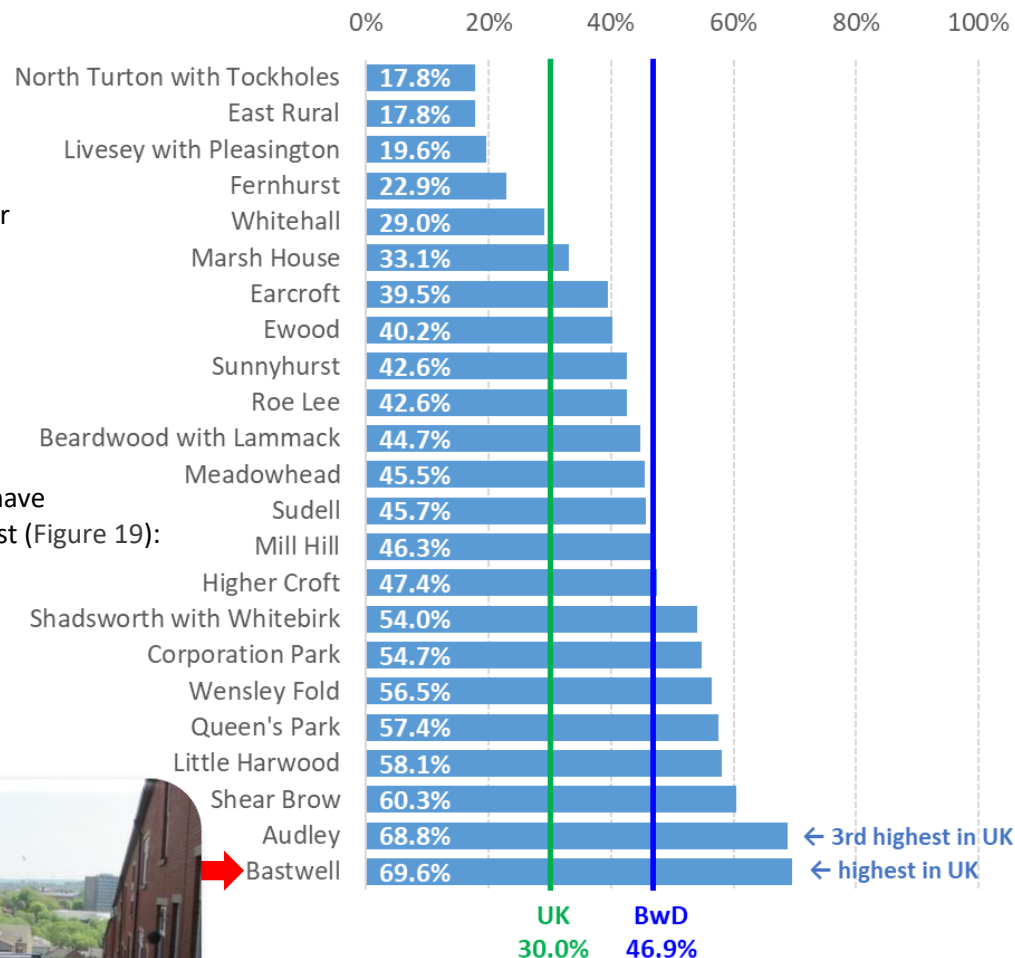


Figure 19 - 'End Child Poverty' estimates by ward (2017/18, after housing costs. Pre-2018 ward boundaries)

Benefit cap

The 'benefit cap' is a limit on the total amount of benefit a person aged 16-64 can receive, usually implemented as a deduction from Housing Benefit. Latest figures show that 107 households in Blackburn with Darwen were subject to the benefit cap in November 2018.⁵⁹ More than 80% of these were single-parent families, and nearly all had three or more children, so the total number of children affected was close to 400.

Local impact

It was always clear that places with large families and/or big Asian communities would be hit particularly hard by the welfare reforms introduced in 2015.⁶⁰ Sheffield Hallam University predicted that by 2020/21, Blackburn with Darwen was set to lose £560 per working-age adult per year, the highest equal impact out of 378 local authorities.⁶¹

"There's never any money left': threat of welfare cuts alarms Blackburn families

A feature in the Guardian in 2015 found that low-income families in Blackburn with Darwen were stretched to the limit already, and could not comprehend how they would cope with cuts on the scale envisaged.⁶² At the Audley and Queen's Park Children's Centre in Blackburn, parents described getting by on the proceeds of insecure and/or part-time low-paid employment, often on the minimum wage, and supplemented by tax credits:

"I don't expect to get stuff for free- we are trying to work, and trying to do the right thing."

"The job opportunities in Blackburn aren't great"

"A lot of the jobs you can get here are minimum wage jobs"

"There's nothing left at the end of the week after the nappies and the powdered milk."

"It goes on food and clothes ... People will struggle."

Almost four years on, young people in Blackburn with Darwen are voicing their own first-hand experiences of poverty - and particularly food poverty - through the Blackburn with Darwen Food Alliance's '#DarwengetsHangry' and '#Blackburngets Hangry' campaigns.⁶³ In a powerful video, students of Darwen Aldridge Enterprise Studio give an eloquent account of what it feels like to experience food poverty and the stigma that goes with it, and how it can affect behaviour in school.⁶⁴

Figure 20 – Students of Darwen Aldridge Enterprise Studio talk about how food poverty affects them



What can we do about it?

What are we already doing?

At the start of their education, children in Blackburn with Darwen who qualify for Free School Meals (FSM) have relatively poor levels of school-readiness, even compared with similarly disadvantaged children elsewhere. However, they more than make up for this during their school years, across a range of indicators covering academic achievement and entry to higher education. By the end of their school years, according to the Social Mobility Commission, outcomes for this group in Blackburn with Darwen are only just outside the best quintile for FSM-eligible young people nationally.⁶⁵

This remarkable turn-around is testament to the success of the efforts already being made across Blackburn with Darwen to try and offset the effects of child poverty. There are many local initiatives provided by the borough council, as well as by schools, Children's Centres, religious organisations, and voluntary groups:



Figure 21 - Volunteers making sandwiches for the Blackburn with Darwen Summer Lunchbox Scheme

BOX 3 – EXISTING LOCAL INITIATIVES

- ❖ Internet access and support with IT skills to ensure individuals are able to access Universal Credit
- ❖ Food and fuel banks to provide short-term support to people experiencing food and/or fuel poverty
- ❖ Support to access employment & volunteering opportunities
- ❖ Resource provision (baby equipment, toys etc)
- ❖ Signposting to debt and financial management support agencies
- ❖ Holiday lunchbox scheme to address lack of access to free school meals during school holiday period
- ❖ Breakfast clubs set up in schools

“A hungry child cannot learn well, and in the current economic climate, parents are struggling to make ends meet. Now, no child will be hungry.”

Head Teacher of St Antony's School, upon establishment of new breakfast club⁶⁶

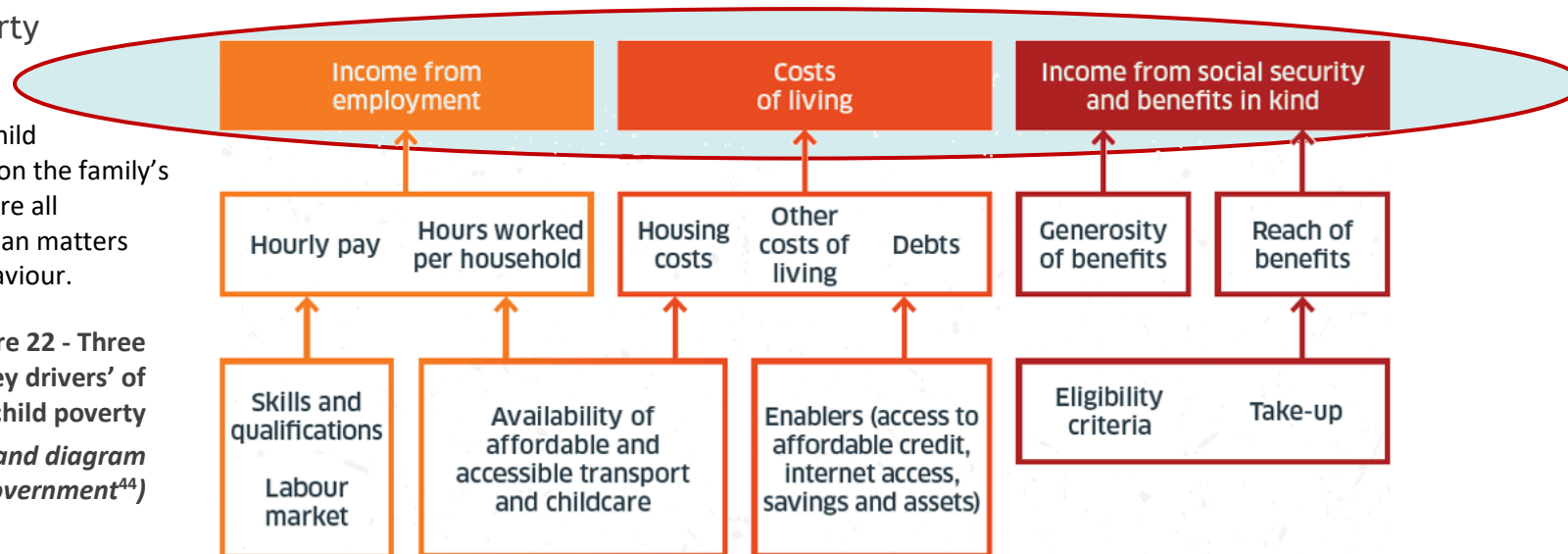
What more can we do?

English local authorities are no longer required to publish a 'Child Poverty Needs Assessment'.²³ However, the Scottish Government has introduced a new duty to produce a 'Local child poverty action report', and published some useful guidelines on how to go about tackling child poverty at the local level.^{44,67}

Drivers of child poverty

The Scottish Government has identified what it calls the '**three key drivers**' of child poverty. These all impinge on the family's income or outgoings, and are all structural factors, rather than matters of individual choice or behaviour.

Figure 22 - Three 'key drivers' of child poverty
(definition and diagram by the Scottish Government⁴⁴)






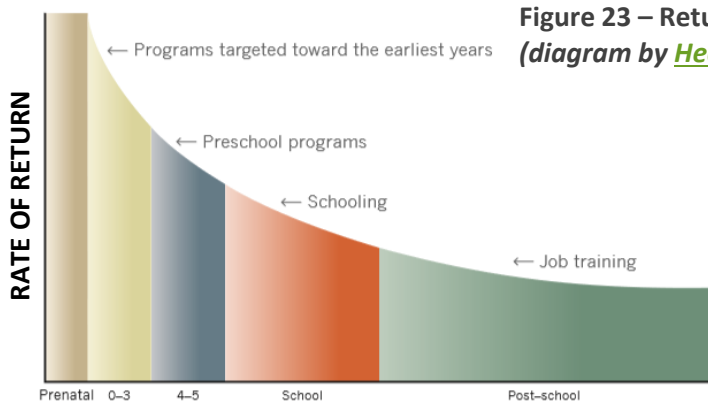
As Figure 22 makes clear, the drivers themselves have deeper underlying causes. Some of these root causes need to be addressed nationally, but local areas can contribute by informing, influencing and lobbying for change. Others are amenable to direct action at the local level:^{68,69,70,71}

Income from employment	Unemployment, economic inactivity, under-employment and zero-hours contracts all conspire to reduce income from employment. Local agencies can work with employers to boost skills, address poor terms and conditions, and promote flexible working arrangements, affordable childcare and transport.
Costs of living	Local agencies are well placed to tackle elements of the 'poverty premium', such as punitively high fuel costs and interest rates, which low-income families often face. They can also help in many other ways, such as by offering budgeting or cookery lessons ⁶⁸ , seeking to reduce the 'Cost of the School Day', and providing free activities in the summer. ⁶⁸
Income from social security and benefits in kind	Even without taking Universal Credit into account, several £bn goes unclaimed each year in income-related benefits and tax credits. ^{68,35} Universal Credit brings added barriers due to its complexity and online nature. Local initiatives can reduce local poverty by helping people to access the state support that they are entitled to.

Table 1 – Ways of addressing the 'key drivers' of child poverty

Levels of intervention*

To complement the 'three key drivers', the NHS in Scotland has defined three **levels of intervention** which can be harnessed to tackle child poverty.⁶⁹

 <p>PREVENT: actions which can prevent families at risk from slipping into poverty (before it happens)</p>	 <p>UNDO: actions which can help lift families out of the poverty they are already in</p>	 <p>MITIGATE: actions which can lessen the negative impact upon children of the poverty they are in</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Actions to offset the ill-effects of poverty upon children should by no means be dismissed. These are highly cost-effective in their own right - and the earlier they start, the better. • Nobel Prize-winning US economist James Heckman is probably the best-known champion of early intervention for disadvantaged children, with a website full of compelling charts and factsheets⁷²: <div data-bbox="963 566 1668 973">  <p>Figure 23 – Returns per unit invested (diagram by heckmanequation.org⁷²)</p> <p>“The highest rate of return in early childhood development comes from investing as early as possible, from birth through age five, in disadvantaged families” James Heckman, 7/12/2012</p> </div>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preventing problems from arising in the first place gives the best results for individuals and for society as a whole, and is a more efficient use of public sector resources. • ‘Prevent’ and ‘Undo’ do not necessarily call for different approaches. Often the same intervention will be of benefit to those <i>at risk of</i> poverty and those already <i>in</i> poverty.³⁷ 		

Cross-cutting themes for actions

We have also identified a number of cross-cutting themes, which local partners may wish to adopt as a matter of good practice:

- Take steps to avoid introducing a ‘poverty premium’ (see page 8) around access to public services or in paying for public services.
- Aim to design services which are available to all, but deliver increasing benefits to those at greater levels of need, to achieve a ‘levelling up’ effect.[†]
- Scrutinise policy and practice changes to ensure that they do not introduce or exacerbate barriers and stigma for those at risk of or experiencing poverty.
- Seek opportunities to engage local communities and/or service users in the development of actions and services which address child poverty.
- Explore opportunities to provide basic awareness-raising on the causes and consequences of child poverty with all frontline staff who are likely to come into contact with families at risk of or experiencing poverty.

* Icon attributions: Precipice by Magicon from the Noun Project; Ladder by corpus delicti from the Noun Project; Support by auttapol from the Noun Project (thenounproject.com)

† This is the ‘Proportionate universalism’ principle of Marmot (2010⁷³).

Beyond child poverty - inclusive growth

Poverty as a soluble problem

One of the hardest barriers to overcome is the attitude that poverty is inevitable. This leads people to suppose that there is no point trying to do anything about it.

The JRF Framing Toolkit¹⁶ carries a strong message that the economy we have today didn't just happen – it was designed. And that means it can be *redesigned*, to tackle problems such as poverty (Figure 24):

Figure 24 – Driving home the message that poverty is not inevitable (from JRF Toolkit¹⁶)



Inclusive growth

“**Inclusive growth** is about enabling more people and places to both contribute to and benefit from economic success.⁷⁴ More specifically, it is about how poverty can be reduced through the creation of better jobs and better access to those jobs for people in or at risk of poverty. A policy or strategy that does not have a focus on living standards of those at the bottom of the income distribution cannot describe itself as an inclusive growth strategy.”
Joseph Rowntree Foundation⁷⁵

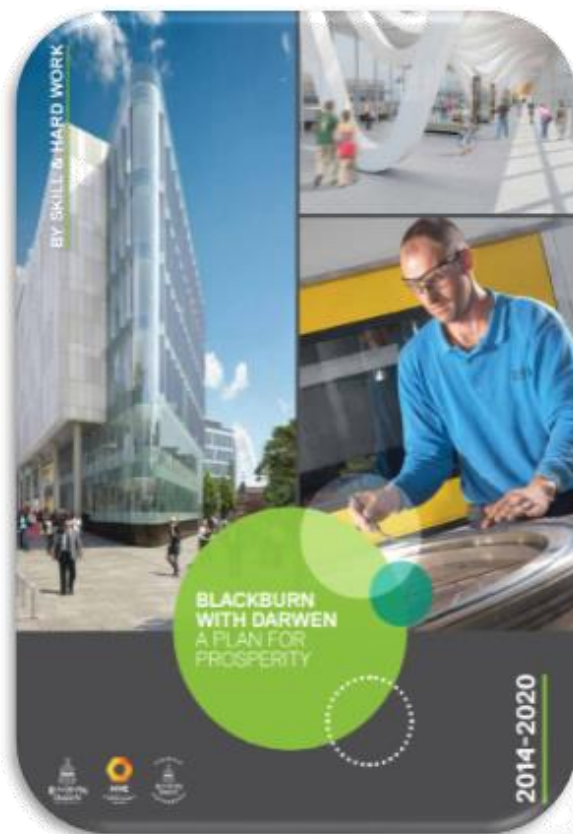
A growing employment rate is no longer helping families out of poverty as it once did. People in many parts of the country are locked out of opportunities to access good jobs and we can no longer rely on previous assumptions that prosperity will trickle down. A growing body of evidence is showing that simply driving up output growth and the number of jobs in an economy is not guaranteed to improve living standards for people in or at risk of poverty. In-work poverty has been steadily rising and one in eight workers now live in poverty.^{75,76}

Since the early 2000s, people getting stuck in low-paid jobs, along with high housing costs and cuts to benefits, all mean that the poorest fifth of households have seen next to no growth in real incomes after housing costs are taken into account.⁷⁷ This is why we need inclusive growth.⁷⁵



In practice this means that while thinking about policies that would boost job creation, we should at the same time be thinking about:⁷⁵

- skills strategies to improve basic skill levels and enable people to access those jobs
- interventions that can improve the quality of jobs
- how people can be supported to progress in work
- where jobs are located, and the cost and accessibility of public transport to get to those jobs



Plan for Prosperity

Local Industrial Strategies, covering sub-regions such as Lancashire, will soon be rolled out across the whole country.⁷⁸ Bodies such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation welcome this as an opportunity for local leaders to be explicit about how they intend to focus on inclusive growth.⁷⁵

Blackburn with Darwen has already had its own **Plan for Prosperity**⁷⁹ since 2014. Although this pre-dates the work of the RSA Inclusive Growth Commission⁷⁴, many of the key principles of inclusive growth are already in place:

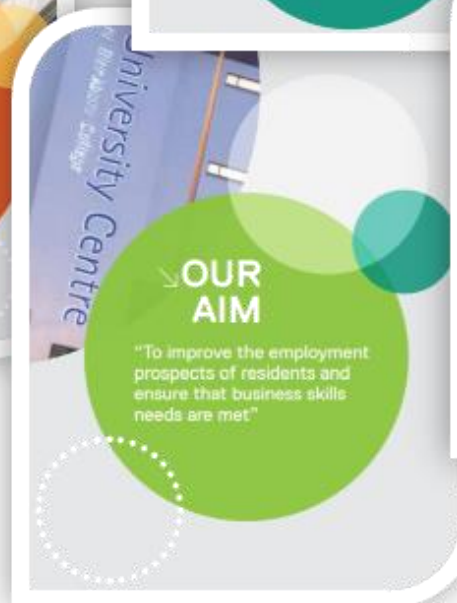


Figure 26 – Blackburn with Darwen Plan for Prosperity⁷⁹

What more will we do?

We are already doing a lot of good work in Blackburn with Darwen to address child poverty, but there is more that we can do.

The **recommendations** below provide a framework for how we can build on our existing work, and address gaps, to tackle child poverty locally.

Recommendations

1. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to champion action amongst partners to tackle child poverty. In doing so, it should promote as good practice the '**Cross-cutting themes for actions**' identified on page 16 of this report.
2. Poverty is one of the three cross-cutting priorities of the Blackburn with Darwen Health and Wellbeing Strategy.⁸⁰ The Health and Wellbeing Board will therefore request an annual report from the Children's Partnership Board, the Live Well Board and the Growth Board, on the actions they have taken in the previous 12 months, and plans for the next year, in tackling child poverty in the Borough. In making their reports, it is proposed that the Scottish model is adopted, of classifying interventions by both:
 - a) their impact on one or more of the three **key drivers** of child poverty –
 - Income from Employment,
 - Cost of living,
 - Income from Social Security
 - b) the **level of intervention** on child poverty -
 - Prevent
 - Undo
 - Mitigate

The Blackburn with Darwen Ambition

Looking ahead, it is difficult to commit to a specific target poverty rate, when the very definition may be about to change.^{14,15} However, we can aspire to close the gap between Blackburn with Darwen and the rest of the country, however that may be measured:

By 2030, in Blackburn with Darwen, we will aim to have
reduced our child poverty rate to the national average
on whatever may be the official headline measure at that time

This target is ambitious but we believe, through co-ordinated and concerted efforts by all partners in the borough, that it is achievable. We owe it to local children to strive to deliver the best possible services to reduce child poverty as much as we possibly can.

Further reading

Joint Strategic Needs Assessment

If you have found this Public Health Annual Report interesting, you may be wondering where you can find further information about Blackburn with Darwen: the borough, its residents, and the social, economic and environmental determinants which influence their health and wellbeing. Like all upper-tier local authorities, Blackburn with Darwen is required to keep these issues under ongoing review in its **Joint Strategic Needs Assessment**, or **JSNA**. The JSNA, in turn, informs the borough's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy and commissioning decisions.

JSNA Summary Review

For a succinct overview of Blackburn with Darwen's JSNA, have a look at our annual JSNA **Summary Review**. This illustrated document starts with a profile of the borough's population and local economy, and then proceeds through the life-course, with sections entitled 'Start Well', 'Live Well' and 'Age Well'. You can try the new online version at <https://bwd-ph.github.io/jsnabook/>.



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