

# CHILD POVERTY

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South East Lead Members workshop 19 March 2021

Lisa Faulkner, Consultant

# Overview:

- What do we mean by “child poverty”?
- Child poverty in the South East
- The costs of poverty to local authorities
- The impact of the pandemic
- Local authority duties
- The role of the Lead Member
- Northumberland and the North East Child Poverty Commission
- Milton Keynes
- Plenary

# Defining child poverty

Relative poverty:

- Children living in households with less than 60% of median income
- This can be measured before housing costs are taken into account (BHC), or after housing costs (AHC)
- This is defined as “the poverty line”

Absolute poverty

Persistent poverty

Low income and material deprivation

New measures...?

# The poverty line

Once housing costs have been taken into account, this “poverty line” equates to:

- £204 per week for a single parent with one child aged under 14.
- £366 per week for a couple with two children aged under 14.

*That's about £14 per day per person for food, clothes and shoes, heating and lighting, toys, books, transport, school trips and activities, and all household items and appliances.*

# Risk factors

Some households are at higher risk of being in poverty than others:

- Families with a disabled child or other family member
- Children whose parents are under 25
- Lone parents
- Families with children under five years old
- Pakistani and Bangladeshi families

# Child poverty – babies and young children

- 1.3m of the country's 4.2m children in poverty are babies and children under 5 years old
- Families in poverty with babies and pre-school children are living, on average, at around 71% of the poverty line
- A quarter of young children in poverty are living below 50% of the poverty line.

Average weekly income (£) – The column shows the weekly income for a family with the average UK weekly income	Couple with two children aged below 5	Single parent with two children aged below 5
Median household income – weekly (£)	£626	£438
Poverty line – weekly income (£)	£375	£263
Nationally, the average family income for children in poverty is 71% of the poverty line. This column shows the weekly income equivalent of this figure.	£267	£187
In London, the average family income for children in poverty is 66% of the poverty line. This column shows the weekly income equivalent of this figure.	£248	£173

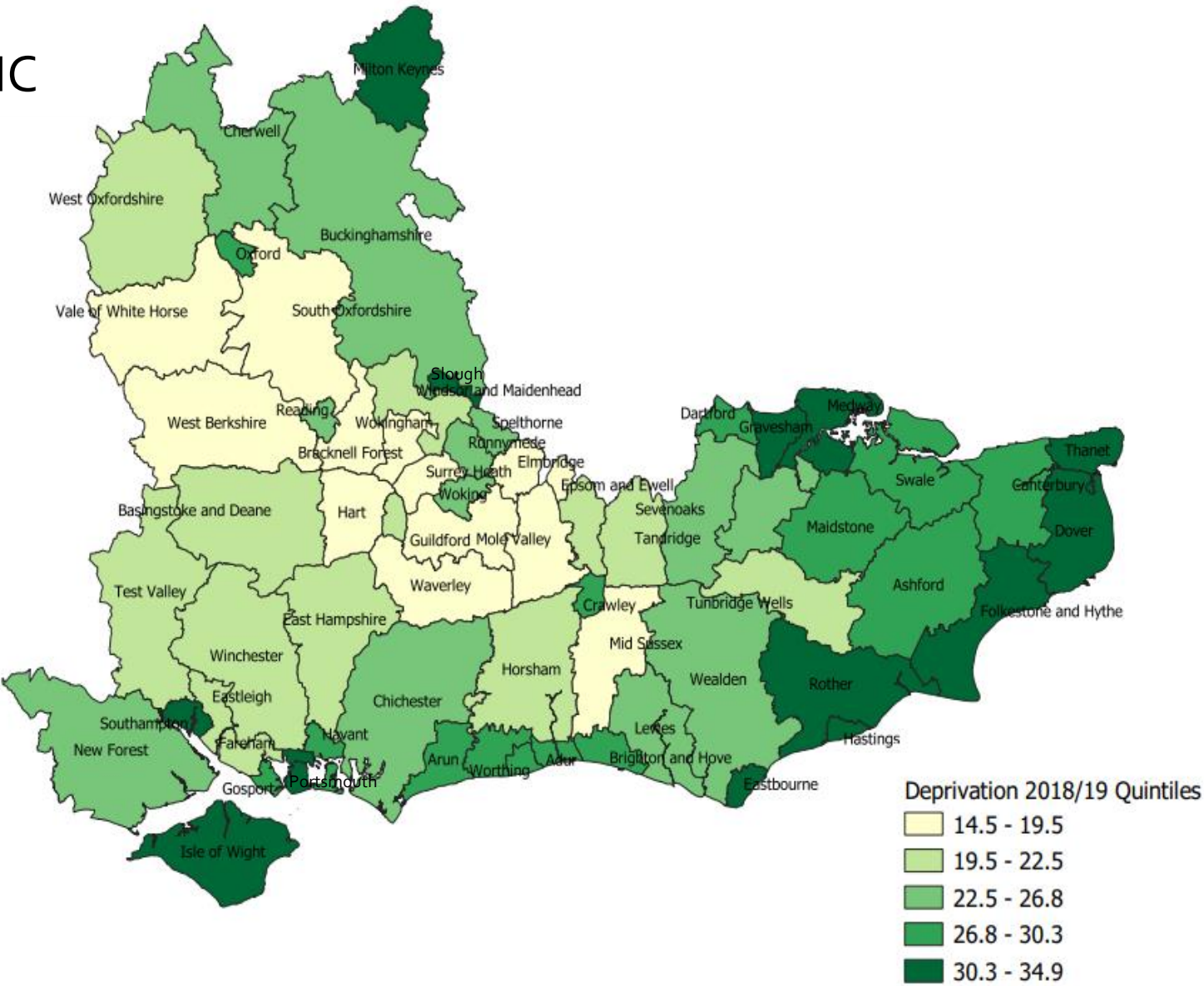
Defining poverty – questions?

# Child Poverty in the South East

- In 2018/19, there were over 415,000 children living in relative poverty in the South East.
- That's 25% of all children here.
- Levels of poverty are higher in some areas than others, but there are pockets of poverty in every area.



# Children in poverty in 2018/19, AHC



Child poverty is highest in coastal areas of the South East.

Highest levels of poverty are in Southampton (35%)

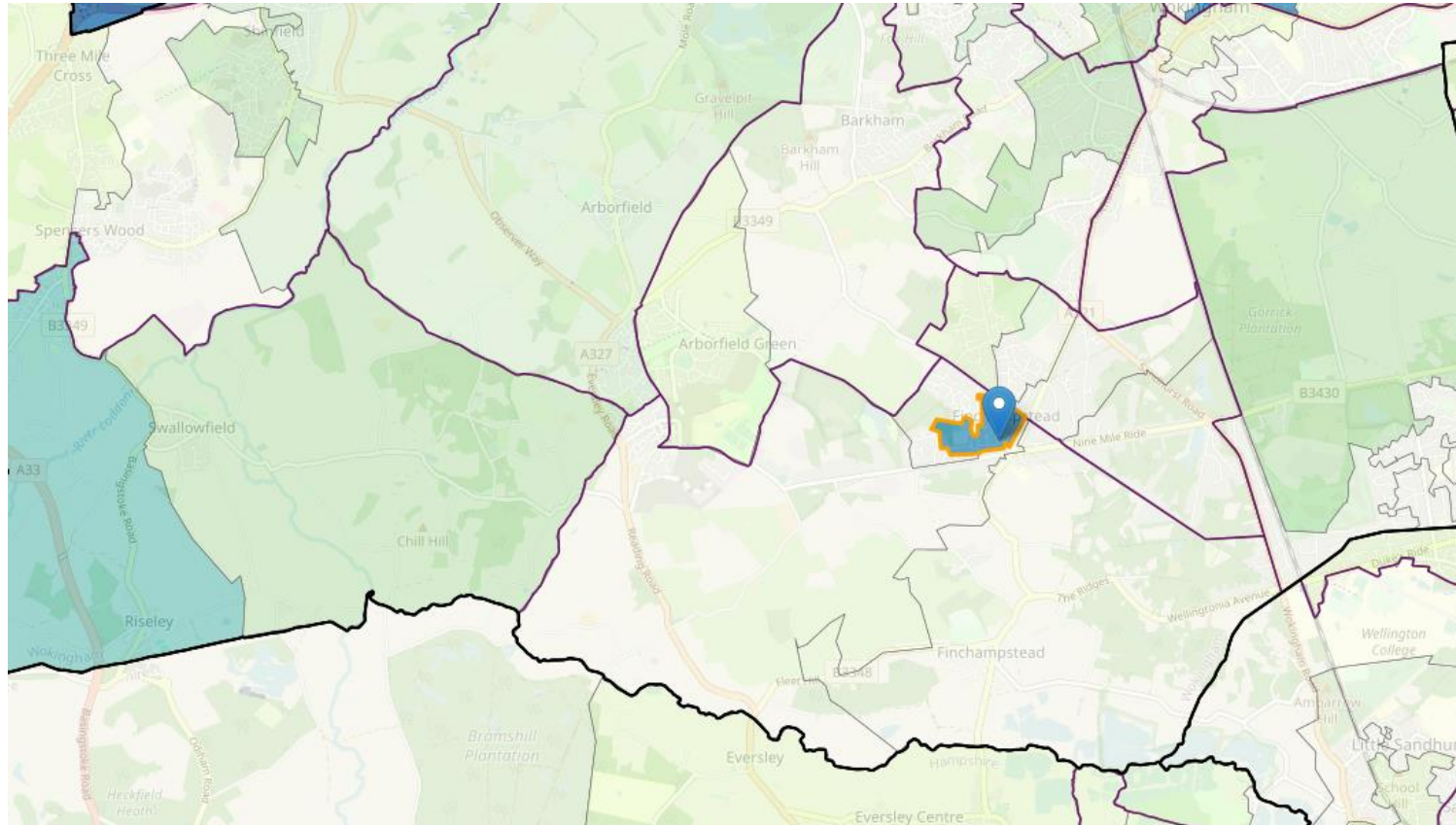
A third of all children are living in poverty in Portsmouth, Isle of Wight, and Slough.

# Child poverty in local areas

These district/borough areas all have more than 30% of children growing up in poverty:

Local Authority – district/borough/unitary	% of children below 60% median income AHC
Hastings (East Sussex)	37.8%
Thanet (Kent)	37.0%
Southampton	34.7%
Dover (Kent)	34.0%
Portsmouth	33.2%
Isle of Wight	32.7%
Slough	32.7%
Eastbourne (East Sussex)	32.6%
Gravesham (Kent)	32.5%
Rother (East Sussex)	32.1%
Folkestone and Hythe (Kent)	32.0%
Swale (Kent)	31.7%
Havant (Hampshire)	31.5%
Medway	31.4%
Crawley (West Sussex)	30.6%
Milton Keynes	30.6%
Ashford (Kent)	30.1%

# Smaller local areas (LSOAs)

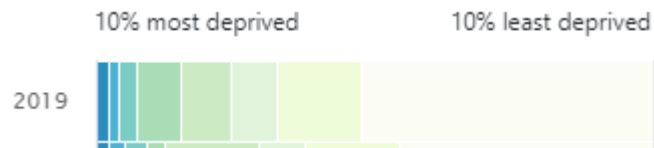


## Wokingham:

Ranked 316 out of 317 local authorities on IDACI

But

Some pockets of poverty nonetheless, within much more affluent areas.



Questions?

# The costs of poverty

Allowing children to grow up in poor families is expensive for us all. Children from low income families are:

- More likely to be born early and have a low birth weight
- Two and a half times more likely to suffer chronic illness
- Almost four times more likely to suffer mental health problems
- Five times more likely to die in an accident
- Three times more likely to be hit by a car
- Ten times more likely to become a teenage mother
- Less likely to stay on at school
- More likely to have fewer qualifications

# The costs to councils

- Child poverty in the UK is currently costing the country at least £29 billion a year
- £15 billion spent on services to deal with consequences of child poverty (e.g. social services, criminal justice, extra educational support)

For example, in 2011:

- Child poverty may have cost Cambridgeshire's Children's Services (including schools) around £96,000,000 per year
- 71% of expenditure in children and families social services (children's social care, youth and family support) was likely to be attributable to poverty – equating to more than £62,000,000 for Cambridgeshire County Council

# The impacts of poverty on children's lives

Children's educational choices are constrained by the cost of a bus fare:

*"But if a child loses their ticket? And what happens when you have to pick them up if they're ill? I can't drive. It would be an £8 taxi."*

Starting school tips finances over the edge:

*"Uniforms for secondary school crippled us. Then the school changed it so I can't pass it down to the next one."*

Keeping up at school is difficult:

*"It's crowded, so I try to do my homework at school." 6 year old*

1 in 4 can't afford to keep their house warm:

*"Once I have bought food, gas and electric bills I have no money left" "When the meter runs out we have to use the emergency gas instead but that doesn't last for long"*

*"Most young people here and probably across the country just have to learn from their mistakes. But it's hard on a low income to make mistakes; you don't have the income to fall back upon"*

90% of parents say they go without in order to ensure their children have enough

Costs and impacts – questions?

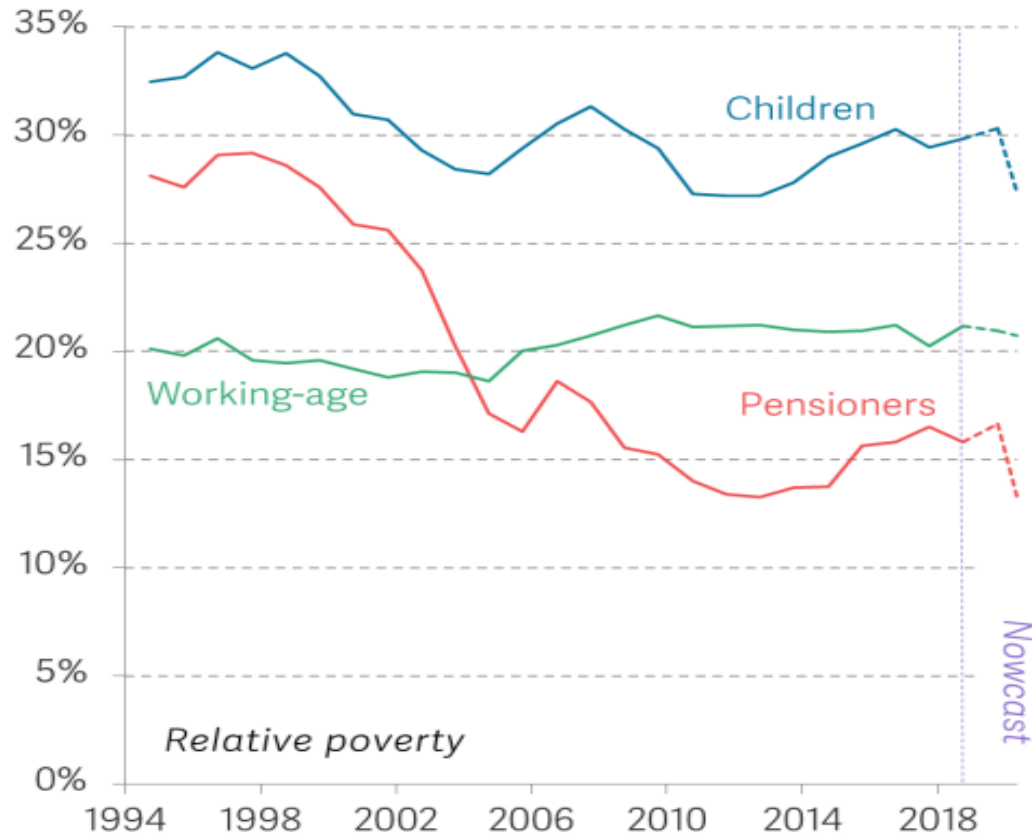


# The impact of 2020

Changes pre-pandemic:

- The risk of poverty had risen for workers in families with children, but there had been little change for workers in families without children.
- Working single parents had seen the fastest rise; three in ten are in poverty by 2019. It was two in ten in 2010/11.
- 72% of children in poverty in 2019 are in working households
- Increasing numbers of children in poverty – more than 4 million children in the UK
- The attainment gap between disadvantaged pupils and their peers began widening for the first time in 12 years

# 2020: Welfare benefit changes



Temporary changes to welfare benefits, including the £20 uplift to Universal Credit and a suspension of the minimum income floor for the self-employed results in a temporary reduction in poverty. Average income falls too.

# 2020: Unemployment, reduced incomes and home schooling

## Rising unemployment:

- Up to 5.1% by end of Dec – 1.74m unemployed, up from 454,000 in 2019.
- Forecast to rise to 7.8% this year.
- 150,000 more children in poverty by end of 2020, and will rise further.

## Reduced incomes:

- Increasing financial problems, deepening poverty
- Increasing use of foodbanks
- Increasing requests for Local Authority welfare assistance

# 2020 pandemic: the impact on children and young people

- Food poverty
- Mental health impacts – children, young people and their parents
- Lack of digital access
- Widening education gap
- Increased behaviour problems
- Reduced employment opportunities for young people – particular impact on care leavers.
- Increased need for Early Help services

# The impact of the pandemic – questions and discussion

# Local Authority Child Poverty duties

- 2010 Child Poverty Act – *set UK-wide targets and conferred duties on local authorities and their partners.*
- 2016 Welfare Reform and Work Act – *abolished the Child Poverty Act and its related duties and targets.*
- Child Poverty Commission became the Social Mobility Commission
- Child Poverty figures stopped being published, but this is now reinstated.

# Local Authority strategies and assessments

Previously:

- Duties to produce needs assessments and child poverty strategies under the Child Poverty Act
- Duties to work together with partners to tackle child poverty and to mitigate its effects

Now:

- Public sector budget pressures
- Place-based working and the role of partners
- Community resilience

# What can Local Authorities do?

- Work with Partners and communities – understand your local communities
- Listen to frontline workers – in schools, social care, and in other frontline organisations – Police, housing officers, voluntary sector organisations

## Poverty proofing policies:

- Advice and support – welfare rights, income maximisation, financial capability
- Local employment support – parents and young people
- Housing and homelessness prevention
- Planning
- Mental health services – CAMHS, support for parents

## Work with communities:

- Community transport
- Unlock sports facilities and community assets
- Green spaces – community orchards, community growing
- Support community organisers and unlock volunteering potential
- Food banks and food share schemes



# Child Poverty – not just an issue for Children’s Services



# The role of the Lead Member

## Leadership

- Ensure good strategic understanding of local areas and communities
- Monitor the effectiveness of outcomes for families in poverty
- Champion Child Poverty activity – keep it on the agenda

## Partnership

- Influence and ensure the right Partners are engaged
- Keep child poverty on the agenda at relevant Partnership Boards – e.g. Health and Wellbeing Board

## Scrutiny and challenge

- Consider a scrutiny panel or local or regional commission
- Challenge and check on performance of actions to tackle child poverty

# Questions to ask – in your local authority

- What priority does our child poverty work take?
- Is there a recognised operational lead and how is this reinforced?
- Who is taking responsibility and action at senior political and organisational level?
- Is there a common understanding of the nature and causes of poverty in our area across our strategic boards and partnerships?
- Do we know where children are growing up in poverty?
- Do we know what the drivers of poverty are in specific areas?
- What do we know about the outcomes for children in poverty – educational, employment, inter-generations?
- What do we, or could we, share with others about what we know?
- What do our service users and residents tell us about their experiences?

# Questions to ask – with Partners

- What do you know about the impact of poverty on your service areas?
- What could we do together to have a greater impact than working within our own services?
- How could we address child poverty in our Place-based work?
- How could we monitor progress along with our partners?
- What might be helpful to do at a regional level?
- Can we/should we provide a voice at national level (e.g. through the LGA)?

Breakout groups –

How might this work in your local authority?

How might you be the catalyst for activity?

What other Partners are/should be involved?

# Presentation – Northumberland and the North East region



# Northumberland

## County Council



**Emma Richardson**  
**Poverty lead - NCC / Strategic Lead**  
**– Northumberland Communities Together**



## Northumberland context:

Northumberland **96.7%** rural

**49%** of residents live rurally

**51%** of population live in 3% of the county

**9%** population no recognised skills or qualifications

- a further **28%** have up to level 1 qualifications

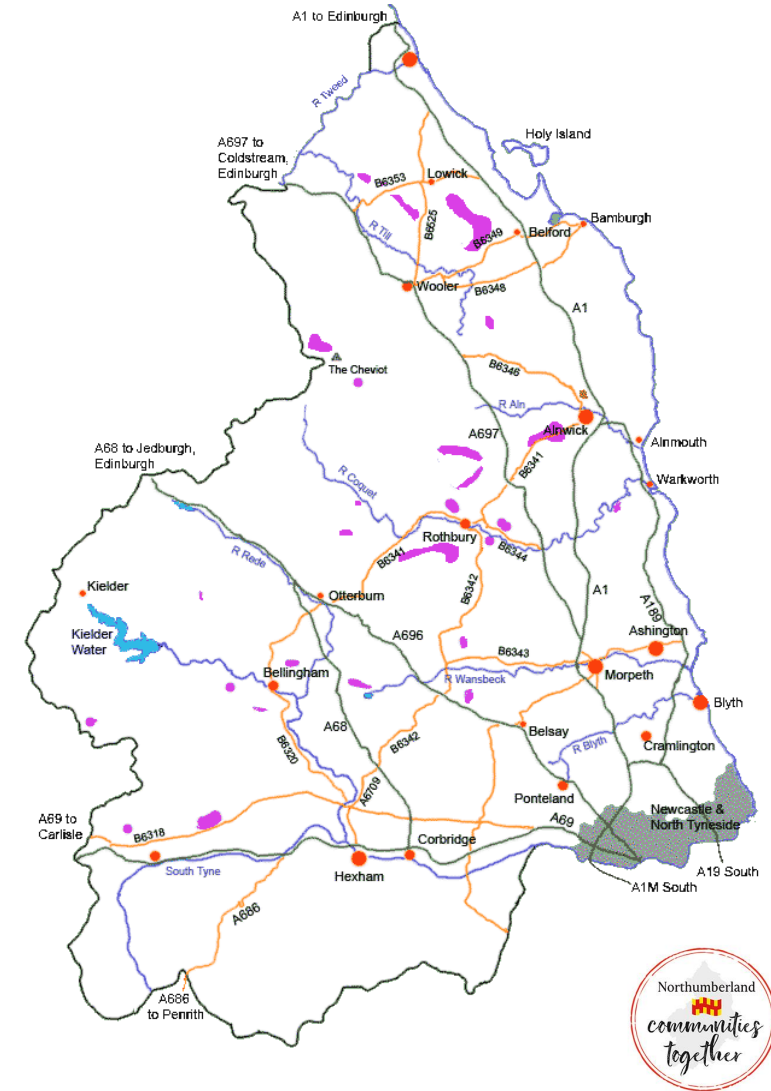
Ranked 288 of 324 in the Social Mobility Commission findings

**8,747** children entitled to Free School Meals (January 2021)

2.4% increase since January 2020 – from 16.5% of pupils to 18.9%

**32%** or **16806** children living in poverty

**The difference: 8059** children and young people





- **Pressures**

- Health inequalities
- Safeguarding
- Education
- Futures

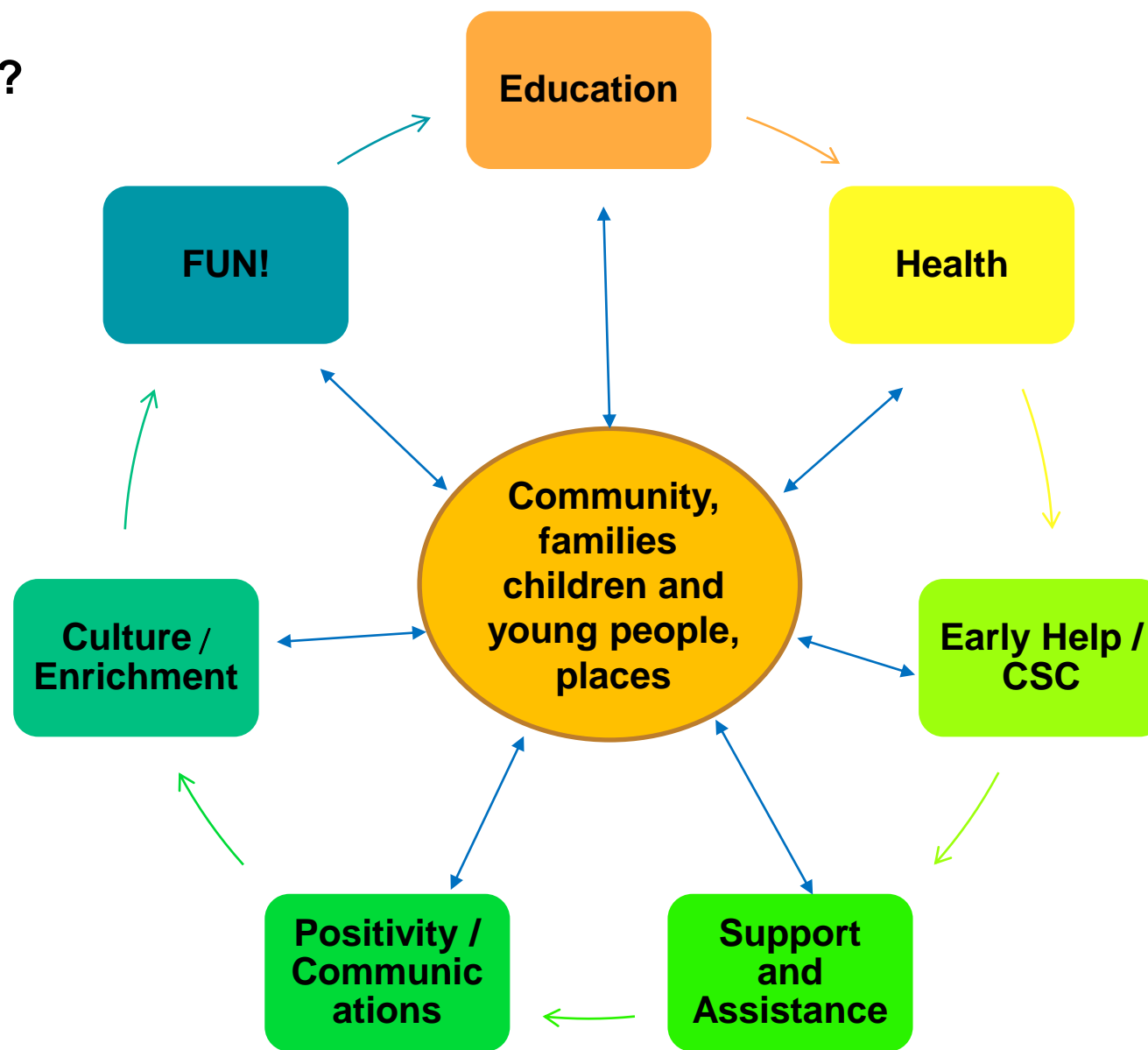


- **Experiences**

- Poor health / insecurity
- Shame, exclusion, inadequacy, hurt
- Responsible, isolated, angry
- Futures?



# Where are we going?



Listen, develop, learn



- Leadership
- Visibility
- Awareness
- Commitment
- Values

Local Authority

NHS

Business

Community

Residents



## Some examples:

Hardship funding – combined and connected

Holiday Activity planning – quality assured but locally led

Food insecurity – innovation and enterprise

**Whose responsibility?**



**Every step, however small, must be in the right direction**

## **Our approach**

- Led by experts - visible, relevant
- Ambitious
- Households focus
- Determined and flexible
- Partnership and collaboration
- Sustainable
- **Impactful**
  
- Celebrate and showcase!



## An even bigger picture – policy, influence, and long-term impact

### Working with the North East Child Poverty Commission:

Why do we sit at the table?

What value do we see?

Where are the possibilities?



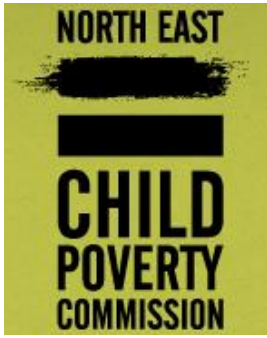
**Information, challenge,  
networking, support, best  
practice, ideas,  
partnership, peers,  
impact, opportunity,  
knowledge, sharing,  
prioritising, capacity,  
realistic**



**Thank you!**

**[emma.richardson@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:emma.richardson@northumberland.gov.uk)**

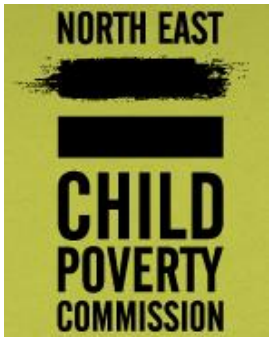




# North East Child Poverty Commission

<https://nechildpoverty.org.uk>

**@nechildpoverty**

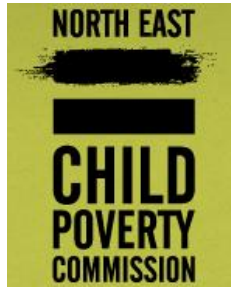


# North East region



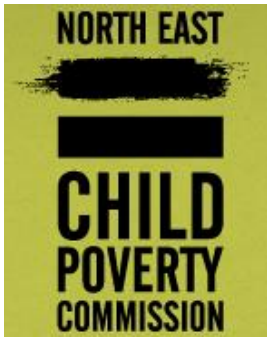
- 12 unitary local authorities (7 Lab; 3 Ind; 2 Con)
- Differing geographies: very rural/sparse populated, former coalfields, cities, towns, coastal
- Population: 2.66m (smallest in England) and 93.6% White British (least ethnically diverse, 2011 census)
- Complex political landscape: 2 Mayoral Combined Authorities; 1 non-Mayoral Combined Authority; 2 LEPs





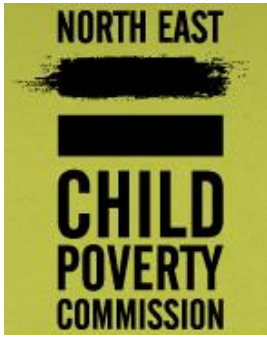
# Child poverty in the North East

- UK's 2nd highest child poverty rate at 35% (London 39%)
- 42% for families with one child under 5 (London 43%)
- UK's sharpest recent rise in child poverty (26% in 2014/15 to 35% in 2018/19)
- Also significant inequalities **within** the North East



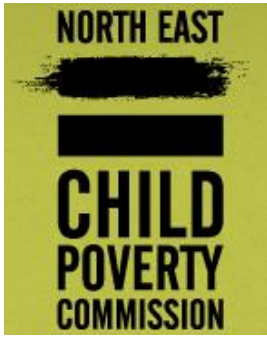
# North East Child Poverty Commission

- Est. 2011 as regional stakeholder network – a ‘coalition of the willing’
  - Local authorities, children’s and youth charities, wider VCS sector, housing organisations, schools/education, public health, academics, social work, faith community
- Hosted by Newcastle University / funded by Millfield House Foundation
- Independent chair / steered by smaller executive group



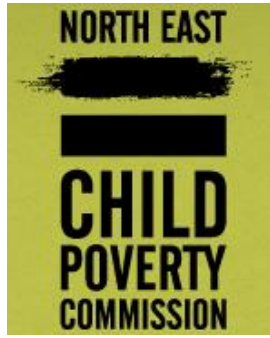
# North East Child Poverty Commission

- Overarching aim:  
  
**‘to provide a strong regional voice to raise awareness of the issue of child poverty in the North East and to work collaboratively to tackle the problem’**
- Ambitious for **every** child and young person in the North East
- Child poverty = structural problem and not inevitable



# North East Child Poverty Commission

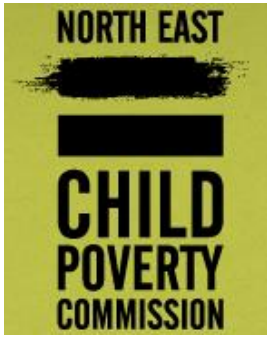
- Gathering and communicating data, intelligence and evidence
- Regional platform for collaboration / network building
- Promoting best practice within and beyond the North East
- Influencing / engaging with policymakers
- Engaging closely with national child poverty campaigns



# Providing a regional platform

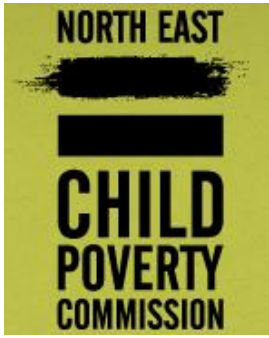
- 3 Commission meetings/year
- Regional conference
- Webinars & workshops
  - In-work poverty (Living Wage Week)
  - Disadvantage gap & digital divide
  - Free holiday provision / HAF





# Sharing best practice

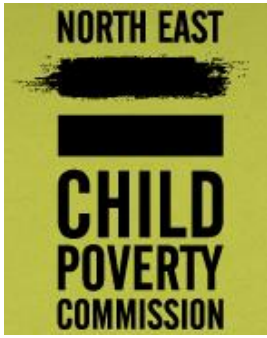
- Regular communications
- Work with individual local authorities
- Local welfare provision research
- Poverty Proofing



# Influencing national policy work

- Joint CPAG workshop – Secure Futures for Children & Families project
- End Child Poverty coalition
- Keep The Lifeline and All Kids Count campaigns





# Engaging with policy makers

- Regular briefing notes/policy responses
- Upcoming research on FSMs
- IPPR North report on child poverty & devolution
- **Amplifying the voice of children & young people: VOICES project**



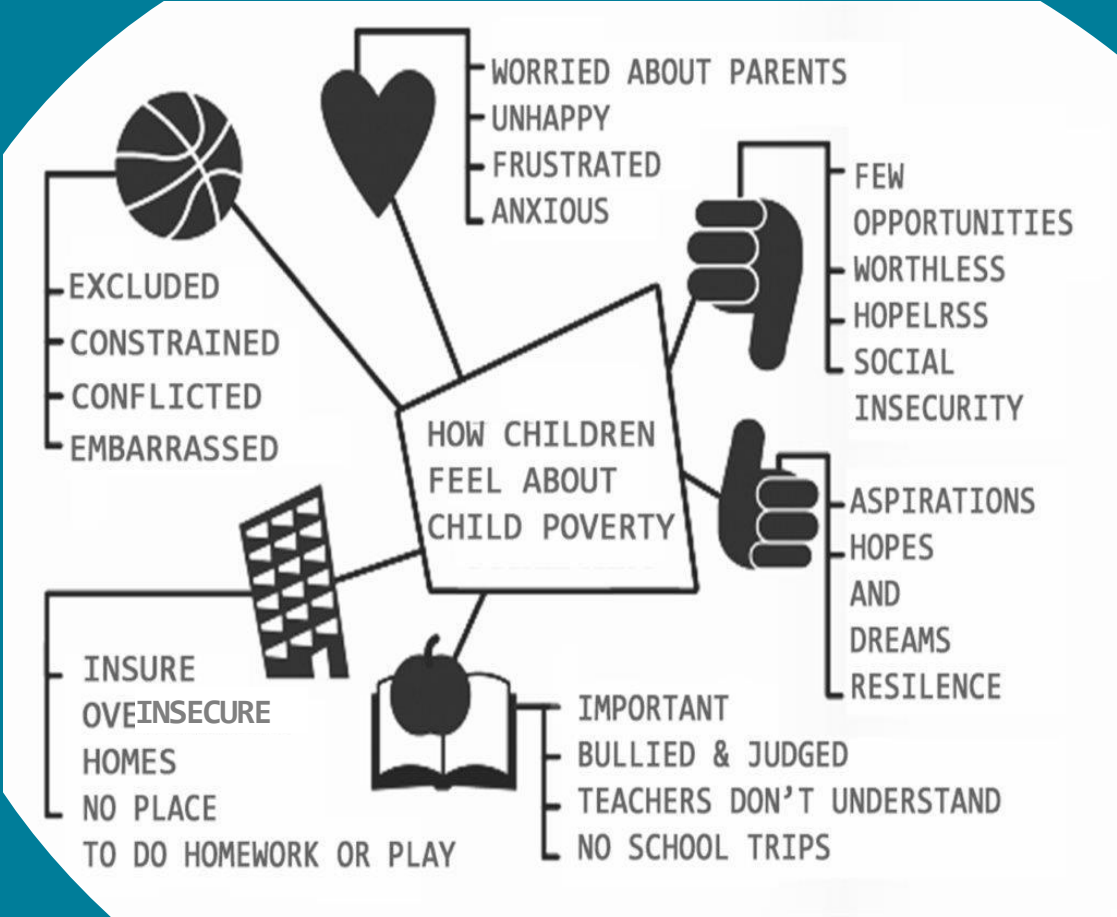


# Questions

# Presentation – Milton Keynes

# Our children deserve better ...

March 2021



## Child Poverty Commission



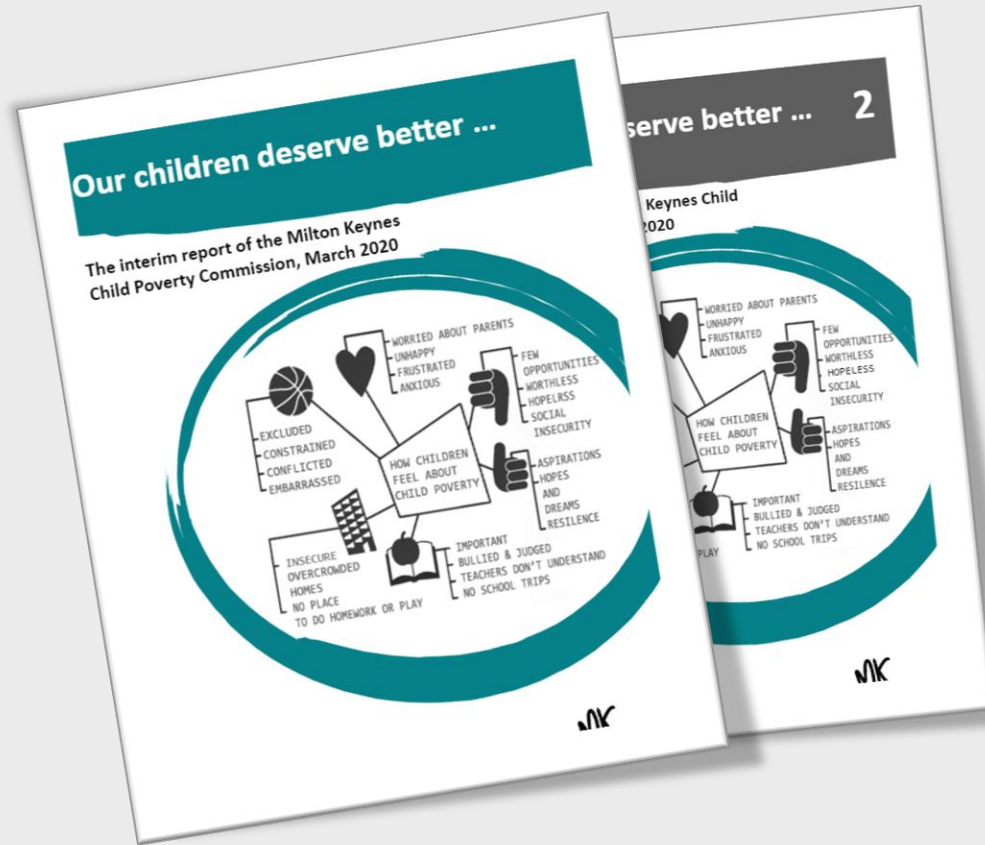
Led by a leading QC in family law, included local people with professional and personal experience and leading members of political groups

- Mid 2019 to end 2020, observing the influence of the Covid crisis
- Speaking to local people across MK, gathering evidence from organisations and agencies and looking at the issues
- Producing two reports: one charting the issue and the second outlining how the people of the Borough can do something about child poverty



**Hannah Markham QC**  
Chair Milton Keynes  
Child Poverty  
Commission

# The child poverty reports

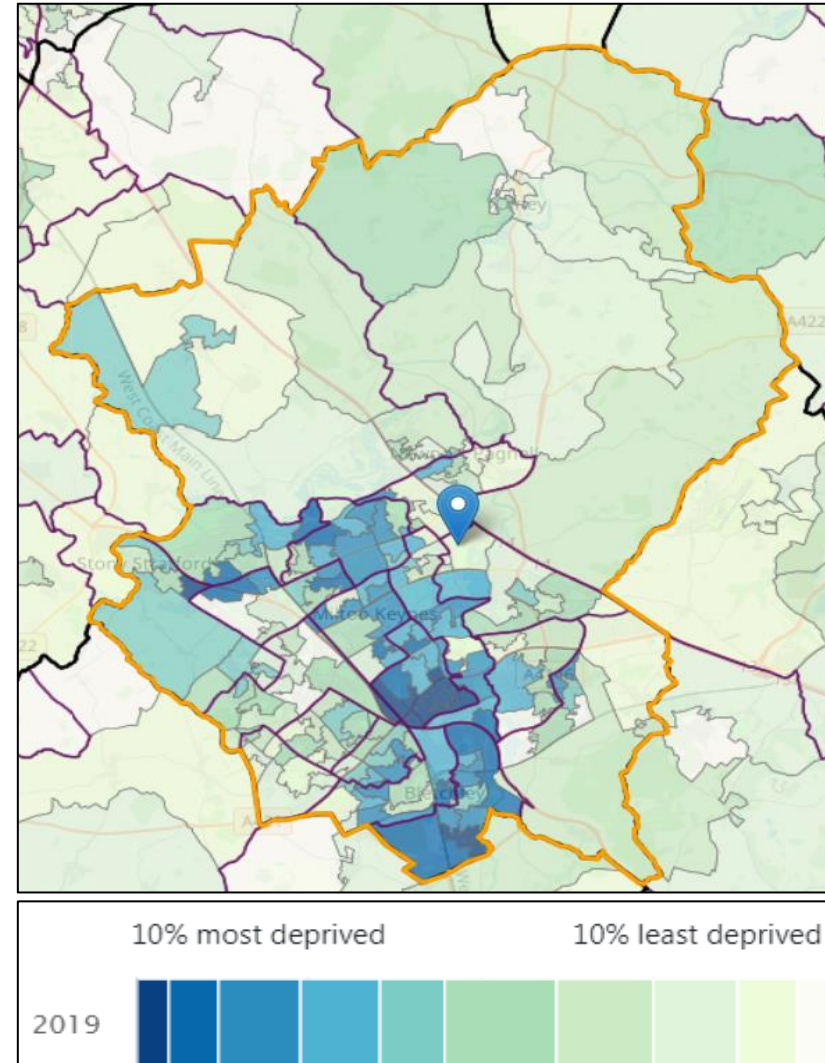


## 2 Reports

- One outlining the issue
- Two addressing the issue

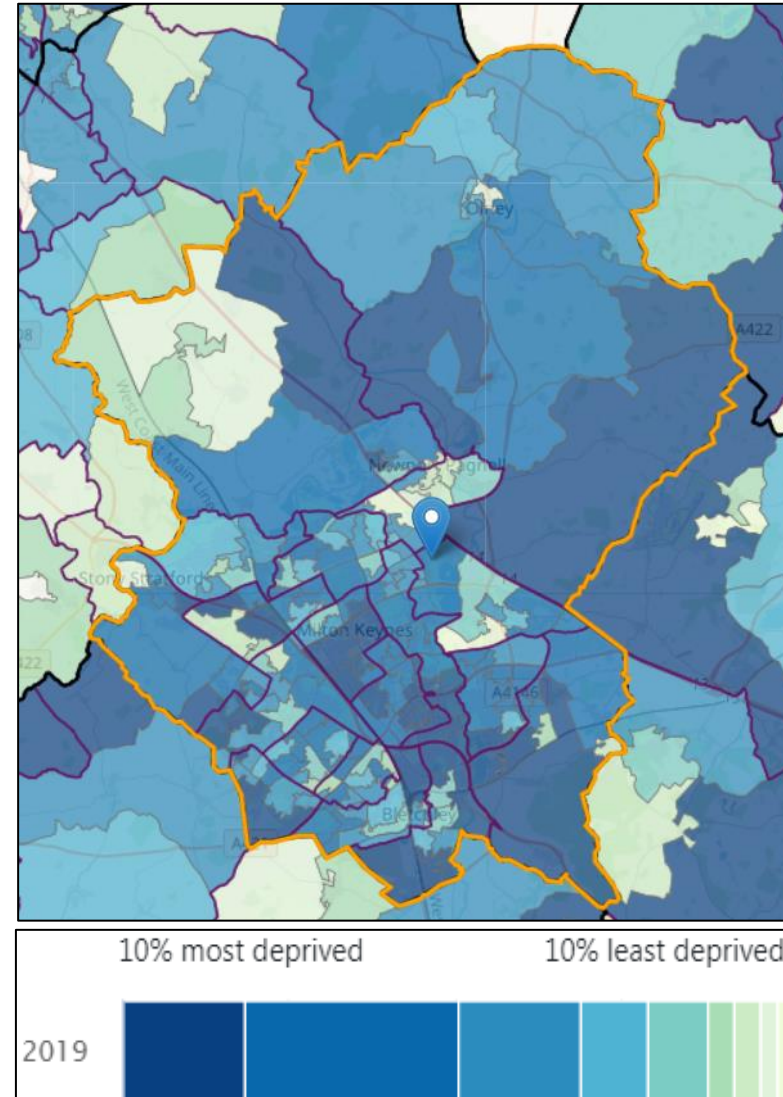
## Five things you may not have known about child poverty in MK

Income deprivation is high on a national scale in some areas of Milton Keynes



## Five things you may not have known about child poverty in MK

The cost of housing means that MK has levels of housing deprivation almost unseen outside London



## Five things you may not have known about child poverty in MK

Most of these households have at least one adult working – which was particularly true before the Covid Crisis

75% of all children in poverty are in households where at least one person is working



**22,940**  
children in poverty  
after housing costs



**5 weeks**  
wait for Universal  
Credit payments



**1,600**  
households helped  
through the Troubled  
Families Programme



**affording childcare**  
people said was their  
major concern



**970**  
children in temporary  
accommodation  
Nov 2020



**£4.80**  
the cost of a return  
bus journey from  
central MK



**3730**  
domestic abuse related  
crimes (2019),  
16% of all crimes



**£220**  
average difference per  
month between HRA  
and local private rents



**7,251**  
pupils known to  
be eligible for free  
school meals



**24,000**  
working age people  
without an NVQ 1 and  
above qualification



**18%**  
of MK in the bottom  
decile for housing  
deprivation in England

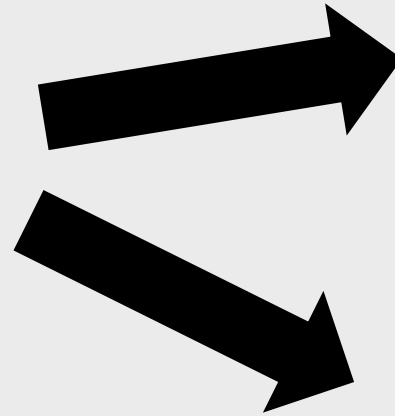
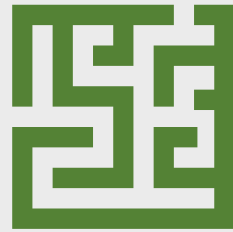


**11,055**  
(up 320% in a year)  
September benefit  
claimants



## The puzzle of child poverty

Challenge  
Child Poverty



At the heart of Child Poverty is a puzzle. How do we challenge child poverty? Can we challenge it when – if we take housing costs into account - it affects over 22,000 children in MK?

Get as many people and organisations involved as possible – **the plight of the children of MK is everybody's responsibility**

Poverty is systemic and needs more than a few small projects – **the plight of the children of MK demands specific work among agencies**

## Successes so far...

- Supporting over 1000 households a week throughout the crisis with Foodbank extra.
- New strategy on domestic abuse, including better partnership and referrals
- Local housing allowance rise, making lower level rents more affordable
- Delivered school holiday meals in 2019 and 2020 to children in need

Challenge  
Child Poverty 

   Support, Benefits, Prevention

    Abuse, Rent, Health

## Successes so far...

- Major long-term projects to create skills for the future MK economy, including a practical support scheme to help women and young people train or re-skill and find work
- Support for business rebuilding after Covid and future university for Milton Keynes.
- The Council has included child poverty as a priority in both its Economic Recovery Plan and its Covid Recovery Framework
- Ambitious plans for the regeneration of estates and the town of Bletchley

Challenge  
Child Poverty 



Learning, Regeneration  
& Transport, Employment



Childcare, Homelessness,  
Children Centres

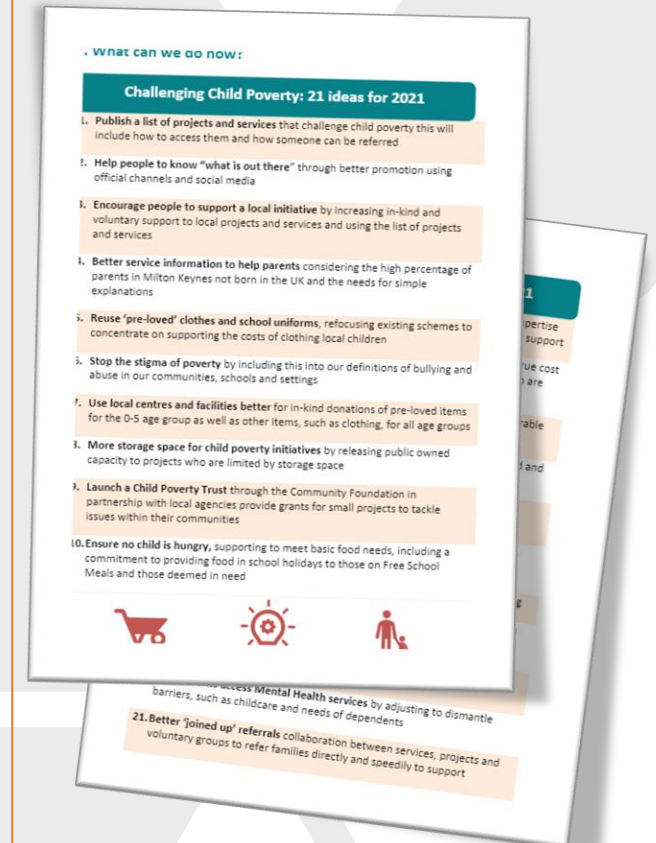
## Our Commitment

Challenge and reduce child poverty by:

- Establishing a Child Poverty Challenge Partnership in Milton Keynes;
- Urging all organisations, businesses, services and agencies in Milton Keynes to have a Child Poverty Challenge Plan based on the Commission's reports and establishing a new funding trust for MK;
- Using our influence over our own services, our role in informing national policy agendas and work with our partners, to develop initiatives that directly contribute to the alleviation and reduction of poverty.




The 21 for 2021 list captures the idea that things should start immediately using existing 'ready ideas'. It is not exhaustive. We will:

1. Develop a **response** based on the 21 for 2021 in the Child Poverty Commissioners report, concentrating on those projects that build resilience
2. Develop **existing initiatives** created to meet the needs of the pandemic to build resilience
3. **Extending and revising existing support** structures and collaboration to ensure 'no child goes hungry' and that parents have the tools to challenge the material needs that come from child poverty





# But what about structural change?

1.    **Support, Benefits, Prevention**

<b>What is needed?</b>	Over the last two decades various governments have repeatedly stated that work is the best route out of poverty. This implies that work is not the only route but is the preferred or main route in tackling child poverty.  However, as we have noted, pre-Covid most children in poverty in Milton Keynes were in working families. A dual process therefore required; sustainable income sources must be accompanied by a strategy to help families be more resilient.
<b>What services are doing?</b>	The Council supported projects and people directly throughout the Covid crisis. Supporting over 1000 households a week throughout the crisis.  The Covid-19 Strategic Recovery Framework outlines how Milton Keynes and its people can successfully recover from the impact of COVID-19, including retaining high levels of employment and reducing unemployment, and providing practical help and support to those in need
<b>Recommendation 3.1</b>  <b>What more could the Council and its partners do?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lobby national government – forming a broad consensus- to reduce the waiting time for universal credit from 5 weeks to 2 weeks, to ensure that changes in employment do not lead to persistent child poverty</li> <li>• Extend the MK Foodbank partnership to continue providing food to vulnerable people including children in poverty and those in financial difficulty</li> <li>• Focus the work of prevention (such as the Council's social fund and activities under section 17 of the Children Act 1989) to build family resilience based on the principle that "providing early help is more effective in promoting the welfare of children than reacting later".</li> </ul>
should be to create a momentum in moving children out of poverty. This is best done through supplementary programmes to mainstream services.  These specific programmes need to be focused and time specific.	

Half of the second report looks at what is needed?

What services are doing?

What more could be done?

The priority for the council is in three areas  
(NB: these will not be the only things they will do). We will:

Develop a **‘Childcare plus’ programme of initiatives**

- Deliver a childcare deposit scheme,
- Increase affordable places and
- Gain a greater contribution from partners such as schools and providers

Develop an **‘Accommodation plus’ programme,**

- finding ways to prevent homelessness by sustaining people in their own homes by partnering with housing providers and voluntary organisations

Develop a **‘Children Centres plus’ programme**

- forming new partnerships and
- seeking outside funds to use the children centres to their best potential as “hubs of delivery” in local areas

# Questions



Group discussion/break out groups – key learning points to take back and act upon

Thank you.

Contact: [lisafaulkner10@gmail.com](mailto:lisafaulkner10@gmail.com)