



Child Poverty in Leicestershire

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Child poverty in Leicestershire, 2011

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

Background

This report provides an overview of child poverty in Leicestershire in 2011. It describes where child poverty exists in the County and what effect it has on the lives of children and young people in Leicestershire. We examine some of the factors which contribute to child poverty and present some recommendations for what we can do to reduce it.

This report is the first attempt to bring together those aspects of existing knowledge in Leicestershire which relate to child poverty. The purpose of this report is to shine a light on some of the issues most relevant to Leicestershire and look afresh at how they may be linked together. How does worklessness and low paid work link with the provision of childcare? How does rural isolation impact on the well-being of the least well-off children in our County?

Much work, both analytical and remedial, already takes place in Leicestershire which addresses issues of child poverty as part of a broader remit. The intention here is *not* to produce a compendium of data and information which duplicates what already exists in other analytical documents.

To quote one of the participants in the interviews with key stakeholders,

...we have multiple needs assessments in Leicestershire but we lack a joined-up approach ...and shared learning; we need to get all of these assessments in one place, dig deeper, maybe [do some] action research.

How well do we really get staff and community views in needs assessments? Probably not.

This is no doubt replicated across many local authorities but it illustrates why a slightly different approach has been taken for this report. In commissioning this report the Leicestershire Child Poverty Strategy Task Group set out a clear mandate to produce a report on child poverty which does not fall into the trap illustrated by the quote above but offered something different.

Whilst the report does draw on existing research, it is not just 'another needs assessment' replicating page after page of tables, charts and maps. The strong vision for this report was to produce something which *does* incorporate the views of staff and communities. It does this by combining analysis of only the most relevant data, along with new, qualitative research into the views of some key practitioners working with the consequences of child poverty and through supporting a

youth-led research project on child poverty, the findings of which are incorporated into this report.

Structure of the report

The main body of the report is structured across three broad themes:

1. what **practitioners** tell us;
2. what **young people** tell us.
3. what the **data** tells us;

What practitioners tell us

Firstly we consider what practitioners tell us about child poverty in Leicestershire. Where it exists, what it means for the lives of children and young people and what can, and is, being done about it. This section focuses primarily on new qualitative research through semi-structured interviews undertaken with a number of key practitioners working across Leicestershire.

What young people tell us

Secondly we focus attention on what young people in the County think about child poverty. This is reported here in a summary of the findings from a new youth-led research project on child poverty in Leicestershire, commissioned to ensure that young people had a genuine voice in this important area of policy development.

What the data tells us

Finally, we look at the existing research undertaken by the County Council and its strategic partners – such as the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment and the report on Income Deprivation Affecting Children in Leicestershire – as it relates to child poverty. Some additional analysis has been undertaken to complement this.

The report concludes with a summary of key findings and some recommendations. The report is intended to bring together what we currently know about child poverty in Leicestershire. It will be added to, revised and amended over time as new knowledge comes to light.

The report is one important part of activity leading to the development of an appropriate and effective local strategy on child poverty. In addition to the production of this report, other consultation with key stakeholders in Leicestershire and with the public will be undertaken. The group of young researchers will disseminate the findings of their research. All of this work will then inform the development of a Leicestershire Strategy for reducing child poverty.

What is child poverty?

What is child poverty? Or, more pertinently, what is child poverty in Leicestershire? What are the causes of child poverty in Leicestershire and what does it mean for children and young people to live in poverty in Leicestershire?

The Child Poverty Unit

The Child Poverty Unit (CPU) brings together key officials from the Department for Work and Pensions, the Department for Education and the HM Treasury.

Child poverty is measured by comparing the amount of money coming into a household with the average. Those living in households with an income which is less than 60% of the median for all households at any one time, adjusted for inflation, may be considered to be living in *relative poverty*. The difference with *absolute* poverty is that comparison is made with a fixed point in time, rather than adjusted and updated for inflation. Thus, those living in households with a total income less than 60% of the median at a particular point in time (i.e. 1998/99 when the government first outlined its pledge to eradicate child poverty) may be considered to be living in *absolute poverty*.

National Indicator 116

The CPU developed a basket of indicators 'which most closely reflect the drivers of child poverty that can be influenced by the local authority and its partners'¹. The highest level outcome measure included in this basket of indicators is National Indicator 116: the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work (means-tested) benefits or in families in receipt of tax credits whose reported income is less than 60% of median income. Data for Leicestershire for NI 116 is shown in Figure 1, below.

Figure 1 - National Indicator 116 – Proportion of children living in poverty in Leicestershire and England²

	Leicestershire	Leicestershire	England
	Number	Percentage	Percentage
2006	13,805	10.3	20.8%
2007	14,410	10.7	21.6%
2008	14,495	10.8	20.9%

Source: HM Government Child Poverty Unit

¹ The Child Poverty Basket in the National Indicator Set: <http://www.education.gov.uk/b0066347/child-poverty-data/>

² Technical note on NI 116 is available here: <http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/ni116-tech-note.pdf>

The County level figure for this income based measure, at around half of the England percentage, is of limited use in helping the local authority and its partners to develop a suitable strategy to reduce child poverty as it masks the local detail of what's happening in specific communities in Leicestershire.

For 2009 and 2010, the local child poverty proxy measure replaced NI116 and is defined as the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work benefits. As figure 2 shows that using this measure shows a higher proportion of child poverty in Leicestershire.

Figure 2, Local child poverty measure (formerly known as NI 116)³

	Leicestershire Number	Leicestershire Percentage
2009	13,920	12.0%
2010	14,230	12.3%

Source: Department for Education

Even where data is available at a lower level (i.e. Lower Super Output Area) it does not relate to other crucial aspects of family circumstances – such as disability – which determine how poverty is felt and experienced by families. There are also issues with just focusing on the areas with highest child poverty as doing so ignores research that identified that poor families living in affluent areas can be even worse off as children are more aware of their *relative* poverty and the stigma attached to poverty, and have less access to affordable activities for children and other amenities (Hooper et al, 2007)⁴. This finding is important as research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) has shown that poverty, especially those they term the Core Poor, those who are income poor, materially deprived and subjectively poor, are found in relatively equal proportions across all areas in the County: even in the wealthy most affluent areas.⁵

Defining child poverty in Leicestershire

The Government's recent consultation on child poverty asked whether people agreed with their working definition of socio-economic disadvantage:

Provisionally we take it to mean that children lack parental resources and/or opportunities to participate in meaningful activities, services and relationships, and such experiences during childhood – especially over persistent periods of time –

³ <http://www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/childpoverty/b0066347/child-poverty-data>

⁴ Hooper, C-A. Gorin, S. Cabral, C. and Dyson, C. (2007) Living with hardship 24/7: the diverse experiences of families in poverty in England. © The Frank Buttle Trust.

⁵ Dorling D et al (2007) Poverty, wealth and place in Britain, 1968 to 2005, Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

*negatively affect children's wellbeing, development and future life chances.*⁶

In its formal response, Leicestershire County Council responded that it did feel the definition was sufficiently broad, recognising that child poverty is not just only concerned with low income. The County Council went on to emphasise the importance of including *relative* poverty as well as *absolute* poverty.

What does it mean for children to live in poverty in the UK today?

The impact of growing up in poverty is well documented and links directly to the opportunities for a child's cognitive, language and social and emotional development, and thus, their future outcomes in life. Frank Field's review found 'overwhelming evidence that children's life chances are most heavily predicated on their development in the first five years of life'⁷.

It is useful to get a feel for what it means on a practical level for children and young people to grow up living in poverty. Data from the Family Resources Survey (2005/06) provides a useful indication of what the experience of poverty means for children in the UK. This national data illustrates a vastly different way of life and access to opportunity for children born into families in the top 20 per cent of family income, compared to the bottom 20 per cent. It means not having a holiday, living in overcrowded housing, not being able to play outside and take part in other activities and socialise with friends, and missing out on the developmental opportunities which all those activities bring.

Hooper et al (2007) highlight commonalities in how the lives of families living on low incomes are restricted by poverty:

- *Many could not afford basics such as a cooked meal each day for adults or toys for children, or went into debt for essential items such as clothes or utility bills.*
- *Making ends meet, and dealing with agencies over benefits and tax credits was demanding and stressful. Fluctuations of income, as a result of mistakes or reassessments, were very difficult to manage.*
- *A sense of being trapped by a lack of options, guilt at being unable to meet their own and children's expectations, and difficulty planning ahead in the context of unpredictable circumstances were common psychological barriers.*
- *Stigma was widespread*⁸.

⁶ Section 4.3 of Tackling Child Poverty and Improving Life Chances: Consulting on a New Approach.

⁷ pg 5, *ibid*

⁸ pg 17 *ibid*

Chapter 3 reports on our youth-led research which examines what it is like to live in poverty in Leicestershire.

Causes of child poverty

Poverty is a complex and entrenched social problem for which there is no simple cause or solution. For some, poverty is overwhelmingly about income and, correspondingly, the solution to the problem of child poverty is seen as one of increasing family income.

The 2008 Budget report (by the then Labour Government) states that the two biggest direct causes of children living in poverty are parental worklessness and low pay. In the Children's Society Report⁹ on 'A Good Childhood' Layard and Dunn (2009) expand this slightly to include the impact of taxes and benefits. They argue that there are essentially three factors which determine whether a child grows up in poverty:

1. do parents (or carers) work;
2. how much do workers earn;
3. the impact of taxes, tax credits and benefits.

This simplified, but valid, line of reasoning may well hold true but the challenge of increasing family income – through employment, benefit take-up, budget management and so on – remains a complex one.

The next chapter reports on the findings of some new qualitative research with some of the key stakeholders who deal with child poverty in Leicestershire on a regular basis – both with the causes and the impact of child poverty – which found that multiple factors combine in complex families and can lead to children living in poverty. The impact of drug and alcohol abuse, domestic abuse, mental health problems, and poor parenting combine with practical constraints (such as the cost of participating in activities, inadequate transport) to create a very different life experience for those children compared to their peers.

⁹ Layard, R. and Dunn, J. (2009) A Good Childhood – Searching for Values in a Competitive Age

Chapter 2 – What practitioners tell us about child poverty

Methodology

The Leicestershire Child Poverty Strategy Task Group recognises the importance of exploring the views of those working with children, young people and their families to capture their experiences of working with families who may be living in poverty. Qualitative research has been carried out for this report based around semi-structured interviews with key practitioners whose work relates to issues around child poverty; a question template was devised (see Appendix 4) and 25 interviews were completed between January and March 2011.

Interviews were carried out covering the following services:

- Youth Inclusion Support Panel (Youth Offending Service)
- Probation Service
- Youth Service
- Barnardo's Care Free for Young Carers
- Locality Support Services (behaviour support in schools)
- HMYOI & RC Glen Parva
- Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council (Housing and Community Safety)
- Housing and Community Services, Blaby District
- Family Intervention Project
- Common Assessment Framework Team
- Melton Children's Centre Programme
- Strengthening Families Team, Specialist Services
- Harborough Locality Partnership Group
- Charnwood Locality Partnership Group
- Children and Young People's Substance Misuse Services
- Disabled Children's Service
- Parenting Early Intervention Project
- Extended Schools Cluster Coordinator (NWL)
- Welfare Rights
- Centre for Fun and Families

A strategic overview of child poverty

As demonstrated by the list above, there are a substantial number and a broad range of services and agencies working with families who may be living in poverty in Leicestershire. Individuals may present themselves to an agency or be referred with specific needs but it is only over time that issues relating to poverty may emerge as part of a more complex picture of need. Most people spoke from their particular perspective of how child poverty is evident in the work they do, but what is clearly lacking is any shared vision or approach in how to tackle the issues together. This report and the subsequent strategy will go some way to addressing this issue.

1. A broad definition of poverty

Without exception the practitioners, managers and strategic leads interviewed all identified a very broad definition of poverty encompassing poverty of experience as well as income related poverty. None of the participants viewed child poverty as an issue exclusively defined by income. For example, one person offered that,

Overall, I think the term 'poverty' can be used to describe a lack of provision, opportunities or the power to change current circumstances, as well as financially based issues.

Looking at levels of income within a family, without understanding the other issues specific to that family presents an incomplete picture. This fundamental point highlights the limitations with a generic income-based measure of poverty such as the one used in previous years for the National Indicator Set.

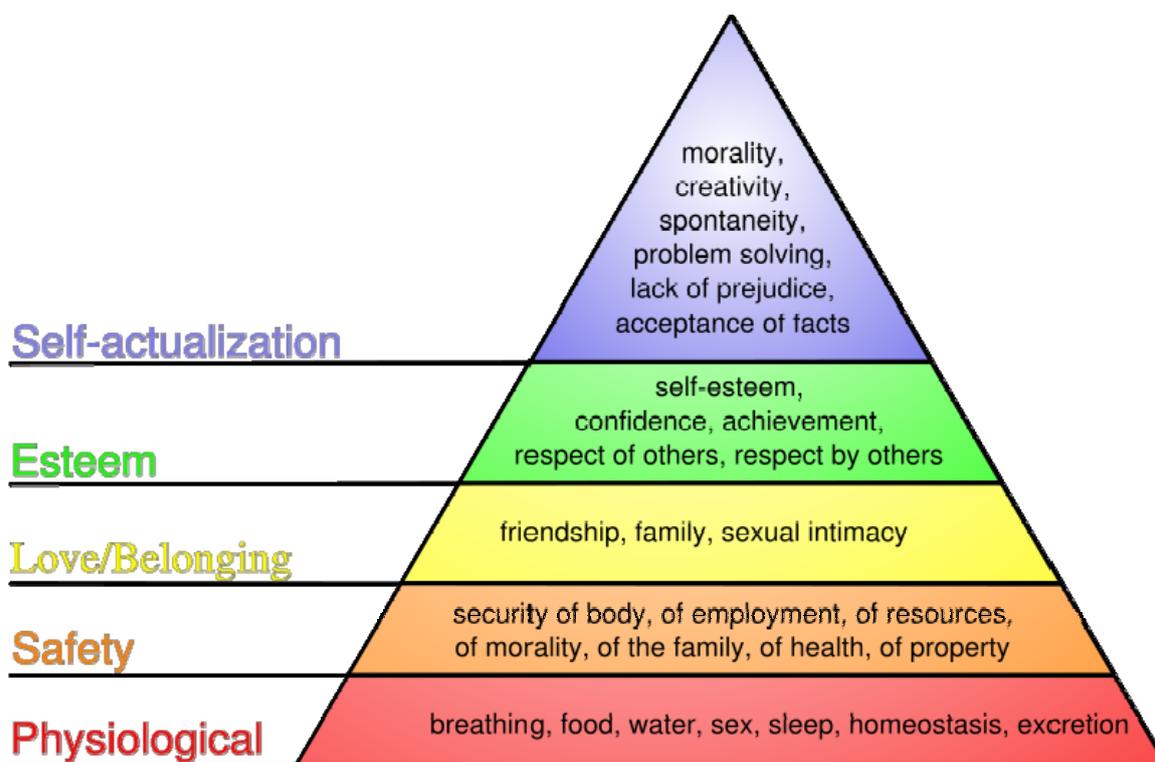
A significant population in Leicestershire for whom this is a case in point is for families with disabled children. An interviewee from the Disabled Children's Service eloquently described how some of the issues are manifest;

Families of disabled children are likely to lack access to childcare which would enable parents to work. There are a lot of barriers for families to access mainstream providers. For example if parents do manage to find after school provision, transport is a significant problem, if children need school transport to take them home, they cannot access the after school provision. Everything becomes more complicated, more difficult for families with a disabled child, and more expensive.

What is the definition of poverty? Is it about choice? If so, disabled children often lack choice. Example: even if you have enough money to go swimming, if you can't get in the pool, or there isn't a suitable changing facility, you can't go in. Another example: If you can't afford to buy the equipment you need and have to rely on public services you could wait a significantly long time for an assessment for a new piece of equipment. Is that poverty?

In describing and attempting to define poverty some practitioners made specific reference to Maslow's hierarchy of need¹⁰ - a theory of human developmental psychology which describes stages of growth using the pyramid/hierarchy shown below;

¹⁰ A.H. Maslow, A Theory of Human Motivation, Psychological Review 50(4) (1943):370-96.



This was seen by some practitioners as a useful way of thinking about relative poverty as it exists in Leicestershire,

[poverty is about] basic needs not being met – Maslows hierarchy – inadequate clothing, sacrificing in order to meet child needs – which in turn can lead to affecting own. Sometimes no furniture, carpet etc.

And another,

Keep coming back to Maslow – services working to improve a child's engagement in after school music lessons but the child doesn't even have a bed to sleep in.

2. A whole family approach

The first question in the interviews asked participants to describe, based on their experiences, what they thought living in poverty meant for children in Leicestershire today. Perhaps not surprisingly, this was the question which the majority of participants talked at most length about.

The dominance of 'families' and 'parents' in the responses reflects their key role in relation to child poverty and the need for a whole family response. Quite obviously child poverty is related to parental poverty, but what is also clear is that there are a whole range of 'adult' issues which can exacerbate, cause, contribute, and confuse the issue of child poverty. The interviews illustrate starkly why whole family approaches

are required to help achieve improved outcomes for some of the more vulnerable families in the county.

3. A complex interrelationship of issues

What was also clear from respondents was that whilst there might be a clear correlation between factors – such as parental substance misuse, domestic violence, parental mental health problems and so on – and child poverty, the interrelationship between these issues is a complex one; correlation does not necessarily equal causation. To quote one participant:

Substance misuse is both a contributor to poverty and a consequence of poverty.

What came across strongly in relation to this is that increasing family income in isolation will not address the issue of poverty for these families with complex needs. One example quoted was that,

...if a parent chooses to spend what money they have on alcohol and cigarettes then the most pressing issue is not that there isn't much money coming in, it's the fact that it is being spent unwisely and at the expense of essentials. What such a family really needs, more than anything else, is an intervention that stops or reduces the level of drinking and smoking, and helps the family to develop the skills to manage a budget, etc.

This issue was also evident in the findings of the youth-led research project (described in Chapter 4). Several young people identified alcoholism and drug abuse by parents as reasons for child poverty in the UK, leading to 'money spent on non-essentials' and children being neglected.

4. Child poverty exacerbated by transport restrictions

In a large, rural county like Leicestershire transport invariably features as an important aspect of child poverty. This relates to what Save the Children and the Family Welfare Association describe as 'the poverty premium'¹¹, whereby the poorest households pay more for goods and services than better-off households. This poverty premium has recently been estimated as costing around £1000 per year through the higher charges incurred for basic necessities like gas, electricity (through pre-payment meters) and banking (doorstep lenders). In Leicestershire this is also true in relation to transport issues and the figure quoted here may be higher. This point was made in interviews by someone from the Locality Support Service:

¹¹ http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/en/docs/poverty_briefing.pdf

Leicestershire by its geography restricts ease of access to a number of support mechanisms which could respond to such issues [created by child poverty]. For example, whilst a family may be earning just above the threshold identified for being on the breadline, the added expense involved in travel to any support provision, may subsequently result in them becoming a family whose resources take them beneath that threshold.

An extended schools coordinator commented that:

Access to services can be an issue for our families. In areas like Measham and Ibstock although there are some good facilities there isn't much choice around supermarkets etc. If you haven't got a car you might not be able to take advantage of cheaper options like [budget shops and large supermarkets in] Coalville.

However they went on to say that there were examples of families who used a taxi for a fortnightly shop at a low-cost supermarket out of town. Although they were living on low income they had the skills necessary to better manage their budget and get the most out of what they had. This again highlights that child poverty in Leicestershire is not just about a measure of income but about broader, whole family issues and the ability families have to respond to, and manage, poverty. It also suggests one possible low cost intervention or 'solution' in the form of mobilised, coordinated community transport/car sharing.

5. Listening to families: simple, low cost, family-led interventions

In terms of what should be done about child poverty the vast majority of practitioners interviewed stressed – in a very positive way – that a big difference can be made with simple, practical support around basic issues such as household budget management, shopping and cooking on a budget, basic literacy and numeracy skills for adults, suitable housing for large families and help with managing money. The key factor which practitioners identified as being most important in such interventions being successful was them being *family-led*; i.e. changes the family want and need, according to *their* priorities and not the priorities of those delivering services.

When we talk to families with complex (and less complex) needs, and ask them what they want, it's usually very low key, very practical. They aren't looking for expensive intervention, just the basics. We are very aware that if the basics aren't right for families - i.e. they are in inadequate housing, having debt etc - they often won't have the capacity to take on any intervention we might put in to address for example child behaviour issues. The everyday pressures of life are too great.

A specific example of this was also provided,

...when they launched Aiming High [for Disabled Children] and did public consultation on the grants, what families wanted most was a decent changing facility and bench in the local leisure centre. Nothing complicated. Cost peanuts in terms of the budget that was available. But it made a huge difference to quality of life and ability to access a service that we might take for granted.

6. Intergenerational transfer of poverty; overall lack of fluidity

All respondents recognised the concept of intergenerational poverty and intergenerational disadvantage: children in care growing up to be parents of children who are also taken into care; third, even fourth generation drug users; repeating cycles of domestic abuse and violence; intergenerational worklessness and low aspiration across whole families.

Intergenerational disadvantaged makes up the bulk [of people we see] – and it's very difficult for them to move out of poverty.

Practitioners recognised the difficulties for families lifting themselves out of intergenerational issues, however, they also felt that change was always achievable but the improved outcomes might be generations away. For example one practitioner commented,

If we get it right now we'll see the benefits maybe in 20 years time. I've worked with third generation drug dealers. It's not unusual to work with parents and then work with their children when they become parents.

Some organisations identified the young people they worked with feeling trapped by their circumstances in a continuing life of poverty. Barnardos Carefree for Young Carers project reported

When we consulted with young carers aged 16-19 recently, a recurrent theme was they did not want to get trapped in what they perceived to be the cycle of deprivation their families live in. Many really wanted to attend and attain but felt their life circumstances were conspiring against them and agencies were not flexible and understanding, e.g. withdrawal of EMA when they were at home caring and more recently the whole overthrow of EMA.

There was an idea that families that fall into poverty through changed circumstances might be a more fluid group, for example families that suddenly lose their income and home through unemployment, families affected by parental bereavement or family breakdown. Whilst the

route out of poverty might not be quick or straightforward it was felt that there was more of a will and determination to return to a standard that they had once enjoyed. Such families might also have developed better skills for coping with what they do have – managing a budget, accessing benefits – and this would enable them to improve their situation.

7. The challenge of measuring success

Perhaps unsurprisingly, those taking part in interviews generally had less to say about some of the more technical aspects of delivering a strategy to reduce child poverty: what should be in the strategy and how outcomes and impact should be measured. Nonetheless some key themes did emerge around looking beyond mere income based measures, the long-term nature of tackling poverty and the involvement of service users in measuring change.

In keeping with the theme already established in this report, there was a clear view from stakeholders that an income based measure of poverty would be insufficient.

As well as income we need to look at softer outcomes, i.e. around children's confidence levels, their level of participation in activities.

Some practitioners identified that there were other existing measures around child poverty and also that some of their own service measures were also relevant, for example, first time entrants to the youth justice system, free school meals and the number of CAF (common assessment framework referrals).

We'd know [we had made a difference] through a reduction in a lot of extreme behaviours such as violence, taking of drugs and alcohol. People will be more fulfilled, contented, with a stronger sense of community, mutual support. Not necessarily higher GDP.

Practitioners provided a range of descriptions about how we would know if the child poverty strategy for Leicestershire made a difference. One practitioner commented,

Maybe we wouldn't see so many parents struggling with their child's behaviour. We could look at how many are on benefits and things like that but probably we need to know more, like how many parents abuse drugs and alcohol? How many are in prison? What affordable childcare there is – and how many jobs there are available that let parents work school hours?

Another interviewee felt that if the strategy made a difference, *“there would be a more balanced and equal society.”*

Practitioners were also keen to emphasise that real change would take time and the impact would likely only be evident in the long term,

...these are long term goals, could be in generations [before we see a difference]

If we see a reduction in repeat family referrals – i.e. we might not see their grandchildren/they are not known to children’s services - then we would know [we were being successful with the Leicestershire Child Poverty Strategy]. We need to build resilience in families.

Another highlighted that success in addressing issues related to poverty may see an initial rise in demand for services through increased awareness before a more substantive positive change was established;

If the strategy’s working, we would expect to see increased referrals for parenting support, etc. in the shorter term, but much longer term it would decrease. Have to look at timescales in terms of next generation, or one after.

Again, there was strong support for service user involvement;

Ask families what they think the solutions are as well as what the issues are.

...seek greater involvement of young people and their families in the evaluation of their current situation

8. Overwhelming pressures on parents

As has already been alluded to, families in poverty who are struggling day-to-day often experience a layering effect of issues – a co-morbidity of issues such as mental health difficulties, domestic violence, which may contribute to poverty or be caused by poverty but which act together to produce overwhelming circumstances. On top of this, many practitioners recognised the additional pressures faced by parents, either real or assumed, reinforced by the media and providing a distorted view of how other people live. For example, practitioners describe circumstances where parents feel enormous pressure to provide material items for their children:

There are more pressures on parents now created and reinforced by the media; the increased prevalence of alcohol, of drugs. There are a lot of negative forces around people in a vulnerable

position which they can find hard to resist, for example credit and debt.

Many families are just about able to keep their heads above water but the unexpected can then come along and blow them off track:

They can get by day-to-day with the essentials, they might have enough for food etc, but when a big expense comes along like a washing machine, they really struggle. They have to make choices, some things get neglected.

National and local research tells us that times like Christmas and birthdays can be an enormous strain for parents who feel under pressure to provide the latest 'must have' items for their children. The free availability of 'doorstep loans' provides a tempting solution which can then in turn increase the overall stress and vulnerability of the family when ability to repay becomes an issue. This provides another example of the 'poverty premium' described earlier.

Related to this idea of media reinforced pressure, the Probation Service commented:

Offending behaviour is a contributor to people living in poverty but also sometimes causes poverty. For some younger offenders (i.e. in their early 20s) it's a case of not being prepared to wait – they receive confusing media messages about wealth, fame, etc and they want it now. They have an unrealistic dream that is simply not obtainable.

9. Poverty or neglect?

Related to the lack of an overall strategic view of poverty, there was a concern amongst practitioners about the understanding of the broader workforce and their ability to recognise and understand the impact that poverty can have. In particular, practitioners felt that often the more universal services lack the experience and understanding of the impact of poverty and how poverty related issues might present:

One family we worked with had lived without a cooker, fridge-freezer or washing machine for 3 months. They were accused of neglect because the children's clothes were dirty, but no washing machine and having to shop daily? Living like this would be a challenge to anyone.

Families without the basics can't function, and there isn't always a good understanding by children's services and others about how poverty might impact on them.

Another practitioner highlighted the effect of cultural norms and how that relates to perceptions of poverty and neglect,

Practitioners feel hamstrung in terms of their cultural segregation from family – practitioners find it hard to relate to poverty, don't have the experience, confusing poverty with neglect. [Can also be] judgmental - e.g. practitioners might have a view of how many kids should sleep in a bedroom – it's not so long ago children sharing was the norm, now its seen as inappropriate, even for young kids.

Similarly,

Poverty and neglect is often confused – it is presented as neglect but, when you look at what is going on, actually it's about poverty. People are not used to working with poverty. We find lots of families don't know about organisations such as Charity Link¹². We send a lot of families to them but find just telling them about it is not enough, just giving them the form is not enough; we have to fill it out, send it in for them. For families in these situations, the enormity of their issues can be so overwhelming that it is difficult for them to know where to start, so they don't.

The latter part of this quote illustrates another key issue in addressing child poverty, which is around the low level of take-up of support services by many people living in poverty. The reasons for this are complex, but the outcome is that just because a particular service or opportunity exists does not mean that people are always able to seize that opportunity. This is a fundamental consideration for any attempt to lift families out of poverty.

This is also the case with regards to benefit take-up as exemplified in the following quote from the Family Support Team in Strengthening Families (Children's Social Care):

Very often we find families are not claiming the benefits, i.e. Disability Living Allowance (DLA) that they are entitled to. 30-40% of case load could get DLA. About 50% of caseload are in employment – but it's a very small minority within this that actually have plenty/sufficient money. Most of the 50% are working to survive.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, increasing family income for the most disadvantaged families in Leicestershire requires more than just creating opportunities (e.g. for jobs, training, benefits etc). Individual support is required both on a practical level – e.g. completing forms –

¹² Leicester Charity Link: Tackling Poverty – Changing Lives. “We help by providing everyday items that the majority of us take for granted, such as a bed to sleep in, a cooker to prepare a hot meal and, in emergencies, food.” <http://www.charity-link.org/>

and, more challengingly, to change values, beliefs and behaviour – e.g. raising aspirations. As discussed earlier, this is best prioritised by the family.

10. What can we do better?

Amidst concerns of public sector cuts and rising demand for support for families, there was a consensus that services could do more to improve the lives of families living in poverty. Simple solutions were identified, such as routinely checking that families are receiving the benefits they are entitled to – moving away from purely issue focused services to take a more holistic view of family life and the issues that might be contributing to poor outcomes.

Working to promote the self-esteem and confidence of children and young people is seen as crucial by practitioners in Leicestershire. Helping to raise the aspiration of children and young people from disadvantaged families; providing opportunities for children and young people to experience positive activities, leisure time activities, visits to museums, galleries, open spaces and parks, etc. alongside working more closely with parents to enhance parental perception of the value of education.

Practitioners identified the fundamental role of education and training in providing future routes out of poverty, providing skills for life and qualifications for work. However, the opportunity for young people to develop new skills as a means of lifting themselves out of poverty was something which came through much more strongly from young people themselves in the youth-led research project, than from the practitioner research. This is described and discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

There was also a clear workforce development message that we must invest in the broader workforce – beyond those directly dealing with poverty on a day-to-day basis – in order to work together more effectively and efficiently. There was a perceived need to create opportunities for multi-agency practitioners to work and train together to help build the crucial informal networks which build individual's knowledge about poverty and of what services are available and who to contact.

One interviewee working at a Borough Council commented,

Workforce – we have to look at the calibre of our officers, and how training affects practice. Improve the capability of officers, recruiting for the future – being clear of the competencies needed to take this wider view within a profession. Some of the longer established members of the workforce find it hard to adapt to changing agenda – it's not what the job used to be.

Another strategic lead commented:

We need a culture change 'how to have a difficult conversation within universal services' i.e. nursery staff asking families about their financial difficulties and referring/signposting on appropriately.

The interviews with practitioners and managers illustrated very well that child poverty is a complex issue which cannot be resolved by any one agency. But whilst we can see that there is much to do around building the resilience of families, building their capacity to respond and thrive in the conditions in which they find themselves, underlying issues of the national and world economy (availability of paid employment etc) will ultimately influence levels of future poverty:

...we might succeed in raising aspiration but if there are no jobs, no training places for young people, what then?

Chapter 3 - What young people in Leicestershire tell us about child poverty?

Peer led research is an excellent way of improving our understanding of an issue such as child poverty. It helps us to see things from the perspective of those people directly affected by the issue (child poverty) and our response to it (what we do) and it helps those people to engage in a genuine dialogue based on experiential learning.

A group of young people in Leicestershire were recruited through the Youth Service to carry out a peer led research project¹³. The group were given the research topic of 'child poverty in Leicestershire' but were otherwise allowed to shape the research question, design and methodology to make as much of the project as possible genuinely 'youth led'.

Photo 1: Young people training in research methods



The young researchers decided to explore issues around what young people in Leicestershire think child poverty means, what the consequences of it are and what could be done about it? They used a

¹³ The group of young people had no prior experience of conducting research. The group received two one-day training sessions providing an introduction to the research process which were delivered on non-consecutive Saturdays in January 2011. The group were supported throughout the process by two youth workers with additional support from the Community Research Company and the County Council's Research Team. Initially the group consisted of eight young people, with two members subsequently withdrawing from the process leaving six young researchers. Young researchers were from North West Leicestershire & Hinckley & Bosworth Borough.

multi-methods approach to the research with fieldwork conducted between January and March 2011. The young researchers have produced a separate report of their own and disseminated the findings more widely, including at the Local Government Association National Conference: 'Celebrating achievement and shaping the future of youth led research'.

The young researchers carried out five activities for their fieldwork. These were as follows:

1. Including a question on poverty in a national survey of 11 to 18 year olds (1,000 respondents).
2. Questions & discussion at Kegworth & Castle Donington locality forum (c. 10 participants).
3. Focus-group style discussion at Hinckley & Bosworth Youth Council residential (c. 25 participants).
4. Online survey using Survey Monkey (c. 60 respondents).
5. Multi-methods fieldwork at Leicestershire Targeted Vox Pop¹⁴ - see Photo 2, below.

Photo 2: Leicestershire's Young Researchers conducting the fieldwork



¹⁴ The Leicestershire Targeted Vox Pop is an event organised by the County Council for young people from a broad range of the more vulnerable communities – e.g. young carers, young parents, care leavers, Black, minority & ethnic groups – to raise their voice and question local councillors on the issues that are most important to them.

Included below is a summary of the emerging research findings from the national survey and the targeted vox pop event (numbers 1 and 5 above).

1. National research by Leicestershire’s young researchers

First the young researchers secured inclusion of a question in the national ‘Youth Omnibus’ survey carried out by the youth research, marketing and interactive agency Dubit Limited¹⁵. This enabled collection of new data from a sample of 1,000 11-18 year olds across the UK. The intention was to collect this national data to provide a comparator for responses locally to the same questions. The young researchers designed a question about what young people think should be done to reduce child poverty in the UK, including a selection of options. The results are shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 - What should be done to reduce child poverty in the UK?

Response	N	%
Create more opportunities for people to develop skills	490	49%
Provide more services for young people	315	31%
Provide more emotional support	76	8%
Pay more Benefits	72	7%
Other (Please State)	47	5%
Total	1,000	100%

Findings show that almost half of young people thought that creating more opportunities for people to develop skills was the best thing which could be done to reduce child poverty. The proportion of 17-18 year olds who chose this option – for males and females - was significantly¹⁶ higher (58%) than for the 11-14 year olds (45%).

This emerged much more strongly than in the qualitative research undertaken with practitioners in Leicestershire and is also something which is not really evident in national studies – such as Frank Field’s report – where the emphasis is almost exclusively on children below the age of five.

Paying more benefits was the least favoured of the four options provided (7%). However, a significantly higher proportion of 17-18 year old males (6%) chose this option compared to females of the same age (just 2%).

A broad range of different options were provided amongst the 47 ‘other’ responses. These included doing all of the options, keeping (or ‘bringing back’) Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and creating more jobs for young people and their parents.

¹⁵ For more information see <http://www.dubitlimited.com/>

¹⁶ Based on two-sided tests with significance level 0.05.

This highlights again the strong link between poverty and employment – also raised by practitioners – and the need to provide opportunities for young people, and possibly their parents too, to develop the skills they need to find a job, stay in work and lift themselves out of poverty.

2. Local research by Leicestershire young researchers

Further fieldwork was carried out at the Leicestershire Voice Event on 17th February 2011. This event was attended by around 20 young people from a range of vulnerable groups across Leicestershire (young parents, young people in care, young people in Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME), lesbian, gay and bisexual young people). At this event six separate methodologies were developed and applied using a carousel approach with two groups of young people participating in each event in turn.

For one of the questions the young researchers developed a list of options which they thought reflected some of the consequences of living in poverty for children in Leicestershire. Participants in the research were asked to rank these options in order of importance. A summary of the responses is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4 – Which of these do you think is most important to you as a young person?

Options	mode	mean
Opportunity to have at least one hot meal a day	1	2.3
Opportunity to buy essentials when necessary (toiletries, clothes, school equipment etc)	1	2.8
Safe access to an outdoor space	3	3.0
A bedroom of your own	1	3.3
A weeks holiday per year away from home	3	4.7
Opportunity to take part in a leisure activity once a month	6	4.9
Opportunity to have friends round for tea/snacks once a fortnight	7	5.8

The responses here align well with the feedback from interviews with service providers which, whilst not making specific reference to it, often framed answers around Maslow’s hierarchy of need¹⁷. The things which young people feel are most important to them are the basic (physiological) things like food, water, sleep, with things relating to love and belonging coming after that (such as friendship, family).

Another exercise carried out with vulnerable young people in Leicestershire asked them to consider what they thought the reasons for child poverty were and to write these on post-it notes and discuss

¹⁷ *ibid*

their answers. The answers young people gave are shown in Figure 5 below.

Figure 5 – What are the reasons for child poverty in the UK?

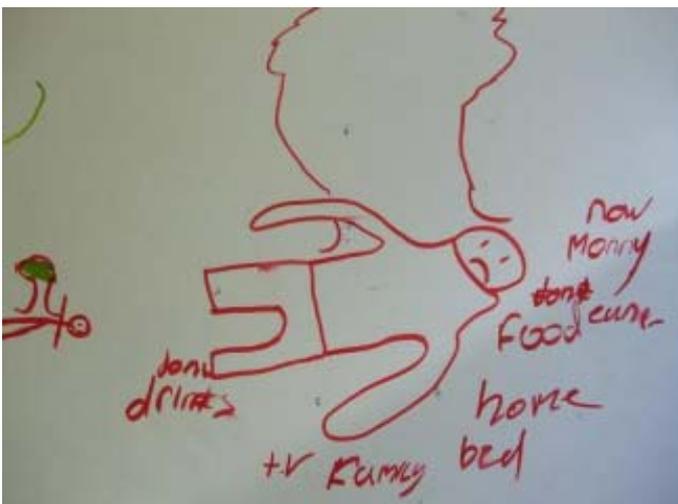
Being in and out of care		Not getting help when needed
	Not having a say	Low income/wages
	Council can't afford to give them money	Gangs and drugs
Low wages and rising process	Abuse at home	Single parent
	Homelessness	Alcoholic parents
Drug abuse	Lack of support for young carers	Alcoholic parents
Running away from home	Parents being poor	No money
	Children born into poor families who can't afford essentials	
Stopping benefits	Homeless	Bad housing
Parents being alcohol or drug addicts		Kicked out for being naughty
	Children might have been neglected	Victim of robbery
	Money spent on non-essentials	Kicked out of home
No income	Parents having lots of debt	Racism
	Drug addict parents	Parents unable to work due to illness

The answers show a broad range of problems indicative of the factors children growing up in poverty in Leicestershire might face. The issues raised by young people link strongly to the risk factors described by practitioners - substance misuse, abuse at home, housing issues, poor health, lack of work, low income/benefits and poor management of finances are all referred here by young people and by practitioners. The influence of parents comes across very strongly and supports the central tenet of this paper that a 'whole family' response is required to address these issues.

In a separate exercise participants were asked to draw images which they thought related to child poverty. They were then asked to label the drawings and what they represented. A representation of these is shown here in figure 6:

Figure 6 –Images of poverty drawn by young people living in Leicestershire and labels used to describe poverty

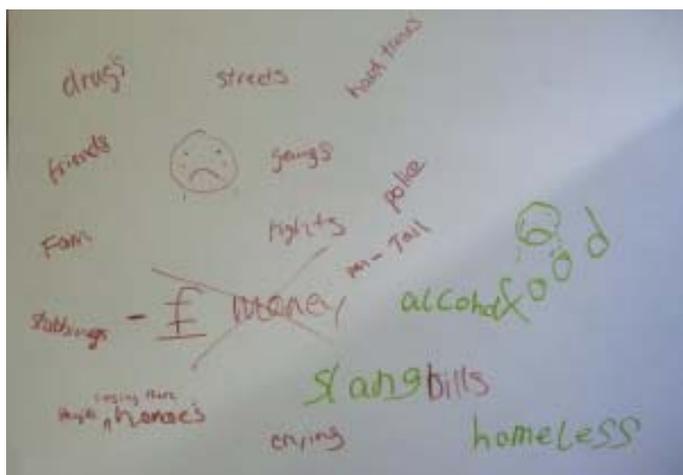
Images of poverty



Labels of poverty

- drugs
- no friends
- no family
- violence
- living on the streets
- crying
- bills
- gangs
- fights
- prison
- abuse
- no money
- no food
- no home
- no bed,
- no TV,
- no family
- no access to medicines
- broken relationships
- broken homes
- child labour

Images of poverty (continued)



What emerged from this exercise reinforces those issues highlighted in the separate task described earlier: family break-up, abuse, lack of the basic needs. The exception to this is the inclusion of the issues of child labour and access to medicines.

Specific groups were targeted through the fieldwork and were asked to discuss – in their groups – which issues relating to child poverty were particularly important for them. The subjects raised were summarised by the young researchers as follows:

Young Carers

- Have less of a social life
- Benefits are not paid to the young person who is the carer – someone in charge of the money who doesn't understand the circumstances

Young People in Care

- Having no say over where you live/who you live with
- Being unable to continue accessing groups/activities/support

- Leaving care at 16/17 with no job
- Lack of qualifications for young people in care (much lower than national average)

Young Parents

- Lack of sleep
- Not having money for school uniforms
- Lack of energy
- No time
- Getting stuck in the benefits trap – not earning enough to come off benefits

Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups (BAME)

- Not knowing where to go to get information
- Language barriers
- Discrimination and prejudice

Finally, young participants in the workshop took part in an open discussion about child poverty in Leicestershire. The discussion broadly focused on whether child poverty existed in Leicestershire, how people knew it existed and where it was.

Young people did think that there were children in Leicestershire living in poverty but they made a distinction between extreme poverty which they had seen on television and read about in other parts of the work, particularly parts of Africa. One person commented that this comparison with poverty in places such as parts of Africa might make it harder to know where it existed in Leicestershire:

When you say poverty you think like Africa, the most severe, not the little poverty that's here. It could be your neighbour and you might not know. I'd be embarrassed telling people

Despite this young people thought it was evident that child poverty did exist in the County:

Yes, there's poverty everywhere, wherever you go, even in the villages

It's everywhere, you see little children on the streets with no one watching them.

I grew up in Highfields [Leicester City] and I saw it everywhere. Then we moved to Oadby and its different, there's more money around and the streets are cleaner

One respondent stated that they knew child poverty existed because,

You can't afford things any more, prices have gone up and it's harder to get a job

Picking up on this, others commented on the need for local authorities to provide support where it's needed most:

It's about people not getting help that's needed. I was out of school for years, cos I was excluded for something I didn't do, and I got no letters or anything

The value of adopting a peer led approach to researching this area enables young people to engage with their peers in a comfortable, frank and open discussion of what the issues are for them. The privilege of being given this insight through the young researchers work is one which the child poverty strategy must build on, demonstrating clear links across to the issues which young people have highlighted as most important for them.

Photo 3: Leicestershire's Young Researchers presenting findings at a national conference on youth led research, Local Government Association, 22nd March 2011



Chapter 4 – what the data tells us

This Chapter pulls together relevant data and analysis to describe some of the main evidence for, and characteristics of, child poverty in Leicestershire. This information can help to identify how resources can be targeted more effectively by adding to our knowledge of the geography, scale and nature of child poverty locally. Initially, we look at traditional methods of describing and analysing deprivation within Leicestershire – the Indices of Deprivation – and an alternative to this – the Child Poverty index.

We then look at data around the impact of child poverty, notably low attainment and disengagement from education, including behavioural problems and exclusion, and future unemployment. Other impacts of poverty are also explored such as poor health outcomes.

We then address the cycle of poverty that exists within families and identify groups that may be more vulnerable and experience additional barriers to improving their situation. We focus on the groups that were identified by practitioners as having specific needs:

- parents with learning disabilities,
- children with disabilities,
- gypsy and travellers,
- teenage parents

The link between the impacts and consequences of poverty will also be explored by looking at some of the new local research, notably research on the links between teenage pregnancy and poverty.

Finally, the provision of child care, a key area of Frank Field's report on poverty and Graham Allen's report on early intervention, is examined through the key findings of the statutory Childcare Sufficiency Assessment for Leicestershire

1. Geography of child poverty

Population of children and young people in Leicestershire

The population of Leicestershire in 2007 was estimated at 641,000 – an increase of 5% since 2001. Within Leicestershire approximately a fifth of the resident population is aged between 0 and 14 years, with 34,700 children of pre-school age (0-4years) and 74,100 aged between 5 and 14 years. Current population projections for this age group show an overall increase of 9% by 2016; higher for the 0-4 age group (15% projected growth) compared to the 5-14 age group (6% increase).

Income deprivation affecting children

The Indices of Deprivation (ID 2010) provide a standard means of identifying areas of multiple deprivation across the country. In the ID 2010 there is a 'domain' for Income Deprivation Affecting Children (IDAC) which measures the proportion of children living in economically deprived households in each Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) in England. The indicator measures the proportion of children aged 0 to 15 who live in households claiming worklessness and income support related benefits¹⁸. Relative to other parts of England, Leicestershire does not experience a high level of income deprivation affecting children and the majority of the county is amongst the least deprived areas in the country.

However, there are a small minority of (Lower Super Output) areas which are amongst the most deprived in the country. Figure 7, below, shows the ten areas (LSOAs) in Leicestershire with the largest proportion of children living in income deprived households. Greenhill North East is the area with the highest proportion of children, over half, living in income deprived households and is the only area in Leicestershire which falls into the 5% most deprived areas in England. Loughborough Warwick Way (again over half of households) and Greenhill Centre also fall within the top 10% most deprived areas nationally.

Figure 7 – Ten LSOAs experiencing highest levels of income deprivation affecting children

IDAC - Top Ten LSOAs in Leicestershire

Rank	LSOA CODE	LSOA Name	District	Proportion of children living in income deprived households
1	E01025934	Greenhill North East	North West Leicestershire	54.2%
2	E01025725	Loughborough Warwick Way	Charnwood	50.1%
3	E01025932	Greenhill Centre	North West Leicestershire	47.4%
4	E01025700	Loughborough Canal South	Charnwood	42.4%
5	E01025905	Melton Sysonby South	Melton	42.3%
6	E01025705	Loughborough Midland Station	Charnwood	39.4%
7	E01025715	Loughborough Shelthorpe North	Charnwood	39.3%
8	E01025699	Loughborough Bell Foundry	Charnwood	38.4%
9	E01025706	Loughborough Meadow Lane	Charnwood	38.0%
10	E01025844	Earl Shilton East	Hinckley and Bosworth	37.0%

¹⁸ Benefits included in the 2007 measure are Income Support, Income Based Job Seekers Allowance and Pension Credit. Households in receipt of the following are also included:

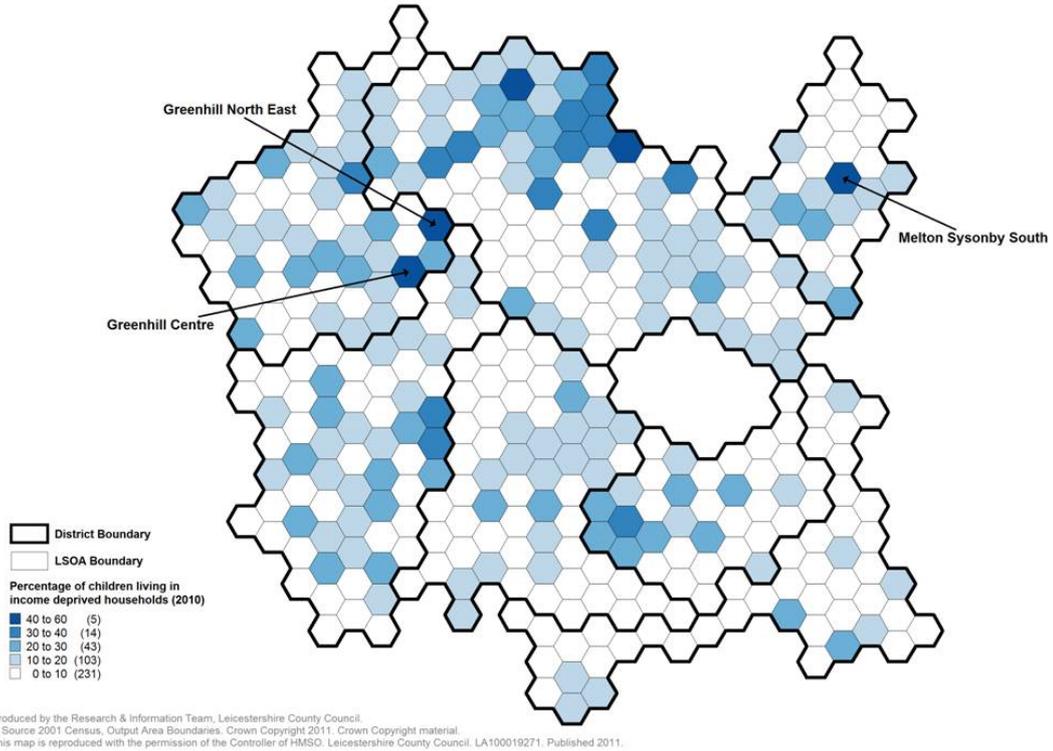
- Working Tax Credit with an equivalised income below 60 per cent of the national median before housing costs.
- Child Tax Credit with an equivalised income below 60 per cent of the national median before housing costs.

Note: the income deprivation domain measures benefit take up only. Not all households claim all the benefits available to them therefore it by no means provides an indication of the total proportion of households experiencing deprivation.

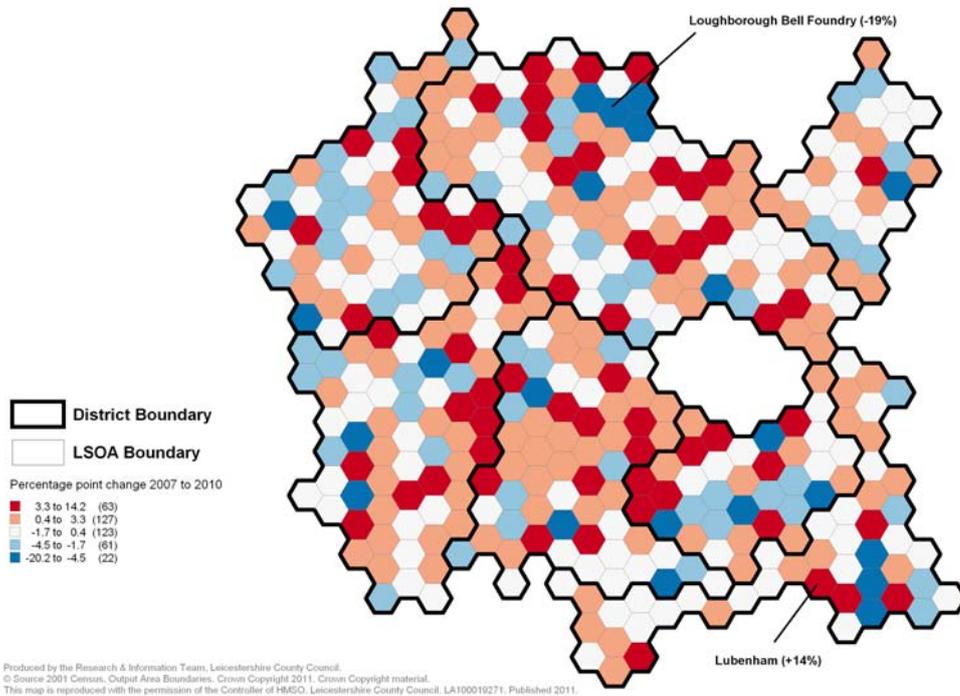
In 2010 three of the five most deprived areas – Greenhill North East, Greenhill Centre, Loughborough Woodthorpe and Loughborough Warwick Way – have all remained amongst the top five most deprived areas in Leicestershire since 2004. The biggest change in 2010 was Loughborough Bell Foundry moving out of the top five with a huge decrease of 18.7 percentage points (counteracting the increase in the 2007 indices of 17 percentage points). Similarly, Loughborough Woodthorpe has dropped to the seventeenth most deprived area, with a fall of 15 percentage points. Finally, Lubenham had the highest increase, a 14.1% point rise, but this only just moves it into the top 50 most deprived Leicestershire areas, but that's still around a quarter of its children living in households with low income.

The two cartograms below highlight areas with high proportions of children living in households with low income (Figure 8a) and how this has changed over a three year period, 2007 to 2010 (Figure 8b).

Figure 8a:
(a) Cartogram of children in Leicestershire living in income deprived households, 2010



(b) Change in the percentage of children living in income deprived households, 2004 to 2007



Source: The English Indices of Deprivation 2010 Department for Communities & Local Government, cited in Income Deprivation Affecting Children in Leicestershire, March 2010. Leicestershire County Council. Each hexagon represents a Lower Super Output Area containing around 1,500 people.

Further analysis of the data reveals that around a third of all areas in the county experienced a change of less than one percentage point over this three year period. This backs-up national research and local perception that there is, generally, very little change in the areas which experience the highest levels of child poverty. In Leicestershire these are primarily the urban centres around Loughborough, Melton and South Wigston and Coalville.

If child poverty is, to a greater or lesser extent, a product of unemployment or low paid work, then it is useful to consider measures of deprivation for two likely determinants of this: (1) education, skills and training and (2) employment. The Indices of Deprivation 2010 has a measure (a domain) of deprivation for 'education, skills and training' and for 'employment' for young people, and looking at this domain shows a correlation between those areas experiencing a high level of income deprivation affecting children and a high level of education and/or employment deprivation.

This finding provides evidence in Leicestershire which supports the theory that deprivation, including child poverty, is multi-layered and transfers through families from one generation to another in the same localities. Attempts to reduce child poverty must be as multi-layered and persistent as the components which create and maintain it. A cross-cutting strategy dealing with issues like education, training, skills and employment will be required to break the cycle of child poverty which exists.

Child Poverty Index - children perceived poor

There are many ways in which poverty can be measured, and all maps of poverty can look identical no matter what measure is used. As part of the work that identified geographical priority areas in Leicestershire¹⁹, the County Council mapped areas of child poverty using the Child Poverty (CP) Index²⁰. This is an alternative measure of child poverty created by Bristol University and has two benefits over the Indices of Deprivation data presented above. Firstly, the results are available at a smaller geographical area, namely output area level, rather than the larger lower super output area, and so is less likely to miss the pockets of deprivation that exist within larger areas. It's also a consensual, relative measure of poverty as it involves asking a large sample of people what they consider to be the necessities for life. Many academics consider it the most sensible measure of poverty, although one drawback is that it is only updated after each decennial Census.

¹⁹ originally undertaken for the Local Area Agreement in 2006

²⁰ Leicestershire LAA Geographical Priority Areas. Discussion Document. Children and Young People Supplement. Leicestershire County Council.

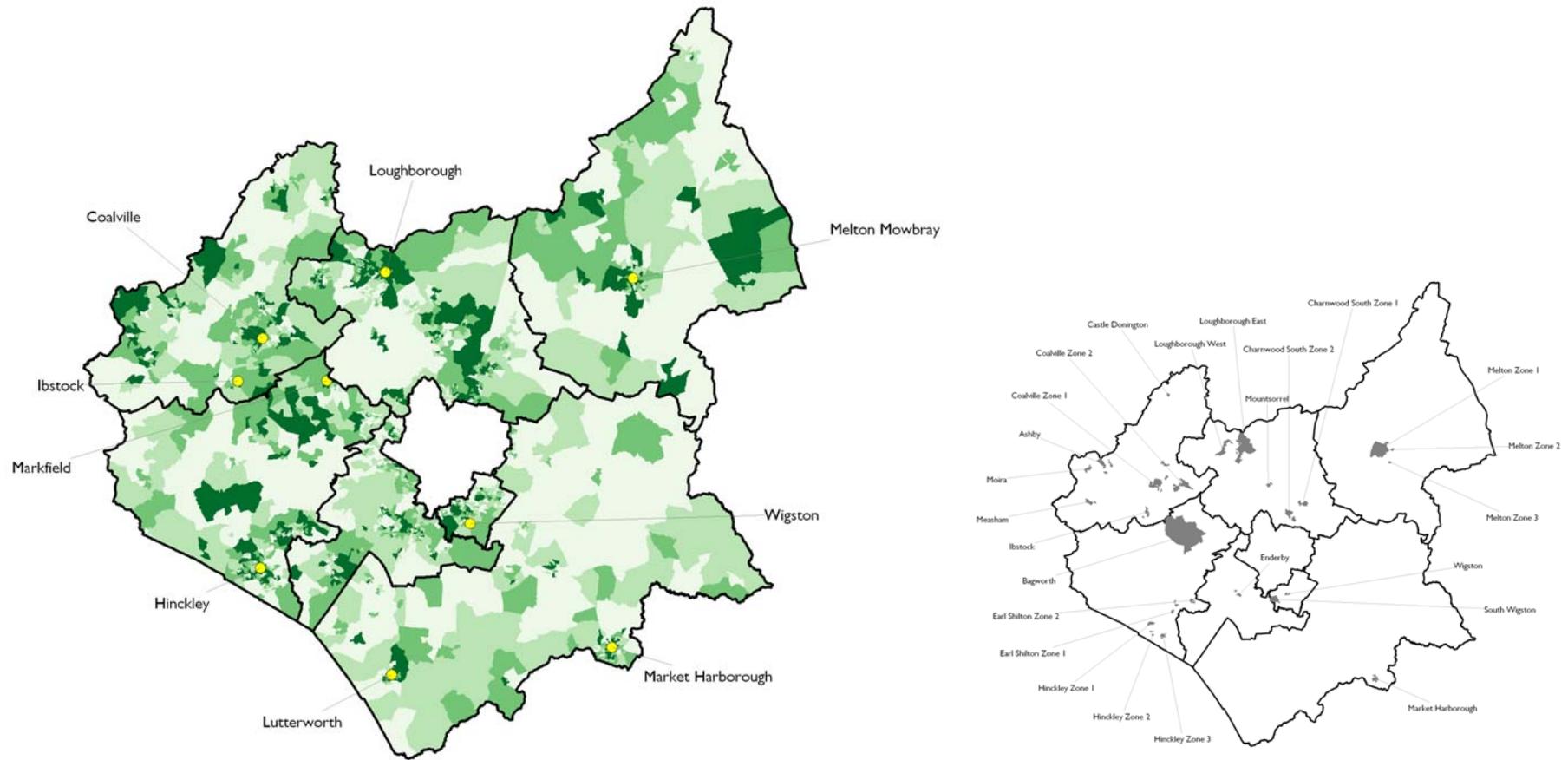
Figure 9, below, and the map which follows in Figure 9, highlights the priority areas across the county which have the highest numbers of children living in perceived poverty. There are of course similarities in areas to the previous deprivation maps, but because of the data being mapped at a smaller geographical area, a more nuanced picture is unearthed that starts to identify the small areas of poverty, especially in rural areas, that practitioners are aware of in their day-to-day work and were discussed in Chapter 2.

Figure 9 – Priority areas identified for Leicestershire using the Child Poverty Index

Priority Areas	Number of children perceived to be living in poor households
Loughborough East	1,420
Wigston	720
Melton	650
Hinckley	580
Loughborough West	520
Barwell and Earl Shilton	520
Greenhill	440
Coalville	290
Measham and Oakthorpe	250
Ashby	200
Mountsorrel	190
Lutterworth	180
Moira	140
Market Harborough	130
Bagworth	130
Castle Donington	120
Thringstone and Whitwick	100
Enderby	80
Stanton & Flamville	80
Kibworth	80
Blaby South	40
Total	6,860

Figure 10 Child Poverty index and LAA Priority Areas

Reproduced from Leicestershire LAA Geographical Priority Areas. Discussion Document. Children and Young People Supplement. Leicestershire County Council. 2006



Rural Isolation and Minimum Income Standards

Research was recently carried out for the Commission for Rural Communities by Loughborough University to explore the Minimum Income Standard (MIS) in the United Kingdom for people living in rural areas. The MIS standard is based on what items people think households need to afford a minimum acceptable standard of living. The researchers talked to groups of people in rural England about what things are essential in rural towns, villages and hamlets. The research found that although some things could be cheaper for rural households than for urban households (e.g. leisure activities for primary school children) this was unusual. Most household requirements were the same for rural as for urban families but there were some critical differences that meant all rural households faced additional costs (e.g. transport and fuel).

The research found that a family with two children in a village requires nearly £60 a week more to achieve the same minimum living standard as an urban family, adding 15 per cent to the budget.

Figure 11. Gross annual earnings required to meet the UK MIS, taking into account tax and in-work credits and housing and childcare costs

	Rural town	Village	Hamlet	Urban
Working age couple with two children	£37,841	£40,073	£42,277	£29,727
Lone parent with one child	£17,773	£19,431	£19,980	£12,454

Based on April 2010 prices

Source: Loughborough University

2. Impacts of Child Poverty

Attainment

A common proxy-measure, although there are issues with different take-up rates, for poverty is those children and young people in receipt of free school meals (FSMs). In spring 2010, 8.3% of Leicestershire pupils claimed FSM. Using this information we can look at the potential impact of poverty on a child's development.

Based on data for 2009, the Research Team at Leicestershire County Council has undertaken a multiple regression analysis to

predict which pupils reach their potential at Key Stage 4²¹. The data showed that those pupils in receipt of free school meals do worse than expected (based on prior attainment) whereas those not receiving free school meals do better. The analysis found that this was primarily associated with higher unauthorised absences in year 11. This provides evidence to suggest that there is an association between FSM and absences that has an important impact on the attainment of pupils in Leicestershire, which in turn is linked to poorer future outcomes; perpetuating the cycle of poverty.

However, this attainment is based on eligibility for FSMs in year 11 and the eligibility for FSMs is not static. Only two-fifths (40%) of pupils eligible for FSMs in year 7 are also eligible for FSMs in year 11²². The paper also highlights that non-white pupils who are in receipt of FSMs often do better than expected. This supports the argument that it is necessary to look beyond the basic income-related measure of poverty and to adopt a whole family approach to tackling child poverty. The 'better than expected' performance of non-white pupils eligible for FSMs may demonstrate the powerful potential for addressing issues of child poverty through raising aspirations and parental engagement

In summary the analysis of FSMs data suggests that poverty does impede some children's development in Leicestershire, particularly for White British pupils, although it is likely this is related to other factors such as lower attendance rates. It also suggests that the degree to which this influence is exerted maybe overcome, or at least challenged to some extent, by changing parental aspirations and improving pupil attendance, particularly unauthorised absence, in year 11.

Children with behavioural problems

In addition to what we know from the data about the link between poverty and attainment of children in Leicestershire, academic research has also demonstrated a link between poverty and behavioural problems amongst children before they even start school. Preliminary findings of a cross-cohort comparison of childhood behaviour problems²³ has shown that

²¹ Bradly, J (2010) Using Multiple regression analysis to predict which pupils reach their potential at Key Stage 4. DRAFT (Unpublished - contact Research Team Leader Rob Radburn, Robert.radburn@leics.gov.uk)

²² This could be related to a change in eligibility criteria, a change in situation, decision not to claim or some degree of movement around the cut-off point for eligibility for a large number of families in Leicestershire.

²³ Washbrook, E. (2010) A cross-cohort comparison of childhood behaviour problems. Summary of preliminary findings from a project for the Sutton Trust. 24th October 2010.

...behaviour problems are much more common among disadvantaged children prior to the start of schooling, and these differentials change little between the ages of 3 and 7. The results [of this study] also suggest that the income gap widened between the 1990s and 2000s cohorts. Washbrook, E. (2010)

The combination of behavioural problems and lower attainment for children from poorer backgrounds presents a powerful example of the barriers faced throughout childhood by children from poorer backgrounds and of the self-perpetuating cycle of poverty.

School exclusions

The outcome for children with behavioural problems may, in the worst case, lead to exclusion or transfer from school. Data is not recorded in a systematic way regarding the level of poverty experienced by children and young people excluded from Leicestershire schools. However, we are able to make an anecdotal assessment of this by talking to Education Support Officers (ESOs) who work with children who are excluded or who are on the cusp of exclusion and who are undertaking a 'managed move' to alternative provision – either to another school or to a Pupil Referral Unit ('PRU'). The work of ESO includes supporting the transition of excluded pupils which means they have direct contact with child and family, including access to the family home. Thus, whilst they would not necessarily know the exact family income they do take a holistic view of what the issues are for the family and would be able to recognise the signs of poverty.

It has been estimated that just over three-quarters (77%) of children and young people excluded (or at risk of exclusion) living in Loughborough are living in poverty (16 cases). Slightly lower proportions are estimated for Melton Mowbray (60%; 19 cases) and for South Charnwood (44%; 11 cases).

This again demonstrates the powerful negative influence of poverty in a child or young person's life. It also raises a question about what is the key driver behind the particular issue we are trying to intervene in to bring about positive change. As well as placing attention on behaviour change of the individual, attention needs to be paid on the significance of other factors – i.e. family poverty – which may lie at the heart of the issue and be linked to a number of other 'symptoms' – e.g. behavioural problems, disengagement in learning, and so on.

Unemployment

There is a logical link between lower attainment at school and unemployment. The impact of unemployment across a range of related issues is well documented and has been linked to malnutrition, illness, mental health issues – stress, depression, poor physical health and an overall reduction in life expectancy. Clearly, where parents/carers of children are unemployed the link between poverty and the negative effects outlined here will be experienced by the children and young people in the family too. In this respect, child poverty is very much a case of 'whole family poverty'.

Nationally around a third of the increase in unemployment since the start of 2008 is accounted for by those aged 18–24 years (Blanchflower, 2009). Similar to this national increase in Leicestershire 30% of the increase in unemployment is accounted for by 18-24 year olds, although 29% of Job Seeker Allowance claimants were 18-24 in January 2008, and this has not changed with the recession.

However, it is also important to recognise that sustained unemployment while young is particularly damaging. Gregg and Tominey (2005) found that the wages of those who experience youth unemployment are 13% to 21% lower than they would otherwise have been (after accounting for education, family background, personal characteristics etc). Those who suffer youth unemployment tend to have lower incomes and poorer labour market experiences even decades later. In other words,

Unemployment while young creates permanent scars rather than temporary blemishes....One explanation for this is that young labour market entrants who fail to gain a foothold in employment do not develop their skills during a key time in their development Blanchflower (2009).²⁴

3. Poor health

The health impacts of child poverty on other outcomes are set out in The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (NHS) - Standard 1: Promoting Health and Well-being Identifying Needs and Intervening Early;

Families living in poverty are less likely than other families to access health and other supportive services. Their children have higher than average rates of overweight and obesity,

²⁴ David Blanchflower. What should be done about rising unemployment in the UK? Open lecture, 25th February 2009. University of Stirling.

tooth decay, unintentional injury, and although death is a rare event in childhood it occurs more frequently in disadvantaged families. Similarly there are higher than average rates of substance misuse, smoking, teenage pregnancy, poor educational attainment, unemployment and social exclusion, but have lower breastfeeding rates²⁵.

Life Expectancy

Life expectancy at birth in Leicestershire is higher than the national and regional comparison and this has been the case over the last decade with a similar rate of increase. The latest figures available²⁶ for districts in Leicestershire show that life expectancy is lowest in North West Leicestershire for both men (79.5 years) and women (80.8) and is highest, for men, in Melton (79.6) and, for women, in Harborough (82.6).

We can also look at the difference between life expectancy in the most and least deprived areas of each district in Leicestershire (using the NHS slope index of inequality 2001-2008)²⁷. For Leicestershire & Rutland as a whole the gap in life expectancy has fallen for men - from 6.5 years for (2001-2005) to 5.6 years (2004-2008) – but has increased for women – from 3.8 years (2001-2005) to 4.8 years (2004-2008). Thus, in Leicestershire, whilst the inequality gap for life expectancy is large for men it is falling whilst the gap for women is increasing.

At a district level the inequality gap in life expectancy is greatest in Charnwood (8.5 years for men and 5.8 for women) and is lowest in Blaby (3.4 men; 1.8 women). Although the confidence intervals suggest that some caution must be taken with these figures.

Infant mortality

This indicator is the proportion of children who die in their first year of life and has traditionally been used as a major indicator of child health.

²⁵ The National Service Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (NHS) - Standard 1: Promoting Health and Well-being Identifying Needs and Intervening Early; Section 2.6. http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/Browsable/DH_4865614

²⁶ Source: NCHOD – National Centre for Health Outcomes Development and NHS LCR Public Health Intelligence

²⁷ Source: APHO – Association of Public Health Observatories

The infant mortality rate²⁸ in Leicestershire matches that of England at 4.8 per 1,000 live births for 2006-08 (the latest available data). However, the trends do not match: there has been a gradual and consistent decline in infant mortality for England overall but in Leicestershire infant mortality has fallen from a peak of 5.2 in 2005-07 but is still up on 2003-05 (4.3) and 2005-06 (4.5).

Oral health

There is considerable evidence that untreated decay is concentrated in children from deprived areas and, as a result, there are inequalities across the country. Figures for Leicestershire show that districts, excluding Melton, have a greater number of decayed teeth in comparison to the East Midlands. (Data at a low geography and trend data is not available).

Teenage conceptions

Latest figures show that in 2009, there were 323 conceptions to females aged between 15 and 17 in Leicestershire²⁹. This represents a rate of 27.6 per thousand females in this age group, compared to a national average of 38.3 per thousand. Over the last eleven years (1998-2009) the under-18 conception rate has fallen by 27.4% in Leicestershire, compared to a national reduction of 18% over the same period. Data at a ward level shows that there is a correlation with a higher teenage conception rates in Leicestershire's more deprived areas. However, taking into account the local context for Leicestershire, the rate could be further reduced and this might go some way to reducing the relative child poverty experienced by some in the County.

Child Health Profiles 2011

The national Child and Maternal Health Observatory (ChiMat) provides information to support the planning and delivery of services. In February 2011 ChiMat published Child Health Profiles³⁰ for each local authority in England. The Child Health Profiles provide a snapshot of child health and well-being using key health indicators. Whilst the relationship between these indicators and child poverty is not a simple one, and the use of county-wide figures is not particularly helpful, this information is included here to help understand the broader context.

²⁸ Source: NCHOD – National Centre for Health Outcomes Development and NHS LCR Public Health Intelligence

²⁹ There is a time lag in the availability of data as figures are calculated retrospectively based on births.

³⁰ <http://www.chimat.org.uk/profiles>

The Child Health Profile for Leicestershire provides the following summary information³¹:

Leicestershire is significantly worse when compared with England
Averages for:

- Participation in at least 3 hours of sport/PE
- Pupils who say that they have been bullied
- Children in care immunisations

Leicestershire is significantly better when compared with England
Averages for:

- Obese children (4-5 and 10-11 years)
- Children who have someone to talk to
- Teenage conception rates
- Hospital admission rate due to injury
- MMR immunisation
- Hospital admissions due to alcohol specific conditions
- First time entrants to the Youth Justice System
- Not in education, employment or training
- Rate of family homelessness
- Percentage of children living in poverty

³¹ Source: CHIMAT – Child and Maternal Health Observatory. Summary provided by NHS Leicestershire County and Rutland.

4. Vulnerable groups

Using established and current research around child poverty, and the findings of the qualitative research undertaken with service providers in Leicestershire, it is possible to identify a number of groups in society who are particularly vulnerable to experiencing child poverty. In this section we will look at some of those key groups for Leicestershire and draw on existing data and analysis to summarise what we know about them.

Children with Disabilities

Research has established a clear link between disability and an increased likelihood of living in poverty. This is true both for families who have a disabled child³² and families with a disabled parent³³ and again, emphasises the need for a whole family approach to tackling the issue.

The campaign Every Disabled Child Matters identifies the twin challenges of expensive care coupled with reduced income as the main drivers behind disabled children and child poverty. It is estimated that (in 1998) the cost of bringing up a disabled child was £7,355 per year compared to £2,100 for other children – i.e. around 3½ times the cost³⁴.

It goes on to identify that “childhood disability is often a ‘trigger event’ for poverty, as a result of additional costs, family break-up and unemployment that can follow the birth or diagnosis of a disabled child”³⁵.

The interrelatedness of factors such as unemployment and housing is apparent here:

- unemployment is higher - 16% of mothers with disabled children work, compared to 61% of mothers with non-disabled children
- three-quarters of families with disabled children live in unsuitable housing.

It also relates directly to key indicators of the consequences of living in poverty in Leicestershire, with disabled families with disabled children “50% more likely to be in debt and 50% less likely to be able to afford holidays, new clothes, school outings or treats”.

³² IPPR (2007) DISABILITY 2020: Opportunities for full and equal citizenship of disabled people in Britain in 2020, London: IPPR

³³ Magadi, M. and Middleton, S. (2007) Severe Child Poverty in the UK. London: Save the Children

³⁴ Gordon D et al (2000), Disabled Children in Britain: A reanalysis of the OPCS Disability Surveys, London: HMSO. Quoted in Disabled children & child poverty (2007) Every Disabled Child Matters campaign.

³⁵ Disabled children & child poverty (2007) Every Disabled Child Matters campaign.

It is estimated that there are around 8,000 children in Leicestershire who have moderate disabilities and 1,600 severe. This is a significant population and clearly, families with disabled children are a key group which the child poverty strategy for Leicestershire will need to address.

Parents with learning disabilities³⁶

An identified risk factor for children living in poverty which emerged from the interviews with stakeholders was having a parent/carer with learning disabilities. The World Health Organisation (WHO) has defined learning disabilities as, “a state of arrested or incomplete development of mind”. It is not a disease or an illness and it is not acquired in adulthood or as a result of injury or disease. There are no definitive figures for the learning disability population in the UK with estimates of prevalence ranging between 2.5% and 5%.

The majority of people with learning disabilities who become parents will be considered to have mild-to-moderate learning disabilities. The 2001 White Paper ‘Valuing People’³⁷ states that ‘lower estimates suggest a prevalence rate of around 25 per 1,000 population – some 1.2million people in England’ with learning difficulties will become parents. Research by Emerson et al (2003/04)³⁸ estimates that around 7% of people aged 20 or over with learning disabilities had a child. This translates to over 53,000 parents with learning disabilities in England.

The Leicestershire Learning Disabilities Partnership Board estimates that there are between 2,000 and 3,000 adults with moderate to severe learning difficulties known to services in Leicestershire, plus around 30,000 adults with mild learning disabilities. Using Emerson et al’s estimate of 7%, this extrapolates to an estimate of between 140 and 210 parents with moderate to severe learning disabilities and 2,100 parents with mild learning disabilities in Leicestershire.

The estimates for the number of parents with learning disabilities show that this could be a large group of families who experience, or who are at risk of experiencing, living in poverty in Leicestershire.

³⁶ Information taken from the presentation: ‘Introduction to learning disabilities and parents with learning disabilities’. 11th February 2011. Leicestershire Learning Disabilities Board.

³⁷ Valuing People: A new strategy for Learning Disability for the 21st Century. Department of Health CM 5086. Accessed: <http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm50/5086/5086.htm> February 2011.

³⁸ Referenced in footnote 20 (above).

Gypsies and Travellers

If we consider that child poverty is not an absolute income based measure, but a much broader, relative measure of a family's ability to make the choices which enable them to make the best of their life, then we must consider how that is bound within different cultures.

In 2009 the Equalities and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published a report on the inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller Communities in the UK³⁹. The report highlights multiple areas of inequality:

1. Economic exclusion and discrimination in access to employment; including low employment rates and high poverty
2. Poor healthcare, social care, education and other public services;
3. Disproportionality and prejudice throughout the legal and criminal justice systems;
4. Racism and discriminatory actions/omissions;
5. Lack of access and discrimination in the housing sector;
6. Cycle of evictions
7. Marginalisation or exclusion from political participation;⁴⁰

Clearly these issues directly related to child poverty and suggest a group of society particularly vulnerable to experiencing child poverty. In Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland it is estimated that there are around 1,815 gypsies and travellers on authorised caravan sites and some in unauthorised sites. Around eight-out-of-ten (78%) families stated that someone in the family was in work. Men were normally self-employed and some women worked but they faced problems in getting to work thought to stem from discrimination and racist attitudes among employers and poor basic literacy skills among gypsies and travellers⁴¹.

³⁹ Cemlyn, S., Greenfields, M., Burnett, S., Matthews, Z., Whitwell, C. (2009) Inequalities experienced by Gypsy and Traveller communities: A review. Equality and Human rights Commission. Research Report 12. Available at http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/uploaded_files/research/12inequalities_experienced_by_gypsy_and_traveller_communities_a_review.pdf accessed April 2011.

⁴⁰ Summary taken from website of Rene Cassin: the Jewish voice for human rights: <http://www.renecassin.org/campaigns/current-campaigns/gypsies-and-travellers>

⁴¹ Gypsy and Traveller Needs Assessment for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland. CURS University of Birmingham. Cited in Leicester and Leicestershire Economic Assessment, May 2010 Version.

Looked after children

Local government Improvement & Development identifies children in care as another vulnerable group with regards to experiencing the multiple disadvantage of growing up in poverty. The County Council estimates that there are currently around 350 children in care in Leicestershire. It has not been possible to undertake further analysis of data with regards to the poverty experienced by this group but young people in care were directly involved in all aspects of the youth led research project. The views of children and young people in care in Leicestershire were sought in developing the County Council's pledge⁴² to children in care and again this will be a key group for the child poverty strategy development.

Young Carers

The 2001 census estimated that there were almost 2,400 young carers living in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland. However, this is likely to be an underestimation as it relies on parents acknowledging their child has a care role and then feeling confident putting that on a Government form. Barnardos currently support 128 young carer families in the county, with 79% of young carers care for a parent with a mental illness, and 48% care for a parent with a physical illness

Teenage pregnancy and child poverty

The potentially negative long-term outcomes of teenage parenthood have been well documented by Government at the national level: poorer health, economic and mental well-being; increased risk of low-birth weight babies; 60% higher infant mortality rate and poor status of teenage mothers⁴³. There is a direct link with issues relating to child poverty with teenage mothers more likely than their peers to have lower qualifications, lower incomes and be more likely to rely on benefits⁴⁴.

It is important to note however, that around a third of teen parents in Leicestershire were NEET before becoming pregnant. Other risk factors associated with an increased likelihood of becoming pregnant or a teenage parent include poor mental health, involvement with police, drug and alcohol misuse, disengaged from school (low attendance & attainment), being in care and low parental aspirations. Further, the most significant 'risk factor'

⁴² Leicestershire County Council: Pledge To Children In Care And Young People Leaving Care http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/social_services/children_young_people/children_looked_after/lac_services_for/corporate_parenting/pledge.htm

⁴³ Teenage Pregnancy: Accelerating the Strategy to 2010 (2006) Department for Education and Skills.

⁴⁴ A League Table of Teenage Births in Rich Nations (2001) UNICEF, Innocenti Research Centre.

associated with increased likelihood of becoming a teenage parent was having a mother who was a teenage parent¹. These recurring themes, reinforcing a cycle of poverty, highlight the 'interconnectedness' of issues and the importance of trying to reduce risk factors in the lives of children and young people and build their resilience in order to alleviate a whole range of 'symptoms'.

This suggests a process which maintains and reinforces the intergenerational transfer of child poverty highlighted in Frank Field's review of child poverty for the Government ⁴⁵: the same families living in difficult circumstances from one generation to the next. Thus through providing targeted preventative support to young people at risk of poor outcomes generally to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies we could be reducing the likelihood of future families living in poverty.

Supporting young parents into education, employment and training is a key initiative designed to break the cycle of child poverty experienced by some families in Leicestershire. In 2010 an evaluation was commissioned of the Young Parents Education, Employment and Training Strategy in Leicester and Leicestershire⁴⁶. The evaluation showed that the strategy was seen 'by those working at both policy and delivery levels, as a well thought out approach to deliver consistent increases in the number of young mothers returning to education, employment and training'⁴⁷. The evaluation identified a number of strategies that worked and characteristics of effective practice, including:

- Flexible learning programmes
- Integration of personalised outreach support with short courses
- Active engagement of delivery partners and multi-agency working
- Roll-on, roll off learning programmes
- One-to-one support from a named worker for a specified period
- Initial provision of on-site childcare and free travel⁴⁸

In March 2011, Connexions were aware of 313 teenage mothers in the County (aged 16-19) and 45% were engaged in Education, Employment or Training.

⁴⁵ (Field, F. 2010) *ibid*

⁴⁶ Neale, I., Neat, S. and Spong, S. (2010) Evaluation of the Young Parents EET Strategy. CFE.

⁴⁷ Page 1 *ibid*

⁴⁸ Page 2 *ibid*

A recent Social Return on Investment (SROI) evaluation⁴⁹ looked at the impact of the Leicestershire and Rutland Community Safer Sex project and found that for every £1 spent between £4 and £8 was returned in social value. However, positive outcomes went beyond a reduction in pregnancies and included better decision-making and increased engagement with health services. Research suggests that reducing teenage pregnancy alone would not necessarily reduce poor outcomes unless such associated factors also change.

5. Childcare sufficiency in Leicestershire

The provision of child care was a key area of Frank Field’s report on poverty and Graham Allen’s report on early intervention. The recent Leicestershire Childcare Sufficiency Assessment⁵⁰, which looked at both the supply of and demand for childcare, identified 1,359 providers of formal childcare in Leicestershire, offering a total of 21,964 places. Figure 10 (below) shows the number of providers & the number of places for each different type of provider.

Overall, nine-out-of-ten children across Leicestershire (0 to 14yrs) live within walking distance (half a mile) of a childcare provider; child-minder provision is the most accessible (eight-out-of-ten within walking distance) and out of school provision is least likely to be within walking distance. The more sparsely populated rural areas of Leicestershire tend to be furthest away from the nearest childcare provision.

Quality of child care

Based on Ofsted inspections, it is possible to get an overview of the quality of local childcare provision. As shown in Figure 11, below, most childcare provision in Leicestershire is of a good (60%) or satisfactory (33%) standard.

Figure 11 - OFSTED ratings of registered Childcare Providers in Leicestershire

Ofsted Rating	2008	2009	2010
Outstanding	4%	5%	6%
Good	57%	58%	60%
Satisfactory	36%	35%	33%
Inadequate	2%	2%	1%

⁴⁹ Bradley, J (2011) Social Return on Investment: Evaluation of Leicestershire and Rutland Community Safer Sex Project, Research and Insight Team, Leicestershire County Council

⁵⁰ Hardy, J (2010) Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2010, Research and Insight Team, Leicestershire County Council <http://www.leics.gov.uk/csa>

Affordability of childcare

With the exception of out of school care (which showed a marginal decrease of 0.4%) all types of childcare provision has seen a rise in cost over the last year (2009-10). For most types of provision the increase in cost has been modest – between 1.9 and 4.7 per cent – however the unit cost of pre-school playgroup is up by over a third (36.5%) from an average of £93 to £127 per week.

Access to childcare

Around a third of parents in Leicestershire think that it is difficult to access formal childcare on foot and an even higher proportion – a half – think access by public transport is difficult. It is not known from the Leicestershire childcare survey what proportion of parents are impeded or prevented from accessing the formal childcare support they need as a result of their geographical location. However, as stated above, given the high proportion of parents within walking distance of provision (90%) the difficulty of access may be more of a reflection of perceptions and/or choice rather than availability.

Who uses formal childcare?

In a survey on childcare usage in Leicestershire, just over two-thirds (68%) of parents responded that they currently use some form of formal childcare. Generally, usage tends to decrease with the age of the child. Usage of formal childcare provision is higher amongst parents working full-time (81% usage compared to 65% of all other families), families with a household income above £40k and parents with a child aged over 11 years with a SEN or disability (four times more likely compared to all other parents).

Are childcare needs of parents in Leicestershire being met?

Around eight-out-of-ten parents of children aged 0 to 14 years in Leicestershire stated that their childcare needs were fully met *during school term time* (82%). This figure fell to around two-thirds (66%) of parents whose needs are met *during school holidays*. As day nursery provision is usually available all year, parents of pre-school children who use a day nursery are more likely to have their needs met.

Parents of a child with a disability or SEN are four times more likely not to have their childcare needs met during school term time. This could be linked to child poverty if parents of a child with a disability are prevented from working due to the lack of suitable child care. This in turn is linked to the availability of additional funding to providers to encourage and enable them to look after children with disabilities.

Overall, satisfaction with the provision of childcare in Leicestershire is very high (c. 95% of parents satisfied). Affordability of childcare is, relatively, more of an issue for parents in Leicestershire than concerns about quality, location or opening times. This was particularly evident for parents from Black & Asian Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and for households where all parents work full-time.

These findings are further reinforced by the fact that making childcare more affordable was identified by parents as the biggest improvement required. This was identified by 41% of all parents but was particularly high amongst parents of children aged under 3 years (53%) and amongst BAME parents (51%).

Chapter 5 – Key messages and action points

Based on the feedback from interviews with practitioners, the youth led research project and analysis of relevant data sets, a clear picture of child poverty emerges for Leicestershire. This report establishes the fact that there are children living in poverty in Leicestershire, some of the causes and effects of poverty, and suggests pointers for further action to be developed through the Leicestershire Child Poverty Strategy.

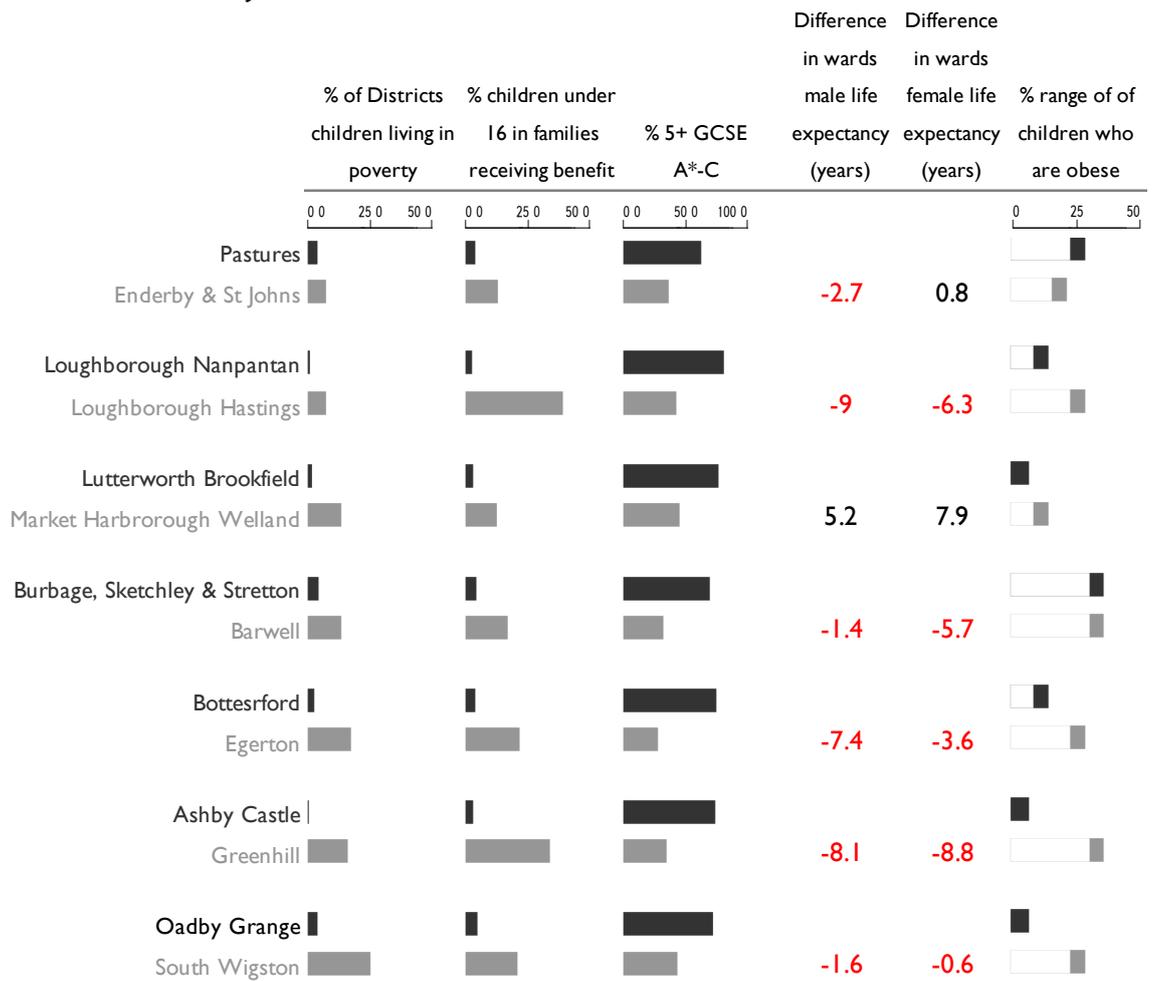
Real child poverty exists in Leicestershire

Data from the Indices of Deprivation 2010 shows that, relative to other parts of England, Leicestershire does not experience a high level of income deprivation affecting children and the majority of the county is amongst the least deprived areas in the country. Generally, there is very little change in the areas which experience the highest levels of child poverty. In Leicestershire these are primarily the urban centres around Loughborough, Melton and South Wigston and Coalville.

Although the quantitative data for the County as a whole often shows that Leicestershire fares better than the rest of England, there are areas of the County in which real child poverty does exist and this was strongly emphasised by both practitioners and young people in the County. The description of 'leafy Leicestershire' was a source of frustration for many practitioners working directly with the consequences of child poverty on a daily basis. Local experience also supports national research which establishes that where families are living in poverty in otherwise more affluent areas the repercussions can be even worse.

As a snapshot of data included in Figure 12, below, shows, in every district in the County there are substantial differences in the lives children and young people are likely to experience. A person born in certain parts of one district can expect to live almost a decade longer than someone born 10 or 20 miles away. They may live in some of the most deprived areas in the country, where benefit take-up is very high and attainment is very low.

Figure 12 – The poverty gap in Leicestershire districts (selected measures and wards)



Child poverty in Leicestershire is multi-layered and intergenerational

Analysis of key data-sets in Leicestershire supports practitioner beliefs that child poverty is multi-layered and transfers through families from one generation to another in the same localities. A Leicestershire strategy for reducing child poverty needs to reflect this complex picture and address including education, training, skills and employment.

Young people particularly emphasised the importance of creating opportunities for people to learn and develop new skills to get, and keep, a job as a pathway out of poverty. The young researchers completing the peer led research on poverty for this needs assessment could be usefully engaged in further work to identify how this might most usefully and practically be achieved.

Practitioners were very clear that creating opportunities alone is not enough for many people living in poverty in complex families.

Additional support is required to change long established low familial aspirations and to support development of practical skills – managing budgets, completing forms – to enable those in the least well off families to seize and make the most of those opportunities available to them.

There is a thread of intergenerational poverty evident in the quantitative data/analysis for Leicestershire, backed up by qualitative findings from practitioners and young people and laid out in this report. A picture emerges of often chaotic families, struggling to cope, with associated behavioural problems, leading to exclusions and poorer outcomes for young people, lower levels of attainment and a clear link with unemployment. The impact of being out of work – particularly when young – and a whole range of negative outcomes for health and well-being associated with this are well documented. Families living in poverty demonstrate a range of poor health outcomes from tooth decay to obesity, mental health problems and shorter life expectancy. The link between parental unemployment, low aspirations and child poverty suggesting a 'whole family poverty' approach is vital.

As we have shown, it is well established that certain groups are likely to be particularly vulnerable to the negative impacts of growing up in poverty, and that they exist in significant numbers within Leicestershire, including:

- some Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic groups
- young carers
- unemployed parents & young people
- offenders – young and old
- those with substance misuse & alcohol problems
- those with mental health problems
- families with disabled parents/children
- teenage parents
- children in care

Making Choices, strengthening protective factors and tackling risk factors

The picture which emerges from this report is that child poverty in Leicestershire is largely about the resources available to children and families and their ability to make *choices* which help them get the best out of life.

Reducing child poverty is about *strengthening the protective factors* such as family income (and how it is spent), aspiration, good parenting and childcare and supportive social networks.

It is also about *dealing with the risk factors* present in complex families suffering from poverty. These include things such as inadequate housing, poor diet, drug and alcohol misuse, domestic abuse, mental health problems, disability and lack of transport.

Key messages

In order to identify potential recommendations for the strategy, it is useful to identify the key messages of 'what we know':

1. There is a clear and obvious link between child poverty and parental income but income alone is too simple a measure to provide a true picture of child poverty in Leicestershire.
2. Children living in poverty in Leicestershire who appear to be at most risk of experiencing poor outcomes are generally those who live in families with additional needs which traverse both adults and children's services.
3. There appears to be a lack of understanding amongst the broader workforce of the existence of poverty, the potential causes of poverty, and the consequences of poverty, in terms of impact it may have on children and families.
4. There is a general consensus amongst the practitioners interviewed as part of this needs assessment that the interventions required to alleviate symptoms of poverty and complex need are low key and simple but must be family-led.
5. Families on low income may not be fully aware of their benefit entitlement or means of accessing additional support i.e. through charitable grants.

Action points – what do we want to achieve?

1. To develop an understanding of the broader indicators of child poverty in order to inform future strategy and practice.
2. To link with the Community Budgets agenda and ensure that child poverty is a central concern of work with families with complex needs.
3. To increase the understanding of the Leicestershire public, voluntary and community sectors about the prevalence and impact of poverty on families.

4. Ensure that the broad Leicestershire workforce has a good awareness and understanding of the impact of child poverty and steps that they can take to address need.
5. Develop improved systems and working to ensure families are enabled to identify their needs and work in partnership with services to identify solutions: develop a culture of listening to families.
6. Maximise the income available to families, and maximise their ability and willingness to take up opportunities (for goods and services) that may help alleviate financial disadvantage.
7. To impact on social and family resilience through the provision of healthy activities and emotional learning with mutual caring and support networks easily available to all ages in local areas.

Appendix 1

National Policy Context

In 1999 the then Labour Government took the bold step of pledging to half child poverty by 2010 and eradicate it by 2020. Following the change in Government in May 2010 the incoming Coalition Government reaffirmed their commitment to ending child poverty by 2020.⁵¹

This cross-party commitment to dealing with an issue is unusual and presents a real opportunity to bring about lasting change to an intergenerational problem of inequality: child poverty.

In developing their own approach to abolishing child poverty the Coalition Government have commissioned two reviews by Labour MPs: Frank Field's Review on Poverty and Graham Allen's Review of Early Intervention.

Frank Field's Review on Poverty⁵² was published on 3rd December 2010 and the findings and recommendations were open for consultation until 15th February 2011. Graham Allen's Review on Early Intervention publishes findings in two stages: the first report focuses on best practice, early intervention and delivery⁵³ (published 18th January 2011) and the second report looks at the financial instruments which might deliver the recommendations (published summer 2011).

Inevitably, different governments have different approaches to how best to reduce and eventually eradicate child poverty and local authorities need to develop and set out how they plan to contribute towards this in their local area.

The Child Poverty Act 2010 (Part 2, Section 22) requires local authorities to prepare and publish an assessment of the needs of children living in poverty in its area.

The responsible authority is the county council and other statutory partners are:

- district councils,

⁵¹ See Section 3.1 of the consultation document on Tackling Child Poverty and Improving Life Chances: Consulting on a New Approach (21st Dec 2010 to 15th Feb 2011).

⁵² Field, F. (2010) The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults: The report of the Independent Review on Poverty and Life Chances. Accessed January 2011: <http://povertyreview.independent.gov.uk/media/20254/poverty-report.pdf>

⁵³ Allen, G. (2011) Early Intervention: The Next Steps. An Independent Report to Her Majesty's Government. Accessed February 2011: <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/early-intervention-next-steps.pdf>

- the police authority,
- chief officer of police
- integrated transport authority
- strategic health authority
- primary care trust
- youth offending team
- probation service
- Jobcentre Plus

Although a toolkit has been produced by the Local Government Improvement and Development there is no formal statutory guidance for producing a local Child Poverty Needs Assessment (CPNA).

The CPNA must be locally determined and relevant and it is up to local leaders to decide what it, and the resultant strategy, looks like.

The purpose of this CPNA is to:

- expose & understand why outcomes are poor locally
- improve the use of resources
- bring other partners to the table
- generate links between poverty, de/commissioning, service design and delivery
- drive multi-agency activity

The local Child Poverty Strategy should be published in April 2011 and developed over the preceding months informed by work on the CPNA and consultation with key stakeholders, including children and young people.

The local strategy needs to align with other local activity including the budget setting process and relevant strategies such as the Children and Young People's Plan and the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.

Frank Field's review on poverty and life chances

Frank Field was commissioned by the Prime Minister in June 2010 to carry out an independent review of poverty and life chances which was published in December 2010. The purpose of the review was to expand the debate about the nature and extent of poverty, look at how we measure child poverty, with a specific focus on the impact of a child's home environment with regards to how it affects their school and to make recommendations for action.

The review focuses, almost exclusively on the first five years of a child's life and the influence of family background, parental

influence and opportunities for learning. Two broad recommendations emerge from the review: (1) that Government should give greater prominence to the early ('foundation') years, and (2) that a set of 'life chance' indicators should be developed.

The Pupil Premium

In December 2010 the Department for Education announced that the new Pupil Premium would be set at £430 per pupil for 2011/12. The pupil premium is designed to target extra money at children from deprived backgrounds. The payment will be for every child registered for free school meals as of January 2011 and for every child living in care⁵⁴. Funding will be passed straight to schools and will not be ring-fenced allowing schools to decide how to spend the money to support children from deprived backgrounds to increase levels of attainment.⁵⁵

Nationally, the number of children registered for free school meals has risen by 15% in the last year. This increase is likely to continue given the financial incentive for schools to ensure that all children eligible for free school meals are registered⁵⁶.

Forecasts of child and working age poverty

Research by the Institute for Fiscal Studies, funded by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, forecasts a rise in child and working age poverty between 2010-11 and 2013-14 (see Figure 13, below).

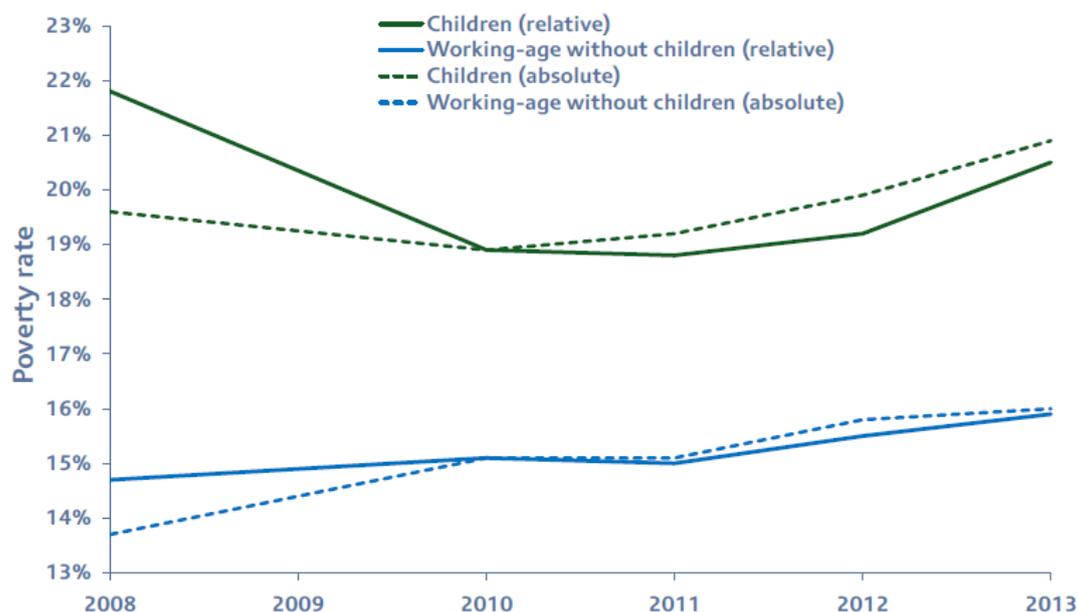
⁵⁴ A smaller pupil premium of £200 will also apply to children of parents serving in the military but 95% of the £625m funding will relate to children eligible for free school meals.

⁵⁵ Written ministerial statement by the Secretary of State for Education on schools financial settlement - Pupil Premium (13th December 2010).

⁵⁶ Institute for Fiscal Studies, December 2010: <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5371>

Figure 13 IFS forecasts for child and working age poverty.

Poverty forecasts under current policies



Notes: 2008 figures are actual. 2009 figures are linear interpolations between 2008 and 2010. Years refer to financial years. Incomes measured before housing costs have been deducted.

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The report concludes that:

- *Under current policies, we expect absolute and relative poverty to rise in next 3 years, particularly in 2013-14.*
- *We estimate that coalition Government's reforms act to increase poverty slightly in 2012-13, and more clearly in 2013-14.*
- *Meeting absolute and relative child poverty targets in 2020-21 looks extremely difficult.*⁵⁷

The report highlights that this will be affected by the Universal Credit and forecasts will be revised following the Welfare Reform Bill.

Universal Credit

The White Paper 'Universal Credit: welfare that works' was published on 11 November 2010 and sets out the Coalition Government's plans to introduce legislation to reform the welfare system by creating a new Universal Credit. It proposes Universal Credit to be 'an integrated benefit in place of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Housing Benefit, Child Tax Credit and

⁵⁷ Robert Joyce, Institute of Fiscal Studies Presentation as part of the CASE Social Exclusion Seminar series (2nd March 2011): <http://www.ifs.org.uk/publications/5497>

Working Tax Credit (p.14). It will not replace Child Benefit, which 'will be available in addition to Universal Credit payments for children' (p.23). The main proposals that will affect children, young people and their families are:

- Fixed amounts to be included within the Universal Credit to cover children's living costs for the *less-well-off*. This is additional to Child Benefit.
- Additional support through the Childcare Element in Working Tax Credits will rise to a maximum of £175 a week for a single child and £300 a week for two or more
- Further income-related element added to Pension Credits for pensioners with dependent children

Appendix 2

Child Poverty Basket of Indicators

The basket of indicators have been chosen from the current National Indicator Set (NIS) and most closely reflects the drivers of child poverty that can be influenced by local authorities and their partners. This sheet displays a summary of the latest data for the basket of indicators for Leicestershire. (Downloaded February 2011). For more information go to: <http://www.education.gov.uk/b0066347/child-poverty-data/>

The child poverty building blocks:

Parental employment and skills

NI number	Description	Leicestershire	England	Data point
NI 118	Childcare take-up (low income working families) (%)	19.8	17.8	FY 2007/08
NI 146	Adults with learning disabilities in employment (%)	3.5	6.8	FY 2008/09
NI 150	Working adults seeing mental health services (%)	7.2	3.4	FY 2008/09
NI 151	Overall employment rate (%)	77.4	73.0	CY 2008
NI 151f	Overall employment rate- female (%)	73.5	69.1	CY 2008
NI 151m	Overall employment rate- male (%)	80.8	76.5	CY 2008
NI 161	Learners achieving L1 literacy qualification (no.)	2,830	320,542	AY 2008/09
NI 162	Learners achieving numeracy L3 qualification (no.)	1,124	116,248	AY 2008/09
NI 163	Working age population qualified to at least L2 (%)	71.2	69.4	CY 2008
NI 166	Average earnings of employees in the area (no.)	468.8	495.2	FY 2009/10

Life chances

NI number	Description	Leicestershire	England	Data point
NI 076	Achievement of KS2 L4 in English & Maths (no.)	10	1,472	AY 2008/09
NI 078	Achievement:5 A*-C GCSEs (English & Math) (no.)	0	-	AY 2008/09
NI 082	Inequality gap in achievement at L2 by 19 (%)	54.4	56.8	AY 2008/09
NI 092	Achievement gap: low. 20% EYFSP & the rest (%)	-	33.9	AY 2008/09
NI 101	Children in care achieving 5 A*-C GCSEs (%)	0.0	9.8	AY 2008/09
NI 102a	FSM/non-FSM achievement gap at KS 2 and 4 (%)	26.8	26.8	AY 2008/09
NI 102b	FSM/non-FSM achievement gap: 5A*-C GCSE (%)	31.6	27.8	AY 2008/09
NI 105	SEN/non-SEN achievement gap (%)	47.2	46.5	AY 2008/09
NI 106	Young people from low incomes entering HE (%)	19	18	AY 2007/08
NI 112	Under 18 conception rate (%)	-12.9	-13.3	CY 2008
NI 117	16-18 yr old NEETs (%)	4.4	6.7	CY 2008

Place

NI number	Description	Leicestershire	England	Data point
NI 156	Households in temporary accommodation (no.)	-	53,370	Q3 2009/10
NI 158	(non) Decent council homes (%)	-	22.0	FY 2008/09
NI 172	VAT registered businesses showing growth (%)	14.4	14.2	CY 2008
NI 176	Working people with access to public transport (%)	80	-	CY 2008
NI 187a	People on IB in homes with low energy ratings (%)	5	-	FY 2008/09
NI 187b	People on IB in homes with high energy ratings (%)	-	-	FY 2008/09

Financial support

NI number	Description	Leicestershire	England	Data point
NI 153	People claiming out of work benefits (%)	-	31.2	Aug 2009
NI 181	Time to process HB/CTB new claims (no.)	-	-	Q2 2009/10

Notes:

1). " - " means there are no data available for this indicator

Appendix 3

Interview template

Questions

1. What do you think living in poverty means for children in Leicestershire today?
 - How does it affect the people you and your service work with?
 - Is poverty just, or primarily, about income?
2. How can we best identify children and young people who are living in poverty in Leicestershire?
 - Do we already know who they are?
 - How fluid is this group of people; how much does it change over time?
3. In your experience, are there particular groups of children and young people who are more likely to be living in poverty? (e.g. young unaccompanied asylum seekers, parents abusing drugs/alcohol)
4. Will the current public sector cuts affect child poverty in Leicestershire?
 - Will it make things much worse or is it unlikely to make much difference to this group of people?
 - Is this already evident in your work?
5. What could we do, that doesn't involve extra resources, to:
 - a. make life better for children and young people living in poverty now that doesn't involve extra resources?
 - b. stop the intergenerational cycle of poverty?
 - What balance should be struck between the two?
 - Are these mutually exclusive or one-and-the-same-thing?
 - Can we realistically do both?
6. How might we best monitor child poverty in Leicestershire?
 - How would you know if Leicestershire's Child Poverty Strategy were being successful?

Questions

- How would things look differently?
7. What one thing, above all others, would you like to see set out in:
 - a. Child Poverty Needs Assessment for Leicestershire;
 - b. Leicestershire Child Poverty Strategy?
 8. How can you personally/your service contribute towards reducing child poverty and/or the impact of child poverty in Leicestershire?



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