

Blackpool Child Poverty Needs Assessment

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Glossary

BEACH	Blackpool Early Action for Children – the funding used to meet individual needs of families following assessment by a professional
BME	Black and Minority Ethnic
DHP	Discretionary Housing Payments – Payments which can be awarded to Housing or Council tax benefits claimants with financial needs.
DLA	Disability Living Allowance – a benefit paid to people with physical or mental disabilities requiring care or supervision
A “domain”	A collection of indicators on a particular topic, which forms part of the calculation of an overall measure. For example, the Index of Deprivation has seven “domains” including crime, income and employment
DWP	The Department for Work and Pensions
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance. This replaced Incapacity Benefit and Income Support paid on incapacity grounds for new claimants
FSM	Free School Meals – available for the children of parents claiming certain benefits, along with help towards uniform costs
IVA	Individual Voluntary Arrangement – an agreement used to avoid bankruptcy where individuals are in debt
JRF	Joseph Rowntree Foundation – a charity conducting research into the causes of social problems
JSA	Job Seekers’ Allowance
Housing Decency Standard	To comply, houses must meet the statutory minimum standard for housing; be in a reasonable state of repair; have modern facilities and services; and provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort.
Incapacity Benefit	A benefit payable to people who cannot work due to illness or disability
Income Support	A benefit payable to people who do not have to declare themselves as unemployed – for example, lone parents, and people on parental leave
Isochrone map	A map where a line is drawn through places which take the same amount of time to reach from a certain location.
Lone Parent Obligation	The requirement of Income Support claimants to switch to Job Seekers’ Allowance when their youngest child reaches 7 years old
LSOA	Lower Super Output Area – an area of approximately 1500 households. These fit within ward boundaries
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership – a group of public, private and 3 rd sector partners who come together to work towards achieving a vision for Blackpool outlined in the Sustainable Community Strategy
Median	The middle point of a range of values. The <i>median</i> value for the following amounts of money: £20, £20, £20, £20, £80, £80 – would be £20, the amount in the middle of the first and the second half of numbers. For comparison, the <i>average</i> value would be £40. The median is used for calculating child poverty because it better reflects the distribution of incomes in the UK – because more people earn lower amount of money, the median better reflects a “typical” household income.
MOSAIC	A lifestyle classification system, dividing households into one of 67 types based on information collated from a variety of sources
(N)EET	(Not) in Education, Employment or Training – refers to those 16-19 yrs old
NVQ	National Vocational Qualification. Graded from 1-5, NVQ levels 1 and 2 are the equivalent of GCSE grades, whilst NVQ level 3 is “A-level” standard.
ONS	Office of National Statistics

1. Introduction

Purpose of the Needs Assessment

Blackpool's Child Poverty Strategy will aim to ensure that child poverty in the area is prevented - and where this is not possible, mitigated. To do this effectively, we need to understand:

- What we mean by the term "Child Poverty";
- The factors which contribute to child poverty in Blackpool;
- Where child poverty is concentrated, and how widespread it is amongst particular types of family or groups of people;
- The effectiveness of current measures being taken to prevent or mitigate Child Poverty, and those which may contribute to its prevention or mitigation.

This Needs Assessment investigates these issues, so that the actions developed and included in the Strategy are based on the latest evidence available. It is not intended to be a comprehensive record of the analysis undertaken on Child Poverty, but aims to summarise the findings relevant to the direction of the Strategy. Further charts and details of other work undertaken can be found in the Statistical Appendix.

Our approach

The child poverty indicator used in this assessment is the measure included in the National Indicator set, which can be used to compare progress across the country:

The proportion of children (those aged 0-16 or 16-19 who are dependent on their families) which are either receiving means-tested benefits, or tax credits where the family has an income of less than 60% of median income

Based on the latest figures available families must have an income of £244 per week¹ or more, before housing costs such as rent or mortgage payments, to avoid being classed as being in poverty. This amount changes annually.

To develop a deeper understanding of the issues, the assessment uses three additional types of information. These reflect the need to tackle the causes and effects of child poverty over the short and long term:

Influence on disposable income	Examples of useful information and data
Factors directly influencing families' income and resources today	Financial support through benefits and tax credits; Parental employment and earnings; Expenditure – including repayments on debt
Factors directly influencing families' ability to enter and sustain well-paid employment in the short and long term	Qualification and skills levels; Access to childcare; Availability of public transport; Availability and the type of jobs available locally
Factors that indirectly influence families' abilities to enter and sustain well-paid employment now and in the future	Financial Inclusion; Health factors; Relationship breakdown; Teen Pregnancy; Crime levels; Drug and alcohol use; Access to services and facilities

The structure of the Needs Assessment

The document opens with a consideration of the current policy context, which will be monitored throughout the development of the strategy. Section 3 draws on current national research to explore the nature of child poverty generally.

Having reviewed the extent of child poverty in Blackpool, the detailed analysis is presented in three “building blocks” derived from those originally suggested by the Child Poverty Unit:

- Financial Support
- Parental Employment and Skills
- Life Chances and Place

There are two appendices – the first gives details of relevant local service provision to demonstrate the type of activity which the strategy can use to deliver its aims. The second includes detailed analysis which underpins this commentary. A report completed by Shelter on teenage homelessness is available separately, and forms an important part of the analysis on wider issues around child poverty in Blackpool.

Analysis and Research undertaken

All analysis has been undertaken by or on behalf of the Research and Intelligence Team. The analysis involves a combination of publicly-available data, national indicators, and analysis of other data held by the Council, NHS Blackpool, and the Police. In addition to the statistical research, we held a discussion with front line practitioners. This was used to sense check emerging findings and signpost other analysis.

Wider consultation with adults and families on the content of this document will be undertaken as part of the development of the Child Poverty Strategy.

How to use this document

Each chapter starts with a summary of the findings, and a list of implications for policy makers. These can be used as a quick guide to the issues for those developing the strategy. The rest of the chapter should be used by those shaping the actions in the strategy and involved in putting them into practice. The Statistical Appendix can be used as a reference tool if required.

Links to the national Child Poverty Strategy

This Needs Assessment aims to complement the national approach by helping partners to decide what kind of services or support are needed, where they should be delivered, and how they could be implemented. Links to relevant local strategies and needs assessments are explored in an appendix; whilst the next section considers the impact of the national policy environment on child poverty in Blackpool.

2. The National Policy Context

Child Poverty became a priority for the previous government following Tony Blair's landmark speech in 1999, in which he pledged to eradicate it by 2020, largely in response to its increase between 1979 and the 1990's. A series of targets were developed and welfare reforms introduced aimed at improving life chances and outcomes for children; central to this was the Every Child Matters policy agenda, which aimed to give all children support to be healthy; stay safe; enjoy and achieve; make a positive contribution and achieve economic well-being.

The Children Act 2004 provided the legal underpinning for the transformation of children's services as set out in Every Child Matters: Change for Children², and set out the statutory basis for local authorities to establish Children's Trusts and develop a Children and Young People's Plan to achieve the five outcomes of Every Child Matters.

In December 2007 the Department for Children, Schools and Families published the Children's Plan; this ten year strategy set out the government's intention to 'make England the best place in the world for children and young people to grow up' with one of its goals to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

A cornerstone of delivering the objectives of Every Child Matters was the establishment of Sure Start Children's Centres in the most deprived areas. They were seen as crucial in supporting families in the early years of children's lives by providing early education integrated with health and family support services, with links to Jobcentre Plus and childcare.

In October 2007 the government set up a joint Child Poverty Unit to bring together the Treasury, DWP and DCSF to drive an integrated strategy aimed at improving children's life chances through children's services, tackle deprivation in communities, providing financial and material support and increase employment and raise incomes. The government expects local authorities to play a vital role in delivering on child poverty strategies and the Child Poverty Unit spearheads the government's commitment to employment as the main route out of poverty.

In 2008, HM Treasury, DWP, and DCSF jointly published Ending Child Poverty: everybody's business³, which set out a detailed strategy to tackle child poverty based on the four areas identified by the CPU. The strategy emphasised the role of local authorities in tackling child poverty at a local level through the Local Area Agreement process and expressed commitment to supporting this through new governance and funding arrangements.

Progress on meeting child poverty targets has been slow and some children remain at high risk of poverty. To address this, the Child Poverty Bill was introduced in 2009, gaining Royal Assent on 25th March 2010 and enshrining in law the commitment to eradicate child poverty by 2020.

The Act, which came into force on 25th May 2010, set four challenging targets to be met by 2020; establishes an accountability framework for central government and puts a duty on local authorities and their partners to co-operate to tackle child poverty in the local area, with a requirement to produce a local needs assessment and joint local child poverty strategy.

The UK-wide targets set by the Act reflect four different aspects of child poverty:

- *Relative Poverty* – where the aim is to reduce the proportion of children living in relative low income (compared with the rest of society) to less than 10%;

- *Combined low income and material deprivation* - to reduce the proportion of children who live in material deprivation (i.e. without certain essentials – see the *Material Deprivation* section on page 12 for more detail) **and** who have a low income to less than 5%;
- *Persistent Poverty* - to reduce the proportion of children that experience persistent poverty, which has long term damaging effects on life chances; and
- *Absolute Poverty* - the proportion of children who live in households below an absolute low income threshold (which will be a lower income than the relative poverty target). This target will be set once data gathering mechanisms have been established.

The Coalition government has pledged to maintain the previous government's goal of ending child poverty in the UK by 2020, and has produced a guidance framework and toolkit to support authorities and their partners and allow greater freedom to respond to local issues.

An independent Review of Poverty and Life Chances is currently underway led by Frank Field MP and is due to report back to the government at the end of 2010. Early findings of the Review indicate that a much broader focus is required than is set out in the poverty measures included in the Act, with income alone far from being the most important driver of future life chances.

In a recent lecture Field suggests that there is an emerging consensus between academics, practitioners and policy makers on the importance of what happens during the first five years of a child's life and the impact that this has on a child's life-time opportunities and thereby on intergenerational change; this is the first principle on which the Review is based. The second principle is that the evidence shows schools are not successful in closing the gap between children from richer and poorer backgrounds. The Review is therefore proposing in the future a much greater focus on targeted intervention to narrow gaps in early pre-school years by developing a reformed early years provision called Foundation Years to ensure that children are given the best possible start⁴.

The government has also recently outlined a commitment to creating a fairer and more socially mobile society. The Deputy Prime Minister will act as the government's champion for social mobility and chair a Ministerial Group to drive forward action. This will be supported by independent, annual progress reviews of the government's effectiveness in increasing social mobility, focusing particularly on inter-generational social mobility. Some of the key barriers identified include differences in pre-school years; educational inequalities; levels of parental involvement; the gap between further and higher education; and the difficulty for children from disadvantaged backgrounds entering the professions.

To complement the work on poverty and social mobility, an independent review into the effectiveness of early intervention to be chaired by Labour MP Graham Allen has been launched by the Cabinet's social justice committee. The review will focus on ways that children's professionals can better support children's needs and break the cycles of underachievement in Britain's most deprived communities. It will also look at alternatives to funding early intervention schemes. An interim report is expected to be published in January 2011, followed by the full report in May 2011.

The importance of early year's intervention highlighted in the above reviews is also identified in the Marmot Review⁵. The report is an independent review of health inequalities in England, with key messages that reducing health inequalities is a matter of fairness and social justice; and health inequalities result from social inequalities and thus require action across all the social determinants of health. It identifies six policy objectives across the life course perspective as essential in reducing health inequalities, with the highest priority given to the first objective 'give every child the best start in life'. This is crucial to reducing health inequalities across the life

course because what happens during the early years has lifelong effects on many aspects of health and well-being.

The report makes a number of policy recommendations to deliver this objective: increase the proportion of overall expenditure to the early years and ensure it is focused progressively across the gradient; support for families to achieve progressive improvements in early child development; and provide good quality early year's education and childcare proportionately across the gradient. The report also states that it is vital to sustain policy initiatives such as Sure Start and the Healthy Child Programme over the long term, and ensure that expenditure is invested in interventions that are proven to be effective.

In a bid to increase social justice and improve incentives to work, the government has published a White Paper setting out plans for structural reform of the benefit system. It proposes to simplify the benefits system by introducing a Universal Credit to replace the different out of work benefits and tax credits; and increase work incentives by creating smoother transitions for people moving in and out of work by allowing them to keep more of their earnings before they lose benefits. To support this, the government's Work Programme replaces previous welfare to work programmes; it pledges to support all unemployed people back into the workplace ensuring that benefit claimants facing the most significant barriers are referred immediately and those aged under 25 after six months.

A further measure to tackle disadvantage has been included within the government's proposals for reforming the education system, which will be set out in the forthcoming Education and Children's Bill. The 'pupil premium' will support disadvantaged pupils who continue to underachieve compared with their peers and will be introduced in September 2011.

However, the Coalition's policy commitments aimed at reducing inequalities are set against a backdrop of large cuts in public service spending announced in the Emergency Budget in June and the Comprehensive Spending Review. According to the Institute for Fiscal Studies the changes to benefits, tax and tax credits announced in the budget are 'clearly regressive', are likely to have a significant impact on the most deprived households, and may increase levels of child poverty.

From April 2011, almost all benefits and tax credits will be linked to the Consumer Price Index, which is likely to mean less generous benefits; tax credits and benefits for families with children will be scaled down; child benefit will be frozen for three years; Child Trust Funds will be phased out and maternity grants scaled back; while lone parents will be required to look for work when the youngest child reaches age five not seven. Educational Maintenance Allowance is being phased out for over 16's, alongside the withdrawal of the entitlement to free participation in courses resulting in level 2 and level 3 qualifications.

In addition, changes in the calculation of Housing Benefit, a more aggressive means test and a reduction in the amount paid to the long-term unemployed is also likely to impact on the poorest households and may have implications for the type and quality of housing that they can afford, also impacting on child poverty. Depending on how much of the change is absorbed by landlords, benefit claimants could lose between £6 per week (for those in a "shared room") through to £29 per week for a five bed property⁶. Disability Living Allowance will also be affected by the changes, as medical assessments are introduced aiming to cut the caseload by around ¼ over a three year period, which is likely to have an adverse impact on some low income households.

The CSR will introduce further cuts to the welfare budget which will disproportionately impact on families, these are outlined below:

- The percentage of childcare costs that parents can claim through the childcare element of Working Tax Credit will reduce from 80% to 70% in April 2011
- The eligibility rules for Working Tax Credit will change so that couples with children must work 24 hours a week between them with one partner working at least 16 hours a week in order to qualify
- Freezing the basic and 30 hour element of the WTC for 3 years from 2011-12
- A cap on household benefit payments will be introduced from 2013 at around £500 per week for couple and lone parent households and around £350 per week for single adult households; all Disability Living Allowance claimants, War Widows and working families claiming the working tax credits will be exempt.

The Needs Assessment comes at a time of increasing austerity as the country is slowly emerging from recession and the government is committed to reducing the budget deficit. While the government have stated their intention to maintain the goal to end child poverty and increase social mobility, the measures set out in the Emergency Budget are likely to negatively impact the poorest households, particularly families with children. In addition, the findings of the reviews announced by the government are unlikely to lead to positive outcomes in the short term, whereas the measures to reduce welfare spending will impact on families much sooner.

Implications for Blackpool's Child Poverty Strategy

- Child poverty levels in Blackpool may increase as a result of changes in the benefits system, particularly levels of relative and absolute poverty;
- In-year budget reductions and the Comprehensive Spending Review will mean changes to service delivery which may impact on the disadvantaged families who largely benefit from these services;
- Services should be redesigned to address budget reductions, and may require a specific focus on mitigating the effects of child poverty to improve life chances for children in the longer term;
- The Coalition government is likely to place increased emphasis on the links between child poverty and social mobility;
- Emerging evidence continues to emphasise the importance of early years intervention, which is likely to have implications for future service design and delivery;
- Whilst details on the governments' plans around social mobility, child poverty and early interventions will not become known until 2011, the strategy should account for these in its vision, outcomes and actions;
- The proposed introduction of a Universal Credit should create a more flexible system which incentivises taking any job, regardless of the amount of hours to be worked and income. This may require support offered by agencies in Blackpool to be more flexible.

3. Child Poverty Research Review

The nature of child poverty is subject to considerable academic debate, with several definitions of the term currently in use and competing explanations as to the drivers of poverty. In some cases, this can lead to apparently conflicting findings. This section highlights some of the most relevant findings in the body of research, both in terms of understanding child poverty and tackling it. Where Blackpool data is available on these issues, it is included in sections 4-7 together with a discussion of how this differs from the national picture. It should also be noted that data presented here refers to data acquired from a sample of data representative at the national level unless otherwise stated.

The nature of low income households

Work by the Institute for Fiscal Studies to examine data from four, large-scale household surveys⁷ identified the types of children most and least likely to be in poverty. Note that they identify that children with the very lowest incomes do not necessarily have the lowest living standards – the lowest standards are found in households whose income is around £100-£200 per week (around 30-50% of median income):

Characteristics *increasing* the risk of poverty

- Being in a couple rather than a lone parent (if comparing workless couples to workless lone parents; or couples where one or both parents work to working lone parents)
- Having more children in the family
- Having a youngest child aged over ten
- Having adults who are self-employed (rather than employed)
- **Having no working adults in the family**
- **For couples; having one worker (rather than two)**
- **Having parents with low levels of education**
- **Being from a non-white ethnic group**
- *Not* having a health problem⁸

Characteristics *reducing* the risk of poverty:

- Being a lone parent family, rather than a couple (conditional on work status)
- Having fewer children in the family
- Having a youngest child aged under 5
- Having adults who are employed, rather than self-employed
- Having two workers rather than one
- Having a health problem
- Having parents who are more educated
- Living in a multi-family household

The research also examined a different measure of child disadvantage: hardship, which includes more focus on living standards and material wellbeing⁹. Some of the characteristics above actually reduced hardship despite increasing poverty and essentially questions whether policy should seek to target those on a low income or those with low living standards.

This Needs Assessment has attempted to reflect this categorisation in developing analysis of Blackpool data wherever possible, although the data is sometimes not available in a format or to a level which would assist in this.

Equalities issues

- Women's role as the main carers of children and controllers of household finance effectively makes them the main managers of family poverty, attempting to absorb its impact on the household and making them more vulnerable to stressful effects of such as depression¹⁰. Their disadvantaged position in the labour market can compound this situation, creating the potential for economic dependency which prevents an easy exit from the relationship should it break down – one study of married women suggests that half of the married women in one study were “at risk” of poverty in the event that their marriage broke down. Although that the overwhelming number of lone parents in Blackpool are women, services delivered need to ensure this does not result in service delivery which discriminates against male lone parents.
- Child poverty varies significantly between ethnic groups, with all non-white groups having higher rates of poverty than average and when compared separately to the white population¹¹. When controlling for other factors known to influence the risk of child poverty such as the number of lone parents, ethnicity still stands as a factor putting children at greater risk of being in poverty in its own right, although there are differences between the groups. For example, Indian families in poverty were likely to have a large share of their income still coming from earnings; whilst Pakistani, Black Caribbean and Black African families were more likely to be in persistent poverty than white families. All groups were at greater risk of falling into poverty than white families.

The persistence of poverty

A Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) longitudinal study of poverty¹², subsequently cited in the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)'s “21st Century Welfare” consultation document, found that people living in poverty as teenagers in the 1980's are nearly four times as likely as the non-poor to live in poverty as an adult – compared with twice as likely for 1970's teenagers. By examining the link between teenage poverty and adult poverty, they found that for the 1970's cohort, poverty itself had little direct effect on the chances of ending up in poverty – the key factors were general background disadvantages around education and worklessness. For 1980's teenagers, on the other hand, poverty itself was an influence on whether they lived in poverty as an adult.

Whilst it is impossible to conclude that the influence of poverty itself will increase in subsequent cohorts, the most relevant conclusion for the Blackpool Child Poverty Strategy is that a focus on skills and employment is one of the most effective ways in which we can tackle the persistence of poverty locally. This will need to be accompanied by measures to increase the supply of skilled employment through the Fylde Coast Employment and Skills Strategy.

Work by the Institute for Fiscal Studies for the DWP¹³ notes that fewer than 4% of families are continuously in poverty over a three year period – but over 40% of families, and 75% of lone-mother families, will be in poverty for at least 1 month during this time. On the whole, lone parents are the least likely to exit poverty, and mothers in couples are the most likely¹⁴.

Recurrent Poverty

The DWP's findings on continuous and discontinuous poverty referenced above are supported by other JRF work¹⁵ to identify types of recurrent poverty, their prevalence, and the root causes of this. Unlike the DWP work, it takes a longer term view, defining “recurrent” as “being poor at the

time of interview in more than one consecutive year”, mainly due to the nature of the data used (the British Household Panel Survey). It identified that:

- People who fall into poverty at any stage of their lives are more likely to fall into poverty again, even after accounting for education, occupation and family circumstances. Furthermore, the reasons they initially fell into poverty are implicated in later spells in poverty;
- People studied could be classified in five groups for each of 3 types of poverty:

Category	% people in 2001-05 sample who were:		
	Income poor	Financially strained	Materially deprived
Never poor/ strained/deprived	69%	46%	52%
1 spell, short	13%	17%	16%
1 spell, long	9%	14%	19%
Recurrent	7%	15%	7%
Chronic	3%	8%	6%

- The risk of recurrent poverty of all three types increases for people with limited education, skilled manual and lower-skilled workers, single parents and the unemployed or economically inactive. Families with children were particularly at risk of being financially strained (defined as those responding they were “just about getting by”), and women were more likely to be income poor on a recurrent basis, with childbirth and relationship breakdown identified as initial triggers of poverty;
- Securing a permanent job is more important than securing a skilled job in reducing the risk of recurrent poverty, with those working in peripheral, low-skill jobs at the most risk of suffering poverty in the future.

The impact of work and worklessness on child poverty

The DWP study previously referred to¹³ concludes that the “small role currently played by work retention and progression in reducing the likelihood of poverty for families with children leaves considerable scope for improvements in advancements within work to help lift working parents and their children out of poverty”. Underneath this conclusion it examines the different groups involved, showing that:

- 65% of families move out of poverty when a parent *enters* work, with 46% being in poverty the month after *exiting* work – although the effects of entering work on poverty are less positive for:
 - mothers in couples entering work
 - lone mothers
 - people with fewer qualifications
 - non-owner occupiers
 - people who have been out of work for longer
 - people not working full time.
- The poverty rate of lone mothers entering work declines substantially more (from 37% to 18%) than for other groups over the first three years of work. But 59% of working lone mothers will enter poverty again at some point during the three years – the highest proportion of any group

- Out of the factors considered, work retention only reduces the risk of poverty for lone mothers

With work being seen as the primary route out of poverty, something supported by an OECD paper undertaking an international comparison which states “reducing joblessness among families with children [in the UK] should be a priority”¹⁶ this raises questions as to how those who might find it difficult to access and maintain full time jobs (primarily, lone parents) can be raised out of poverty. Research shows that unemployment rates are higher than average amongst time-constrained people seeking part time work¹⁷, suggesting that the time constraints prevent employment. This reflects the need for greater provision of affordable, suitable childcare (as well as, the authors suggest, reform of the benefits system to incentivise part time work more effectively – an idea which drives the potential reforms outlined in Welfare for the 21st Century).

Specific research undertaken on childcare¹⁸ suggests that child care provision addressing out of school, holiday, and atypical working hours care is needed to ensure childcare is playing an effective role in assisting people in poverty back to work. The diversity of families in poverty – both non-working and working, lone parent and couples - must also be taken into account. Whilst child care is usually an essential enabling factor for people wanting to work, it is rarely the main driver behind getting people into work. It does, however, have other spinoffs relating to the improvement of health and development of children, which could lead to a reduction in child poverty in the next generation.

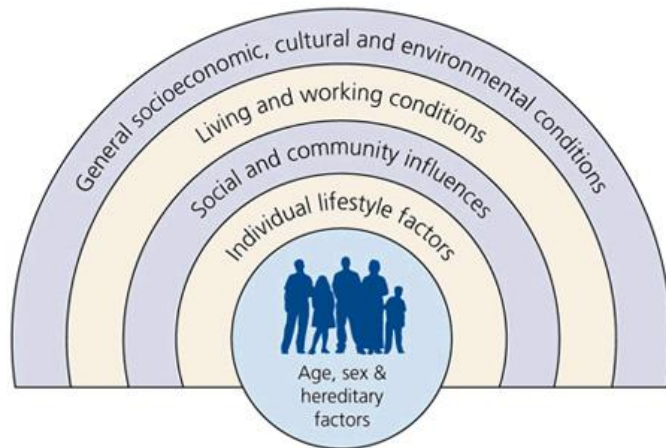
Tackling poverty for those who cannot work requires a more tailored approach. More JRF research¹⁹ identifies three issues in this regard – pregnancy and maternity, short term sickness and unemployment, and disability and caring. Whilst this research focuses on the effectiveness of government policy around each of these issues, and points out particularly that welfare should play the biggest role here, important implications are raised for local work to combat child poverty amongst these groups. In part, there is a structural need to ensure the labour market is receptive to people in these situations – something which would need to be addressed through the Fylde Coast Employment and Skills Strategy.

Material deprivation

The four definitions of child poverty in the national strategy include a measure of material deprivation, which considers household expenditure on essential items – although most of the analysis and indicators used in research tend to use a purely income-based definition. How “essential” items should be defined has been an area of considerable research, with the latest suggestions²⁰ that these should be treated in the same way as the “relative poverty” calculation – i.e. to compare items in relation to the perceived norm rather than as being a focus on basic physical necessities. This would mean including a break away from the house or a short holiday, some forms of information and communication technologies and the ability to enjoy social participation as essentials.

Poverty (as expressed through material deprivation) and social inequalities in childhood have profound effects on the health of children, and their impact on health is felt through to late adulthood. Three-year-olds in households with incomes below about £10,000 are 2.5 times more likely to suffer chronic illness than children in households with incomes above £52,000. Globally and historically, poverty has been the major determinant of child and adult health and, even in rich nations such as the UK, it remains a major cause of ill health with huge public health consequences²¹. A diagram of Dalgren and Whitehead’s Social Model of Health illustrates how various factors influence health. Child poverty both directly influences, and can be exacerbated

by, all of the conditions and influences cited beyond those relating to age, sex and hereditary factors:



In practical terms, the level of material deprivation is currently measured by questions in the DWP's Households Below Average Income series, derived from information in the Family Resources Survey which focuses on the widely recognised basics such as functioning domestic appliances, the ability to keep the home warm in winter. The research referenced above was commissioned to establish the suitability of these questions, and so it is possible that the definition of "essentials" could change in the future.

Crime

Research from the Wave Trust²² considers the factors contributing to the likelihood of children becoming violent adults, and concludes:

- The propensity to violence develops primarily from wrong treatment before age 3;
- A violent act results a combination of personal factors and external triggers such as a specific situation occurring to provoke violence. Both factors need to occur for violence to occur
- The ability to empathise with people inhibits the development of propensity to violence, and is created by the parent-child bond. The absence of this, combined with harsh discipline, tends to create an antisocial offspring;
- Where people have a propensity to violence, this can be triggered by social factors such as unemployment, poor housing, over-crowding, economic inequality, declining moral values and stress. Alcohol plays a significant role in the timing of violence. Since these factors reflect long-term cultural trends that are difficult to reverse, investment is required to reduce the number of people with propensity to violence.

This social model of violent crime would seem to suggest that the underlying factors, and exposure to potential triggers of violent crime, would be higher in areas with characteristics generally associated with child poverty. This theory cannot be extended to cover all crime, although there may be some common factors.

Education

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation literature review on Education and Child Poverty²³ suggests “there is good evidence that education has a strong influence on the probability of employment and higher wages (although this is conditional on the type of education undertaken)”. It states that where government intervention helps to raise level of achievement and where this results in increases to household income, this does result in a reduction in child poverty, and states that “it is more realistic to see measures to increase educational attainment as part of a longer-term strategy to reduce child poverty, alongside other social policies that have a more immediate effect on household income”. This should be tempered by the local context of Blackpool’s labour market, which means that those achieving higher levels of qualifications may not be able to access suitable employment opportunities which match their skill set locally.

However, increasing household income on its own does not appear to give an immediate impact in terms of educational outcomes: a 2008 DWP report²⁴ concluded that “income effects on educational and behaviour outcomes – whilst probably not zero – are unlikely to be large”.

The effects of living with poverty

For all the discussion on drivers of poverty, there remains the effect that poverty has on the life experiences of families. The qualitative research undertaken over the last ten years has been summarised²⁵, drawing together the thoughts of children and parents on the impact of poverty:

<p>Children in poverty can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worry that there is enough money to meet their families’ needs • Lack childhood possessions and be concerned about being short of everyday items like food and clothing • Be restricted in their opportunities to make and sustain friendships through social activities • Feel as though their opportunities at school are restricted through an inability to pay for study guides and social activities • Lack the same material goods as their peers, and experience bullying • Often moderate their own needs in response to a lack of family money • Sometimes get into conflict with their parents over long working hours or childcare the children did not enjoy • Often take on additional responsibilities such as caring, or paid work • Live in poor quality housing, affecting health, wellbeing and education – more so for those in temporary housing • Live in neighbourhoods without safe spaces and low cost leisure opportunities 	<p>Adults in poverty:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are more vulnerable to instability, debt, social exclusion and homelessness arising from changes in their economic, social or familial circumstances • Often go without everyday essentials, with mothers particularly going without these to meet their children’s needs • Experience pressure trying to comply with social norms such as Christmas • Juggle immediate and unforeseen demands for money with financial problems and debt – the expense of which often means going without essentials • Are concerned around the costs of work, including childcare, losing time with their children and the expense of travel • Try to satisfy the needs of their employers by working longer hours, although this affects their family life • Suggest that dealing with the benefits system is stressful and missed payments or overpayments exacerbate their difficulties.
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Subsequent chapters of this Needs Assessment move on to examine these findings in the light of data on Blackpool itself.

Implications for Blackpool's Child Poverty Strategy

- A focus on worklessness and skills is the most appropriate way to tackle the long-term impact of child poverty;
- Short term interventions to alleviate the level and nature of poverty must be used alongside longer-term measures to improve skills;
- Measures to mitigate the effects of seasonal nature of employment and unemployment in Blackpool through the creation of year-round work (see “Financial Support”) must be considered. These would be put into place through other routes, such as the Fylde Coast Employment and Skills Strategy, with the Child Poverty Strategy playing a supporting role;
- Analysis by SQW consultants shows the low-wage nature of employment in the area. Work should be undertaken through the accompanying strategy to encourage opportunities for job progression at work;
- Support for affordable, appropriate childcare, linked to the promotion of suitable reduced-hours employment opportunities, is vital to assist those who cannot take up full-time positions;
- Measures are also needed to ensure the labour market is receptive to people returning to work after pregnancy, short term sickness and unemployment, and those with disabilities or caring responsibilities;
- The strategy could encourage agencies in contact with families in poverty to identify the reasons for this, as this will provide insight into how to avoid future poverty;
- Additional focus is needed on individual-level factors, encouraging work retention through holistic support for the individual. This may involve long-term engagement with families²⁶. It is not enough to focus on increasing income to prevent poverty recurring;
- Identifying which “essentials” families in material deprivation poverty are going without should be a key part of the strategy for dealing with poverty on the front line, and fits with the Family Intervention Programme and BEACH approaches;
- The higher proportion of children in poverty at earlier ages suggests that early interventions should be included as part of the strategic approach;
- Strategic priorities and actions need to take account of the links between women’s poverty and child poverty;
- Individual actions should be evaluated for their appropriateness for, and impact on, Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) communities;
- The process of developing the strategy should reflect on the views of local families, parents, children and practitioners to ensure the actions are grounded in the realities of life in Blackpool;
- Increasing household income has a very small immediate effect on educational outcomes, meaning alternative actions at the local level, as outlined above, can legitimately be pursued.

4. The extent of Child Poverty in Blackpool

Key Findings

- Over 9,000 children live in poverty in Blackpool, 29.3% of all children;
- Bloomfield, Claremont, Park, Brunswick, Talbot and Clifton wards each have at least 40% of all children living in poverty, which is equivalent to at least 500 children in each ward;
- Every LSOA²⁷ in Blackpool has children living in child poverty – the lowest child poverty level in any LSOA is just 3.5% but this is still a higher “background level” of poverty than the best performing LSOAs in all other North West authorities;
- LSOA analysis shows that the extent of child poverty varies substantially within wards;
- Child poverty increased in Blackpool between 2006 and 2007, but has remained at broadly the same level between 2007 and 2008;
- Two LSOAs in Park and Talbot ward showed the largest decline in the percentage of children in poverty between 2007 and 2008. At the same time two LSOAs in Bloomfield and Layton had increased levels of poverty;
- Areas with high levels of child poverty are broadly the same areas highlighted as deprived by the Index of Deprivation;
- Areas with high levels of child poverty also rank towards the bottom of the “Children at risk of being in Need” element of the Child Wellbeing Index, meaning that these children are more likely to be served in some way by Local Authorities;
- 2/3rds of children in poverty live in lone parent families;
- Blackpool has lower wages, higher levels of teen pregnancy, lower levels of qualifications and fewer pupils entering higher education than other areas with similar levels of child poverty;
- Blackpool has had better take up of childcare, a higher rate of employment, and more people on benefits living in energy efficient homes than other areas with similar levels of child poverty;
- There is a significant number of children acting as carers, many of which are not in contact with support services;
- Blackpool’s schools close the gap between expected and actual performance by pupils on Free School Meals (a proxy for child poverty) by the time they reach Key Stage 4;
- Most poverty is “out of work” poverty, but a significant minority results from parents in work earning low wages;
- Child poverty levels generally appear to be higher than average in coastal areas.

The Overall Picture

Almost ¼ of Blackpool’s 140,000 strong population is between 0-19 years old. A higher proportion of this age group (6%) is from a minority ethnic background than for the population as a whole (estimated at around 5% in 2007)²⁸, and 1% of children are classed as Looked After Children. This is the context within which this Needs Assessment is based.

The measure for Child Poverty is the proportion of children living in families which are either receiving means-tested benefits, or tax credits where the family has an income of less than 60% of median income. The *median* income is used because an *average (mean)* income measure is affected more by extremely high salaries. Extreme earners artificially raise average salaries and make it appear that the majority of families in Britain earn less than expected. Overall this makes the median (the amount of income at the middle point of all the incomes recorded) a more realistic way of measuring relative poverty. “Children” refers to those under 16 years old or still classed as dependents living at home until the age of 19.

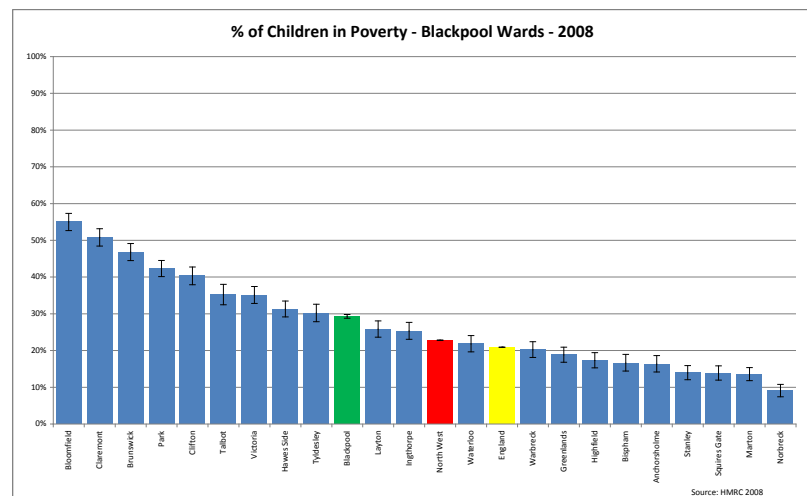
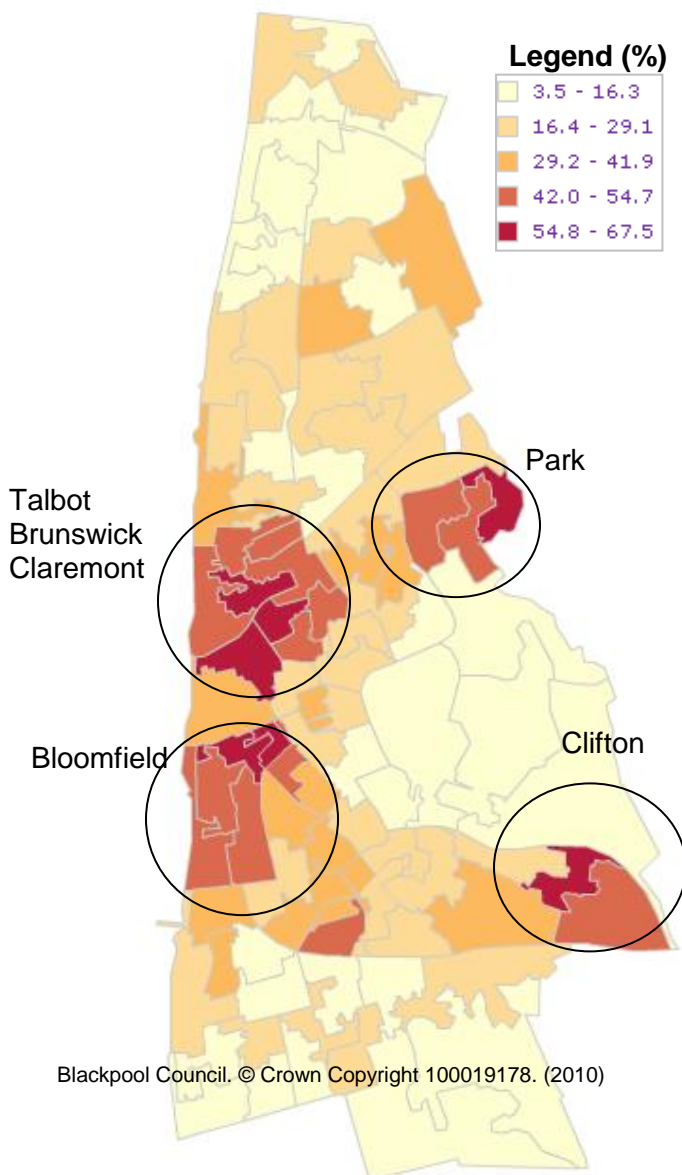
Based on 2008 figures, **9070** children in Blackpool live in relative poverty, **29.3%** of the total, and up from 29.2% in 2007 – 10 more children, in real terms. This ranks Blackpool as the 32nd worst area in the country, within the bottom 25% of authorities²⁹, and the 4th worst in the North West³⁰.

Whilst this might seem lower than expected considering the low level of wages in Blackpool and its relative position in the Indices of Deprivation, the reasons behind this could not be fully investigated with the data available. This may be a result of different datasets being used, or a majority of lower than median Blackpool incomes being concentrated between the median figure and the 60% median figure.

Geographical Concentration

The distribution of poverty within Blackpool varies significantly. 965 children live in poverty in Bloomfield ward, with around 840 in Park and Claremont and a further 845 in Brunswick. The chart below illustrates the distribution at ward level, showing that the extent of poverty varies more between the worst performing wards than between the best performing wards:

Distribution of Child Poverty in Blackpool



This is also true when we focus in on areas made up of around 1500 households, the Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level geography. Blackpool's best performing LSOA's tend to have relatively similar, lower, levels of child poverty – varying between 3.5% and 15%, whilst the worst performing ones vary much more - between 37% and 67%.

The extent of child poverty, measured at LSOA level, ranges from 3.5% - around 10 children - in one LSOA in Norbreck to 67.5% - around 285 children – in an LSOA in Bloomfield. This pattern of distribution is not unusual - around half of North West local authorities have some children living in poverty throughout their entire area, as does Blackpool. However, the best performing LSOA's of other North West councils all have lower levels of child poverty than 3.5%, meaning that Blackpool has the highest "background level" of child poverty of any area in the North West.

The map to the left shows the level of Child Poverty at LSOA level in Blackpool, which enables us to get a more accurate view of the spread of child poverty within each ward, whilst the table below summarises this in terms of the number of LSOAs in each ward with child poverty levels in the worst 20% locally. **Note that the landmarks are used to illustrate the approximate area covered, and should not be taken as identifying the “worst performing” areas.**

Ward	Number of LSOAs in worst 20%	Nearest Landmarks: included to help think of the areas the analysis refers to
Claremont	5 out of 5	Areas around Blackpool North Train Station
Bloomfield	4 out of 5	Areas around Blackpool Football Ground
Brunswick	3 out of 5	Areas around Devonshire Road Primary School
Clifton	2 out of 5	Areas around Mereside Park / Tesco Supermarket
Hawes Side	1 out of 5	Areas around Palatine School Playing Field
Park	2 out of 5	Areas around Grange Park Playing Fields
Talbot	1 out of 5	Areas around Syndicate Night Club / Albert Road Offices
Tyldesley	1 out of 5	Areas around Revoe Primary School / Bethesda Church

Understanding families in poverty

Of the 9,070 children in Blackpool in poverty, around 80% are from households claiming Jobseekers Allowance or Income Support. The other 20% live in households claiming child tax credits, or a combination of child tax credits and working tax credit, with incomes below 60% of the national median income. Whilst it is not possible to characterize this as “out of work” and “in work” poverty due to the eligibility criteria for tax credits, it does support a broad conclusion that the majority of child poverty is concentrated in households claiming benefits (see further analysis in the Financial Support section). This percentage split is similar to both regional and national figures, and supports analysis showing a strong correlation between the proportion of children living in poverty and the proportion of households claiming benefits in Blackpool at LSOA level.

In terms of family types:

- 67% of children in poverty in Blackpool live in Lone Parent Households – around 94% of which are women³¹;
- The proportions of children in poverty from each age group are relatively consistent between 0-15 years – although there are a slightly higher proportion of children in the 0-4 age group (31%) living in poverty. The proportion falls to 11% for 16-19 year olds, as children move out, enter into education or take on work;
- A high proportion of children in poverty (32%) are from 2 child households compared to other household sizes. In part this will be due to average fertility rates being around 1.94 children per woman³².

Child Carers

Research has shown that households where a child provides care to another family member have a high risk of living in poverty. In Blackpool, over 300 young carers have been identified, and estimates from the service suggest the true figure could be as high as 600³³. The 5 wards with the most identified carers are the Central wards of Bloomfield, Brunswick, Claremont, together with Park and Ingthorpe, which together make up just under half of the total. Carers are, on average, 13½ years old, with their responsibilities making them much less likely to attend school - carers achieve around 82% attendance compared with 92% for all Blackpool pupils.

Disability issues

370 of the 2,770 lone parents are also in receipt of incapacity benefits and are captured in the 'incapacity benefits' statistical group. While small, this group accounts for approximately 590 children who may be at a higher risk of being in relative poverty given they are both lone parents and have a disability or injury preventing them from entering the workforce easily.

Over 1000 children are in receipt of Disability Living Allowance.

Change over time

Between 2006 and 2007, child poverty increased in 58 LSOA's, decreased in 35, and remained at a similar level in just 1. Wards seeing substantial percentage point(pp) increases were Talbot (+4.9pp), Clifton (+2.5pp), Brunswick (2.4pp) and Layton (1.9pp), whilst only Waterloo registered a significant decrease (3pp).

Between 2007 and 2008, child poverty remained broadly level at borough level, a small increase to 29.3% from 29.2%. Child poverty in 52 LSOAs increased, and decreased in 42 LSOAs. Child poverty in Talbot ward declined by -4.3 percentage points, and in Park ward by -4.4 percentage points. Surprisingly, Bispham, one of Blackpool's lowest child poverty areas saw an increase of 4.3 percentage points. Layton also saw an increase in child poverty by 3.9 percentage points.

This change cannot be ascribed purely to fluctuating levels of income and employment in families in the areas involved, as there will also be a general movement of population over the period in which the data was measured. There is a longstanding perception that Blackpool has a transient population which is due to be explored in forthcoming research and data analysis³⁴.

Link to Deprivation

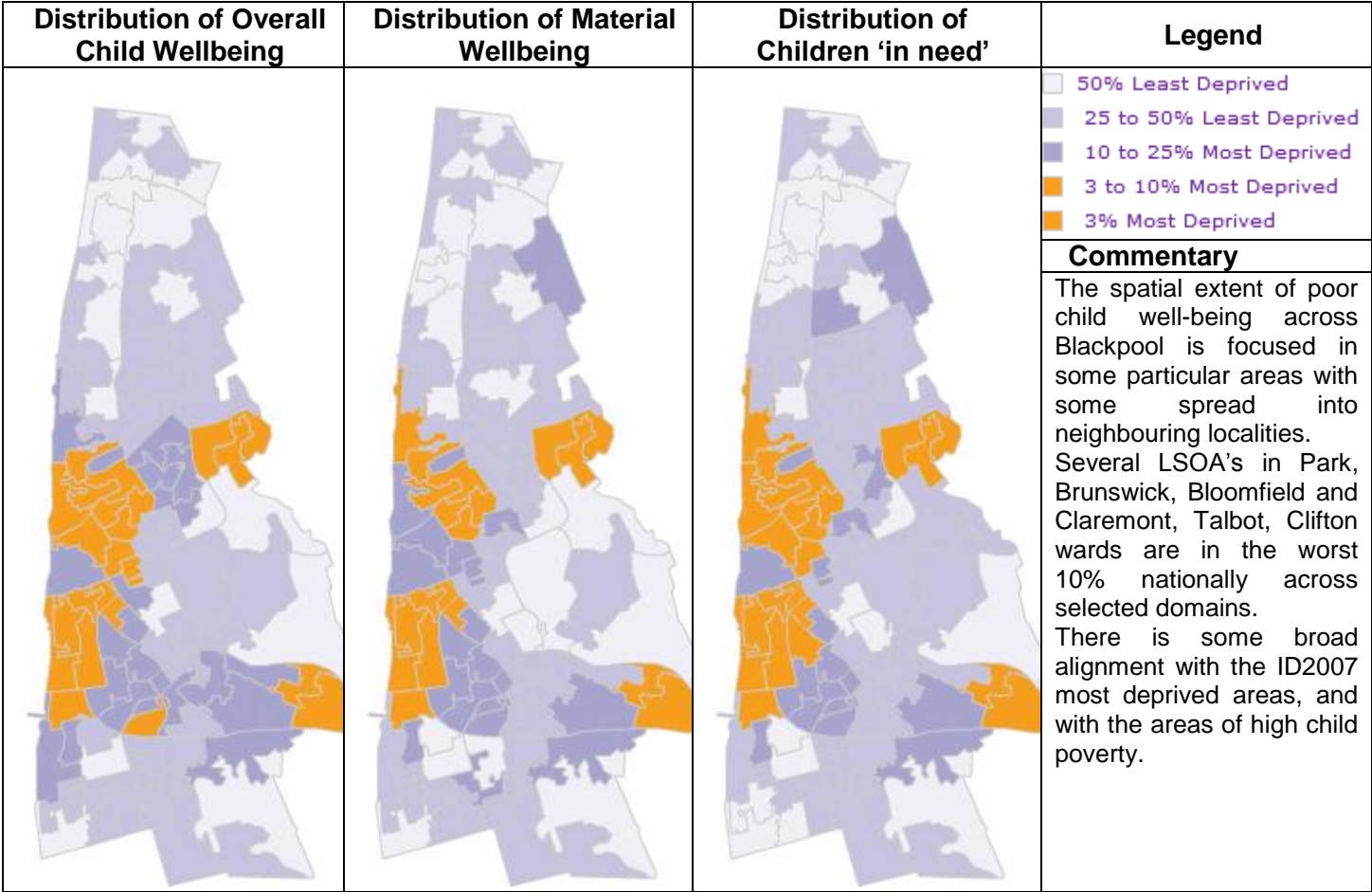
Index of Deprivation

Although the main measure of child poverty is based on an economic factor – the level of household income, whether earned or from benefits - the factors causing and exacerbating child poverty are much wider. Deprivation and poverty are closely linked – this Needs Assessment uses "deprivation" to refer to wider unmet needs in communities arising from a lack of Political, Social, Technological, and Environmental resources, whereas poverty is taken as a measure focused on the individual. Deprivation is measured through the Index of Deprivation, which was last calculated in 2007.

At LSOA level, there is a clear correlation between the level of child poverty and the level of deprivation. Whilst this is in part because the deprivation measure includes income as a factor, analysis suggests that the Income, Employment and Education domains of the Index of Deprivation all correlate highly, whilst the Living Environment and Crime domains have a less direct relationship.

Generally, the index indicates that Blackpool became more deprived relative to other areas in England between 2001 and 2005³⁵. 30 LSOA's are in the 10% most deprived areas in the country, with three large pockets of the 'most deprived 3%' occurring in Park (Grange Park), Clarendon/ Brunswick/ Talbot (6 pockets), and Bloomfield/ Waterloo (6). Clifton (Mereside) has one deprived LSOA. These areas broadly correspond to those with the highest levels of Child Poverty with the exception of Waterloo, which has seen a significant decrease in child poverty since 2007.

Child Wellbeing Index



Source: Child Wellbeing Index, DCLG, 2009

The Child Wellbeing Index is calculated in a similar way to the Index of Deprivation, but focuses only on children. Overall, Blackpool is ranked as the 27th worst area for child wellbeing out of 354 authorities. Ranks on the individual domains range from relatively good performance on Health & Disability and Crime, to lower ranks for Environment, “Children in Need” – a measure of the level of contact authorities have with children - and Education.

The maps overleaf are included to demonstrate how areas performing poorly in the Material Wellbeing domain – the same calculation as for child poverty without 16-19 year old dependents – are similar to those performing poorly in the “Children at risk of being in need” domain, which measures the number of children served by Local Authorities in an LSOA. The index was calculated in 2009 from 2005 data, but we can establish from it the principle that areas with significant child poverty levels are broadly similar to those placing demands on local authority services.

Factors around child poverty

One way to understand the factors contributing to child poverty in Blackpool is to undertake an analysis comparing areas with a similar overall level of child poverty, using a basket of national indicators with some relationship to Child Poverty as identified by the Child Poverty Unit. The authorities were Coventry, Hartlepool, Hounslow, Redbridge, Southampton, South Tyneside,

Stoke-on-Trent and Walsall, and an overview of the findings has been captured in the table overleaf.

The analysis emphasizes the complexity of the issue. Even excluding the London Boroughs in the list, average earnings in Blackpool were substantially lower than the other areas with similar levels of child poverty. The key point here is that given the variety of influencing factors already identified by national research, progress can be made on tackling child poverty on a number of different fronts as outlined in the “Implications for the Child Poverty Strategy” boxes

Blackpool performed less well than the group average on these national indicators:	Blackpool performed better than the group average on these national indicators:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Average employee earnings • Levels of people claiming out of work benefits in the worst neighbourhoods • Proportion of the working age population qualified at level 2 or higher • The rate of decline of teenage pregnancy • Numbers entering Higher Education - although the difference between Blackpool and other areas is smaller for those on Free School Meals • The gap between expected and actual performance by pupils on Free School Meals at Key Stage 2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take up of childcare • The overall employment rate • More people living in energy efficient homes • More people living in “decent” Council homes • The gap between expected and actual performance by pupils on Free School Meals at Key Stage 4

A coastal issue?

The child poverty workshop for practitioners raised the possibility that major coastal towns might be expected to have higher levels of poverty. As a result, the Research and Intelligence Team compared the figures for eight urban coastal towns³⁶ to all other authorities. This analysis shows that Coastal towns are more likely to have higher child poverty levels compared to the distribution for all local authorities.

Blackpool is the poorest performing of the selected eight coastal authorities.

Implications for Blackpool's Child Poverty Strategy

- Tackling child poverty should be adopted by the LSP as a priority and included in the Sustainable Community Strategy;
- The approach to tackling child poverty needs to be tailored to reflect the huge differences in the level and nature of child poverty in different parts of Blackpool;
- The close relationship between child poverty and other factors suggests the strategy should consider a holistic approach covering a range of deprivation issues, or should make links to other strategies more appropriately placed to achieve child poverty-related objectives;
- A Local Integrated Services approach could be considered as part of the above, particularly as areas with high levels of child poverty tend to have more children in contact with Local Authority services;
- The analysis suggests that income, employment and education are key areas on which the strategy should focus;
- A variety of intervention types are needed to help families stabilize their living arrangements and move out of poverty:
 - immediate interventions around providing for the basic needs;
 - the extension of existing needs assessment processes (such as the Common Assessment Framework) to uncover which help would be most likely to contribute to a route out of poverty;
 - the creation of new (or adjustment of existing) services which may be offered to families to account for poverty-based needs;
- The strategy should link into the attempts of the Fylde Coast Employment and Skills strategy to create more permanent jobs and to create a more skilled economy.

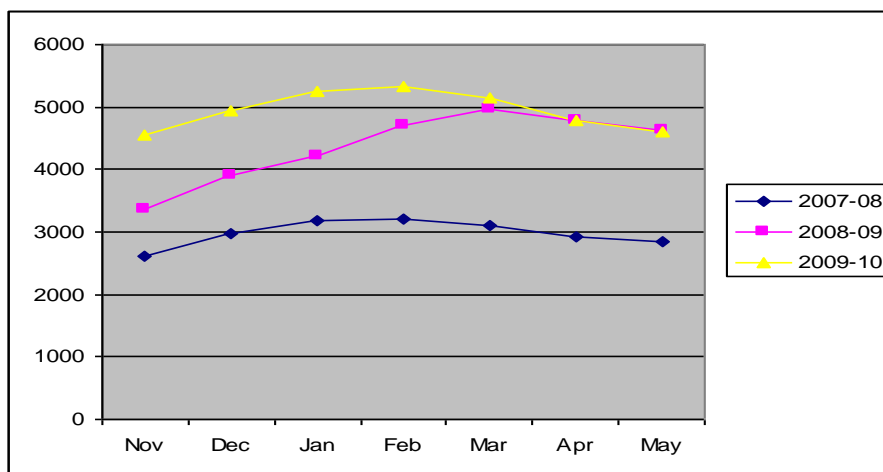
5. Building blocks analysis: Financial Support

Key Findings

- Of households in receipt of non-local authority administered benefit, Lone Parent households are the most common, followed by those on ESA/Incapacity Benefits;
- The numbers of households in receipt of JSA are growing more quickly than the number of households receiving other benefits due to the recession;
- The proportion of Lone Parents claiming JSA will rise due to changes in the Lone Parent Obligation, impacting on the level of benefits they receive whilst claiming;
- The Office of National Statistics estimates that there are around 8000 children living in **workless** households in Blackpool
- Having responsibility for children is not a significant driver of people continuing to claim incapacity benefits rather than seeking work
- Post-recession, Blackpool's seasonal pattern of employment seems to have returned to a similar form as that of the 2008 season, but on average 1900 more people now claim Job Seekers' Allowance each month
- This has increased the amount of people out of work for 12 months or more from 320 to 645 between August 2009 and August 2010
- In July 2010, only 640 out of 4370 JSA claimants had dependent children
- Weekly variation in income caused by changing benefits claims and irregular earnings, added to a lack of savings, creates pressure points leading to short term financial issues
- The level of child poverty is lower than might be expected given the low wage economy. This could be due to a bulk of workers earning between the median wage for Blackpool and the 60% of national median income level

Context

Blackpool has a low wage, low skill, seasonal economy, which has been impacted on by the national economic downturn. Detailed analysis of the economic and employment context is included in the Fylde Coast Employment and Skills Strategy Research Report³⁷, but as an illustration the graph below pinpoints the impact of seasonality on Blackpool Job Seekers' Allowance levels, the increase in JSA claimants caused by the economic downturn in 2008-09, and the subsequent return to the pattern of JSA claims seen in 2007-08:



Seasonal change in JSA claimant count, Winter 2007-08 to Winter 2009-10 shows an increase of around 1900 more claimants per month

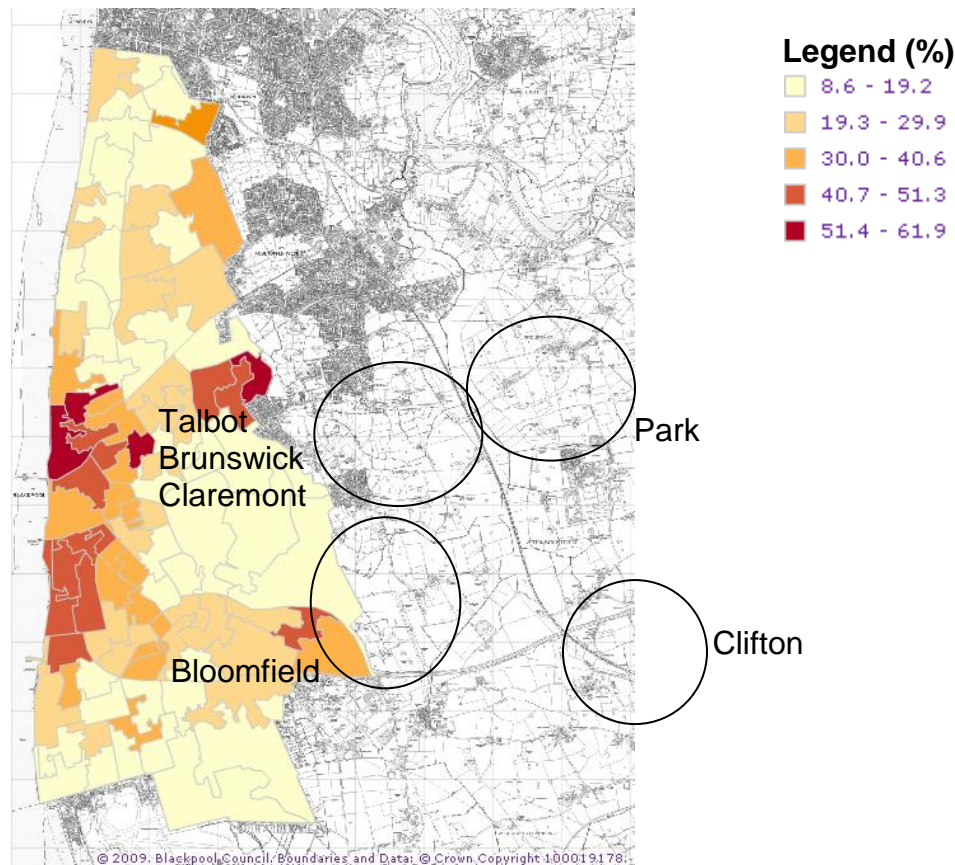
Levels of insolvency, Individual Voluntary Arrangements and Bankruptcy are all significantly above North West and National averages, and rising – insolvency cases rose from 33.7 per 10000 people to 49.1 between 2008-09, IVA rates from 14.3 to 18.1 per 10000, and Bankruptcy rates from 19.4 to 21.4 – the former two to their highest rates ever³⁸. It is not clear whether this is due to higher underlying levels of debt relative to income, or the more active promotion of bankruptcy as a debt solution.

Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP's) can be awarded to help with the cost of rent or council tax costs. In 2009/10, the Council made 178 payments, of an average amount of £434.55. The coalition government's emergency budget in June 2010 suggested that the annual amount earmarked for local authorities to spend on DHP's will be increased.

Distribution of benefits claimants

National Indicator 153 measures the proportion of working age people claiming out of work benefits in the “worst performing” areas, defined as Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) with a benefit claim rate of 25% or more based on a 4 quarter average between May 2006 and February 2007.

Blackpool's quarterly figures for all “worst performing” areas in 2009 varied between 36.6% and 38.1%, the highest since 2002³⁹. The map overleaf indicates the proportion of out of work benefits claimants in each Lower Super Output Area in Blackpool. Comparing this with the map on page 16 demonstrates that there are some minor differences, mainly caused by the inclusion of non-work related benefits, but the overall pattern is broadly similar:



Spatial distribution of out of work benefits claimants shows that these correspond with the most deprived areas

Main benefits claimed by households

The DWP divides benefits claimants into “Benefit Statistical Groups”, which categorise benefits recipients by the main benefit they are in receipt of. Of the estimated 8,000 children in Blackpool living in households claiming benefits not administered by the Local Authority:

- 1,110 children were in households whose “main benefit” was JSA;
- 2,120 children were in ESA and Incapacity Benefit households;
- 4,430 were in Lone Parent households;
- 340 were in Carer households.

Blackpool has a higher percentage of benefits claimants of all types as a proportion of working age households with children compared to the average figure for Britain as a whole. The recently-replaced benefits system did not allow for historical analysis of figures to compare those claiming Housing Benefits, which would allow us to assess the likely change between 2008 and 2010, although 35% of children in Blackpool live in families claiming housing or council tax benefits. The new system should allow for comparative data to be captured in future.

Claimant trends

Looking at the numbers claiming benefits over the last 10 years⁴⁰:

- The number of households receiving lone parent benefits gradually dropped until 2006, after which time they have levelled out;
- The number in receipt of JSA has increased since 2008 due to the impact of the recession;
- Numbers of households receiving ESA and incapacity benefits, and carers’ allowance have both seen a slight increase from 2009 to 2010 after long periods of relative stability.

Job Seekers with Children

Of the 4370 JSA claimants in July 2010, only 640 had dependent children. The majority of these claimants are between 35 and 44 years old, and 64% of all JSA claimants with children are male. Although the number of JSA claimants has risen generally since December 2008, the increase in the number of JSA claimants with children has risen particularly rapidly, partially as a result of the economic downturn but also due to the Lone Parent Obligation which forces parents to move from Income Support to JSA when their eldest dependent turns 10 – this will reduce to 7 years old in October 2010 and 5 years old in 2012.

Incapacity Benefit

A 2007 study of Incapacity Benefit claimants in Blackpool⁴¹ found that 22% of women receiving the benefit had a dependent child either with a partner or on their own – with just 7% of all women claimants citing “childcare” as one of a range of issues preventing a return to work, and 5% of all women claimants citing “having children to look after” as one of a range of reasons they did not want to get a job. This, together with other findings of the study, indicates that family responsibilities are not a significant driver of people continuing to claim incapacity benefits rather than seeking work, although it could be because they consider themselves to be so far from a return to work that childcare does not *appear* to be an issue.

Children in receipt of Disability Living Allowance

The 8000 figure given on the previous page **does not** include households where children under the age of 17 have been awarded DLA, of which Blackpool has 1020 cases in payment as of November 2009. Although we cannot determine which of these are in households in poverty, the individualised care required to cover the range of disabilities can have an impact on factors leaving the family at greater risk of poverty. It may also lead to more specialist child care provision being required.

Lone Parents

5,110 children in Blackpool live in a total of 2,770 lone parent households, once the lone parents whose primary benefit does **not** relate to their status as lone parents is included. Around 370 of these households - 590 children – are in receipt of Incapacity Benefits, and may therefore be at a higher risk of being in relative poverty given they are both lone parents and have a disability or injury preventing them from entering the workforce easily.

94% of lone parent claimants are female.

The relationship of child poverty to benefits claimants

As may be expected, a high proportion of people claiming lone parent benefits in an area indicates high child poverty levels, as does (to a lesser extent) a high level of JSA claims. However, the range of factors involved in child poverty means that levels of benefits claimants cannot be used to predict the level of child poverty in a precise way.

Income

Fluctuating income levels

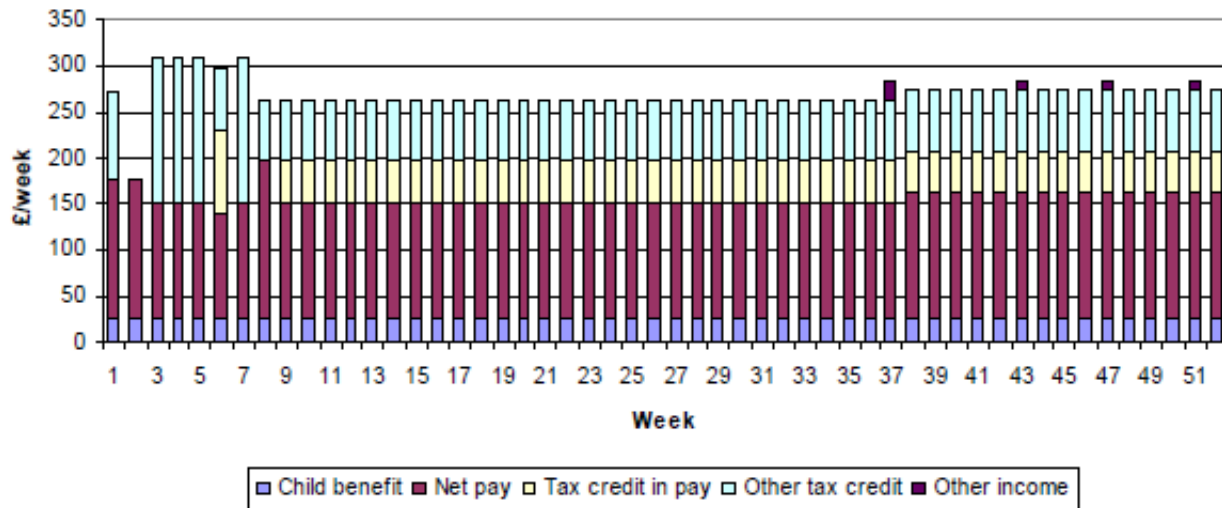
No quantitative data exists at a Blackpool level to establish the role of fluctuating incomes in exacerbating poverty and inhibiting social mobility. People changing jobs and amending claims for benefits will have periods where their income varies, and where the outcome of the claim is uncertain. Not only can this mean families are in and out of poverty, but they are also more vulnerable to pressures on spending, and unforeseen one-off costs. Clearly, the seasonal nature of work in Blackpool adds to the likelihood of this happening for people reliant on service industry employment.

The time taken to process benefits claims has an impact on how quickly income levels are stabilized in most cases. Blackpool currently processes new claims and changes to claims in an average of 14.6 days, 18th out of a group of 26 unitary councils⁴² - though work to migrate to a new benefits processing system has resulted in claims being processed more slowly compared with 2009/10. There is case-based evidence from voluntary organisations to suggest this causes real problems for clients who get into debt whilst waiting for their claims to be paid⁴³.

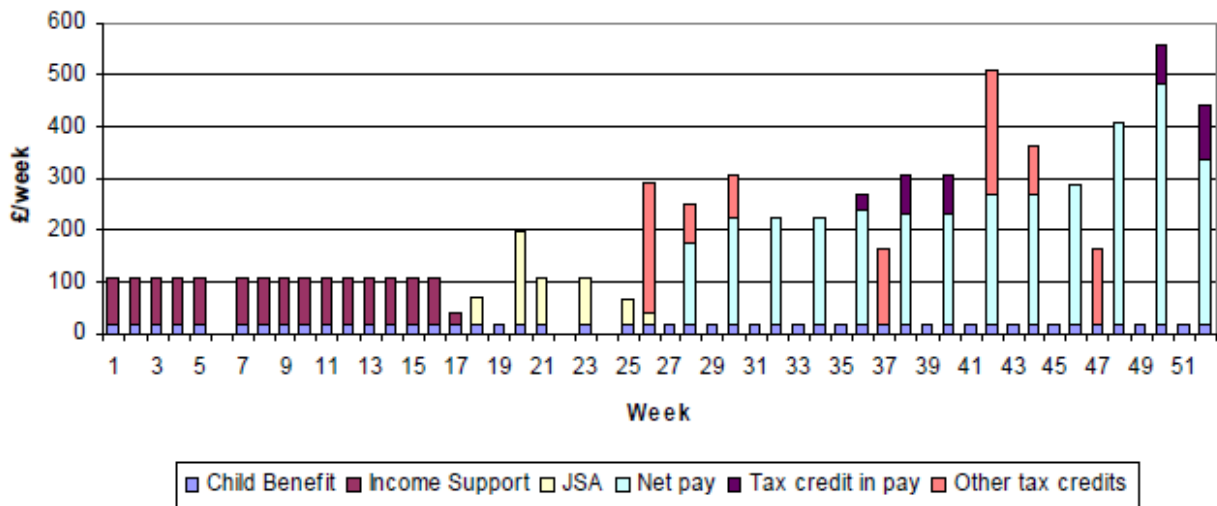
Blackpool Council processed 53,616 requests relating to changes in household circumstances on benefits claims in 2009/10. Whilst most of these will involve no or minimal financial impact, and a significant amount of housing benefit is still paid direct to landlords (40%) who will shoulder the cashflow implications in these cases, it demonstrates that this is an area worthy of further investigation once the replacement of the case management system is complete.

Clients with frequently changing circumstances experience peaks and troughs in income, as illustrated by the following charts **taken from national research** into short-term income volatility. These illustrate the impact of changing circumstances and the receipt and backdating of working tax credits, but the same is true of people in and out of receipt of housing and council tax benefits, or with irregular earnings:

Example case with regular weekly income⁴⁴ (from Mills, 2006: *Researching short-term income volatility*)



Example case with changing circumstances:

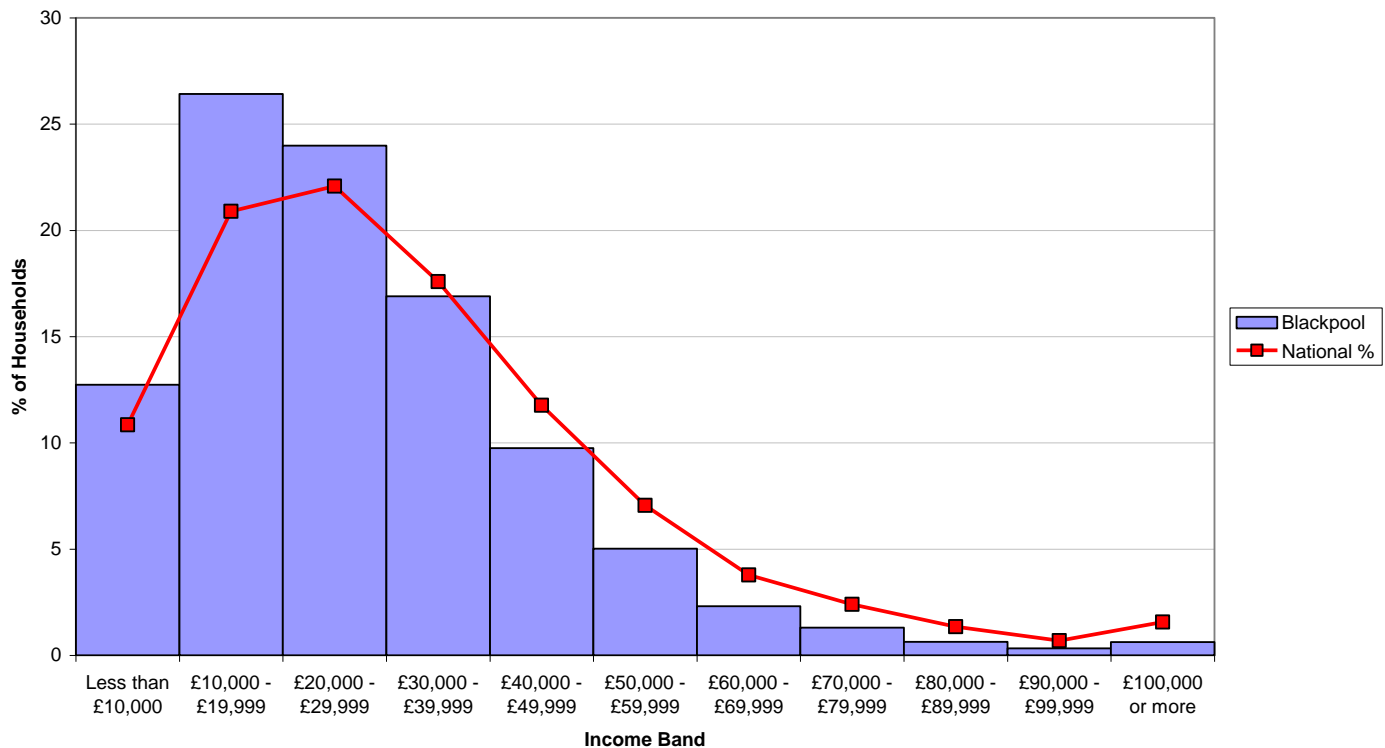


This demonstrates the potential for people to get into financial difficulty, particularly where there are no financial assets to cushion them – a common issue associated with those on benefits⁴⁵. The total income in weeks 17-25 is substantially lower than the (already low) income in the previous weeks, creating a vulnerability to taking out high interest credit which will impact disproportionately on future prosperity, and reduce future income flexibility.

Low levels of income

Wage levels in Blackpool are substantially below average levels for the North West, and the UK as a whole, and there are disparities within this too - gross weekly pay for female full-time workers in Blackpool is over £50 lower per week than for male workers. The lowest earning 10% of residents earn up to £246 per week - £15 less than the figure for the North West. When considering the 40% of lowest earners, this difference rises to £66 per week. Some analysis of gross household income estimates demonstrates that the income profile of Blackpool is significantly skewed towards lower income households compared to the national picture, with over 38% of households having an income of less than £20,000.

Gross Household Income in Blackpool



Source: Experian MOSAIC, 2010

Around 26,000 households in Blackpool have a gross income of less than £20,000. The table overleaf shows different calculations for median weekly pay in Blackpool, how we compare nationally, and why this is significant:

Median pay level	Jobs included	UK Rank	Change in Rank 2006 - 2009	Relevance
£302.50	All jobs done by Blackpool residents	6 th worst	Up 3 places	Half of all Blackpool residents earn this amount or less
£372.60	All full-time jobs done by Blackpool residents	7 th worst	Up 2 places	Half of all Blackpool residents in full-time jobs earn this much or less
£294.40	All jobs in Blackpool	6 th worst	Down 26 places	Half of the jobs available in Blackpool pay this amount or less
£375.40	All full-time jobs in Blackpool	10 th worst	Down 16 places	Half of all full-time jobs available in Blackpool pay this amount or less

This demonstrates that earnings from jobs in Blackpool are not keeping pace with the growth in earnings elsewhere, which has implications to be picked up by the Fylde Coast Employment and Skills Strategy, and implications for the ability of those with higher skills levels to access suitable employment within the Borough.

“Non-dependent” child poverty

The child poverty figure does not include 16-19 year old young people who have left home, but who are living on less than 60% of median income. No figures are available to assess accurately the extent of this group, which could cover a broad spectrum of young people in entry-level secure jobs through to those who are homeless⁴⁶. Nevertheless, the knowledge of the services and voluntary services in contact with them needs to be used to produce a sustainable solution.

Debt and saving levels

Figures from MOSAIC suggest that around 40% of Blackpool households have loan debt totalling under £4,000 – higher than the equivalent national figure, whilst over 30% owe £4,000 - £9,999, and the remainder owe more than £10k. Whilst this sounds positive, given the low wages in Blackpool, this could suggest that households are more likely to have a debt they cannot service. Further analysis would be required to test this theory.

Payday loans are generally loans for small sums of money, which charge extremely high interest rates to account for the short lending period. Although no specific figures are available for Blackpool, an August 2010 study⁴⁷ suggests that almost half of all households taking out payday loans in the UK have an income of less than £15,499, with borrowers usually being under 35 years old. This type of loan impacts on the total amount of disposable income in the short term, but also the longer term if repeat payday loans are taken out. The research shows that “most” borrowers do not have dependent children, although there will be families with children in Blackpool who use this form of credit.

Housing Affordability

By comparing house prices and rental values to income levels, we can calculate how affordable property in Blackpool is. As one of the main sources of household expenditure, this gives an indication of the housing decisions families on different income levels have open to them.

Using the latest available figures⁴⁸, and assuming that three times income is a more likely mortgage offer in the current financial climate, and making other reasonable assumptions about the type of mortgage deals on offer, around 65% of non-homeowning households are unable to afford to buy a property of any type in Blackpool, with terraced houses and flats both being an option for the remaining 35%. This has implications for social mobility through access to the home ownership property ladder.

In terms of weekly costs, buying certain properties carries a similar cost to renting property, although this excludes associated maintenance requirements. In the absence of detailed property type data on housing conditions relating to areas associated with high levels of child poverty, it is not possible to draw any firm conclusions from this analysis. Work to bring social housing up to the Housing Decency Standard by 2012 will result in the worst housing conditions being associated with the cheapest rented flats in the private sector, accessed by those on the lowest incomes or dependent on benefits, and those of marginal homeowners.

Possible implications for Child Poverty Strategy

- Local research could be commissioned to understand the effects of fluctuating household income and seasonality on child poverty, social mobility and debt levels on family units, but in the absence of this services should be designed to minimize and account for these wherever possible
- The Discretionary Housing Payments system and criteria should be reviewed to account for increased funding, and the application process should be used to capture more data on child poverty
- The strategy needs to account for the varied nature of poverty in Blackpool households, including those in and out of work, and an approach differentiated depending on the nature of benefit dependency;
- The approach required for parents out of work will need to be different from that targeting people without dependents;
- Actions need to be developed to bring workless families and the children within them in closer contact with work, creating opportunities for increased understanding and mobility
- “Non-dependent child poverty” needs to be considered when developing the objectives and actions of the Child Poverty Strategy
- Links need to be made with the Financial Inclusion Strategy to ensure that their strategy for alleviating debt issues is appropriately targeted
- Thought should be given to actions supporting increasing numbers of lone parents in accessing work;
- Flexible funds are an appropriate way to relieve some of the impacts of poverty in the short term, when accompanied by sustained support
- The strategy needs to complement the approach being taken in the Financial Inclusion Strategy.

6. Building blocks analysis: Parental Employment and Skills

Key Findings

- There are proportionately more jobs available per person in Blackpool than the North West average, meaning that the availability of work is less of an issue than elsewhere;
- There are large numbers of people who are “distant” from the workplace, such as those on incapacity benefits. For those who can work, support will be needed to re-integrate them into a working environment;
- Access to employment opportunities, in terms of geography and the cost of travelling to work, is not currently a major issue for Blackpool workers – though this could change in the near future with cuts to jobs in the public sector and the knock-on effect to the private sector;
- Levels of short and long term unemployment are increasing;
- Claims levels of incapacity benefits are increasing from an already large base;
- Employment rates of people with learning disabilities and mental health needs have increased over the last 3 years but remain low;
- The proportion of people of working age holding qualifications is increasing, with some evidence to suggest growth sectors in the local economy are in more skilled areas;
- A large proportion of the workforce remain unqualified.

Background

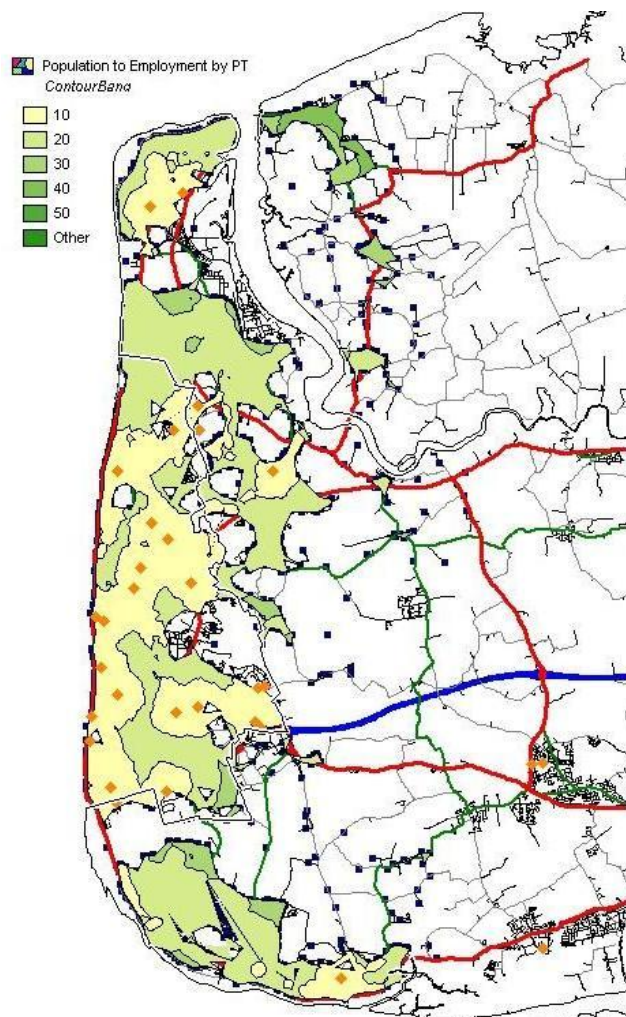
One of the issues ultimately causing poverty in Blackpool is the nature of the economy and its increased reliance on low skill work. The Fylde Coast Employment and Skills Strategy Research Report and accompanying Strategic Framework contribute to the Local Economic Assessment, providing detail on the structure of the economy and the changes which need to be made to support higher value, more skilled work. In doing so, it aims, given the relationship between wages and poverty, to deal with one of the primary causes of child poverty. This section complements this by looking at the practical issues and barriers around improving access to work of all skills levels for families in poverty, both for current parents and their children in the future.

Access to Employment - Transportation

Blackpool's dense urban structure, coupled with an extensive public transportation network, means it ranks as the joint 4th most accessible borough in the country outside of London in 2009, with 85% of working age people living within walking or travelling distance of an employment site of more than 500 jobs. As the isochrone map overleaf shows, 94% could walk to major workplaces in less than 20 minutes, rising to 97% for those in receipt of JSA – with 100% of both groups being within 20 minutes when using cycling and public transport.

75% of people with household incomes of less than £15k are satisfied with the value for money offered by public transport, with a similar proportion of this group being happy with the bus service overall, although it is worth noting that satisfaction with value for money was slightly lower at 69% amongst those saying they looked after their family/home full time⁴⁹.

This seems to indicate that access to transport is not a major issue for lower income families in relation to employment in Blackpool currently. Travel to Work figures suggest that 91% of Blackpool residents work on the Fylde Coast⁵⁰, with most of the employment sites in question being within the area bounded by the furthest travel to work time by public transport. However, given the changing jobs market, it is possible that the loss of jobs or employment sites may make work significantly less accessible.



This isochrone map shows the time in minutes it took residents to get to their nearest major employment site by public transport (one with over 100 jobs) in 2008. The coloured shading corresponds to the map key on the left.

Major workplaces are shown as a golden diamond on the map.

Note that this data does not capture information on the suitability of work for the people who can access it.

Source: Travel to work analysis, Transportation Team, Blackpool Council

Employment

The large majority of Blackpool JSA claimants have been claiming for less than six months duration: 2,820 (64.3%) for up to six months, 920 (21%) over six months but less than 12 and 645 (14.7%) over twelve months. The proportion on the claimant register for over 12 months for the region is higher at 17.5%, equivalent to the national average – but it should be noted that Blackpool has a high proportion of people of working age in receipt of incapacity benefits in Blackpool (25.3%)⁵¹. The implications of this for child poverty are discussed in more detail under the Financial Support Building Block.

The availability of employment continues to be less of an issue in Blackpool in terms of the ratio of unfilled jobcentre vacancies than elsewhere in the North West and the country. Blackpool has 4.1 claimants per unfilled vacancy as of August 2010, and 1,075 unfilled vacancies in total, of which 70% are full-time positions – the claimant rate per vacancy has been under the North West rate since May 2009⁵². However, the claimant count remains high – 5% of the working age population are unemployed, a similar rate to a year ago. Improvements in claimant count rate elsewhere in the North West means that Blackpool is now performing relatively worse – with our relative position changing from 15th highest rate to the 5th highest⁵³.

Blackpool has 0.74 jobs for every working age resident, meaning that if every working age person took a job, there would be a need for some workers to commute elsewhere. Given the nature of the authority boundaries on the Fylde coast, local opportunities will be available in Fylde – which

has a jobs density of over 1 – and Wyre, which has a lower density but a higher proportion of outward commuters. Given the proportion of working age people who do not want a job (see below), this confirms the availability of employment is not a major issue in Blackpool currently, although an increase in job seekers arising from changes to the benefits system could change this.

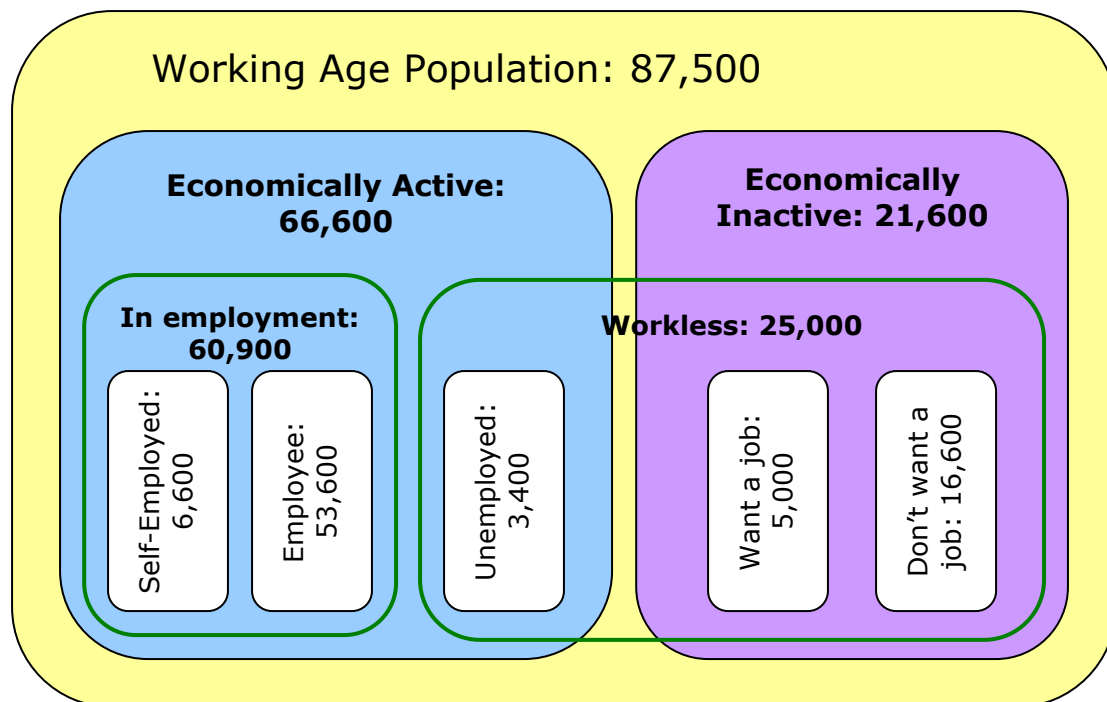
Adults with Learning Disabilities in Employment

This group includes people with learning disabilities in contact with local authorities taking any paid employment lasting for more than 1 hour a week. 4.8% of adults with learning disabilities are in some form of employment – a middle ranking figure compared to North West upper tier Council areas⁵⁴.

Adults receiving secondary mental health services in employment

This group includes people with mental health issues in contact with mental health services taking any paid employment lasting for more than 1 hour a week. The proportion of this group in employment went up from 3.7% to 14.7% in 2009, the second highest rate in the North West⁵⁵.

Economic Activity



This diagram breaks the working age population down into its constituent groups. The majority of Blackpool’s workless population identify themselves as “not wanting a job”, equating to 19% of the total working age population. This group includes people with serious health impairments preventing them from working. As a proxy for distance from the workplace, this means that a large proportion of Blackpool’s population are not actively seeking work, which has implications for the imagined benefits arising from social mobility due to work. The figures do not currently allow us to break this down into those with and without children, but the finding that there is a large proportion of the population either unable to or not actively considering work has significant social mobility and life chance implications. Page 26 has more information on the numbers of children in households claiming different benefit types.

Skills levels

Skill levels in Blackpool are low, but increasing. The percentage of the population with NVQs levels 2 and 4 increased in Blackpool between 2005 and 2009, with 59% of working age people now holding at least an NVQ level 2 equivalent qualification, slightly improving Blackpool's ranking against all authorities in England, but still comparing poorly to the regional and national level of 65%. The levels of people acquiring basic skills, as measured by the numbers achieving entry-level qualifications in literacy and numeracy, are also increasing – with over 1,100 people achieving basic literacy skills and 438 achieving basic numeracy skills in 2008/09.

However, 19% of working age people have no qualifications, 5% higher than the North West average, and the levels of 19 year olds achieving a level 2 qualification remain relatively low compared to North West levels at 69%.

Analysis from SQW⁵⁶ suggests that the sectors experiencing the greatest increase in employment across the Fylde Coast are ones requiring higher skills levels, emphasizing the importance of continuing to upskill the population and link these skills more effectively to the employers in question. The issues around this are investigated in more detail in the Fylde Coast Employment and Skills Strategy Strategic Framework, which discusses the need to ensure that those with lower level qualifications or none at all are made “ready for work”.

Pre-School, Sure Start Children's Centres and Nursery Provision

Blackpool's Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2010⁵⁷ is a measurement of the nature, extent of the need for and supply of childcare within each local area. The key findings of the report indicate that compared with other areas, Blackpool has a relatively high supply of childcare with one childcare place for every four children, for early years the amount is higher with one place for every three children.

The number of full-time vacancies is low at 7% which suggest that demand for childcare is high in most areas of Blackpool. However a number of factors may affect demand for example; a lower than average rate of female employment and high levels of worklessness are likely to be the main reasons for reduced demand particularly in more deprived areas.

The cost of childcare is higher in Blackpool than the North West average for example; for full day care the average cost is £144.48 per week compared to £141.00 for the North West. Most parents say that they struggle to pay for childcare, and the cost – or the perceived cost – can be a significant barrier to work for some parents. The childcare element of Working Tax Credit makes childcare more affordable but not all eligible parents take it up.

The report identifies a number of gaps in provision in particular for children aged over 11 years; holiday care for school aged children; suitable childcare for disabled children, with some issues around a lack of trained or specialist staff acting as a deterrent and inappropriate care for the child's specialist needs; and a lack of flexibility in existing provision to fit in with the shift working patterns prevalent in Blackpool.

Funded Places – Part Time Equivalents

The table below shows the total number of funded 'part-time equivalent' places filled by three and four year olds over a six-year period. Note that a 'part time equivalent' is equal to 12.5 hours education and an individual place may be the sum of several children participating in shorter

sessions. Consequently, the number of actual students benefiting will exceed the part-time equivalents.

It can be seen that numbers in Blackpool increased by a larger percentage (19.3%) than the percentage increase in the Northwest (5.9%) and in England (9.3%) during the period between 2004 and 2008:

Table 1: Part time Equivalent Number of Free Early Education places filled by 3 and 4 year olds 2004-2009								
	<u>2004</u>	<u>2005</u>	<u>2006</u>	<u>2007</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>Change 2004-2009</u>
Blackpool	2,825	2,820	2,695	2,735	3,230	3,370	3,320	+17.5%
Northwest	144,335	142,560	141,670	143,885	149,070	152,800	159,230	+10.3%
England	1,032,725	1,027,970	1,029,705	1,054,800	1,098,090	1,128,790	1,177,235	+14.0%

Source: [DCSF](#), June 2010

Funded Provision – Private, voluntary and independent providers

The total number of three and four year olds taking up early education sessions in private, voluntary and independent providers only in Blackpool was 1,450 in 2008, compared to 1,510 in the previous year. (Source: DCFS, June 2010)

Possible implications for Child Poverty Strategy

- The Strategy should take measures to deal with the increasing distance from the workplace of the longer term unemployed and those claiming most forms of benefits;
- Training and support should be tailored to parents' strengths and needs;
- It should support efforts in the Fylde Coast Employment and Skills Strategy to focus on developing both formal and informal qualification skills;
- Improved transport provision would not offer significant value in terms of reducing child poverty levels – although maintaining current levels is important for maintaining workplace accessibility;
- The Childcare Sufficiency Assessment is the primary source of information on childcare, and should be used to shape provision in line with employment initiatives targeting families affected by child poverty, in terms of availability and cost.

7. Building blocks analysis: Life Chances and Place

Key Findings

- The numbers of NEETs in Blackpool are reducing, in contrast to the regional trend towards an increase
- High numbers of teenage pregnancies mean that significant proportions of teenagers are not available for work
- The proportion of children gaining qualifications in schools is increasing, potentially improving future resilience against child poverty
- Analysis using pupils receiving Free School Meals as a proxy measure for poverty shows that outcomes are significantly worse for these pupils
- The future aspirations of Blackpool's pupils in terms of paid employment tend to involve relatively low skill work
- No research has been undertaken into the links between child poverty and crime. Areas with high levels of child poverty are generally areas with high levels of crime generally and specifically amongst young people, but this does not suggest there is a causal link
- Key factors in the lives of young people who become homeless are: persistent school absence, and parental relationship breakdown or the introduction of new parental partners
- Persistent school absence can lead to offending, becoming a victim of offending, sexual exploitation, alcohol use and poor mental health
- Poverty is implicated in a number of health issues from before birth through to teenage years
- Individual life chance factors are crucial to the success of any initiatives put in place.

Individual Life Chance factors

The statistical analysis elsewhere in this section reflects on a number of well-monitored subject areas, but these provide only a broad brush understanding of topic areas on which co-ordinated actions could be undertaken. To get an insight into the immediate reasons causing or exacerbating poverty, the Research and Intelligence Team held a workshop with around 30 frontline practitioners drawn from the Council and third sector organisations to explore the issues involved. In addition to confirming analysis elsewhere in this Needs Assessment, this revealed the following factors:

- **Lack of opportunities** for parents to improve their lives generally
- **Low self confidence, leading to low aspirations and a lack of motivation** given their circumstances. This can be caused by a variety of reasons which can only be understood at the level of the individual households and families involved
- **Some families are isolated** and without a strong support network
- The **welfare system creates a trap** and the incentives to leave benefits through work are insufficient to overcome the short term issues which arise
- **A lack of access to affordable credit** means that families can spend a higher proportion of their limited incomes on interest payments
- Poor quality housing was cited as a reason for young people sometimes finding it **difficult to build social relationships** – together with the effects of transience in some cases
- The **lack of financial education in schools** was cited as an issue for individuals learning how to manage their money
- Some delegates questioned whether communities had become over-reliant on support services

- Families have unavoidable pressures – both socially and economically – which can combine to create a “tipping point” leading to **family breakdown**.

The main message from the group was that a holistic approach to dealing with child poverty is essential, basing it wholly around the needs of the individual families. This meant that the economic aspects of child poverty should be seen as a small part of the whole story, chiming with the messages emerging from the Frank Field review.

NEET

The proportion of NEETs in Blackpool has fallen from 12.4% of all 16-18 year olds in 2005, to 6.7% by the end of 2009, and has been below the average for our statistical neighbours and the North West since 2007. As at August 2010, NEET levels are 0.9% lower than the same period in the previous year, bucking the regional trend, and the proportion of all 18-16 year olds “in learning”, which measures whether young people are undertaking some form of skills development regardless of employment status, has increased by 9.8% to 78.7% of the whole cohort⁵⁸, providing a further indication of improving skills levels.

The table below shows wards with the highest numbers, which correspond to the areas with the highest levels of child poverty. These are not calculated in percentage terms as the numbers of NEETs in each ward are relatively small:

Ward	Number of NEET 16-18 yr olds (August 2010)
Claremont	57
Talbot	54
Bloomfield	50
Brunswick	35
Park	29
Clifton	27

Of the 678 NEETs classed as “not available for work” (who are included in the above figures), 69% (467 people) were unavailable due to pregnancy or because they were teenage parents supporting their own family.

Key groups in Education, Employment and Training (EET)

The table overleaf shows the proportions of vulnerable groups who are **in** Education, Employment or Training as at August 2010. The total number of people includes those whose status is currently not known.

There is no research to prove that NEETs are a risk group for future child poverty, though there is a logic to suggest that the same processes resulting in intergenerational poverty and “distance” from work (in terms of being ready to get and maintain work) would put the NEET group at a higher risk of this.

Group	Number of 16-19 year olds in EET, August 2009	Percentage of this group in EET	% point change from August 2009
Teenage mothers	52 out of 223 people	23%	Up 5%
Those known to aftercare	16 of 34 people	47%	Down 35%*
Care Leavers	24 of 55 people	44%	Up 1%*
Learning Difficulties and Disabilities	457 of 564 people	65%	Up 14%
Youth Offending Team clients	33 of 100 people	33%	Up 16%

*Note the small numbers involved

A handful of young people were recorded as “substance misuse” clients, of which the majority were NEET.

Education

The Needs Analysis for the Blackpool Children and Young People’s Plan covers educational indicators in some detail⁵⁹. The key message on performance is the increasing proportion of young people achieving level 2 and 3 qualifications. The proportion achieving level 2 qualifications by age 19 went up to 69.1% in 2008/09 from 60.5% in 2006/07. This still leaves Blackpool behind all but three authorities, but with the best improvement rate from 2006/07 to 2008/09 (up over 8 percentage points).

The picture was similar as far as level 3 qualifications are concerned – up to 40.6% from 35%, making Blackpool the second most improved authority but still lagging all but 6 in overall performance terms.

The gap between those who do not receive Free School Meals and those who do is of primary concern for this Needs Assessment. Bearing in mind the difference in overall achievement levels between Blackpool and most other North West authorities, there is a gap between pupils on Free School Meals and not on Free School Meals of 23 percentage points at level 2, and 24.6 percentage points at level 4.⁶⁰ There is a slight association between the achievement gap and the overall level of child poverty, suggesting that as child poverty becomes more prevalent in an area, the difference between pupils receiving Free School Meals reaching the expected level of achievement and non-Free School Meals pupils reaching the expected level of achievement at both Key Stages 2 and 4 diminishes. Correspondingly, in areas with lower levels of child poverty, the difference between the two groups is much more stark. This could be indicative of an agglomeration effect.

Local data analysis has been carried out by the research team and concluded:

- Child poverty, proxied by FSM⁶¹, has an affect on pupil attainment levels.
- The well-publicised national ‘gap’ in overall attainment levels between FSM and non-FSM pupils is present in Blackpool at Foundation Stage and Key Stages 2 and 4.
- The level of deprivation in the areas where children live appears to have additional affects on attainment at KS2 and KS4. For example, pupils eligible for FSM who live in the 10% most deprived IDACI areas appear to have reduced attainment compared to similar pupils who also receive FSM but who live in the 90% least deprived areas. This suggests that social and environmental factors associated with deprivation go some way to increasing or mitigating the effects linked with FSM eligibility alone.

- The same 'area deprivation' affect on attainment is not clearly demonstrated at Foundation Stage – While the combination of FSM and 10% does produce the poorest attainment, and the opposite combination of non-FSM and 90% least deprived areas results in higher attainment, those with only one deprivation factor (FSM or deprived location) have varied outcomes. This may support the Field Review's conclusions around early intervention;
- Pupils not on Free School Meals in deprived areas have only slightly higher levels of achievement compared to those on Free School Meals in the least deprived areas.

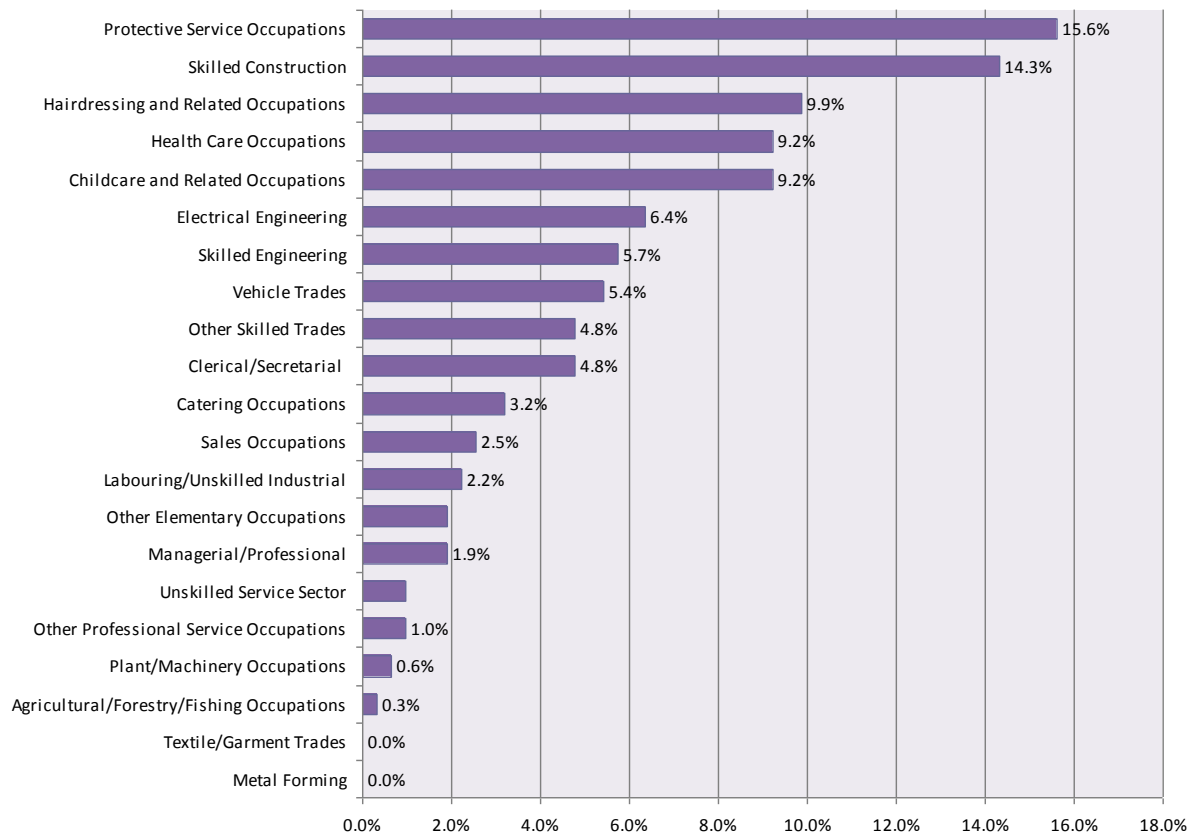
Research carried out in the North West suggests that social class and location is a much more significant factor in educational achievement and aspiration than ethnicity. With relatively few pupils from BME backgrounds in Blackpool, this suggests that whilst there is the need for a tailored approach to ensure that no further educational disadvantage arises, most of the work "Narrowing the Gap" should be focussed on the differences between deprived and non-deprived children.

Progression to Further Education

Using the proportion of pupils receiving Free School Meals, we can calculate an indicative figure to show the difference in the levels of pupils progressing to Further Education from households most likely to be in child poverty compared to those who are not. Whilst pupils receiving Free School Meals are less likely to go into Higher Education, the difference in Blackpool is slightly smaller than for the country as a whole, at 16% compared to 18% in 2007/08. However, only 19% of the cohort progresses to HE compared to 31% across England.

Future Aspirations

A database maintained on behalf of the Young People's service captures details on each school leavers' aspirations, with the 2010 leavers' aspirations in terms of career shown overleaf. This shows a tendency to opt for jobs in relatively low skill areas, in part reflecting the availability of opportunities locally. "Protective Service" includes the Police and Armed Forces; Skilled Construction includes any building-related trades.



School leavers' intended destinations, from Management Information Analysis, CCIS database, August 2010

Crime

A comparison exercise by Lancashire Constabulary⁶² highlights that wards with high levels of child poverty are also ones with relatively high numbers of residents who have been victims of crime, as might be expected from the association of high levels of child poverty with deprived areas. Two of the areas are characterized by their mix of commercial and residential property (Claremont and Bloomfield), with two being primarily residential (Park and Clifton), and one being almost wholly residential (Brunswick).

The table below examines the distribution of offenders aged 0-19 in each ward recorded between April 07 and March 08. **This does not demonstrate a link between child poverty and crime**, but simply highlights that areas with relatively high levels of child poverty are also areas with relatively large numbers of both young offenders and victims of crime. As one of a number of contributing factors under this building block, there is an implicit assumption that, together, these have a significant impact on the life chances of all children, as well as those offending and who are victims of crime, in these areas.

Ward	Child Poverty rank	# offenders resident in ward aged 0-19 yrs	0-19 offenders: Blackpool Rank	# victims resident in ward aged 0-19yrs	0-19 victims: Blackpool Rank	All offenders: Blackpool Rank	All victims: Blackpool Rank
Bloomfield	1	232	1	151	1	1	1
Claremont	2	205	2	147	2	2	2
Park	3	175	4	118	4	4	5
Brunswick	4	195	3	138	3	3	3
Clifton	5	170	5	85	7=	6	6
Talbot	6	74	12	99	5	5	4
Victoria	7	94	8=	72	12	10	9
Hawes Side	8	129	6	97	6	8	10
Tyldesley	9	116	7	85	7=	7	7
Ingthorpe	10	80	10	66	13	11	12
Layton	11	72	13	85	7=	12	11
Waterloo	12	94	8	74	10	9	8
Greenlands	13	75	11	73	11	14	13
Warbreck	14	33	17	45	16=	13	14
Highfield	15	36	15=	46	15	16	15
Stanley	16	36	15=	48	14	18	17
Anchorsholme	17	15	21	26	21	20	20
Marton	18	31	18	42	18	15	16
Squires Gate	19	38	14	37	20	17	18
Bispham	20	29	19=	45	16=	19	19
Norbreck	21	29	19=	39	19	21	21

Young Offenders

The number of first time entrants to the Youth Justice system has gone down 15% between 2008-09 and 09-10, although this is a lower rate of fall than the North West, England, and comparator family average, with the proportion of those being rehoused in suitable accommodation rising by 13% to 96% over the same period. Custodial sentences were lower than average, and Blackpool recorded a reoffending rate after 9 months of just 0.16 offences per person – much lower than the comparative figures for England and the region.

Domestic Violence

In 2009-10, 388 domestic violence victims were considered to be at a high risk of homicide arising from the abuse, of which 16 were male. 540 children (aged 0-18) were involved in these cases, of which 42% were under 5 years old. 41% of the referrals to support services in 2009-10 noted that children were in the same room as, or involved with, the incident.

47% of the victims in recorded cases lived in Bloomfield, Claremont, Park, Brunswick and Clifton – with a further 8% in Victoria ward.

Housing

Non-dependent “child” poverty

Between April 2009 and March 2010, 579 people aged 16-24 years presented themselves as homeless or potentially homeless to Blackpool Housing Options, nearly 29% of the total number of presentations⁶³. Of these, 196 were 16 or 17 years old. Although there is a grey area as to whether these young people would be included in the technical definition of “child” poverty, a holistic approach would suggest that those accepted as homeless are going without a need usually fulfilled by parents in their role as care-givers; and they should therefore be included within the scope of the Strategy.

Shelter’s report “Youth Homelessness in Blackpool” identified the most common factors amongst young people becoming homeless in Blackpool as: persistent school absence (together with lack of qualifications), and parental relationship breakdown or new parental partners. Noting that 69% have been involved with services prior to being housed, the report makes a series of recommendations which will be incorporated into the Child Poverty Strategy.

Housing conditions

Almost half of all childhood accidents are associated with physical conditions in the home⁶⁴, and although this cannot be directly related to child poverty, lower incomes certainly constrain housing choices. This is compounded where households are not thermally efficient, leading to larger proportions of household income being spent on heating the home. 8% of people receiving income-based benefits live in homes with a low energy efficiency rating – the worst rate of upper tier areas in the North West. However, 48% live in homes with a high energy efficient rating, making Blackpool one of the best performing areas on this measure compared to upper tier authorities. Nevertheless, analysis shows an association between low energy efficiency rated homes and the distribution of child poverty in Blackpool.

Work on bringing the public sector homes up to standard will conclude in 2012 in Blackpool, leaving the problem of energy inefficient homes entirely in the private sector. It is important to note though that this will not eradicate fuel poverty in the public sector. Although thermal efficiency is used as a proxy, a more accurate measure is households spending above 10% of their income on heating. Blackpool has the 11th highest percentage of households in relative fuel poverty by this measure⁶⁵.

Health

Poverty and social inequalities in childhood have profound effects on the health of children, and their impact on health is felt through to late adulthood. Three-year-olds in households with incomes below about £10,000 are 2.5 times more likely to suffer chronic illness than children in households with incomes above £52,000. Globally and historically, poverty has been the major determinant of child and adult health and, even in rich nations such as the UK, it remains a major cause of ill health with huge public health consequences⁶⁶.

The factors determining an individuals’ health for the duration of their lives, and to an extent their life chances, are set throughout childhood, with different factors playing a role at different stages. In the pre-birth period, the risks relate to the mothers’ health, including smoking, alcohol consumption and substance misuse, factors which can be influenced by the mothers’ income, and living environment. Between 0-5 years, the risks are around poor air quality and accidents in the home, and the forming of good familial relationships. Once the child is in primary school, good

school performance becomes the key factor – and into the teenage years, participation in education and skill acquisition, together with substance abuse, become increasingly important. Teenage pregnancy distances young women from the workplace and can create social exclusion.

This section therefore explores these health factors associated with poverty and children, but also touches on parents' health factors which might exacerbate the situations of households in poverty.

Teenage Pregnancy

Blackpool has the ninth highest teenage conception rate in the UK (62.9 per 1,000 females). Historically, Blackpool has had a relatively high teenage pregnancy rate compared to the UK and North West averages. Teenage pregnancy interacts with child poverty in a number of ways, including increasing the likelihood of teenage mothers being NEET and unavailable for work (see NEET analysis). There will also be anomalies – for example, where there are three generations living in the same house including a teenage mother, that this would not be a household in poverty due to the benefits available. The main point is that teenage pregnancy affects the life chances (and in some cases reflects the life aspirations) of the young mother, meaning that the likelihood of their child being raised in poverty is increased.

National research shows that children born into poverty are more likely to become teenage parents, creating an intergenerational effect – especially for young women living in workless households aged 11-15⁶⁷

Smoking in pregnancy

Taking figures for the first quarter of 2010/11 as an example, one third of Blackpool women were recorded as smokers at the time of delivery - the highest proportion in England and significantly higher than the North West average of 19%. Despite this, and the relatively low wage economy, a 2009 study shows that the purchase of illicit tobacco is significantly lower than average compared to the rest of the north of England⁶⁸, although well established local experience suggests that there is widespread supply of, and demand for, illicit tobacco, particularly in disadvantaged communities. This is often used without people being aware of it.

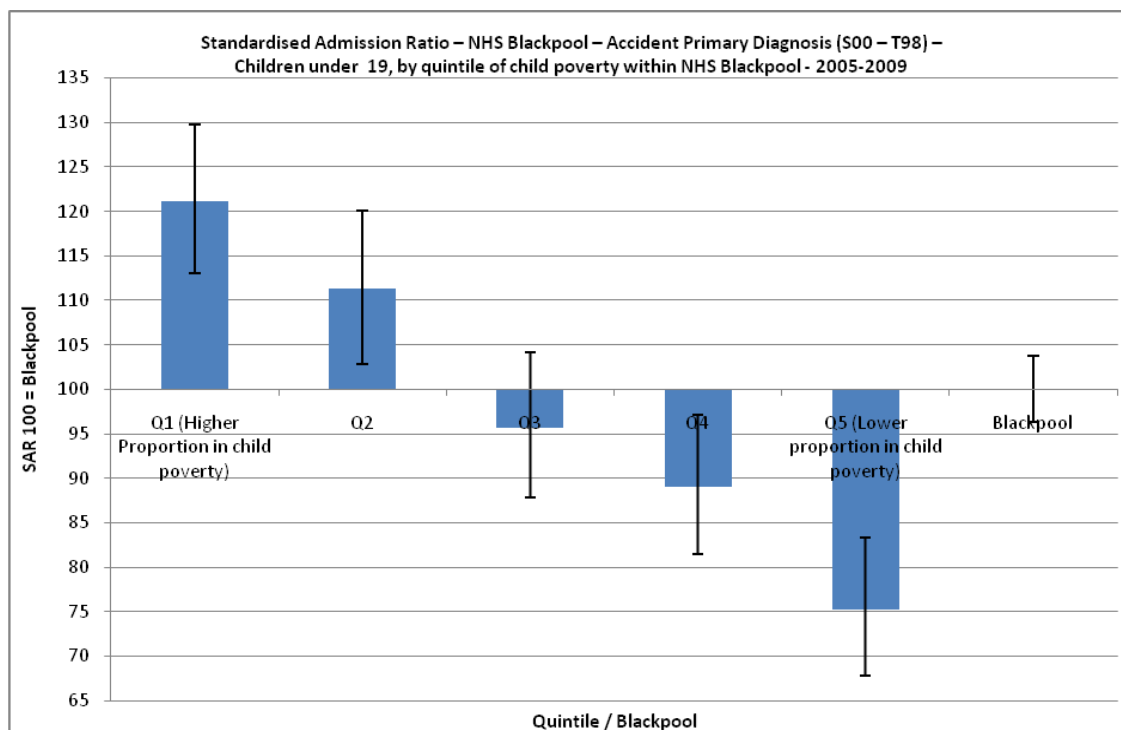
12 wards have significantly higher rates of smoking in pregnancy than for England as a whole. The 7 most significantly higher of these – Bloomfield, Talbot, Park, Claremont, Clifton, Victoria and Brunswick – are also the wards with the 7 highest levels of Child Poverty in Blackpool.

Low weight births

It is recognised that there are differences in the average birth weight of babies depending on levels of disadvantage, with lower average birth rates seen in more disadvantaged areas. Although the causes are not fully understood, factors thought to be contributing to these differences include maternal height, smoking, substance misuse, and micronutrient deficiency. In Blackpool a significantly higher proportion of babies are born at low birth weights (under 2500g) than the England average. Because of the small numbers involved when looking at ward-level birth rates, Bloomfield and Park are the only two wards which we can say have *significantly* higher proportions of children with low birth weights than the national average.

Accidents

The chart overleaf groups areas within Blackpool into 5 levels based on the proportion of households in child poverty, so that level 1 is the 20% of areas in Blackpool experiencing the highest levels of child poverty, and level 5 is the 20% of areas with the lowest levels of child poverty. The chart shows significant variation in hospital admissions associated with the level of childhood poverty in an area. Areas with high levels of child poverty experienced 21% more admissions than average for Blackpool, and 25% fewer admissions amongst the areas with the lowest levels of child poverty:



Asthma

Blackpool children experience significantly higher admission rates to hospital for asthma than England, with a total of 95 inpatient admissions for children aged under 19 in financial year 2005/06. Park ward has significantly higher admission rates than Blackpool, with more than 80% more admissions than would be expected if the ward experienced the same rate as Blackpool. Risk factors around asthma include damp housing and smoking.

Infant Mortality

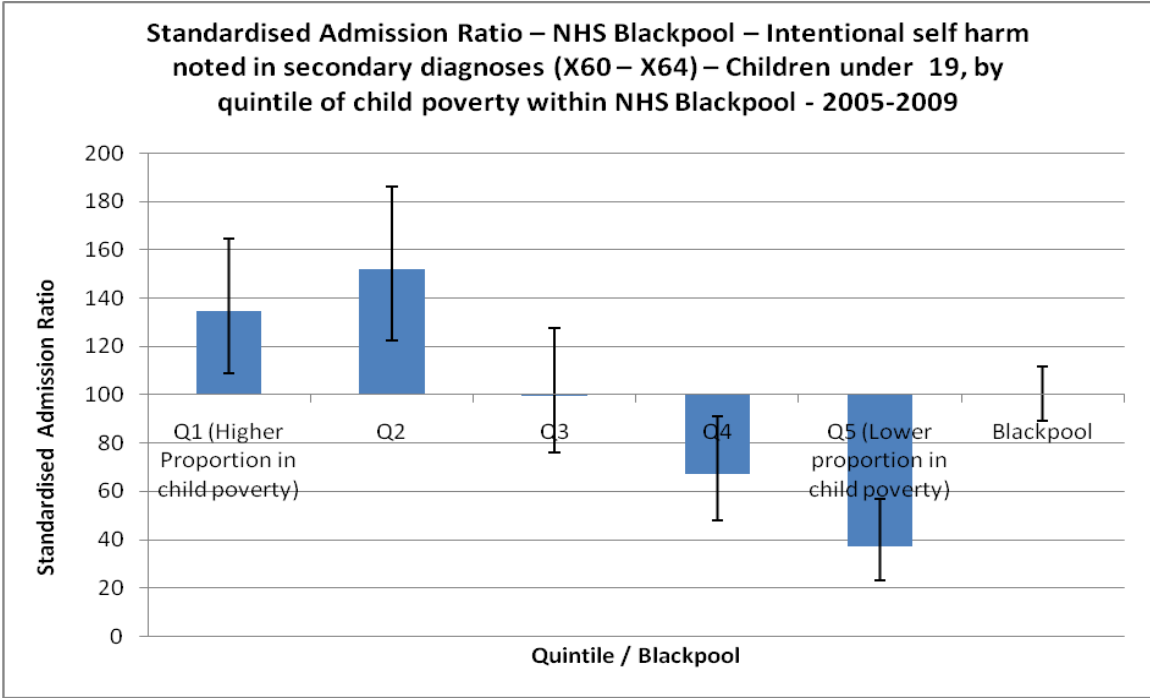
Babies born in disadvantaged areas or to ethnic minority parents in England are up to seven times more likely to die before their first birthday than babies born in the richest areas. Blackpool has a significantly higher infant mortality rate than the national average, despite not having large proportions of Caribbean and Pakistani households – groups which have a higher rate of infant mortality than average. This would suggest that the high rate of infant mortality in Blackpool is likely to be a function of the high levels of disadvantage.

Oral Health

Blackpool contains three wards which have significantly higher average numbers of decayed, missing and filled teeth than England: Brunswick, Tyldesley, and Victoria.

Mental Health

The chart below is based on the same premise as the one under “Accidents” above, and looks at hospital admissions for intentional self harm amongst children under the age of 19. The overall pattern shows that areas with higher proportion of children in poverty have higher rates of hospital admission for self harm amongst under 19’s:



Possible implications for Child Poverty Strategy

- A series of recommendations around youth homelessness in Blackpool were included in a recent Shelter report – available separately;
- Despite a difficult employment market, the aim of the Child Poverty Strategy means efforts to engage with groups with particularly high levels of worklessness (such as teenage mothers) must continue to be made
- Work to improve levels of pupils from deprived backgrounds entering Further Education must be coupled with an expansion in the types of opportunities open to them in Blackpool, or on the Fylde Coast
- Child Poverty is a cross-cutting issue which should be dealt with across the Blackpool Strategic Partnership
- More analysis is needed on the relationship of crime to child poverty
- Work to tackle teenage pregnancy levels would represent a significant intervention in terms of child poverty and social mobility
- Having identified broad areas of concern in the statistical analysis, the need to base actions around the needs of individuals in each of the categories identified is essential if the strategy is to be effective
- Any service withdrawals to communities affected by child poverty should be managed through disengagement strategies which link to preparations to deliver the community engagement and Big Society agendas.

Appendix: Local service provision and links to other strategies

The text of the Needs Assessment makes clear where there are links to relevant local strategies, although there are some which merit a separate explanation:

Links between the Child Poverty Strategy and Local Strategies

Teenage Pregnancy Strategy

Blackpool's Teenage pregnancy strategy and Action Plan were refreshed following self – evaluation against the National Teenage Pregnancy Toolkit. Work-streams within the existing Teenage Pregnancy Delivery plan mirror nationally recommended focus, and a Commissioning Intentions Strategy will be written to provide direction around commissioning of prevention and support services in relation to Teenage pregnancy and under-18 sexual health services.

Transition Strategy

The Council is intending to develop a robust Transition Strategy for all young people facing transition across a range of services, to ensure that no young person /adult “slips through the net”.

Fylde Coast Employment and Skills Strategy

This deals with the wider economic picture, ensuring that employment opportunities and the skills of Blackpool residents to fill these are raised. The Child Poverty Strategy has a role ensuring that appropriate provision is made for families in poverty so that they are able to access these opportunities on an equal basis.

Sustainable Community Strategy

The overall strategic document setting out the vision for Blackpool, this touches on themes covered by the other strategies included here. Child Poverty needs to be built into the performance management framework of the SCS to ensure that it is considered in relevant actions to deliver outcomes.

Children and Young People's Plan

One of the priorities in Blackpool's Children & Young People's Plan is that “Blackpool's children and Young People should be enabled to overcome the impact of poverty through effective partnership working which both addresses immediate needs and contributes to the wider economic regeneration of the town”. It identifies services relevant to mitigating child poverty, details of which are captured below.

Some of the programmes are running with time-limited funding, or are being undertaken on a pilot basis. The strategy could consider how these could be shaped to deliver a reduction in child poverty.

Financial Inclusion Strategy

The vision for the Financial Inclusion Strategy, developed with a range of local and national partners is:

“That all residents in Blackpool will be financially included with access to appropriate financial advice, products and services, the skills and confidence to manage their finances efficiently and the support they require should they fall into financial distress”.

The analysis undertaken in the Financial Support block clearly links the issues around family and therefore child poverty to this work. Three theme groups have been formed:

- Banking/Saving/Affordable Credit, which works towards improving access to products, promoting a savings culture, tackling fuel poverty and raising awareness around illegal money lending
- Financial Advice, which aims to provide appropriate services across the community, promote access to legal debt remedies and to facilitate the takeup of assistance for those in financial distress
- Financial Capability, which looks at expanding training on lifeskills, increasing financial education in schools, co-ordinating community and workplace financial education, and to increase non-sales based money guidance.

Work has been undertaken with each group to ensure the Child Poverty Strategy dovetails with their work.

Relevant Service Provision

A brief overview of some of the key services being provided is included below:

Place based budget pilot

Blackpool has been named as one of the local authorities to operate as a ‘place based budget’ pilot. The pilot will build on the work of two pioneering Blackpool initiatives, **Springboard** Family Intervention Projects and **Works 4Me** both of which pull together services to deliver packages of support to help turn around the lives of families with a complex range of needs.

Support for families

- **Sure Start Children’s Centres** provide easy access to a range of community health services, parenting and family support, integrated early education and childcare, and links to training and employment opportunities for families with children aged 0-13 (with a special focus on Children aged 0-5 years old). Children’s centres are a key mechanism for improving outcomes for young children while reducing inequalities between the poorest children and their peers.
- The **Parenting Team** deliver Family Support for parents with children aged 5-19 years old and evidence based parenting programmes, delivered in each locality, for Parent(s)/Carer(s) with children aged over five years old.
- The **Springboard** Family Intervention Project provides intensive multi-agency support to families with complex support needs. The project has improved life chances for families on a number of factors including reductions in criminality and anti-social behaviour, and improving school attendance, as well as other behaviour changes in the families involved such as moves towards gaining employment, reductions in NEETs, and smoking cessation.

- The **BEACH (Blackpool Early Action for Change)** project is a Budget Holding Lead Practitioner project; it targets universal services along with identifying unmet needs at an early stage. An evaluation study⁶⁹ found that families reported improvements in their children's development, their own parenting ability, a greater sense of their children's potential, improved family relationships and reduced stress.
- The nationally-recognised **Family Nurse Partnership** supports vulnerable young mums, improving health outcomes for babies, improving the confidence of parents and the involvement of fathers throughout pregnancy.
- The **Family Prescribing Service** cuts across adult and young people's services. This provides a specialist prescribing treatment service to vulnerable families within Children's Centres where substance misuse impacts on parenting.
- The **Family Nurse Partnership** aims to reduce the impact of multiple deprivation and improve the short and long term health and well-being outcomes of children born to vulnerable young first time mothers, reducing the short and long term cost of caring for these children and families. It should result in a range of improvements including a reduction in smoking in pregnancy, increased immunisation rates, less accidents and better language development.
- **1 to 1 support** has been given to over 190 children living in families of Domestic Violence.

Supporting people into work

- **Works 4Me** is a work focused services pilot, which has placed Jobcentre Plus staff in 3 key children's centres. The project, currently running until March 2011, has engaged over 200 parents in becoming work-ready.
- **Positive Steps Into Work** – a LEGLI funded initiative which is due to conclude in March 2011; this programme builds skills and confidence to help people get back into work.
- **Working for Health** offered 48 'intermediate' job opportunities for local residents on long-term incapacity benefit wishing to return to work in the health and social care sector.
- **Employment Support for patients with Mental Health problems.** This service provides advice, information and a full employment support service where applicable. The full service will include vocational profiling, targeted job search, brokerage, on and around the job support and career development advice and support to people with mental health problems, their employers and professionals working with them. 54 people were helped to secure, maintain or return to employment in 2008/09.

Housing and tenancy support

- Blackpool's **Enhanced Housing Options Trailblazer** model centres have gone live, receiving 172 referrals with 112 people positively engaging onto the programme of support (58% of these have moved into education, employment or training).
- Blackpool charity **Streetlife** engages with young people who have been, are currently, or are at risk of homelessness at the earliest opportunity, to raise their aspirations and equip

them with the skills and confidence to enable them to make a positive contribution to the economy of the town;

- The **Rent Bond Scheme** has helped approximately 600 vulnerable households access good quality, affordable accommodation in the private rented sector and plays a vital role in the prevention of homelessness in the town.
- The **Youth Accommodation Team** is working to improve the extent to which the identified housing needs of young people in the town are met

Supporting people into education and training

- The **Parents with Prospects** course is being delivered to some young parents to raise aspirations.
- **Aimhigher** programmes offer mentoring to young people aimed at getting them to consider Higher Education as an option.
- **Mentoring programmes** have been created, to improve transition and retention in education post 16.
- The **Extra Mile Initiative** is a scheme for schools; it focuses on breaking down cultural barriers around low aspirations and scepticism about education.
- 11 **diploma learning opportunities** for KS4 learners include work related learning experiences, preparing young people for employment and further education.

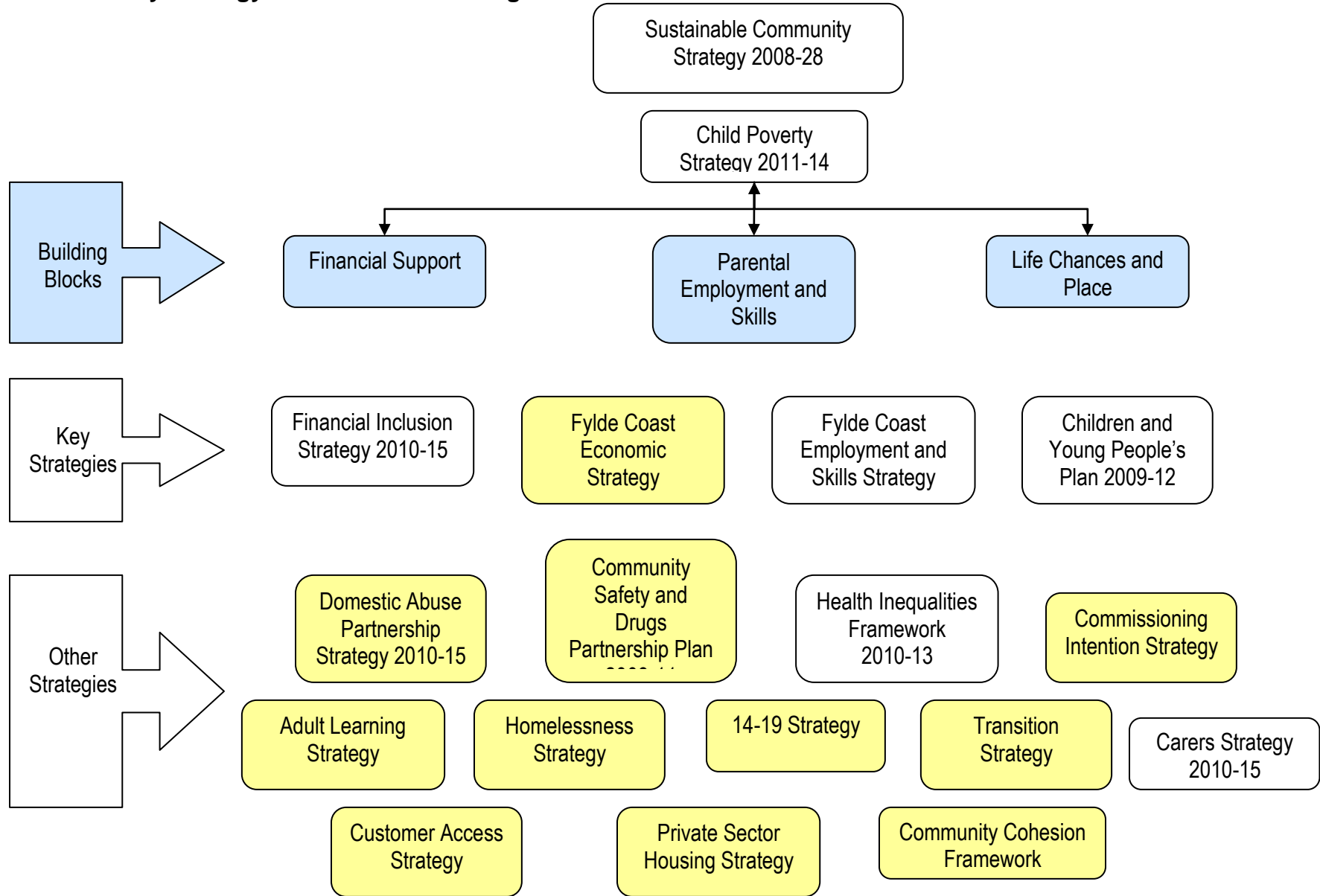
Supporting children

- **Emotional Health and Well Being teams in schools** provide prevention and early intervention services and form part of the clinical pathway to specialist CAMHS services
- The **Every Child Counts** programme provides training and support to teachers working with Year 2 pupils and provision for intensive coaching where children have fallen behind their peers, and could be rolled out to all schools in Blackpool if the evaluation shows it to be effective.
- **Blackpool Children's University** has provided accredited extended learning opportunities, raising pupil aspiration and enabling them to see the link between school and life-long learning.
- The Children's Trust has been successful in increasing the number of **funded learner opportunities for young people aged 16-19**.
- **Apprenticeships** for young people are available across Blackpool
- The PCT and BSAFE are currently reviewing drug and alcohol services to obtain better outcomes, in particular recovery from substance misuse. Services will be holistic and encourage good sexual health including the use of Long Acting Reversible Contraception. Commissioned services will be recovery led with the expansion of abstinence programmes which support previous drug and alcohol misusers into training and employment. Services will also consider the hidden harm caused to children by substance misuse.

Financial support

- Partnerships with key agencies around **financial inclusion for families** have been established.
- The **Advice Link** network provides advice and support to people regarding debt issues, benefit take-up and the availability of other services

Child Poverty Strategy Links to Other Strategies



Appendix: References

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- ⁴ Press Release: The Right Honourable Frank Field MP, Embargoed Release 17.30, 16th September 2010, Lecture at Haileybury School
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- ⁶ Impacts of Housing Benefit proposals: Changes to the Local Housing Allowance to be introduced in 2011-12, DWP, 2010 – available from <http://www.dwp.gov.uk/docs/impacts-of-hb-proposals.pdf>
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- ⁸ Although this finding seems counter-intuitive, the authors note that the risk of poverty probably increases for the healthy because some adults with health problems receive extra benefits or tax credits because of their poor health or disability. This may, of course, change as the benefits system changes in future.
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- ²⁵ Living with poverty – a review of the literature on children's and families' experiences of poverty, Centre for the Analysis of Social Policy, University of Bath/DWP
- ²⁶ Practitioners' Perspectives on Child Poverty – Ipsos MORI/DCFS, 2008
- ²⁷ Lower Super Output Area: a geographical unit made up of around 1500 people. There are 94 LSOA's in Blackpool, each of which fit within one of the 21 wards
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- ²⁹ Based on all district council areas – i.e. not including County Councils.
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