

# Tackling Poverty – how do we know what works

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We need to make sure we understand the things that are most likely to help people to escape poverty. Then we will try to match the biggest problems in Sheffield with the things that work best to resolve them. Of course it won't be straightforward because everyone's situation and circumstances are different, but we think it's important to try.

This document is a work in progress. It includes links to lots of different information and evidence. We'd like you to help us add to it.

- What has helped you, or people you know, cope with / overcome poverty?
- Are you aware of any other research or evidence that you think would help us to write the Strategy?
- Is anything in here that is contradicted by other information you can provide? (if so, please specify)
- Anything else you think we ought to know / include

We would like to hear about specific things we might be able to do and also about approaches, or *how* we do things. Here are some of the things people have told us about what does and doesn't help.

"If you gain someone's trust and get to know that person, sooner or later you will know if something isn't right. It's not about sitting in front of someone with a checklist. That doesn't build the relationship. It's hard work to admit you need help. But if somebody in poverty trusts you they will, sooner or later, come to you for that help. If they don't trust you then they're just on their own, they're too scared."

"It's ten times worse if they've got a bad attitude. That's worse than anything, whether they give you any help or not. If you leave that building feeling like dirt, you won't want to go back and ask for help again."

## Structure

We think it will make most sense to structure our evidence review around themes. That way, people should be more easily able to find their area/s of interest / expertise. However, whilst we are in this development stage, we have simply listed the majority of reports by author. Our initial list is shown under the heading 'Evidence list.'

Our proposed structure is shown below. If you are contributing additional evidence, it would be helpful if you could let us know where in this structure you think the evidence fits. We may not be able to include all evidence that is submitted, but we will consider it. If you think there is a missing section, please let us know this too.

We know that some things will need to be considered across all themes and are often more about how we do things than what we do. This is why we have included the last section, which has the working title of 'cross-cutting themes'.

## Tackling poverty today – mitigating its worst effects

- Food
- Fuel
- Transport
- Credit / money management
- Benefit take-up
- Advice /advocacy / access to service
- Housing and homelessness
- Work and progression within work (this will mainly be included in the next section on root causes)

## Tackling some of the root causes of poverty

- Work and progression within work
- Growing the economy with a focus on higher level skills
- Work conditions – including pay
- Improving skills
- Childcare – as an enabler to work

## Breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty

- Maternal health
- Home life (including home learning environment, interactions with primary care giver, emotional development)
- High quality early years provision (childcare to support child development)
- Education
- Reducing barriers (e.g. youth offending, DV, teen pregnancies, safeguarding)

## Cross-cutting themes

- How we do things
- Engaging people experiencing poverty in solutions to tackle it
- ‘Making it easier for people’ including the whole household approach, making every contact count and new approaches
- Building on strengths and assets within communities and families

## Evidence list

### From Struggling to Succeeding: Sheffield Child & Household Poverty Strategy 2012-14

#### Research

In our last Child & Household Poverty Strategy, we included a section called ‘evidence base by life cycle stage’ the full version of this is in the appendix (section 8.3). You can see this document

here: <https://www.sheffield0to19.org.uk/professionals/strategy/Sheffield-s-Child-and-Household-Poverty-Strategy.html>

We know that new evidence has emerged since we produced this and we need to update it. For example, the evidence we considered as part of the Best Start lottery bid significantly improves our understanding about early brain development and the importance of attunement, structure and regulation.

What else can you tell us that can help us with this?

#### Sheffield people’s experience

We also talked to parents and young people about what they thought worked, didn’t work and what was important. Their priorities can be found throughout the strategy document and are listed in Section 5. We worked closely with some young people and parents to take their messages about the importance of how we do things into module 2 of our training modules (and throughout all five modules but module 2 is particularly focused on this). You can see the modules here:

<https://www.sheffield0to19.org.uk/professionals/Training/Child-poverty-training.html>

We think these are still important messages and the feedback from people doing the training continues to be very positive. We know that the benefit system has changed since we developed the modules and sanctions and emergency food are increasing problems. What has changed since then and what else might we need to focus on in the future?

## Sheffield Fairness Commission

The Sheffield Fairness Commission's report *Making Sheffield Fairer* provides evidence on inequalities in the city and evidence on the Commission's recommendations. The evidence presented in the final report focuses on those topics the Commission makes recommendations on. The report and all the evidence submitted to the Commission can be viewed here: [www.sheffield.gov.uk/fairnesscommission](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/fairnesscommission). Below are the headlines from each chapter of the report:

### Health and Wellbeing for All

- There are stark health inequalities between different communities in the city
- Poor health is caused by poor socioeconomic circumstances: the poorer you are, the worse your health and wellbeing is likely to be.
- Health problems are worse in unequal societies
- Inequity and unfairness in health can also be due to inequity in access to, and quality of services
- Imbalance in spend per head of population on physical health compared to mental illness
- Caring is more likely to be done by people in particular groups (women, over 65s, specific BME groups) and caring has a negative impact on carers physical and mental health

### Fair Access to High Quality Jobs and Pay

- There are a large number of people that have been unemployed for a considerable time. People who have been out of work for a year or more start to de-skill and are increasingly affected by issues such as deterioration in mental wellbeing.
- Numbers of young people out of work or Not in Education, Employment or Training have been exacerbated by the recession and young people are now remaining on Job Seekers Allowance for much longer. Studies have shown that periods of long term unemployment (12 months or more) can have profound implications for the life chances of young people.
- Evidence indicates that people from deprived communities are often trapped in 'poor' work with low pay, poor working conditions, long hours and job insecurity. There is also a significant cost to businesses and society due to pay inequality in the workplace. There is also an impact on specific groups such as people with disabilities, older people, migrant workers and the unequal work place outcomes for men and women.
- The gap between the national minimum wage and the wage need to cover the essentials has widened in recent years, especially for families with children in the past two years.

### Fair access to Benefits and Credit

- Evidence suggests changes to social security will impact severely on the bottom half of the income distribution, people who are disabled, people from BME groups, and those with children.
- Money invested in debt advice increases income for the city's poorest by at least five times as much as the investment.
- A significant level of use of high-cost credit in the city, for example based on national figures between 20,500 and 30,000 adults in Sheffield, largely from excluded communities will, use doorstep lenders.
- Increasing numbers of people are unable to access enough food to feed themselves and their families. The number of food banks in the city has risen from 3 in early 2010 to 11 in October 2012. National evidence shows that the poorer people are, the worse their diet, and the more diet-related diseases they suffer from.
- National evidence shows that 19% of households are in fuel poverty. Those with a disability or long-term illness and people aged 60-74 are affected more than other households. In terms of housing tenure those in private rented accommodation are most likely to be in fuel poverty.

### Aspiration and Opportunities for All

- Early years experiences go on to impact on every area of life and many children and babies in Sheffield already experience positive early years. However, the Commission heard evidence that for some children in the city this is not the case, leading to long term inequalities. Early years attainment is particularly

inequitable in Sheffield, with the bottom 20% performing considerably worse than the remainder of the Foundation stage cohort.

- Evidence suggests there are some barriers wider than one person's choices – structural barriers – though individuals can be supported to overcome them. Major structural barriers to educational potential, and therefore wider life chances, include poverty, poor housing, caring responsibilities, and discrimination as a result of gender or cultural background.
- Compelling evidence that although young people from poorer backgrounds tend to do less well at school, they have the *same* high levels of aspiration as other children in the city, but very often they do not know *how* to achieve these ambitions. Rather than raising aspirations in order to raise attainment, there is a real need for children and parents to be offered support to learn more about educational and career options so they can make more informed decisions about their future.
- Evidence that the point of entry to secondary school (ages 11-12) is a crucial time as young people's aspirations tend to drop off from this point.

### Housing and a Better Environment

- The scale of house building in general has fallen substantially. The number of new completions has fallen from a peak of 2,882 completions in 2007/8, to 919 in 2010/11. The biggest barrier to home ownership is now the level of deposit required to secure a mortgage, and first time buyers and home owners with little equity in their home are being affected the most.
- In 2009 45% of the private rented sector was classed as not meeting the 'decent home' standard. A quarter of private rented properties also have a hazard that poses a considerable risk to the health and safety of the people living there.
- The evidence shows that poor air quality is estimated to account for up to 500 premature deaths per year in Sheffield with health costs of around £160million per year. Furthermore, there is research evidence of a 'triple jeopardy' with low socio-economic status being associated not only with greater risk of exposure to environmental pollutants, but also with increased susceptibility to health damage from such exposures.

### A Safe City

- Evidence shows certain communities in Sheffield are disproportionately affected by criminal behaviour, with those communities having the highest levels of deprivation tending to have the highest levels of offenders and also the highest levels of victims of crime as offenders will usually commit crimes in areas already known to them.
- Evidence shows the introduction of 20mph zones in one study area was associated with a 41.9% reduction in road casualties. The highest impact on reductions in those killed or seriously injured and casualties was amongst young children. A 20mph speed limit may also lead to increased levels of walking and cycling, which reduce the risk of obesity and heart disease. Some evidence suggests that lower speeds produce fewer emissions and have little or no impact on average journey times.

### One public transport system

- The Commission heard evidence that following deregulation bus companies are able to run whichever services they choose and decide the fares they will charge. As private companies, their main priority is to make a profit overall, rather than meet the needs of local people. Separate fares and tickets for each operator can be potentially confusing and inconvenient for passengers. The deregulated system can result in intense competition on profitable routes and reduced services on less profitable routes.
- The Commission heard evidence that young people rely heavily upon public transport as their primary means of getting around independently. A simple, flat and consistent offer on child fares has been found to be more important for young people than the actual fare level.
- Evidence shows that public transport is not available or appropriate for everybody. Some people are at risk of isolation simply because they live where there is not a public transport service. Some people at risk of isolation because getting to the bus stop and then getting on a bus unaided is not possible, regardless of

how close to a bus route they might live. Simply getting from A to B can be an ordeal for older people and transport improvements would have a positive impact on the life of disabled people.

### **What Citizens and Communities Can Do**

- Evidence shows that there are also some widely believed myths that can harm the case for reducing inequalities. Anecdotal evidence also suggests the knowledge of inequalities in the city could be improved greatly.
- The Commission received evidence that people who most rely on public services tend to be those who are most disempowered by the current model and that if communities and individuals are not empowered to have more say over the issues and services that affect their lives, inequalities can be created or deepened.
- The Commission received evidence and clear examples of where individuals getting more involved has enhanced both individual and community wellbeing. One example is the Community Health Champion Programme which recruited 280 volunteer Community Health Champions from Sheffield's most deprived communities, supporting over 8000 local people to address their own and their communities' health. For every £1 spent, a social return on investment of £2.07 has been demonstrated and over 20% of Health Champions have secured employment due to increased confidence, skills and training – saving £175k from public funds as people move from JSA to employment. The Champions were building on, and supported by the local third sector organisations and local forums.

### **The Child Poverty Unit – evidence review 2014**

The national Child Poverty Unit have recently published 'An evidence review of the drivers of child poverty for families in poverty now and for poor children growing up to be poor adults'. This can be found here: [www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/285389/Cm\\_8781\\_Child\\_Poverty\\_Evidence\\_Review\\_Print.pdf](http://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/285389/Cm_8781_Child_Poverty_Evidence_Review_Print.pdf)

### **Joseph Rowntree Foundation**

Joseph Rowntree Foundation have a long history of research and action to tackle poverty. Their poverty programme can be found here:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/poverty>

Of particular interest is their recently commissioned systematic review, which examines whether money has a causal impact on children's outcomes: DOES MONEY AFFECT CHILDREN'S OUTCOMES? By Kerris Cooper and Kitty Stewart.

They also have a specific programme dedicated to developing evidence about what works for anti-poverty strategies:

<http://www.jrf.org.uk/work/workarea/anti-poverty-strategy>

They say this about it: 'The UK has had a number of anti-poverty strategies in recent years, often focusing on particular groups, like children or pensioners, or with a specific regional scope. What they have all lacked however is an evidence-based link between the policies or actions suggested within the strategy and the outcomes sought. JRF has repeatedly criticised such strategies on these grounds, so we are grasping the nettle by asking what it would take to create an evidenced, all-age strategy to reduce poverty across the UK.'

The Strategy for the UK will be published next year. We can't wait until this is complete to start taking action but we can make sure that we consider all the publications and information available and review anything new as it comes out.

## **Children's voices – what children and young people think is important in tackling child poverty**

The office of the children's commissioner has undertaken a piece of work with children and young people to get their views on policy to tackle child poverty. Information and five strategies that were developed as a result can be found here:

<http://www.appgpoverty.org.uk/children/young-peoples-thoughts-on-child-poverty-policy/>

They have produced a range of publications including:

We want to help people see things our way: A rights-based analysis of disabled children's experience living in low income (OCC, 2013a) □ What we say we need: A report on the important items, opportunities and aspirations for children and young people (OCC, 2013b)

A Child Rights Impact Assessment of Budget Decisions (including the 2013 Budget and the cumulative impact of tax-benefit reforms and reductions in spending on public services 2010–2015) (OCC, 2013d)

Child Rights Impact Assessment of the Welfare Reform Bill (OCC, 2013e)

Trying to get by: Consulting with children and young people on poverty (OCC, 2011b)

We want to help people see things our way: A rights-based analysis of disabled children's experience living in low income (OCC, 2013a)

What we say we need: A report on the important items, opportunities and aspirations for children and young people (OCC, 2013b)

## **Church Action on Poverty, Oxfam and the Trussell Trust**

Below the breadline, The Relentless Rise of Food Poverty in Britain, June 2014 contains information about experiences of using food aid provision and some recommendations.

## **GLA**

The Mayor's Education Inquiry, Final Report: Findings and Recommendations, October 2012 contains some useful information about London's approach to improving education.

## **The Sutton Trust**

Baby Bonds, Parenting, attachment and a secure base for children, March 2014 – research by Sophie Moullin, Jane Waldfogel and Elizabeth Washbrook – chapter 5 contains information about barriers to secure attachment including poverty, chapter 6 then goes on to look at policy responses to reducing barriers.

## **Centre on the Developing Child : INBRIEF Executive Function: Skills for Life and Learning**

Through a series of brief summaries of essential findings from recent scientific publications, Harvard University have identified an evidence base of research on the developing brain. This identifies a set of skills that are essential for school achievement and success in later life and makes recommendations on policies to reduce the impact of 'toxic stress,' such as neglect and persistent poverty : [http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/briefs/inbrief\\_series](http://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/briefs/inbrief_series)

## **The Big Lottery 'A Better Start' programme - what matters for child outcomes in the early years**

This programme aims to improve the nutrition, social and emotional development and language of young children living in disadvantaged communities. The 'Science Within' framework demonstrates that family poverty has direct effects on children's well-being and life chances and provides pointers to diverse activities that could promote

positive outcomes for children from conception to 3 years and can be found here : <http://dartington.org.uk/the-science-within>

### **Family Nurse Partnership (FNP) Programme**

The Family Nurse Partnership programme aims to improve pregnancy outcomes by supporting mothers-to-be to make informed choices about healthy pregnancy behaviours. 85% of FNP mothers have incomes below the poverty line. The evidence base for the programme in England demonstrates successful engagement with disadvantaged young parents, including fathers. Mothers are more likely to adopt healthy lifestyle choices, have increased confidence and their parenting ability and future aspirations. In addition, FNP children appear to be developing in line with the general population, which is again promising as this group usually fares much worse.

### **What Works' evidence standards**

The Social Research Unit at Dartington has worked collaboratively with international experts on evidence-based ways to improve children's outcomes to produce a set of 'what works' evidence standards.: <http://dartington.org.uk/projects/what-works-evidence-standards>

The standards are being used as the basis for building the Blueprints for Success portal: a database of programmes and interventions proven to work in improving children's outcomes for children's commissioners. The 'what works' evidence standards have been tailored and adapted for the Big Lottery Fund's Realising Ambition programme.

### **Lisa Harker's review for DWP: Delivering on Child Poverty: what would it take? 2006**

Lisa Harker's own introduction gives a good overview of what is included and excluded in this report: 'The terms of reference limited the scope of this work to the areas of policy and service delivery that are within the remit of the Department for Work and Pensions. Although the Department is responsible for helping parents to participate in work – a key aspect of tackling child poverty – the Government's overall child poverty strategy cannot be viewed through the lens of a single department. As set out in the Government's 2004 Child Poverty Review, improving financial support for families, reforming public services to enhance children's life chances and supporting parents in their parenting role are also critical elements of this strategy.'

### **National Children's Bureau work on international approaches to tackling child poverty**

Tackling Child poverty and promoting children's wellbeing, lessons from abroad, Fauth, Renton and Solomon, 2013

Child Poverty outcome models, Fauth, Blades and Gill, 2012

Both these pieces of work consider lessons from other countries to make recommendations about tackling child poverty.

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