

# Peterborough Child and Family Poverty Strategy



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## 1. Introduction

In Peterborough we are determined to improve the outcomes of children and young people across a whole range of indicators, including:

- Educational attainment;
- Physical health and development;
- Emotional and mental health and resilience;
- Reducing numbers of children at risk of or who experience significant harm;
- Ambition and long term sustained improvements in standards of living.

However, it is clear from a wide ranging body of research that achieving these ambitions means that we must tackle child and family poverty. Children who grow up in households affected by poverty experience poorer outcomes compared with those who are unaffected by poverty.

Poverty affects not only a family's standards of living but also children's future prospects – their chances at school, their health, safety and overall wellbeing. So poverty is not just an issue for this generation, but for those to come.

Britain has some of the highest levels of child poverty in the industrialised world. It is estimated that some 3.5 million children and young people in the UK live in relative poverty [defined as living in households with an income of 60% or less of the median household income]. This figure has increased from an estimated 2.9 million as of 2009, and is estimated by some to be likely to increase by a further 400,000 over the next 12 months.<sup>1</sup>

Ending child and family poverty requires concerted, coordinated leadership and action across the whole range of local services. In Peterborough we have a Child and Family Poverty Action Group, reporting to the Children and Families Commissioning Board. These partnership bodies are the focus of our work to reduce levels of child and family poverty in the City.

This Child and Family Poverty Strategy therefore sets out our goals for ensuring that all our children and young people can achieve their full potential, and describes the steps we will take to achieve them. But ending child poverty also requires a contract with families. Our services will work to narrow the gap in outcomes between the most and least disadvantaged groups and help to remove barriers to employment and training. However, in return, it is reasonable to ask that parents make the most of opportunities to improve their and their children's situations.

This strategy begins by exploring definitions of child poverty national indications of incidence. It moves on to detail the impact of child poverty for the child concerned and for the broader community before setting out our priorities for action in both the short and longer term.

## 2. Definitions of Child Poverty

The definition that is most commonly used for child poverty is the proportion of children living in families who have an equivalised household income that is less than 60% of the median household equivalised income.

An equivalised income takes household size into account: larger households obviously need a bigger income to maintain the same standard of living than smaller ones. Equivalisation also enables comparisons to be made between different areas. Household income includes all salaries and benefits, before outgoings such as housing costs.

Because the most commonly used measure of child poverty is a relative one, the proportion of children living in poverty by this definition falls when median income levels fall. This meant that there was a fall in the proportion of children living in poverty in the year 2010/11 compared with 2009/10 according to this measure. However, further analysis shows that this was because there was a fall in the median income between these years as a result of broader economic factors, as opposed to an increase in income among the poorest groups.

For this reason, some prefer measures of absolute poverty [such as that defined within the Child Poverty Act 2010 which set a level of 60% of median income as at April 2010, adjusted annually for inflation].

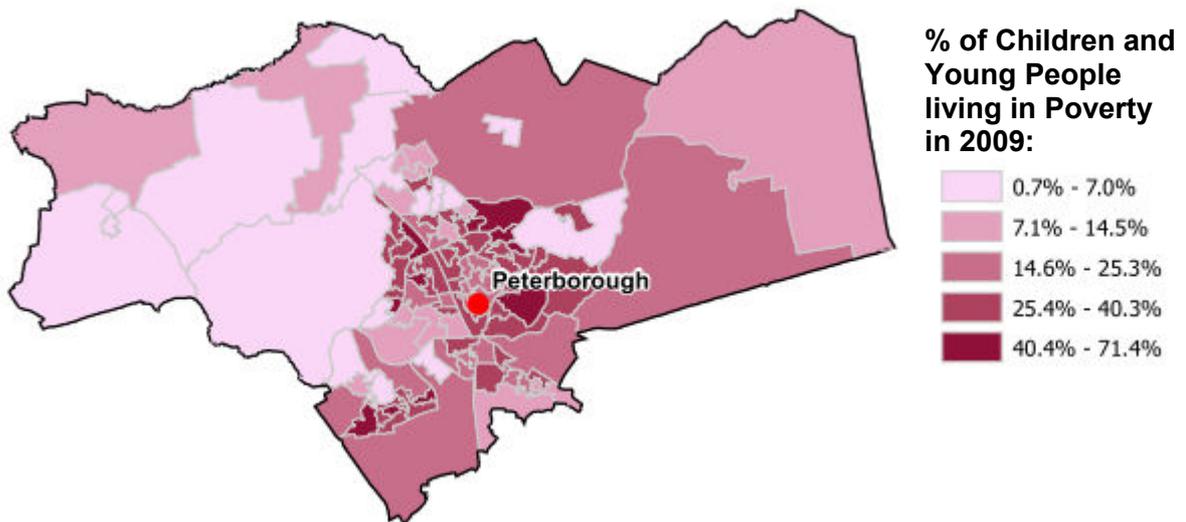
To further complicate matters, child poverty is often expressed as two relative indicators – one before housing costs and one after housing costs are taken into account. Taking the numbers of children in poverty in 2010/11 using figures for the Department of Work and Pensions, 2.3 million children were living in poverty [i.e. in households with an income of less than 60% of the median income] before housing costs are taken into account, and 3.6 million were living in poverty after housing costs were taken into account.

Measures of the numbers of households affected by poverty within published statistics also vary. The Department for Work and Pensions publishes estimates of the proportion of children living in poverty by local authority based on proxy indicators [mainly the proportion of workless households], while Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs publishes data at lower super output and ward level that estimates proportions of children and young people living in households affected by poverty based on claimants of Income Support, Child Tax Credit and Working Tax Credit.

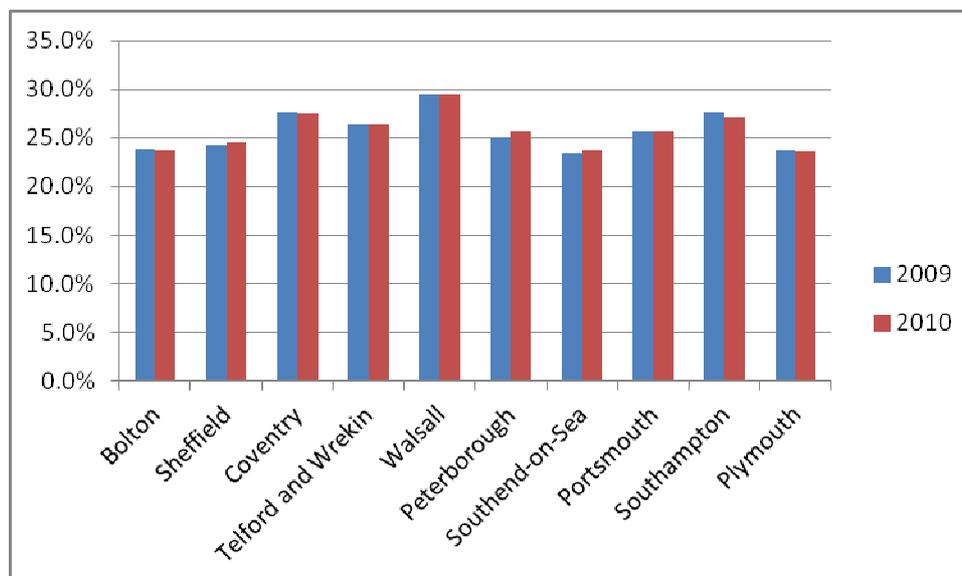
Finally, a number of researchers point to a need to differentiate between short term poverty and sustained or persistent poverty. This is because many households will experience temporary periods of poverty without these having a long term impact on the health of children and young people. It is households that experience persistent poverty where outcomes for children and young people are likely to be most significantly affected.

### 3. Indications of the Rate of Child and Family Poverty in Peterborough

Peterborough is an area of contrasts that includes some of the most and least deprived areas in the country. The map below shows the proportion of all children who were living in poverty in 2009: <sup>ii</sup> The likelihood is that there are higher levels of child poverty now than there were in 2009, given increases in the level of unemployment since then. However, the areas where the proportions of children and young people living in poverty are highest are unlikely to have changed significantly.



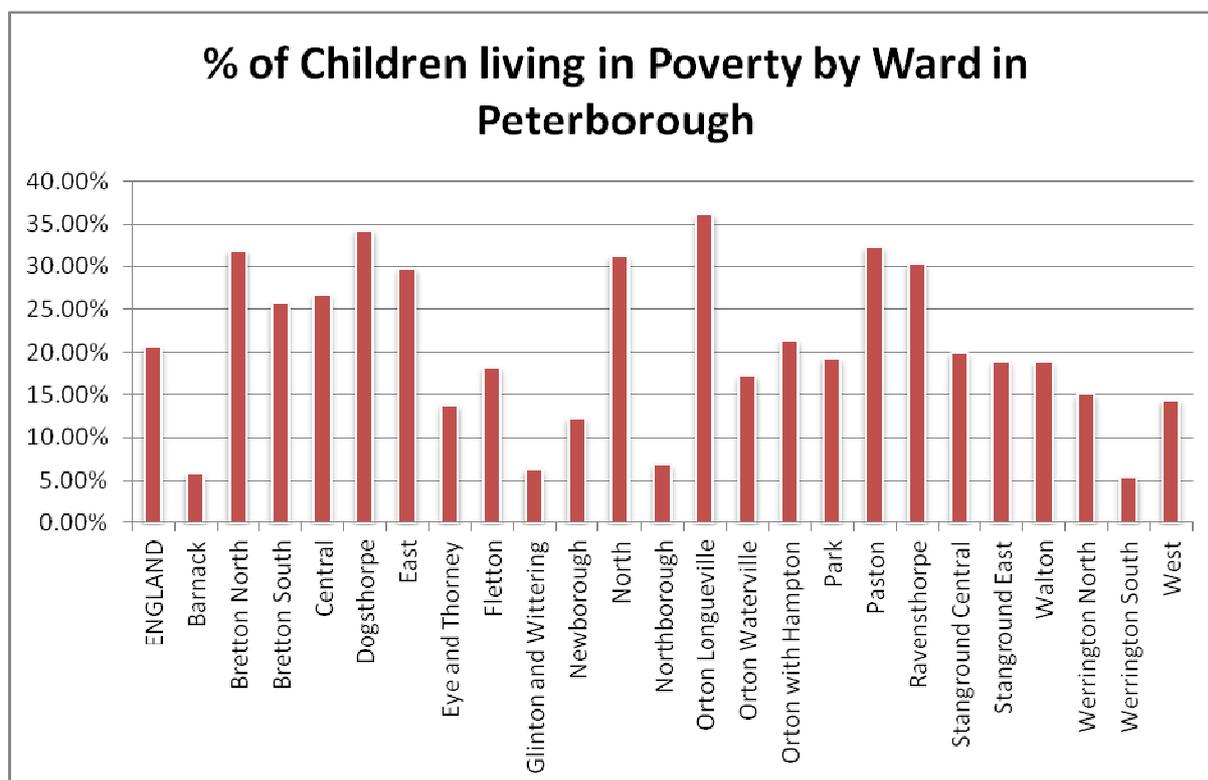
According to the Department for Work and Pensions proxy measure for child poverty, 25.7% of children in Peterborough were living in poverty in 2010. The following chart compares Peterborough with rates of child poverty among our statistical neighbours in 2009 and 2010: <sup>iii</sup>



Of our statistical neighbours, four have higher rates of Child Poverty than Peterborough, placing us close to the middle position. However, in most of our statistical neighbours the rate of children in poverty fell or stayed the same between 2009 and 2010. In contrast the biggest increase in the rate of children in poverty took place in Peterborough between these years.

Data published by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs provides an indication of the rate of child poverty at ward and Lower Super Output Area [LSOA]. Lower Super Output Areas are the smallest statistical area measure, typically consisting of approximately 1,500 people. They are mapped to wards, so each ward is made up of a precise number of LSOAs. They enable the characteristics of small areas to be analysed.

The following chart shows the proportion of children and young people living in poverty by ward as of 2010: <sup>iv</sup>



This chart shows the diversity of deprivation levels found in Peterborough. So while over 30% of children and young people living in Bretton North, Dogsthorpe, North, Orton Longueville, Paston and Ravensthorpe are living in poverty, fewer than 6% live in poverty in Barnack and Werrington South.

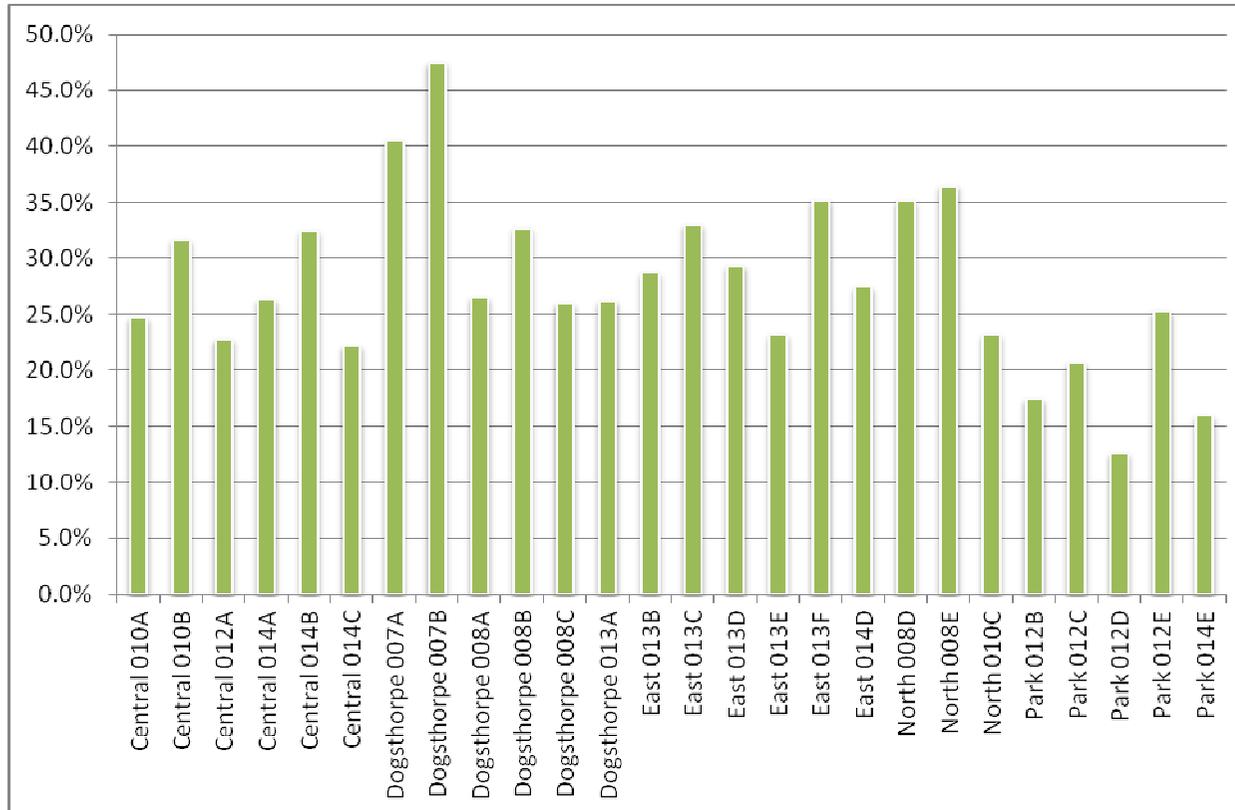
However, even ward level data hides very significant variations between pockets of relative affluence and deprivation. The next three charts, again using HMRC data from 2010, show the proportion of children and young people living in poverty by Lower Super Output Area in each locality.

Maps that show the approximate location of each LSOA can be found at:

<http://www.uklocalarea.com/index.php?q=Peterborough>

## East and Central Locality

The following chart shows the percentage of children living in poverty in each LSOA:



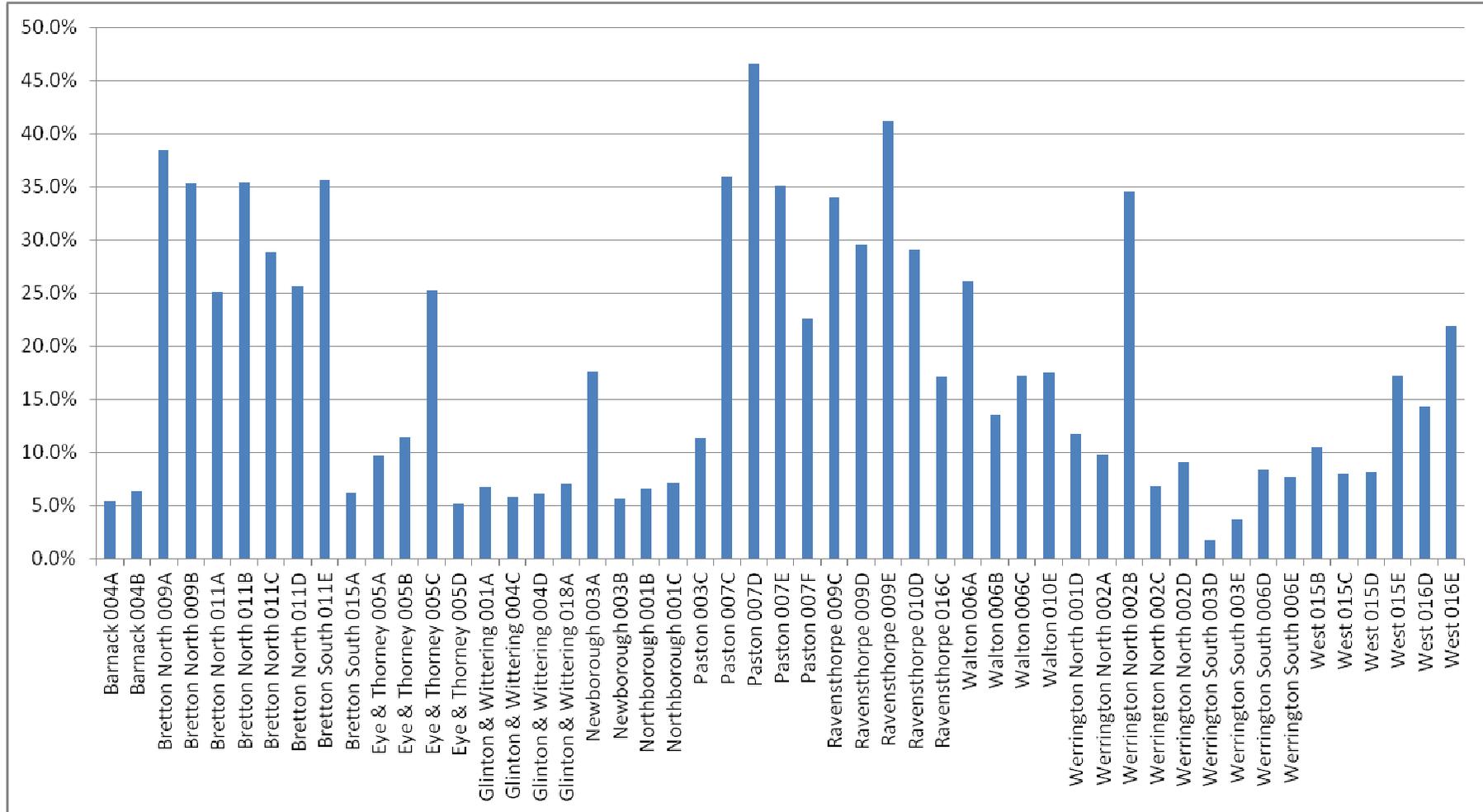
One LSOA in Dogsthorpe ward [007B] has the highest proportion of children living in poverty in Peterborough, at 47.5%. This is the area roughly between Eastern Avenue, Scalford Drive, Belvoir Way and Shelborne Road.

Meanwhile, the chart for North and West below illustrates the extremes of affluence and poverty in this locality, with very high rates of child poverty in Paston, Bretton North and Werrington North, and very low rates in Werrington South, Barnack and Glington & Wittering:

See <http://www.uklocalarea.com/index.php?q=Peterborough> for maps of each LSOA.

## North and West Locality

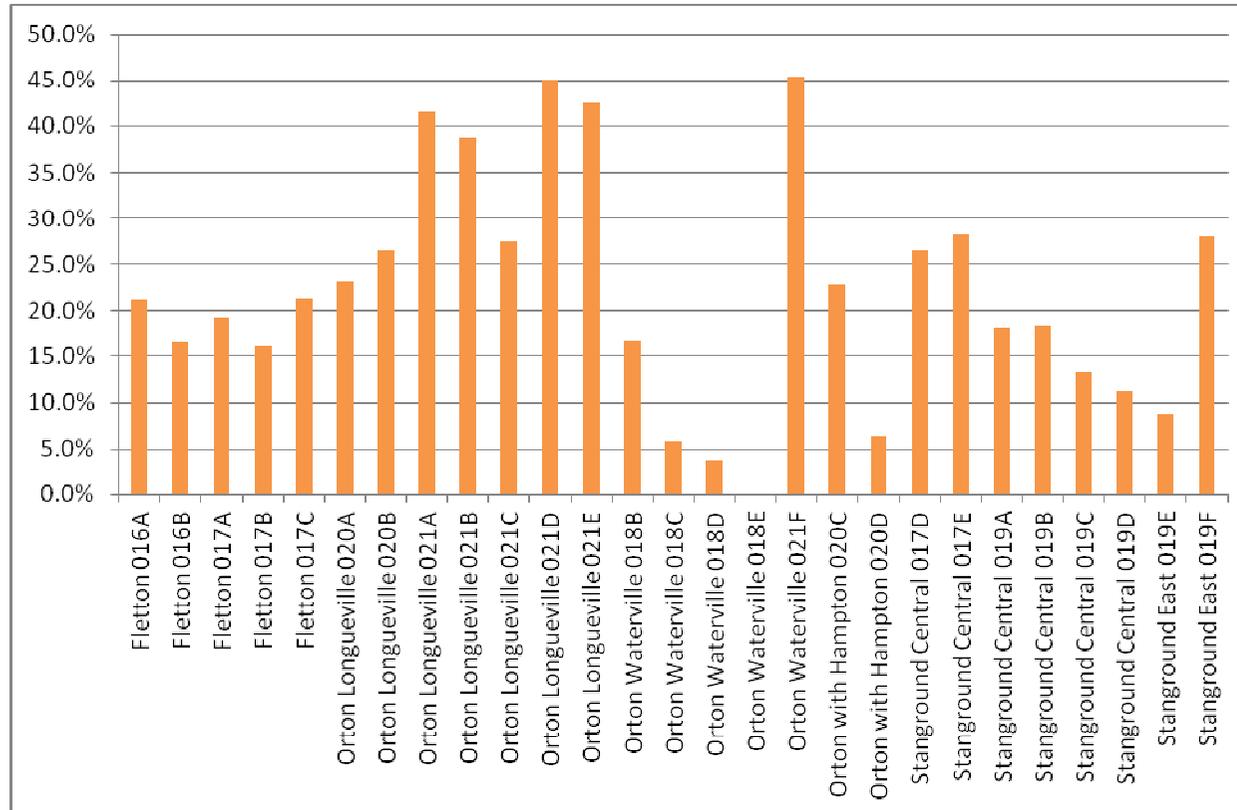
The following chart shows the percentage of children living in each LSOA in poverty:



See <http://www.uklocalarea.com/index.php?q=Peterborough> for maps of each LSOA

## South Locality

The Following chart shows the percentage of children living in poverty in each LSOA:



Orton Waterville has the biggest range of contrast of any ward in Peterborough. Generally affluent, one LSOA has 0% of its' children living in poverty. However, another LSOA in the same ward has a child poverty rate of 45.5%. This is the area Newcombe Way. Three of the LSOAs in Orton Longueville have poverty rates of more than 40%.

See <http://www.uklocalarea.com/index.php?q=Peterborough> for maps of each LSOA.

## **Indications of changes since 2010**

The above charts provide indications of the rates of child poverty in Peterborough in 2010, the latest statistical data available. It would seem likely that levels of child poverty, at least as measured in absolute terms, will have increased over this period, given the continuing economic difficulties.

Although as we will see later, many of the families living in poverty include adults who are in work, the number of workless families with children is an indicator of the overall number of families with children who are living in poverty.

In Peterborough, the number of workless families has increased by 3% between 2010 and February 2012. If the number of children living in poverty were to have increased by the same rate between 2010 and 2012, then there would now be 108,000 children living in poverty compared with 105,000 in 2010. In percentage terms this would mean that the proportion of children living in poverty would have increased from 25.7% in 2010 to 26.5% in 2012.

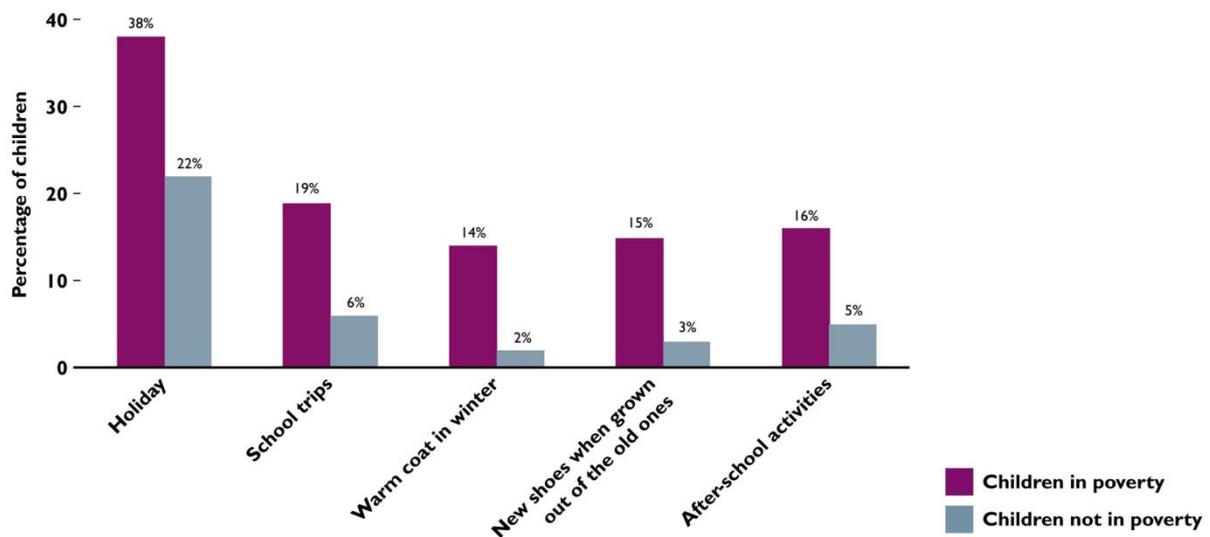
## 4. The Impact of Child Poverty

Children living in poverty are at significantly higher risk of poor outcomes than children who are not exposed to poverty. Children living in persistently poor families who are exposed to poverty over long periods are at greater risk of poor outcomes than children who experience poverty for shorter periods. The harmful effects of poverty are felt most when they are experienced by children at a young age. Children affected by poverty are more likely to:

- Miss periods of schooling and secure poorer educational outcomes than their peers;
- Become involved in criminal or anti-social behaviour;
- Have lower levels of health;
- Have lower levels of self esteem and aspirations for the future.

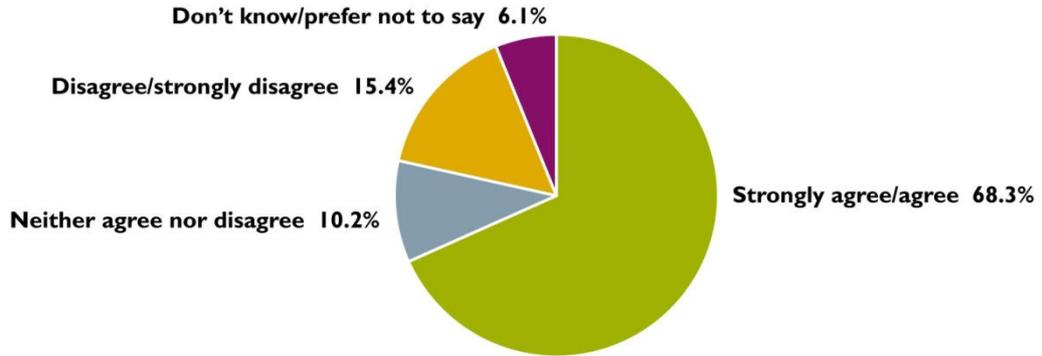
Experiencing poverty as a child can have a substantial impact on a child's experiences at school, where they can miss out on opportunities to learn and socialise because their families may have difficulty meeting the costs of uniforms, school trips, music, art and out of school activities. Poverty can also affect a child's social confidence and relationships with other children; children report that being seen to be poor carries great social stigma and leads to a fear of being excluded by their better off peers.

Children affected by poverty are aware of missing out on opportunities or having to go without, as the following research by Save the Children<sup>v</sup> found:

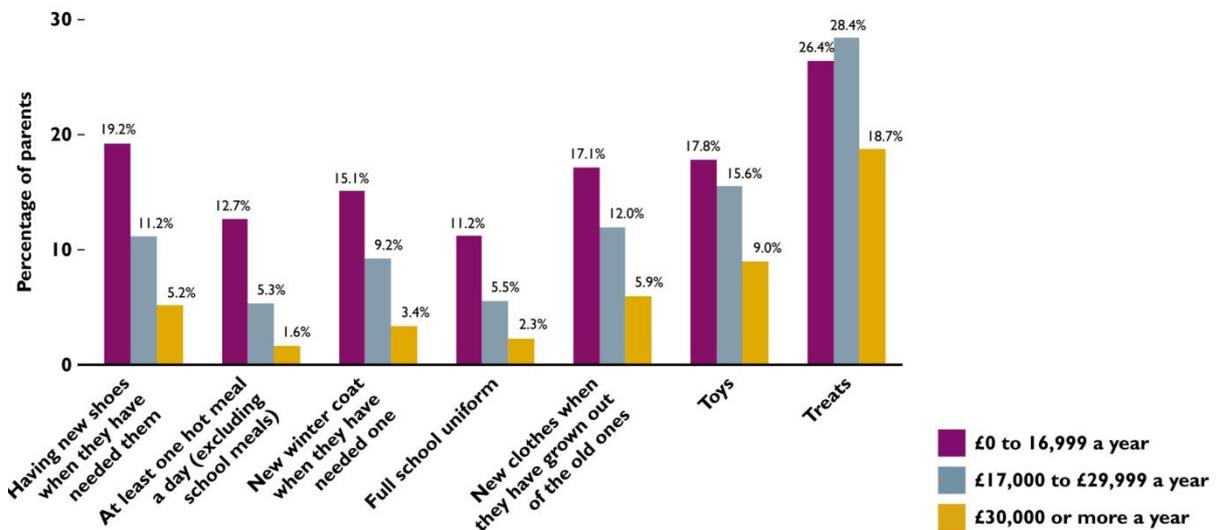
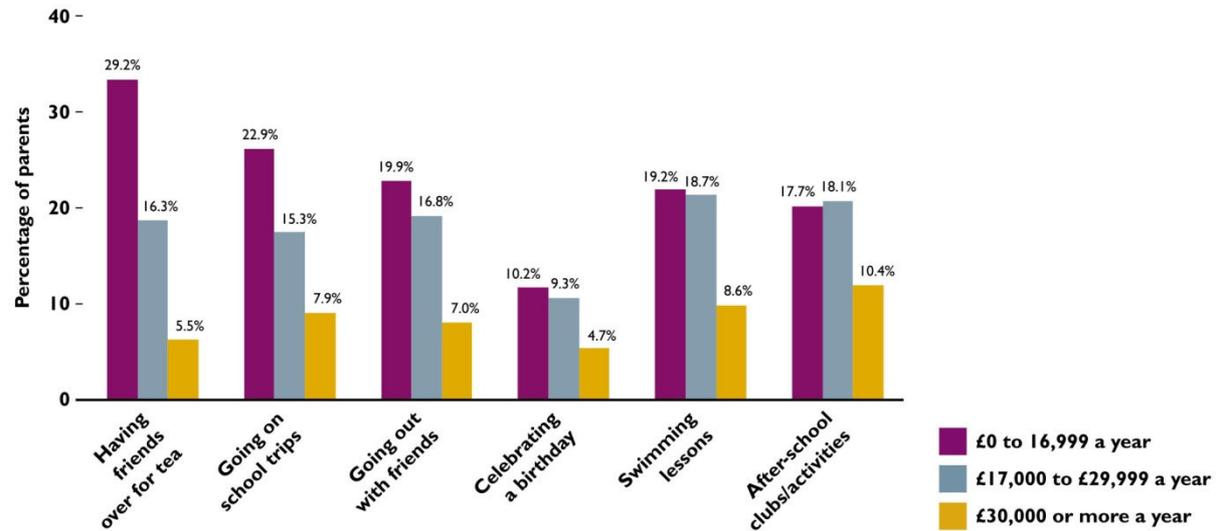


The same research also found that children living in families with low incomes were often aware of the pressures experienced by their parents, as shown by the following chart:

**“My family has to think carefully about the things we spend our money on”**



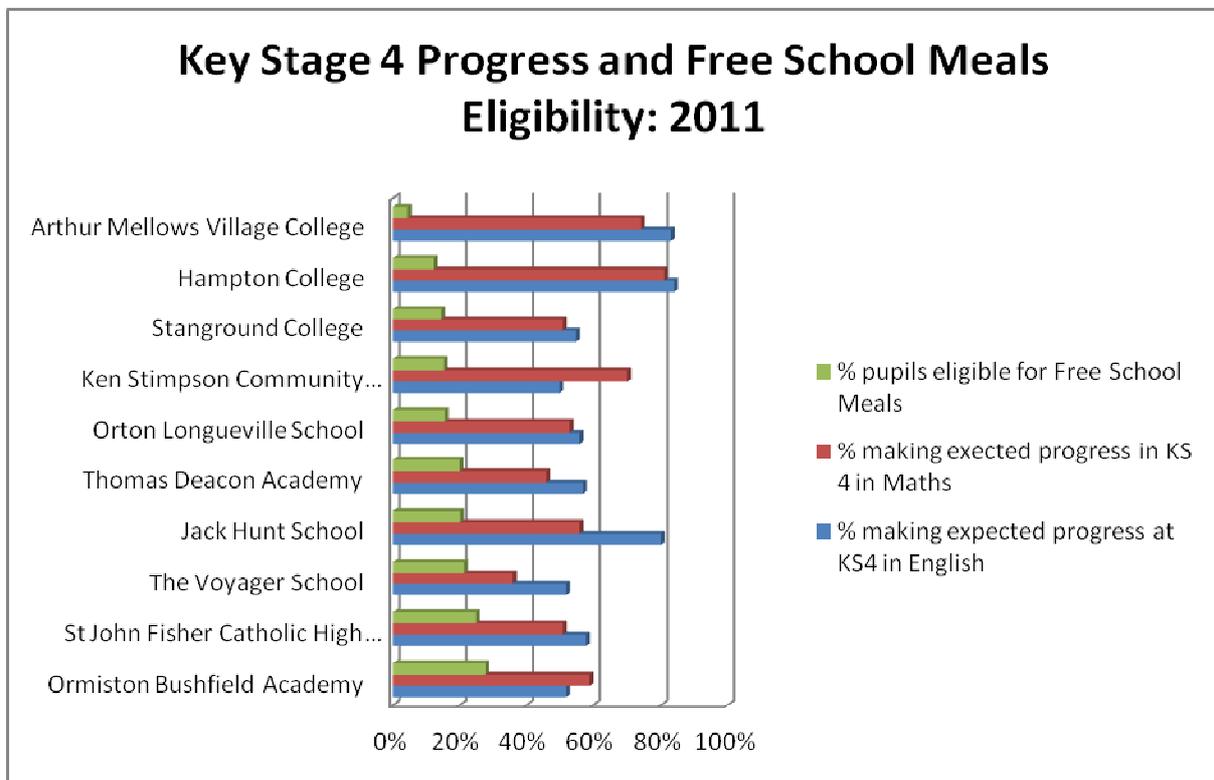
Parents in families affected by poverty also identified that their children were missing out because of a lack of money when compared with their peers:



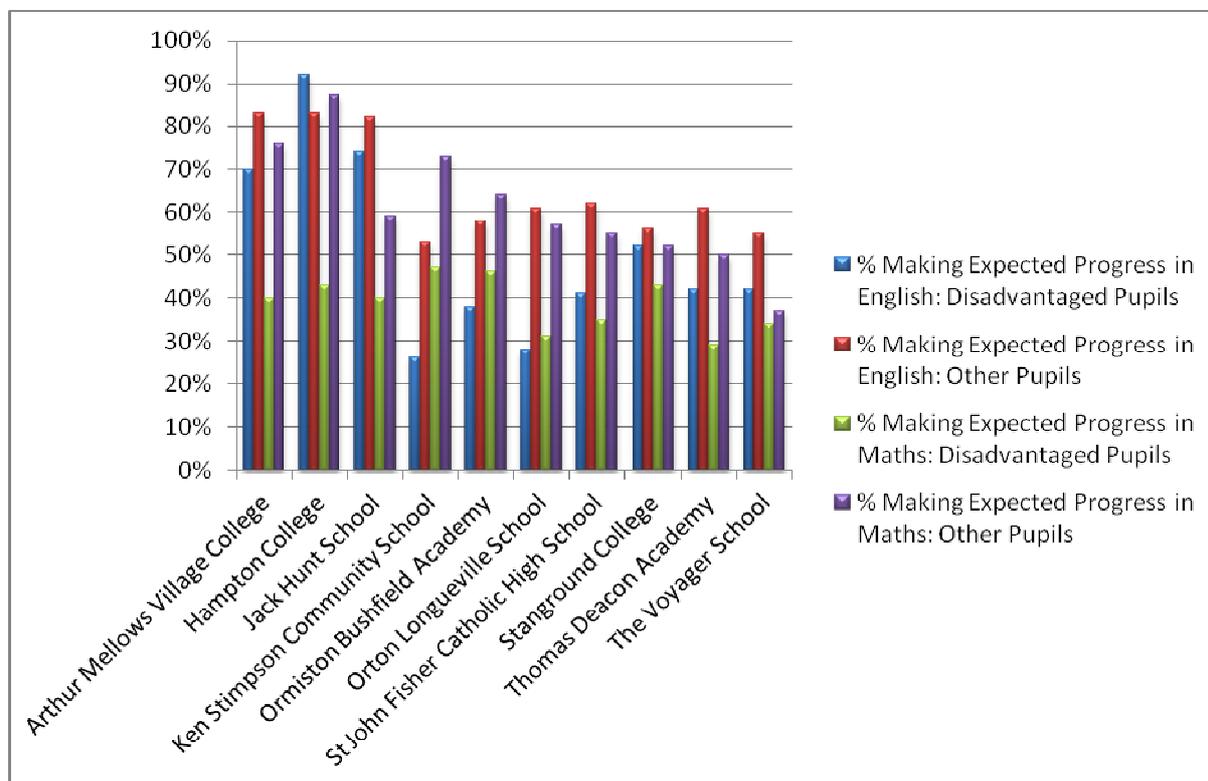
Early social experiences are important determinants of later life chances and children from low income families can face a double disadvantage. They may be less likely to experience the stimulation they need at home, while disadvantaged children also tend to attend pre-school education for shorter periods than children from advantaged groups. This can have a profound effect on educational attainment right up to GCSE level and beyond, as evidenced by the gap between pupils in receipt of free school meals and their peers.<sup>vi</sup>

Peterborough schools vary significantly in terms of the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals. Over 58% of pupils in Winyates primary school are eligible for free school meals, for example, while only 1.6% of pupils are eligible for free school meals at Newborough primary.

The following chart compares expected progress at Key Stage 4 in English and Mathematics with the proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals in the city's secondary schools [schools are omitted where no data is available]:



The chart illustrates that in general terms, the expected progress is lower in schools where there are higher proportions of pupils eligible for free school meals. The chart below indicates the relative progress made by disadvantaged pupils compared to other, non-disadvantaged pupils, again in 2011 at Key Stage 4:



This chart shows that regardless of the school attended, disadvantaged pupils make significantly less progress than their non-disadvantaged peers.

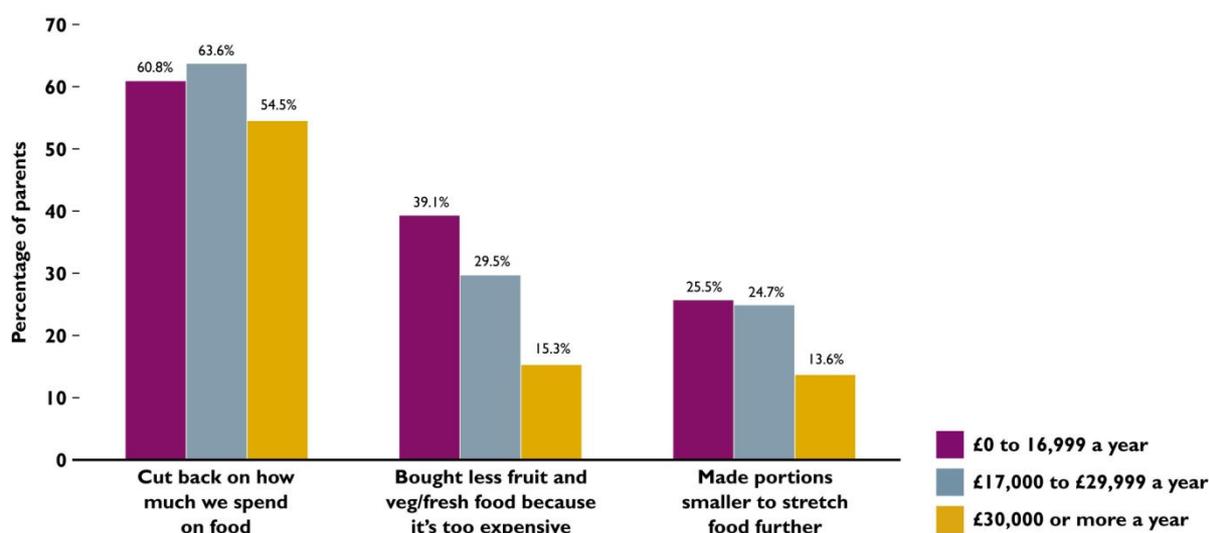
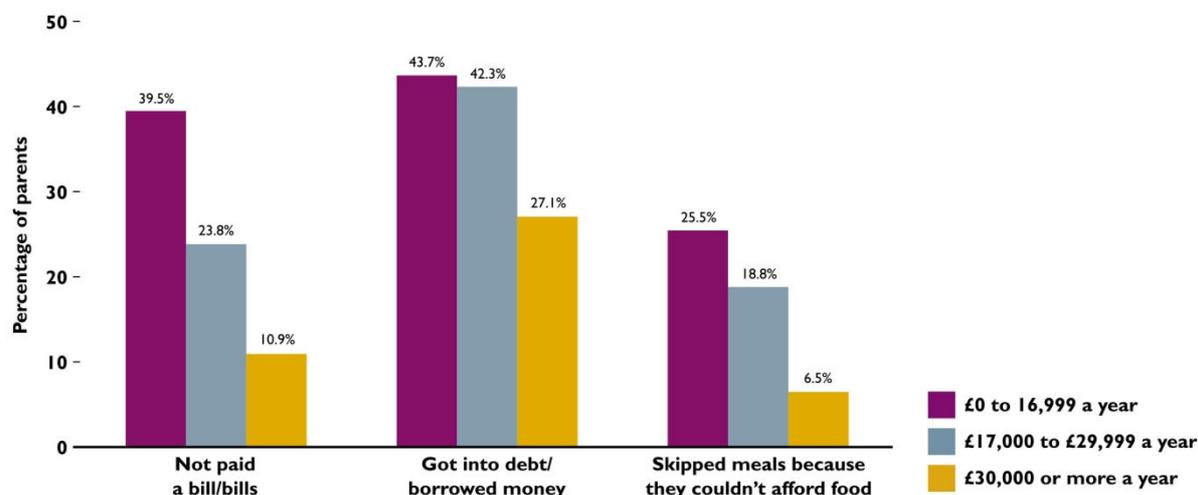
Children in poverty have worse health outcomes across a range of indicators. For example:

- They are more likely to be born prematurely, have low birth weight, and die in their first year of life;
- Children and young people from lower income households are more likely to report longstanding illnesses and less likely to report good or very good health;
- Children from unskilled, working class backgrounds are three times more likely to have a mental health disorder as children from professional backgrounds. Children from backgrounds where the parents have never worked are four times more likely to experience such disorders as are children from professional backgrounds;
- Children living in deprived areas are significantly more likely to be obese – levels of obesity of year 6 children are about 10% higher in the most deprived authorities compared with the least;
- Children from poorer backgrounds are 13 times more likely to die from unintentional injury and 37 times more likely to die as a result of exposure to smoke, fire or flames.

Urban areas and areas characterised by deprivation are often associated with a lack of safe spaces in which children can play. This can have a negative impact on children's cognitive development, communication skills and health, all of which can have a knock on effect on their attainment. In Havering, local performance against the indicator for the proportion of

physically active children is particularly poor. It is also poor for physically active adults, suggesting that a lack of physical activity is transmitted across the generations.<sup>viii</sup>

Many parents are juggling paying commitments such as bills, rent and mortgages, with buying essentials for their children and ensuring that there is enough to eat. The following charts give an indication of the difficulties faced by families on low incomes:



Source: Save the Children: Child Poverty in 2012

Poverty can also affect the ways in which individuals participate in society, form social networks and develop shared values. The concept of social capital is complex. The Office for National Statistics describes social capital in terms of citizenship, neighbourliness, trust, shared values, community involvement, volunteering, social networks and civic participation. Evidence shows that low social capital is related to poverty and other associated factors including employment, community deprivation and levels of education. For example, 86% of people with an A level qualification or above had three or more people to turn to in a crisis, compared with only 77% of people with no qualifications.<sup>ix</sup>

Poverty can also have an impact on the level of serious neglect experienced by children. While there is no clear link to suggest that poverty causes neglect and indeed most people in poverty do not neglect their children, some research suggests that chronic poverty plays a part in many cases of physical child neglect by reducing morale and increasing a sense of general hopelessness and passivity.<sup>x</sup>

Material deprivation is a broader concept than poverty and includes, for example, housing and the accessibility of public services. Financial resources, such as savings and debt, are also important determinants of a family's standard of living.

Family incomes depend on the degree of the family's financial inclusion – whether they have access to a bank account or affordable credit and access to impartial debt advice. Regardless of how well families manage their finances, exclusion from mainstream financial services can lead to them facing extra charges, for example because they have to pay to cash a cheque, or pay higher charges for utilities through 'pay as you go schemes' because they cannot use direct debit.

Low income families are also vulnerable to over-indebtedness when they turn to poor value sources of credit. Research suggests that 57% of low income families and 72% of lone parents have no savings. When these families are faced with unexpected costs, they often have no choice but to turn to credit. However, they may well only have limited options, such as the so called specialist lenders or illegal money lenders, all of whom can charge very high rates of interest.<sup>xi</sup>

Areas of deprivation can suffer from a lack of local shops and other private sector services, leading to a reduction in choice and an increase in prices, which in turn contribute to families' material deprivation.

Links between child poverty and an increased likelihood of involvement in anti-social behaviour and criminal activity, of developing poor health and of failing to achieve educational potential or secure well paid employment, together with an increased likelihood of future generations repeating similar patterns provides the foundation to the development of a business case for tackling child and family poverty, as described in Section 5, below.

## 5. The Business Case for Reducing Child & Family Poverty: The Case for Action

The costs of child poverty fall on individuals, families, communities and the tax payer. Child poverty has effects that go beyond the individual: poor children tend to have lower educational attainment, and low skills and productivity will stunt economic growth and limit the ability of the UK to compete in the global economy.

In 2008, The Joseph Rowntree Foundation estimated that child poverty costs the UK nationally at least £25 Billion each year. £13 billion of this reflects the costs associated with below average employment rates and earning levels among adults who grew up in poverty, including benefits payments and depressed tax revenues. The remaining £12 billion is estimated to relate to the current generation of children living in poverty and the extra costs of providing personal social services, educational support and costs associated with higher levels of offending and anti-social behaviour. <sup>xii</sup>

'Child poverty is... costly to everyone in Britain, not just those who experience it directly... Children from low income families are less likely to do well in school, and more likely to suffer from ill-health.'

If we only consider the impact of poorer educational outcomes associated with child poverty, it is clear that these will have an impact on children's employability as adults: children who grow up in low income families are more likely to become unemployed or do low paid jobs. Poor educational outcomes also have a wider impact on society and generate costs for public services. For example, analysis of the public costs of those who are not in education, employment or training between 16 and 18 concluded that the total lifetime costs at 2000-2001 prices was £7 billion in resource costs and £8.1 billion in public finance costs. The costs considered included educational underachievement, unemployment, crime, poor physical and mental health and substance abuse. <sup>xiii</sup>

Poorer outcomes for children, young people and families place additional burdens and costs on public services such as health care and children's services, and can have an impact on everybody's experiences of safety and wellbeing. Communities suffer through increased deprivation and inequalities, which in turn reduce social cohesion.

The outcomes of poverty today can be the causes of poverty tomorrow, thus perpetuating a vicious cycle where costs can only escalate. <sup>xiv</sup>

'Many of the [economic] differences cumulate across the lifecycle, especially those related to people's socio-economic background. We see this before children enter school, through the school years, through entry into the labour market, and on to retirement... and mortality rates later in life. Economic advantage and disadvantage reinforce themselves across the life cycle and often on to the next generation.' <sup>xv</sup>

## 6. Risk Factors for Child and Family Poverty

Not all children in poverty experience the same risks: child poverty is a result of a number of complex and varied factors which act at both the individual and community level. Although the causes behind each child's poverty will be different, there are some key characteristics that place parents at greatest risk of living in poverty and deprivation, which are summarised in the box below:

Families with the following characteristics have a higher than average risk of poverty:

- children in workless families, where the risk of poverty remains high, at 58 per cent, which is considerably above the average of 22 per cent;<sup>a</sup>
- children in couple families where one adult works part-time<sup>b</sup> have a 44 per cent risk of poverty;
- more than a third of all ethnic minority families live in poverty;
- children in families with one or more disabled adults face a high risk of poverty at 31 per cent;
- children in families with 4 or more children have a 40 per cent risk of poverty; and
- children who live in Inner London have a high risk of poverty at 35 per cent.

<sup>a</sup> It should be noted that these risk figures are for children in workless families. The Households Below Average Income series report of 2005/06 presents the risk of children in workless households. This latter figure is 60 per cent. The two differ as there are a small number of children whose parent or parents are not working, but others in their household are in work.

<sup>b</sup> Includes the very few cases where both adults work part-time.

*Source: Households Below Average Income 2005-06, Regional data 2003/04-2005/06*

Low income is a central component of poverty, and family income is largely determined by employment status. It is not surprising therefore that worklessness is a large determining factor of child poverty. Research for the Department for Education published in 2012,<sup>xvi</sup> found that the following family characteristics were closely associated with family worklessness:

- Single parent;
- Younger and particularly teenage mother;
- Larger numbers of children;
- Living in rented and especially social rented housing;
- Parents with no or low level qualifications;
- Living in income poverty;
- Living in a deprived area;
- Family instability [e.g. losing a partner through separation or divorce];
- Parent with long-term limiting illness;
- Parent with English as an Additional Language.

Other studies have identified the presence of disability within the family as being strongly associated with worklessness. Parents of disabled children face particular difficulties in

accessing employment, often linked to problems finding childcare able to meet the needs of their child. This is compounded by the fact that a higher proportion of children living in families with a disabled child are living in lone parent families.<sup>xvii</sup>

Poor physical and mental health can seriously affect the opportunity for parents to enter the workplace. 25% of children living in poverty live with at least one parent who has a disability. Mental health is a particular barrier, with only 24% of adults with long term mental health difficulties in work.<sup>xviii</sup>

However, these factors also interact with skill levels. With a given level of disability or age of child, those with higher skill levels are more likely to be working. Non cognitive [social and emotional] skills, basic skills and formal qualifications all affect an individual's ability to get a job and then remain in it and make progress. 90% of people with a degree are in employment, while only 50% of those without formal qualifications are in work. It is therefore not possible to define fixed relationships between characteristics such as disability and the likelihood of working. Nevertheless they help to emphasise where the focus of enabling policies need to be placed.<sup>xix</sup>

For some groups, the links between poverty and poor outcomes are particularly significant. There is a strong relationship between poor outcomes and length of time spent in poverty. Children from persistently poor families are more likely than children in temporary poverty to be at risk of poor outcomes across a number of areas. For example, they are more likely to be excluded from school than those experiencing temporary poverty. They were also more likely to live in poor housing and in hard pressed areas.<sup>xx</sup> The effects of poverty are also likely to be longer lasting where children are exposed to poverty in their youngest years.<sup>xxi</sup>

Table: Risk of Poverty and Severe Poverty by Household Characteristics

	Not in poverty (%)	Non-severe poverty (%)	Severe poverty (%)
Workless parent/s	5.3	42.1	62.3
No means-tested benefit/tax credit receipt	36.4	12.1	15.2
Mothers with no qualification	10.8	31.4	44
Rent	15.7	60	72
No savings	68	90	96
Lone parent	15	44	48
Non-White	9	15	26
Disability	18	29	33

Source: Ending Severe Childhood Poverty: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, November 2008

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the table above shows that the risk of exposure to severe poverty, is highest for children living in families where no adult is in paid employment. High risks are also associated with living in a lone parent family, or in a family where the mother has no formal qualifications, and where the family is from a minority ethnic background.

Children in working families have a much lower risk of being in poverty at 14%. But because there are so many children who live in families who work, children living in working families and who are living in poverty still account for half the total number living in poverty at 2.8 million as at 2006.

In reality, experiences of poverty and work are dynamic. Low paid work and worklessness are closely related – people who are in low paid employment are more likely to be unemployed in the next year. Lone parents and those in persistent poverty are at particular high risk of cycling between periods of employment and unemployment, which can make it even harder for families to cope financially.

Achieving positive outcomes for children and young people across all domains - health, safety, enjoyment and achievement, and future economic wellbeing – are all intrinsically linked to poverty. Getting it right on income and jobs will help to get it right on all these other dimensions of children’s and families’ wellbeing.<sup>xxii</sup>

## 7. In-work Poverty: Low Pay and Intermittent Unemployment

The role of paid employment is often cited as being the best route out of poverty, and increasing parental employment must therefore be a central aspiration of any child and family poverty strategy. But work itself is not always a guarantee out of poverty. In-work poverty is a considerable challenge, and low paid work and worklessness are often closely related, with families cycling between in-work poverty and unemployment.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Over two-thirds of those in low paid work are women, and over two-thirds of these are women working part time.<sup>xxiv</sup> The patterns of working among mothers is very strongly related to qualifications and hence the ability to command higher earnings. Over 80% of highly qualified couple mothers and lone mothers are working. This falls to 69% [couple mothers] and 55% [lone mothers] at qualifications equivalent to NVQ Level 2 and 34% [couple mothers] and 27% [lone mothers] for those without qualifications.<sup>xxv</sup>

In November 2008, the risk of being unemployed was almost 60% higher for those looking for part time work compared with those looking for full time employment. For many single mothers – particularly those with lower levels of qualifications – part time working is often seen as ideal as it helps in balancing working and caring responsibilities.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Clearly, the economic climate and local labour market are important determinants of employment opportunities, as are other factors such as the accessibility of child care and transport. However, there are a number of personal constraints that can hinder parents from entering, remaining in and progressing in work, including:

- Low skills, which reduce the likelihood of finding or progressing in work;
- Poor physical or mental health and disabilities can seriously limit opportunities for parents to enter and remain within the workforce;
- Caring responsibilities can make balancing work and family life difficult, particularly where there are young children within the family or any child has a disability;
- Family breakdowns and crises can make searching for work very difficult and also increase the risk of dropping out of the labour market.<sup>xxvii</sup>

## 8. Protecting Against the Impact of Child Poverty

Although poverty is associated with an increased likelihood of poor outcomes in later life, and has a negative effect on children's housing, health, the risk of crime and accidents, education and, in turn, employment, it is important to note that the great majority of poor children do not themselves grow up to be poor.

None of the consequences of poverty discussed elsewhere are a foregone conclusion. Outcomes for children are not predetermined by their situation and with the right support; children growing up in poverty can go on to achieve success in life. Protective factors include:

- Educational attainment – which mitigates against poverty experienced during childhood and its impact on adult outcomes;
- Good relationships between parents and their children help children cope with adversity. A positive parenting style can reduce the likelihood that growing up in a low-income household or deprived neighbourhood will have a negative impact;
- Parental interest in their child's education throughout life has an impact on attainment. Some studies suggest that parental involvement in their child's schooling between ages 7 and 16 has more impact on attainment than family background or levels of parental education;
- High quality early education can have a marked impact on children's early development, and has been shown to produce cognitive gains with lasting effects which include reductions in criminal activity and teenage pregnancy. The positive effects of early years education are larger and longer lasting for children from low-income families and can reduce differentials between children from different backgrounds;
- Positive early years experiences also help to develop children's social and emotional skills and these are also important determinants of outcomes. High skills in these areas have a positive impact on attainment, employment, mental and physical health. They are also associated with lower levels of crime and risk taking behaviour;
- Friendship is a key protective factor and can help children manage negative experiences such as bullying or family breakdown.<sup>xxviii</sup>

## 9. The Role of Early Intervention and Prevention

Our Early Intervention and Prevention Strategy highlights a number of areas for coordinated action by the partnership working with children and their families in Peterborough, many of which are intended to have a positive impact on reducing levels of child and family poverty. However there are two areas that deserve particular mention as part of this strategy. The first is Early Years provision, and the second the notion of Community Family Engagement Volunteers.

### Children's Centres, Early Years and Childcare

Children's centres in Peterborough are delivering an increasingly targeted service, ensuring that those families who are most vulnerable to poor outcomes are able to access support. While not all of these families will be affected by poverty, it is likely that a significant proportion will be.

Given that we know that persistent poverty, particularly when accompanied by poor or neglectful parenting, and when experienced at a young age, it is clear that Children's Centres have a very significant role to play in helping to ameliorate the impact of family poverty.

Children's Centres can help parents to develop positive parenting models, while also providing advice, support and guidance around child care and access to employment. Supporting children into high quality childcare increases the likelihood that they will arrive at school with the social and communication skills needed for them to be ready to learn.

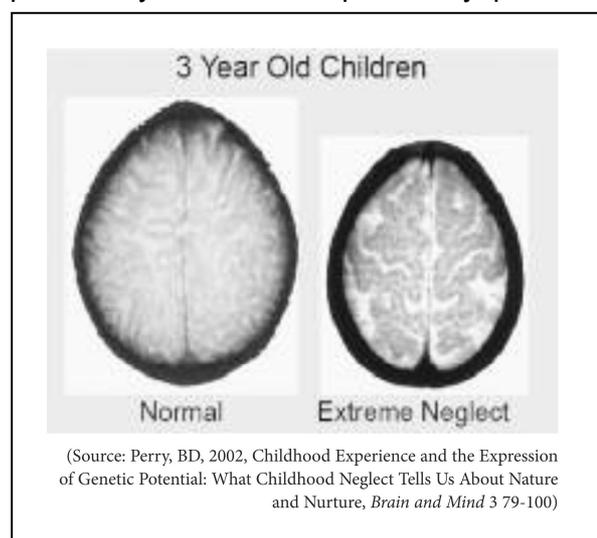
Children's centres can also play an important role in raising the aspirations of parents for themselves and for their children, as well as helping them to recognise the value of their taking an active interest in their children's progress in education.

In so doing, children's centres, early years' services and child care providers are all able to help families to lay the foundation for a positive start to education, which is the single most important factor in subsequently avoiding poverty as an adult.

### Community Family Engagement Volunteers

Peterborough is changing rapidly, with many families with young and school age children moving here from Eastern Europe in particular. Many of these families are at risk of exclusion from sources of support because of language barriers and because they are not aware of the support that is available or how to access it.

There is already a tradition of recruiting volunteers in Peterborough through organisations such as 'Better Together' and we intend to develop this tradition by developing a Community Family Engagement Volunteering programme. This programme will particularly seek volunteers from newly arrived communities, and the aim is for them to work alongside families, helping them to access the support services available.



This will have the impact of ensuring that newly arriving families are better able to access support and so be less likely to be affected by poverty and other difficulties, while providing routes into employment for those members of the community who engage in the volunteering programme.

Where child care and other support services are able to recruit a staff team that reflects the communities served, those services become better able to reach out to all members of the community.

## 10. Priority Strategic Outcomes

The preceding sections set out in detail the analysis of need in relation to child and family poverty in Peterborough while reviewing the evidence of the causes and impact of poverty. They also set out some of the steps and key services that are needed in order to help to prevent and reduce child and family poverty and reduce the impact of family poverty on children.

In line with this analysis, the following strategic outcomes have been identified as fundamental to the success of services in Peterborough reducing levels of child and family poverty:

Strategic Outcome	Responsible Group	Lead/ Coordinator
<b>Partners use their influence to embed systems and processes within their organisations that can really make a difference</b>	Greater Peterborough Partnership	GPP Secretariat
<b>Excellence at the first point of contact</b>	Welfare Reform Action Group	Head of Neighbourhood Services
<b>Models of work that identify risk factors, intervene early and enable communities to develop resilience</b>	Children and Families Joint Commissioning Board	AD Commissioning Children
<b>Improved education and personal development of all children and young people to narrow the gap in achievement between the poorest children and the rest</b>	Children and Families Joint Commissioning Board	AD Commissioning Children
<b>Increased financial capability, employability and take up of benefits amongst families</b>	Welfare Reform Action Group	Head of Neighbourhood Services
<b>Improved mental health within the local population to reduce the gap in health inequalities and promote healthy lifestyles</b>	Children and Families Joint Commissioning Board	AD Commissioning Children
<b>Creation of inspirational places to live and cohesive communities</b>	Cohesion Board	Strategic Housing Manager, PCC & Cohesion Manager, PCC

## **11. Family Poverty ‘Proofing’ Peterborough**

There are a number of further steps that can be taken to help to reduce the levels of child and family poverty in Peterborough in the future. Many of these are related to including family poverty reduction measures as part of joint commissioning arrangements and contract requirements.

For example, we know that the risks of poverty are significantly increased where a parent has a mental health difficulty. At the same time, there is currently considerable investment in supporting adults with mental health difficulties. It makes sense to link these issues and to build linked outcomes into associated joint commissioning arrangements.

If low self esteem and depression is likely to result in an increased likelihood of unemployment and employment is likely to lead to increased self esteem and result in reduced levels of depression, then it should be possible to include outcomes relating to employment within service specifications for services commissioned to support mental health needs within the adult population.

As a Council, we are also very significant procurers of goods and services. While there is a tension between aligning measures to reduce child and family poverty with procurement processes and the responsibility to ensure that we achieve best value for money, the power to promote wellbeing enables local partnerships to procure with some flexibility to take into account the child and family poverty impacts of procurement decisions. It is possible, for example, to encourage procured organisations to focus on targeting recruitment among locally disadvantaged communities or to require them to develop modern apprenticeship schemes and similar initiatives. This approach is sometimes known as the poverty reduction principle.

## **12. Concluding Remarks**

Family poverty blights the lives of our children in the present, and harms the potential of our communities and society to develop in the future.

It is a complex issue, requiring a multi-faceted approach that can deal with both the causes and the consequences of the problem.

However it is an issue that must be addressed if we are to achieve improved outcomes for our children today and enable our society to be ready to face the challenges of the future.

Supporting people out of dependency towards independence not only has benefits for them as individuals, but it helps to break intergenerational cycles of disadvantage and is essential if we are to be successful in tackling the challenges facing our public finances.

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- <sup>iv</sup> Source Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs: [http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/child\\_poverty.htm](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/stats/personal-tax-credits/child_poverty.htm)
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