

SCRUTINY IN A DAY

17th January 2014

Understanding and Managing the Impacts of Welfare Reform on Communities in Peterborough

Overview Report

March 2014



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Introduction

The 2012 Welfare Reform Act is making the biggest change to the welfare benefits system since the 1940's. These changes will have a direct impact for most benefit claimants, which for some will be significant. There may also be a number of indirect and unintended consequences, some negative (such as overcrowding in housing) and some positive (such as greater innovation leading to new employment schemes).

Between 2012 and 2018, a number of important changes will come into effect on a range of welfare benefits such as housing benefit, council tax benefit, tax credits, disability living allowance and incapacity benefit amongst others. Welfare Reform will affect people both in and out of work.

The Act will also see the introduction of Universal Credit, which aims to simplify the current benefits system by bringing together a range of separate benefit payments into one single streamlined payment process.

Welfare Reform will have an impact on how the Council and its partners deliver support, advice and services to the public. The Council will need to work even closer with local partners across the public and civil society sectors, and with businesses in delivering the changes that Welfare Reform brings. Key to the successful implementation of Welfare Reform will be ensuring that the Council and local partners have an agreed strategy and understanding of the issues and how they can be addressed. Given the scale and impact that changes will bring each of the Council's Scrutiny Committees and Commissions have a strong interest in understanding these impacts on their areas of work and in making recommendations to manage these impacts.

Each Scrutiny Committee and Commission therefore agreed to participate in a ground-breaking 'Scrutiny in a Day' event, entitled 'Understanding and Managing the Impacts of Welfare Reform on Communities in Peterborough', to develop an in-depth understanding of the issues and opportunities and to scrutinise responses on this cross-cutting agenda. The event, held on January 17th 2014, provided all scrutiny councillors and other participants with a chance to understand the Government's strategy on Welfare Reform, and how it affects Peterborough.

This report provides an overview of the event and its consequential outcomes, and sets out a series of issues and recommendations for further debate and exploration by each Committee or Commission.

Further work is underway to identify the longer term impacts of and benefits from the event in order that these can be more widely shared and used to influence and shape policy and practice across Peterborough.

Context to welfare reform and poverty

The Scrutiny in a Day event, although primarily focussed on welfare reform, was organised against a backdrop of the broader issue of tackling poverty.

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).

The Child Poverty Act 2010 sets challenging UK-wide targets to be met by 2020. These targets are to:

- reduce the number of children who live in families with income below 60% of the median to less than 10%
- reduce the proportion of children who live below an income threshold fixed in real terms to less than 5 per cent.

In 2012 the Welfare Reform Act received Royal Assent. The Act legislates for the biggest change to the welfare system in over 60 years.

The Act has been designed to deliver £18bn savings from the national welfare budget as announced in the spending review 2010, and a further £12bn savings by 2018 announced in the budget of March 2012.

One of the Government's priority aims in reforming welfare benefits is to make the system of benefits and tax-credits fairer and simpler, protecting the most vulnerable in society and delivering fairness both to benefit claimants and to the taxpayer. It also seeks to recreate the incentive to get more people into work by ensuring that 'work always pays'.

According to the last available figures, the East of England has an unemployment rate of 7.2%¹, which is less than the national average. Peterborough has an average workless household² rate of 16.6%³, slightly higher than the regional average of 15.4% but lower than the national average of 18.9%. However, Peterborough has higher levels of poverty than many other areas in the country, with 24.3% of Peterborough's population considered in poverty (higher than the English average of 21.4% and the regional average of 16.9%).

¹ House of Commons Research paper 12/04, Jan 2012

² Where the household contains at least one adult of 16-64 years old.

³ "Households by the combined economic activity status of household members by area (Jan – Dec 2011)", Office for National Statistics, September 2012

Centre for Public Scrutiny Return on Investment Model

The Scrutiny in a Day event was organised with the support of a cross-party, cross-committee working group. The working group benefited from the generous support and advice of the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS) who provided three days of funded support via one of their scrutiny expert advisers, Brenda Cook.

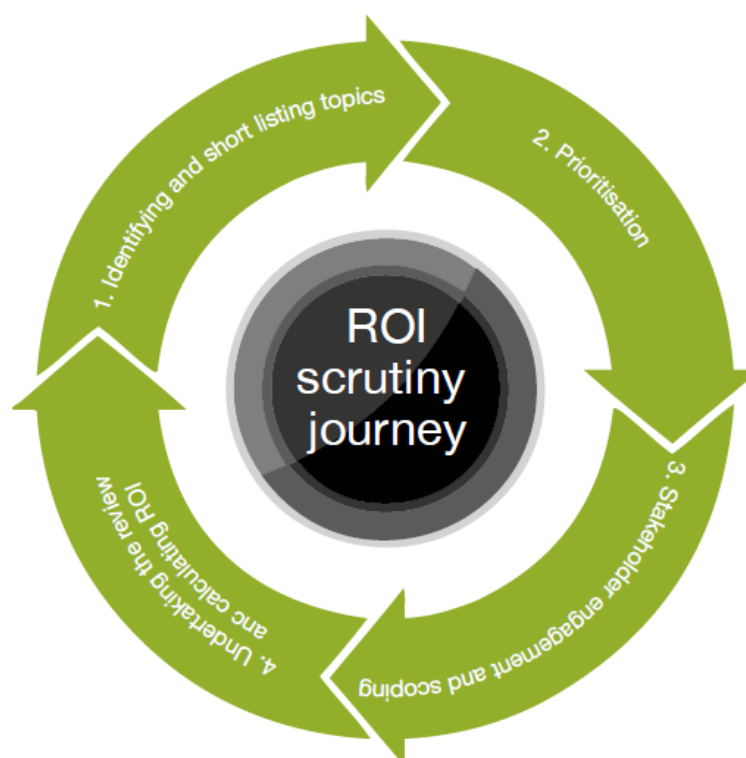
The CfPS is a charity whose principal focus is on scrutiny, accountability and good governance, both in the public sector and amongst those people and organisations who deliver publicly-funded services.

Brenda Cook advised the working group on the 'Return on Investment' model for scrutiny developed by the CfPS, and it is this model that was used as the tool for measuring the impact of the event and subsequent workstreams.

The Return on Investment model is based on four stages of a scrutiny journey (figure 1 below refers):

1. **Identifying and short listing topics:** understanding the potential impacts and opportunities the city faces as a result of welfare reform
2. **Prioritisation:** being clear about what aspects of welfare reform we want to focus on
3. **Stakeholder engagement and scoping:** broadening out the review to draw in the experience and expertise of partners and members of the public
4. **Undertaking the review:** and then estimating and evaluating the impact of the scrutiny process, and testing the ways in which a potential return on investment may be calculated

Figure 1:



Officers are currently working with the CfPS to calculate the returns on investment that can be attributed to the event. Some of these are already evident and are happening, including:

- New relationships being formed between different individuals and partners, leading to different processes and procedures being introduced that make best use of resources
- New investments or expert support from the private sector into organisations such as the Foodbank and Carezone
- Young people from City College Peterborough's John Mansfield Campus learning about the risks of excess credit and inappropriate borrowing

Other returns on investment will evolve and emerge throughout the course of the year, depending upon which lines of enquiry each Committee or Commission chooses to pursue. However, even at this early stage we can be confident that some of the returns on investment will be linked to:

- Greater connectivity between partners to deliver more seamless support services to people adversely affected by welfare reform
- New schemes that develop volunteering, training or employment opportunities
- A focus on reducing gambling, particularly on the High Street
- Greater and more consistent investment in preventative programmes, including quality advice and guidance, appropriate financial products, housing related support and reducing criminality

The Scrutiny in a Day Event – Format and Overview

The event combined sessions designed to inform and educate councillors, to connect councillors with service providers and support organisations, and to enable councillors to consider workstreams, lines of enquiry and recommendations that their respective Committees might wish to pursue during 2014/15.

A copy of the programme for the event is attached at appendix 1.

A wide range of councillors, council officers, and partner agencies attended the day. The Joint Scrutiny Committee was made up of the following Councillors:

Joint Scrutiny Committee:

Cllr Nick Arculus
Cllr Chris Ash
Cllr Sue Day
Cllr Lisa Forbes
Cllr John Fox
Cllr Judy Fox
Cllr Chris Harper
Cllr Jo Johnson
Cllr Nazim Khan
Cllr Pam Kreling
Cllr Diane Lamb
Cllr David Over
Cllr John Peach
Cllr Brian Rush
Cllr Lucia Serluca
Cllr John Shearman
Cllr Ann Sylvester
Cllr Nick Thulbourn
Al Kingsley – Independent Co-opted member

Other Councillors in attendance were:

Cllr Charles Swift, and

Cabinet Members:

Cllr Graham Casey
Cllr Wayne Fitzgerald
Cllr Nigel North
Cllr David Seaton
Cllr Marion Todd
Cllr Irene Walsh

In addition, we are extremely grateful to the wide range of council officers and partners who helped to organise and facilitate the event.

Set out below is a summary of each of the various components that made up the programme for the event. The morning sessions were held without members of the public or the media present, to enable participants to focus on learning more about the subject, whilst the afternoon sessions were all held in public.

Morning Sessions

Welcome and Introductions

Brenda Cook, expert adviser from the Centre for Public Scrutiny and facilitator for the event, welcomed all attendees and set out the objectives for the day.



Opening Address

Gillian Beasley, the Council's Chief Executive, gave the opening address stating how innovative the event was. Gillian also set out the opportunities that could come from the event and the subsequent year of scrutiny, and how critical this was in the context of supporting our citizens and strengthening our communities.

Overview of the Reforms

Julie Coleman from the Department for Work and Pensions and Keith Jones from Peterborough Citizens Advice gave an overview of the breadth of the reform agenda, including the scale of some of the changes being made. They confirmed the recent news that the funding being used in Peterborough to deliver the Community Assistance Scheme (the Local Welfare Provision from the Department of Work and Pensions) was to be withdrawn from 2015/16.

The Wider Context: Poverty in Peterborough

Jawaid Khan from the Council's cohesion team and Sharon Keogh from Carezone gave an overview of the wider issue of poverty and its impacts in Peterborough. Sharon then shared a number of real case studies, bringing to life the reality for some of the clients her organisation supports.

Development Session 1: The Experience

Participants were invited to experience five scenarios, each drawn from real experience in Peterborough, that articulated the impacts of welfare reform or poverty, the support available to people affected by these issues, and the temptations that some people turn to in order to help them cope. The five scenarios (attached for information at appendix 2) were acted out by council officers and staff from partner agencies.



Development Session 2a: The Evidence

Participants were invited to learn more about the facts and figures associated with welfare reform and poverty, through the medium of a short interactive quiz. Voting buttons were used to answer a series of questions that were designed to challenge people's understanding and knowledge of the issues and to expose some of the key facts. In advance of the event, councillors were provided with a pack of information and evidence (see appendix 3), and this part of the event was designed to pick out the key points from that pack. The questions asked and their respective answers are included at appendix 4.



Development Session 2b: The Reality

Participants were invited to meet a small number of Peterborough residents who have been directly affected by welfare reform. This was an opportunity to hear the reality that some people were facing, and we are grateful to those who volunteered to attend and to the various partner agencies that supported them.

In addition, this session provided an opportunity for participants to view a series of displays and information from a wide range of partner organisations, specifically:

- Accent Nene
- Age UK Peterborough
- Anglia Rainbow Savers Credit Union
- Axiom Housing
- Care and Repair Home Improvement Agency
- Carezone (Kingsgate Community Church)
- City College Peterborough
- Council 0-19 service
- Cross Keys Homes
- DIAL Peterborough
- Foodbank (Kingsgate Community Church)
- Health Watch
- Heataborough
- Home Group
- Hyde Housing

- Job Centre Plus
- Peterborough and Fenland MIND
- Peterborough Citizens Advice
- Peterborough Council for Voluntary Service
- Public Health Live Healthy Team
- Ready to Switch

Afternoon Sessions

The Impacts

The Shontal Theatre Company were commissioned to deliver a performance entitled 'Bust' which exposes the issues of excessive credit and inappropriate borrowing in a domestic setting, and the impacts that changes of circumstances can have on a family. The hard hitting performance involves actors acting out a domestic scenario, with interludes for the audience to engage and comment on what they've seen.

Feedback from Development Session

Brenda Cook summarised the initial feedback from the morning development sessions in order to focus the participants on the more detailed discussions and debates to be held during the afternoon. During the morning sessions participants were invited to post ideas and questions in ballot boxes that were located throughout the areas being used. These were reviewed during lunchtime, enabling Brenda to summarise the key points. Brenda identified four common themes:

1. There are many different organisations that are engaged in supporting people in poverty and people who are relying on benefits, welfare or support, but how well are organisations working together? How well are organisations signposting to each other? And can the current practise be improved?
2. The impact of gambling, and the prevalence of gambling in Peterborough, and also the amount of money that's involved in the gambling industry. What can the Council do in relation to gambling? What stance can we take? Is there a need for education in schools, or for young people to see some of the figures that the councillors were given earlier? What action can be taken?
3. The issues associated with educational attainment and young people, and why Peterborough is so poor when measured against other areas at Level 4 and above. What can be done? What can we as a Council do to address that, working with partners?
4. The issue of managing debt: how is this dealt with? What can be done to improve it?

Public Engagement

This session provided an opportunity for members of the public who were in attendance to ask any specific questions or make any points they felt were relevant. Nobody chose to ask anything at this point, although it should be noted that various members of the public who did attend contributed to the discussions at other times throughout the afternoon.

Joint Scrutiny Committee – the Big Questions

Brenda Cook facilitated a question and answer session during which a range of issues and queries were responded to in order to prepare scrutiny councillors for their more detailed discussions. The questions asked and the answers provided is attached at appendix 5.

Individual Scrutiny Committee and Commission Meetings

Each of the Scrutiny Committees and Commissions met separately to develop a list of recommendations and lines of enquiry, formed as a result of the day's various sessions (although unfortunately the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities had insufficient numbers of Scrutiny Members present to meet during this session). The various recommendations and lines of enquiry developed during this session are set out in section 4.

Final Remarks, Next Steps and Close

Councillor Irene Walsh, Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion, Safety and Public Health, gave closing remarks, commenting on the impact and diversity of the event and the wide ranging topics discussed. Councillor Walsh reaffirmed our collective commitment to supporting people affected by welfare reform and poverty.

Recommendations and Lines of Enquiry from each Scrutiny Committee or Commission

Four of the five Scrutiny Committees or Commissions produced a shortlist of key lines of enquiry or recommendations that those present felt they may want to focus on during the 2014/15 municipal year. These are set out as follows:

Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities Scrutiny Committee

1. To explore the impact of welfare reform on young people and their attainment in mainstream education.
2. To identify barriers to work and explore how early years provision, support and related services can help parents into employment.
3. To understand the impact and needs arising from welfare reform and ensure that initiatives such as Connecting Families can meet these needs.

Strong and Supportive Communities Scrutiny Committee

1. To explore the impact of the cessation of the Local Welfare Provision funding from Department of Work and Pensions and develop recommendations to Cabinet on how the Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme can be sustained.
2. To raise awareness of the ongoing reforms, the impacts and support available with communities, councillors and partners. Develop opportunities for sharing experiences caused by welfare reforms between communities, councillors and partners.
3. To explore opportunities of how investing in local community groups can help to prevent and tackle poverty.
4. To receive a report on the extent of gambling within the city and develop actions to mitigate the impact of gambling such as education, awareness raising and prevention.

Scrutiny Commission for Health Issues

1. To create an accessible, visible and customer-orientated access point for advice.
2. To receive and scrutinise a report from Public Health on planned initiatives relating to healthy eating, food and nutrition along with the links to poverty and other lifestyle factors.
3. When receiving the Public Health report above, to look at links between the nutrition and uptake of school meals and educational attainment.
4. To receive and scrutinise a report on the impact of poverty on public health and explore how investing in measures to tackle poverty can improve health outcomes.

Sustainable Growth and Environment Capital Scrutiny Committee

1. To consider the Council's response to gambling and to devise a holistic approach to combatting the economic threats posed by gambling and vice
2. To understand the role that the voluntary sector can play in helping the council to deliver its key objectives. To foster closer links into and between the voluntary sector and review how the Council can support this
3. To scrutinise the Affordable Housing Capital Strategy to enable the Committee to consider recommendations relating to social housing.

Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities

As the remit of the Scrutiny Commission for Rural Communities is cross-cutting, members will consider which of the recommendations and lines of enquiry above they wish to pursue alongside new suggestions that have emerged since the event.

Next steps

This report will be presented to each of the Council's five Scrutiny Committees and Commissions during March and April 2014. Members will be asked to discuss, debate, refine and finalise their key lines of enquiry and recommendations in order that they can be added to the relevant meeting schedules for the 2014/15 municipal year.

Officers will also continue to work with the Centre for Public Scrutiny to define and calculate the return on investment achieved as a result of this intensive scrutiny approach, and will support the CfPS who wish to produce a case study based on our experience of the event which can be shared nationally.

Finally, when agreed by each Scrutiny Committee and Commission, this report will be shared with all who participated in the event as well as with our wider partnership networks to help define and guide our work programmes for the coming years.

Further information on this report is available from:

Democratic Services Team

Chief Executive's Department, Town Hall

Bridge Street

Peterborough, PE1 1HG

Telephone – (01733) 747474

Email – scrutiny@peterborough.gov.uk

Understanding and Managing the Impacts of Welfare Reform on Communities in Peterborough

Programme

Joint Meeting of the Scrutiny Committees and Commissions: Scrutiny in a Day

Friday 17th January 2014

Town Hall 9am – 4.40pm

Session 1: 9am to 1pm – Development Session for Councillors

9.00 – 9.30 Arrivals, registration and coffee

9.30 – 9.35 Welcome and introduction to the day

Brenda Cook, Centre for Public Scrutiny

9.35 – 9.45 Opening address

Gillian Beasley, Chief Executive, Peterborough City Council

9.45 – 10.00 Overview of the Reforms

Julie Coleman, Department for Work and Pensions and Keith Jones, Peterborough Citizens Advice

10.00 – 10.15 The Wider Context: Poverty in Peterborough

Sharon Keogh, Kingsgate Community Church and Jawaid Khan, Community Cohesion Manager for Peterborough City Council

10.15 – 12.15 Development sessions:

Session 1

10.15 – 11.15 The Experience

An interactive walk-through of the impacts of welfare reform, the support available and the temptations facing individuals and families.

Session 2a

11.15 – 11.45 The Evidence

Gary Goose and Ray Hooke, Peterborough City Council

An interactive workshop to better understand data and evidence on poverty and deprivation

Session 2b

11.15 – 11.45 The Reality

An opportunity to hear from local residents who have been impacted by welfare reform and an opportunity to meet with agencies providing frontline support to people.

11.45 – 12.15 Sessions 2a and 2b repeated

12.15 – 1.00 Lunch

1pm to 4.40pm – Joint Scrutiny Event – Open to Public

1.00 – 2.00 Theatre Production ‘Bust’

Shontal Theatre Company to perform ‘Bust’ production: a young couple who manage to attract a portfolio of debt leading to a change in personal circumstances.....

2.00 – 2.10 Feedback from the Development Session and Introduction to the Afternoon

Brenda Cook, Centre for Public Scrutiny

2.10 – 2.30 Public Engagement

An opportunity for members of the public to give evidence on the impact of welfare reform

Facilitated by Brenda Cook, Centre for Public Scrutiny

2.30 – 3.10 The Big Questions

Facilitated by Brenda Cook, Centre for Public Scrutiny

3.10 – 4.10 Joint Scrutiny Committee Workshops

Explore key lines of enquiry and develop recommendations

4.10 – 4.30 Feedback from Workshops

Facilitated by Brenda Cook, Centre for Public Scrutiny

4.30-4.40 Closing Remarks and Next Steps

Councillor Irene Walsh, Cabinet Member for Community Cohesion, Safety and Public Health

APPENDIX 2: SCENARIOS USED IN THE 'EXPERIENCE' SESSION

The Experience Session – Zone Scenarios

The following scenarios were used to set the scene for the Experience Session, during which council officers and staff from other agencies acted out different situations that brought together the impacts of welfare reform and poverty, the support that is available to people affected, and the temptations that are open to them.

Zone 1: Charlene

Charlene is a single mum with school age children. She has a history of receiving benefits for her disability, but following a recent reassessment, Charlene has been told that she is no longer eligible for disability benefits.

Charlene has now got a part time job, but on minimum wage. She is finding it difficult to pay her bills and provide food for the family. To make matters worse, her cooker no longer works and needs replacing. Charlene needs to find £300 urgently as she cannot provide a hot meal for her family.

Zone 2 – The McGuire Family

The McGuire family consists of Mr & Mrs McGuire and two children. Both parents have been unemployed for a number of years and receive benefits. Due to the changes in the Council Tax scheme, the family are now required for the first time to pay an element of Council Tax.

The family live in a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO). Conditions are very poor affecting the family's health and wellbeing.

The family have problems managing their money properly and are in debt. The children are often given convenience foods (ready meals, junk food etc.) and are in poor health. The parents see the black market as a way of making some quick money through the sale of illegal tobacco /alcohol.

Zone 3 – Andy

Andy is a private tenant aged 32. He has been renting a 1 bedroom self-contained flat from his landlord for the last 4 years. The rent is £400.00 per calendar month. When he started renting the flat he was working full time, but was made redundant and has been unable to find another job since.

Andy is in receipt of housing benefit which covers his rent. Due to changes in Housing Benefit rules, Andy's benefits have reduced from £400 per month to £242 per month.

Andy is unable to meet the shortfall in his rent and is now in arrears. He currently owes £1400.

After numerous threatening phone calls, the landlord has now told Andy that she will be visiting the property at 11am today and if he's not out of the property she'll "get some guys round" to forcibly remove him and his belongings. Andy is considering turning to crime as a means of covering his debts

Zone 4 – Denham

Denham is a single father living in a four bedroomed house. He has two children, both boys, one aged 7 and the other 14 who attend different schools. Due to the changes in housing benefit from the Spare Room Subsidy, his benefit has been cut by 25%.

Denham's new job means he has to leave the house at 6am. This means that the children have no one to get them ready for school.

The school is concerned about the lack of attendance of the younger child and the disrupting behaviour in class. The school has asked to meet with Denham on a number of occasions. Denham is also concerned that the older son is hanging around a group of older boys known for anti-social behaviour and being a bad influence.

Denham is struggling to cope and turning to alcohol.

Zone 5 – Dave

Dave moved to a small village with his partner six months ago in a bid to make a fresh start after they kept arguing and Dave's partner started becoming violent. Dave doesn't work as his partner preferred him to stay at home and look after the house, however the rent and bills are all in Dave's name at his partner's insistence. Since they moved, the arguments got worse; Dave's partner cut him off from his friends and family and stopped him going out. Then one day Dave's partner simply took the car, his things and left.

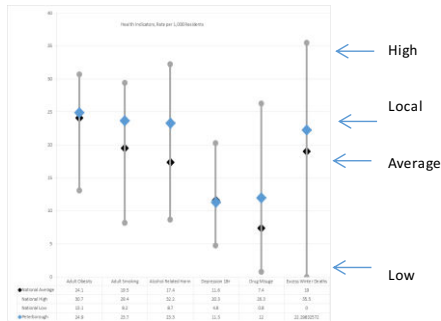
This left Dave alone in the village, isolated without a car and no income. His bills are mounting and Dave is getting into debt. Dave doesn't know anyone locally because his partner didn't allow him to socialise.

Dave starts to visit his local pub daily and uses the fruit machine to pass the time, he occasionally wins and starts to think this a means of getting himself out of debt.

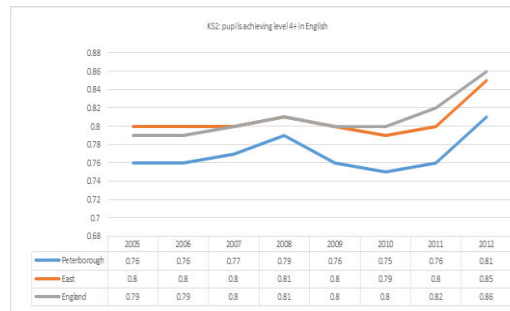
Scrutiny in a Day - Information pack guidance notes

This evidence pack has been developed to assist with the scrutiny in a day "Tackling the effects of the welfare reform" event. The information contained within has been sourced predominantly from open data with some local datasets included and has been grouped, where possible, into themes relevant to each of the five scrutiny committees. The most recently available data has been utilised where possible. This pack has been designed to allow questions to be raised as opposed to providing definitive answers. Where possible, Peterborough has been shown as a comparison to all other Local Authority areas in England, with a proportion showing a localised "drilled down" element.

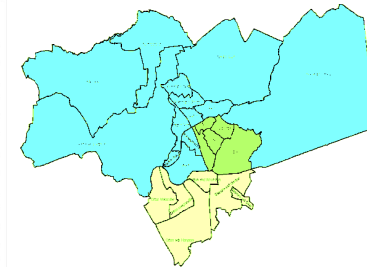
A guide to interpreting the data.



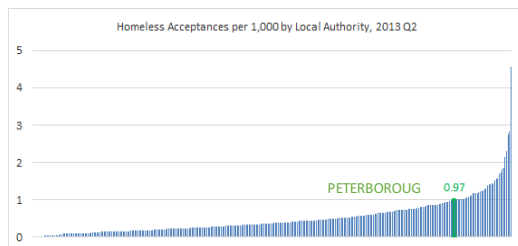
Stock Charts - are a quick way to look at a broad range of data. The maximum and minimum ranges are shown as the highest and lowest points of the line, with Peterborough featuring a blue diamond and the national average shown as a black diamond, these charts will either be shown across a time range, or across a range of themes.



Line Charts - These are utilised for displaying trends over time. The horizontal X axis shows the date range while the vertical Y axis will show either a number (i.e.. age) a rate (i.e.. per 1000 population) or a percentage (i.e.. a proportion). All Line charts in this evidence pack utilise the same colour themes. Blue = Peterborough, Orange =

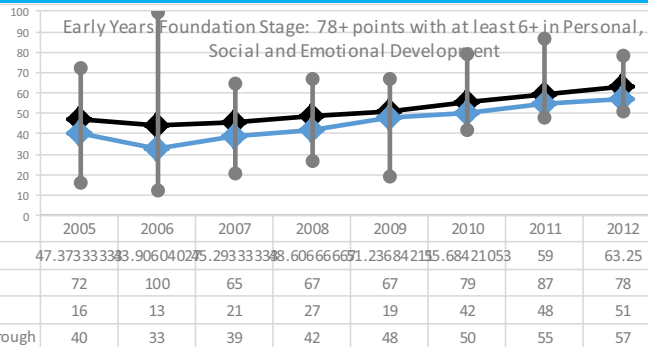


Maps - All maps that have been utilised within this evidence pack are based on ONS defined Output Areas within Peterborough Unitary Authority Ward boundaries and are shown as shaded "heat maps" based on the relative values or rates relevant to each

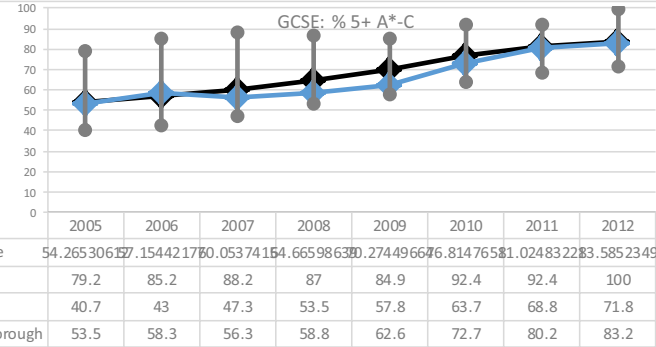


Column Charts - These charts are utilised throughout this document primarily as a way of demonstrating where Peterborough is placed in a national context. Each column represents a Local Authority in England and Wales. Peterborough will always be represented as a green column with its respective data label visible. Lowest volumes/rates will always feature to the left, where highest volumes or rates will appear to the right.

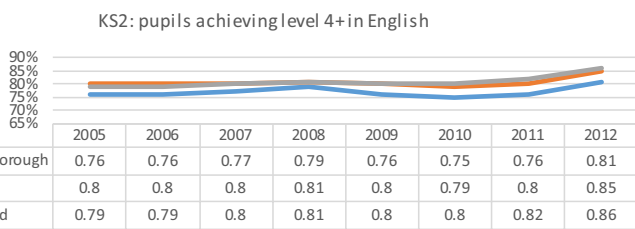
Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities



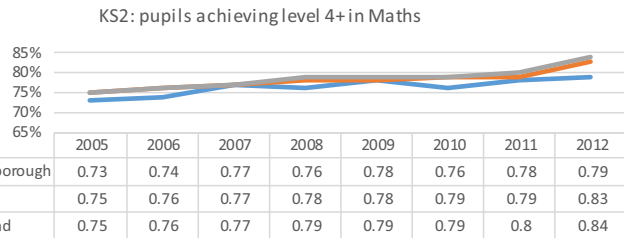
This graph shows that, regarding Early Years achievement, Peterborough and the national average are improving at a similar rate with Peterborough remaining in a relatively deficient position.



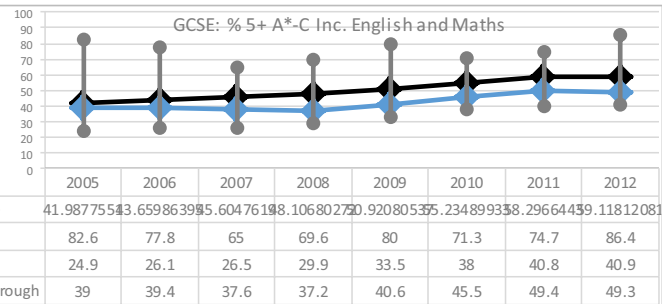
This graph shows that, despite a minor dip from 2007 to 2010, the percentage of students achieving 5+ GCSEs at A*-C grades is in line with the national average.



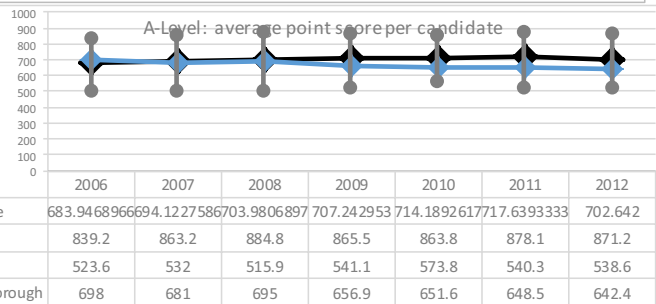
This graph shows that KS2 pupils in Peterborough have consistently trailed the region and country in English achievement since 2006.



This graph shows that, while Peterborough is improving in KS2 pupils achieving level 4+ in Maths, it is at a slightly slower level when compared to regional and national progress.



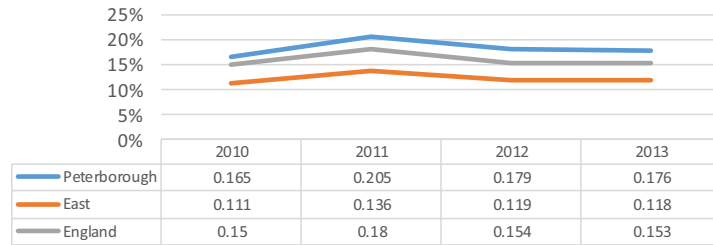
In contrast, this graph shows that Peterborough lags behind the national average regarding A*-C achievement in English and Maths in GCSE.



This graph shows that, beginning in 2009, Peterborough's average A level score per candidate has fallen below the national average.

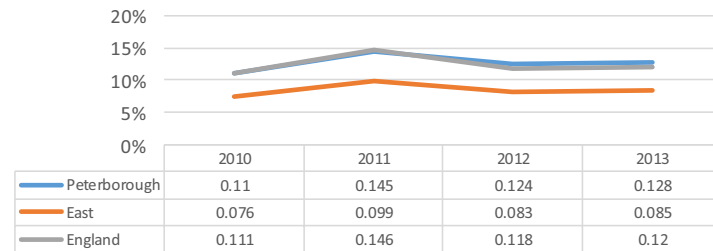
Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities

FSM: primary schools

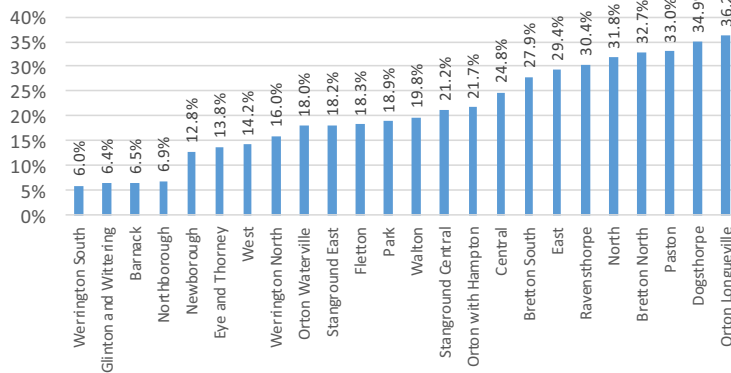


These two graphs demonstrate that Peterborough has a marginally larger percentage of pupils receiving free school meals than England and a considerably larger amount than the region.

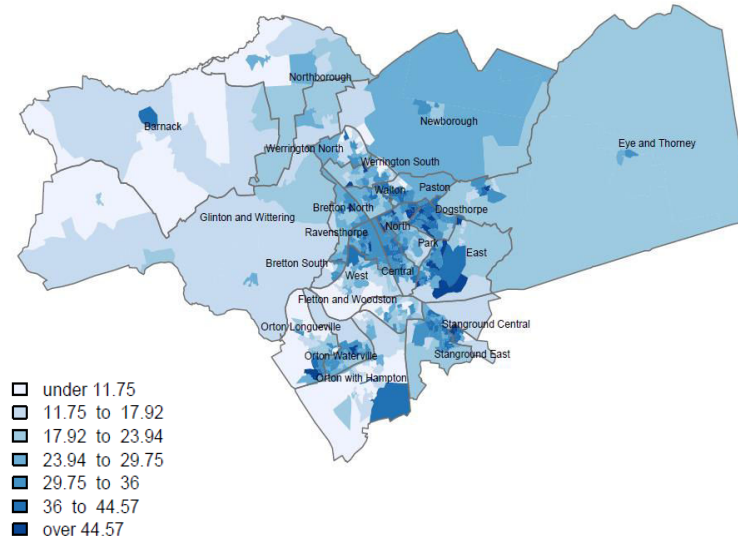
FSM: secondary schools



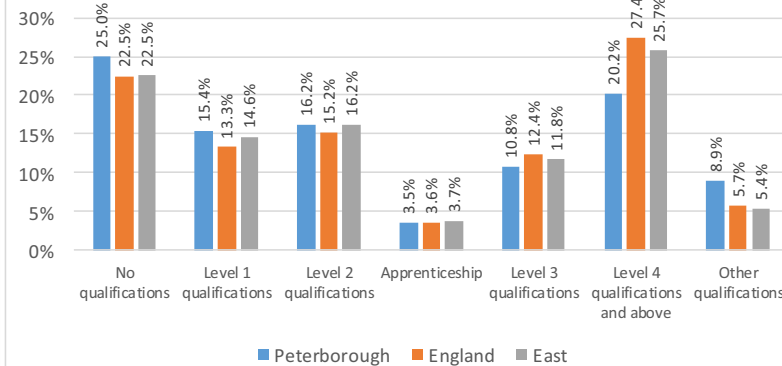
Percentage of Children Under 16 in Poverty



KS501EW0014 (No Qualifications)

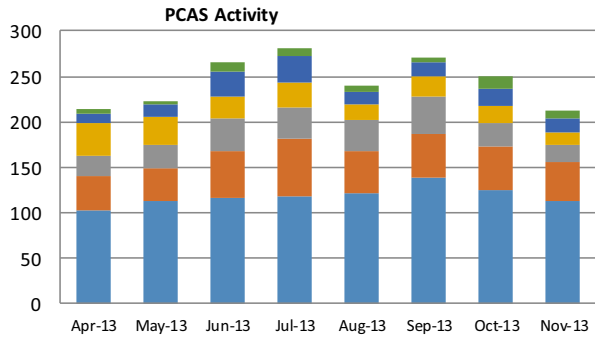


Highest Level of Qualification



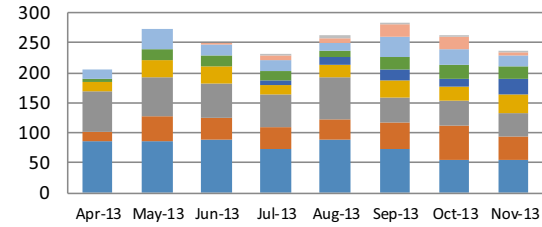
This graph shows that Peterborough has a higher percentage of people with no or other qualifications than the region and country. It also demonstrates that Peterborough has a significantly lower percentage of people with level 4 qualifications (degrees and above) than the region and country.

Creating Opportunities and Tackling Inequalities



	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13
Microwave Packs Issued	6	3	10	8	7	6	13	8
Wee Re-Use Vouchers	10	14	28	30	13	15	20	15
Referrals to Care Zone	35	30	23	28	18	23	19	15
Emergency Foodbox	23	27	36	34	34	40	26	19
Meter Card Vouchers Issued	38	35	52	63	46	49	48	43
Food Vouchers Issued	102	113	116	118	122	138	124	112

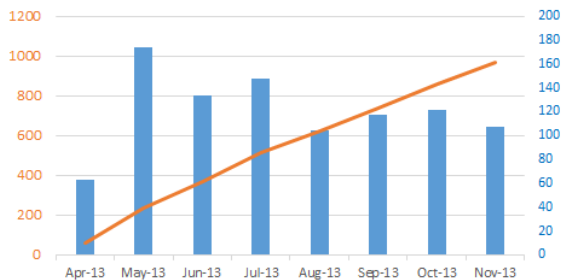
Foodbank Vouchers Redeemed



	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13
313 Cromwell Road (Central ward)	0	0	0	3	4	4	2	3
Orton	0	0	2	7	7	21	21	7
Stanground	14	33	17	17	15	33	25	16
Bretton	7	18	20	16	10	21	24	23
Salvation Army (Central ward)	0	0	0	8	13	19	14	24
Paston	14	30	28	17	19	28	23	31
Westgate	67	64	57	52	71	42	41	39
Gunthorpe	17	41	37	38	33	43	57	40
Dogsthorpe	86	87	88	73	90	74	55	55

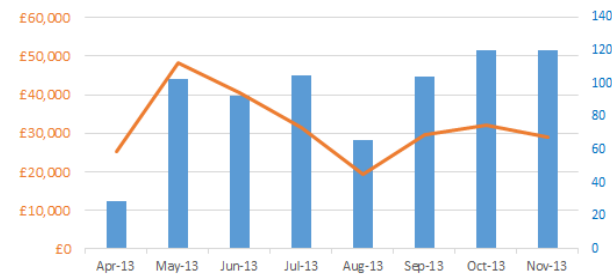
These above two graphs firstly demonstrate the activities of PCAS of which the majority activity was issuing food bank vouchers. Accordingly, the second graph shows the food banks where vouchers were redeemed, the major three location were Dogsthorpe, Gunthorpe and Westgate.

Credit Union: joined



	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13
Total Joined (Credit Union)	63	174	134	148	105	118	122	108
Cummulative total	63	237	371	519	624	742	864	972

Credit Union: loans

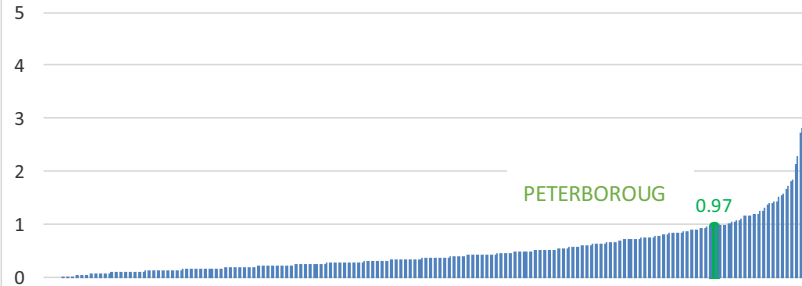


	Apr-13	May-13	Jun-13	Jul-13	Aug-13	Sep-13	Oct-13	Nov-13
Total number of loans	29	103	93	105	66	104	120	120
Total value of loans	£25,163	£48,291	£40,397	£31,502	£19,480	£29,544	£32,137	£28,945

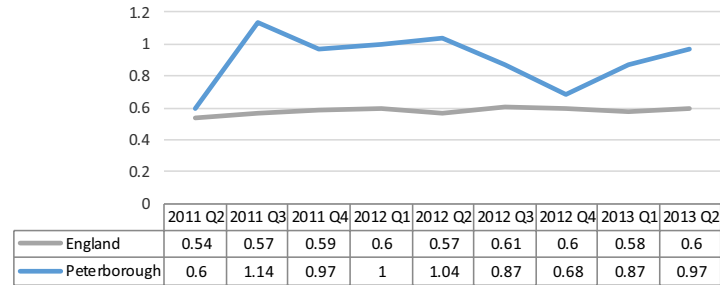
The bottom two graphs track the number of members of the credit union and the amount and value of loans approved.

Strong and Supportive Communities

Homeless Acceptances per 1,000 by Local Authority, 2013 Q2

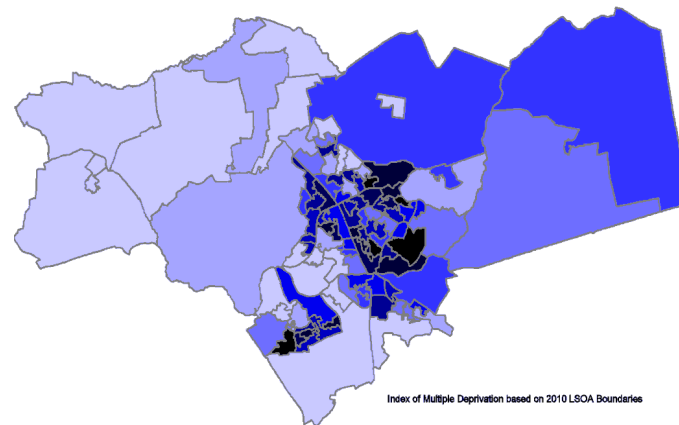
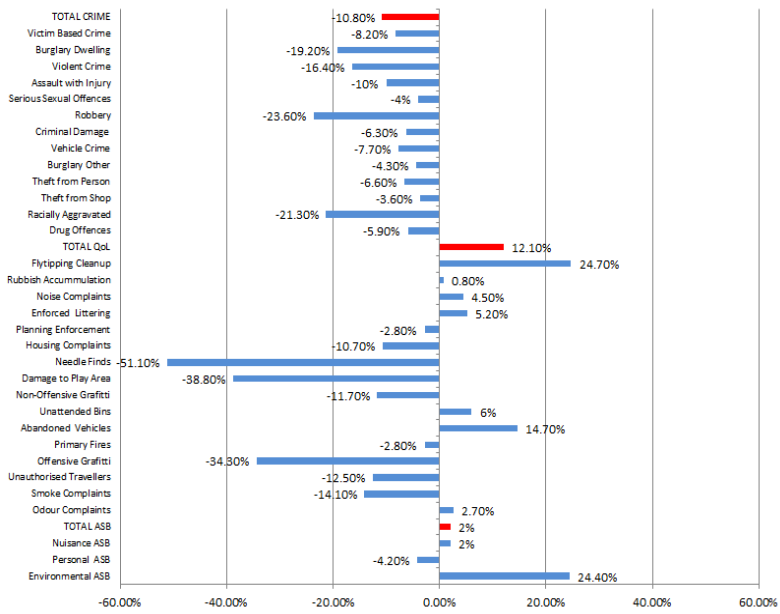


Homeless Acceptances per 1,000



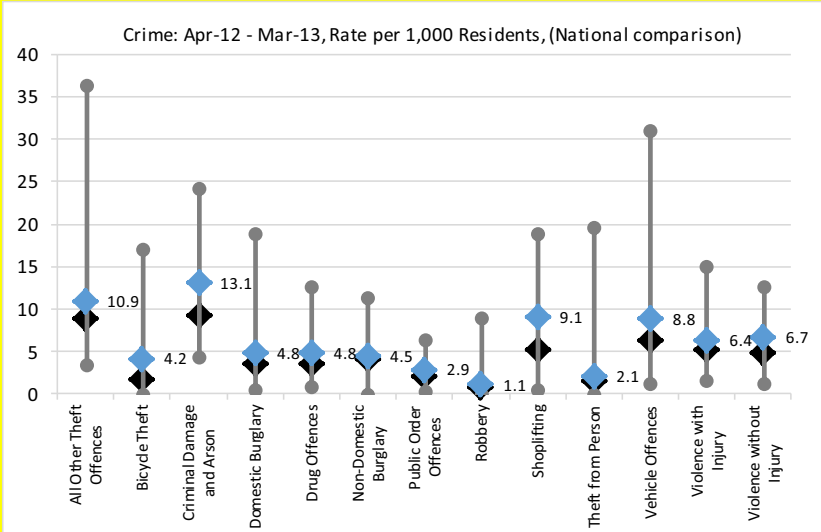
This above graphs show that Peterborough has consistently recorded homelessness acceptances as a rate per 1,000 population in excess of the country. Accordingly Peterborough lies at the higher end of all local authorities in England.

% Variation of Quality of Life factors across Peterborough from Baseline Period (Apr 2012- Mar 2013) to Current period (Dec 2012 - Nov 2013)

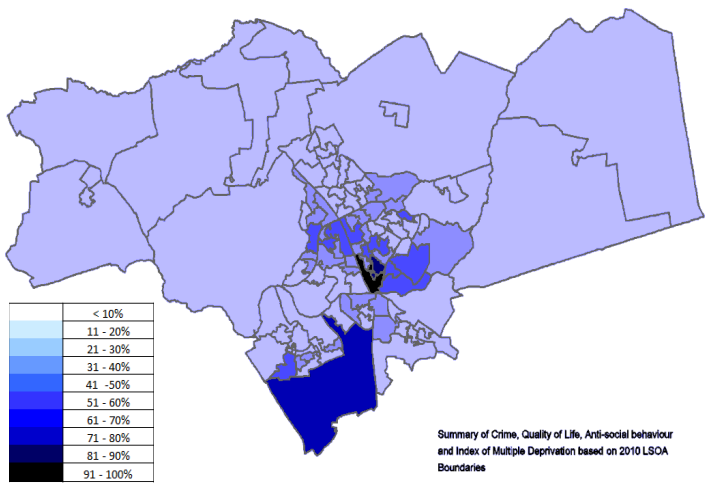


The map above shows the overall rank based on the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation by LSOA. The darker the area, the more deprived it is (and the lower the rank is). When compared to 2007 IMD rankings there is little change. This is the most recent IMD data available. IMD scores will be refreshed in 2014.

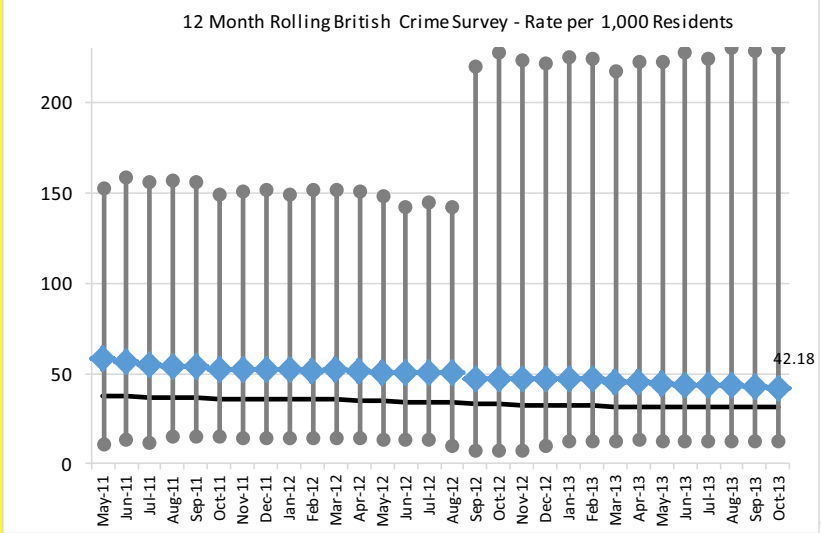
Strong and Supportive Communities



This graph plots the range of crime types per 1,000 residents with the national average and Peterborough's scores superimposed. In all cases Peterborough exceeds the national average.



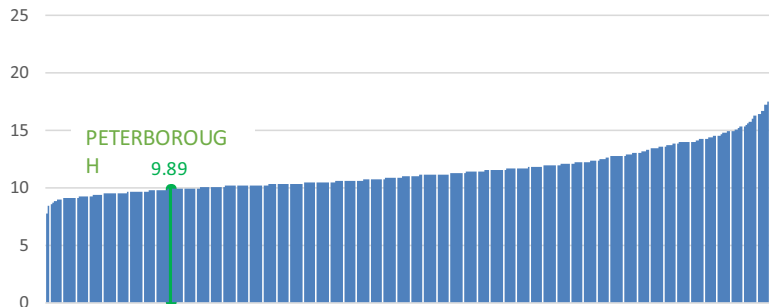
The map above shows the combined proportion of all Crime, Anti-social behaviour and Quality of life incidents reported to the police and local authority.



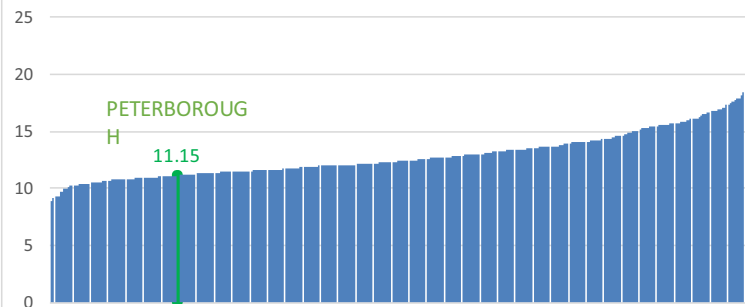
This graph to the left shows the range of Crime Survey of England and Wales scores with the national average and Peterborough superimposed. Peterborough exceeds the national average, but the gap is gradually reducing.

Sustainable Growth and Environmental Capital

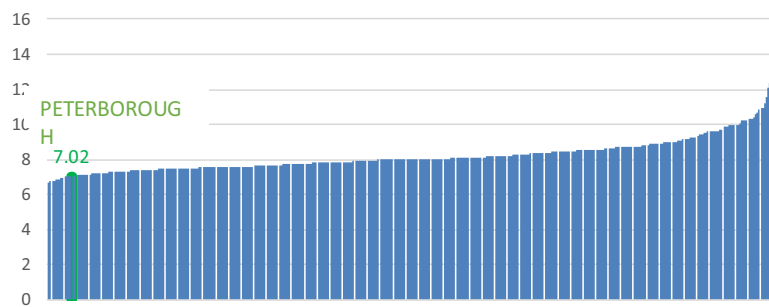
Gross Median Pay (£) by Local Authority - All Pay



Gross Median Pay (£) by Local Authority - Full-Time Pay

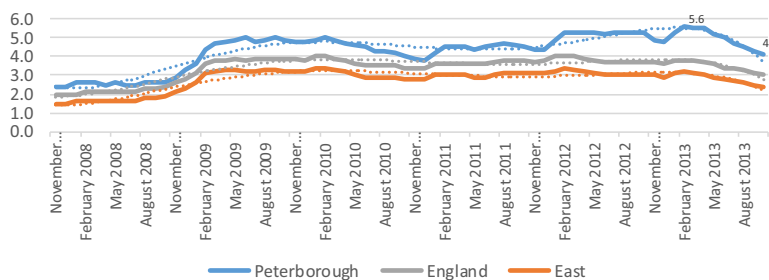


Gross Median Pay (£) by Local Authority - Part-Time Pay

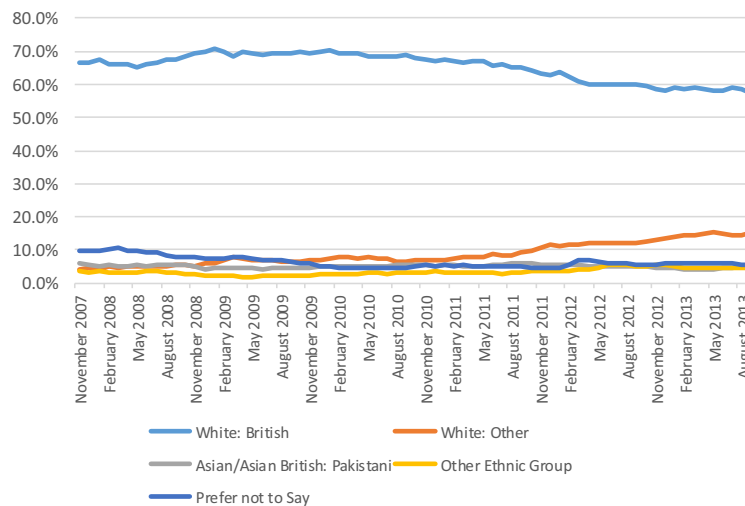


Residents of Peterborough earn comparatively less than the national median of all British local authorities. This is especially so regarding Peterborough's part-time employees whose median wage is amongst the very lowest in Britain after having experienced an annual reduction of 6.8%. This places Peterborough as 359th of 373 comparable local authorities and well within the lowest 5% in the country at 3.8%. Peterborough's part-time employees accordingly account for 22,000 (27.5%) of Peterborough's 80,000 employees.

Rate of Unemployment, Nov-07 - Oct-13



Percentage of Top 5 Ethnicities Claiming JSA, Nov-07 - Sep-13

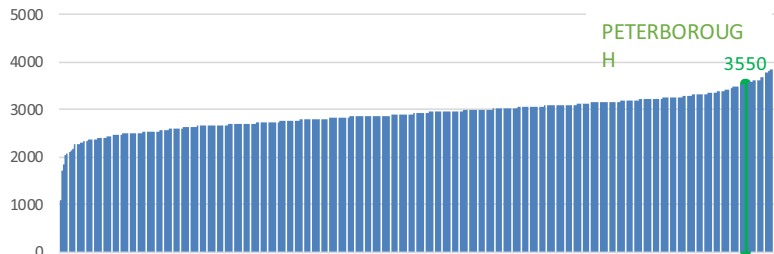


This graph shows the rate of working age unemployment. Peterborough has historically had a higher rate than the region and country although this has been exacerbated by the financial crash. However, during the last couple of months, Christmas hiring seems to have reduced the gap.

This graph shows the proportion the top 5 ethnicities contribute to Jobseekers' claims. As would be expected, White British contribute the most although this has been in gradual decline for the past few years. White Other contribute a distant second and has been increasing for roughly the same

Sustainable Growth and Environmental Capital

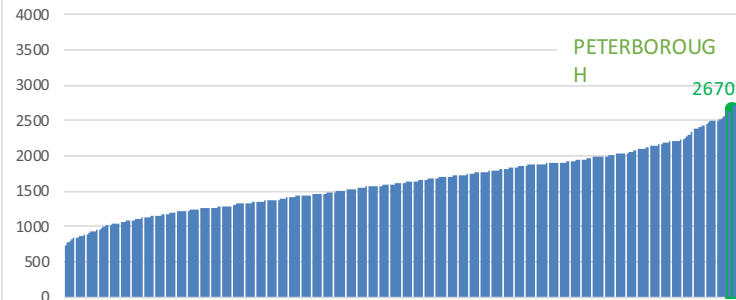
Child Benefit reductions, Households Affected Rate per 10,000



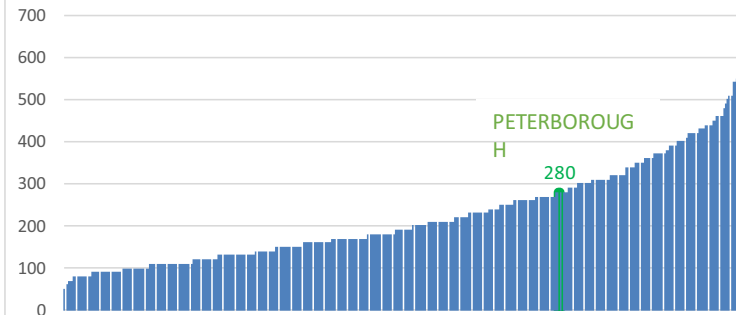
- Peterborough has amongst the highest rate of households affected by child benefit cuts in England and Wales with 3,600 (36%) per 10,000 households affected. This puts Peterborough at 365th of 379 comparable local authorities and well within the top 5% of local authorities most affected at 3.7%.

- Peterborough has amongst the highest rate of households affected by tax credit cuts in England and Wales with 2,720 (27.2%) per 10,000 households affected. This puts Peterborough at 372nd of 379 comparable local authorities and well within the top 5% of local authorities most affected at 1.8%.

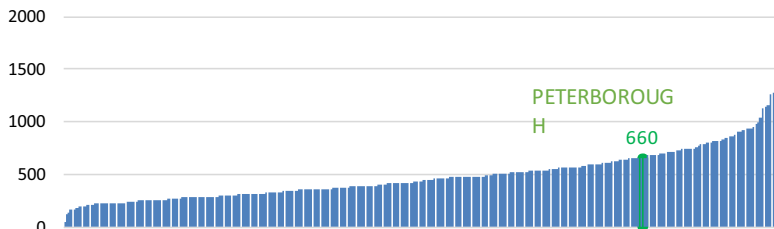
Tax Credit reductions, Households Affected Rate per 10,000



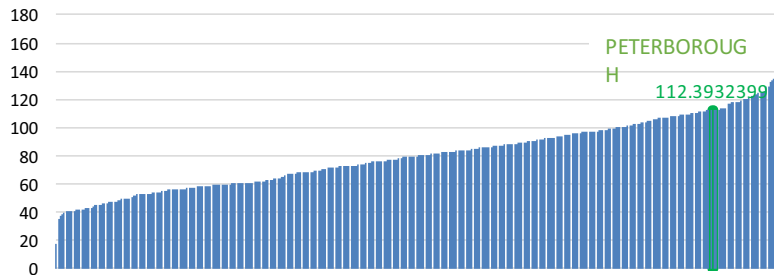
Housing Benefit reductions: Under Occupation (Bedroom Tax), Households Affected Rate per 10,000



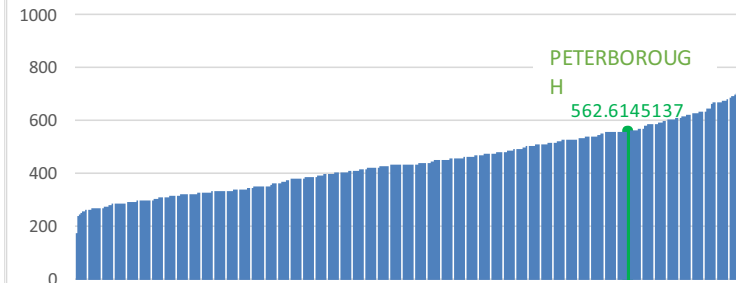
Housing Benefit reductions: Local Housing Allowance, Households Affected Rate per 10,000



1% Uprating, Financial Loss per Working Age Adult, £ per Year

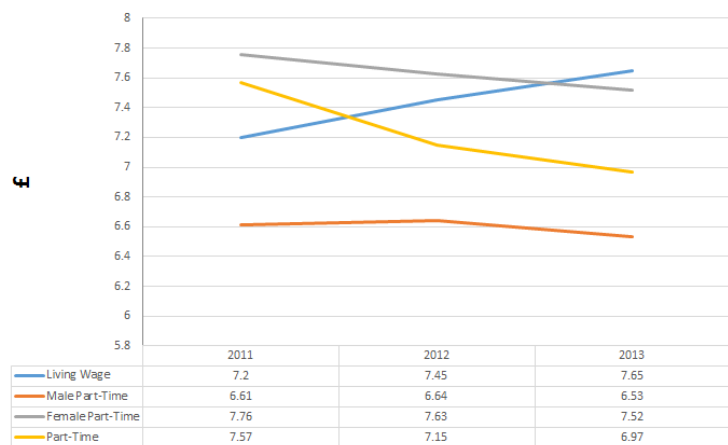


Total reductions, Financial Loss per Working Age Adult, £ per Year

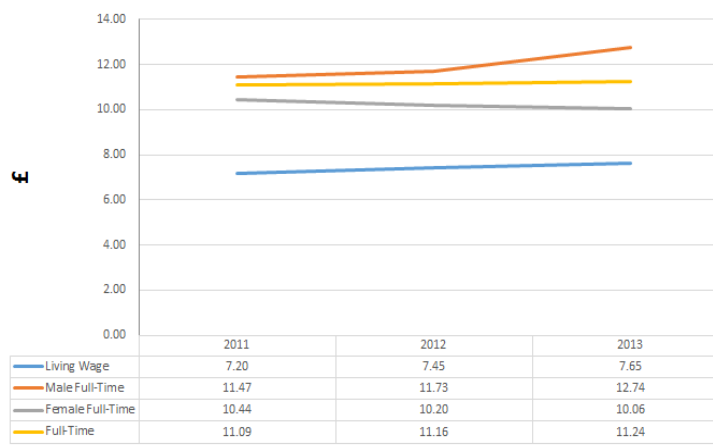


Sustainable Growth and Environmental Capital

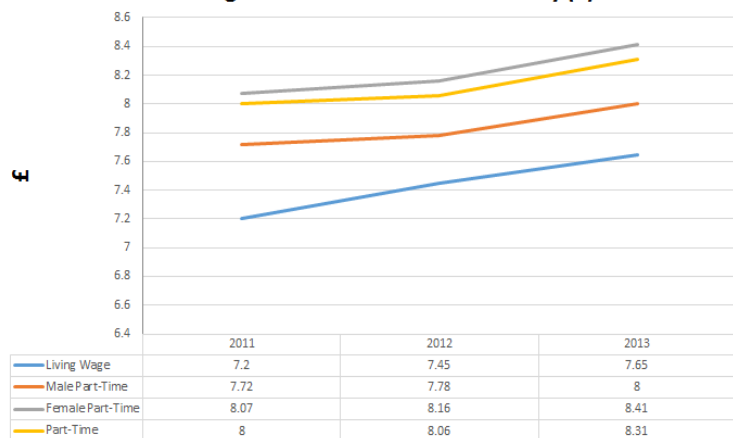
Peterborough - Part time median salary (£)



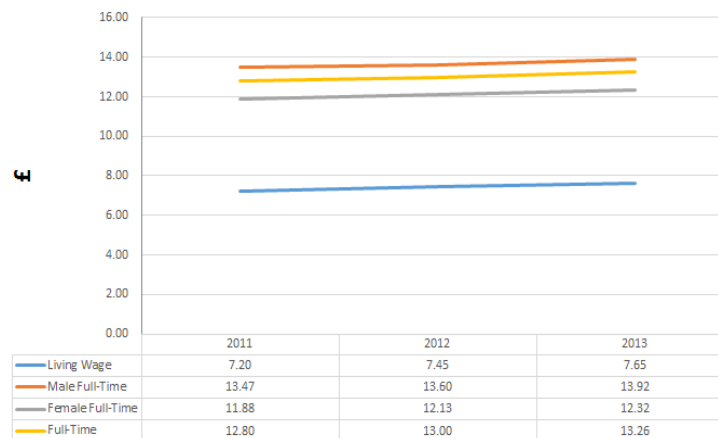
Peterborough - Full time median salary (£)



England - Part time median salary (£)

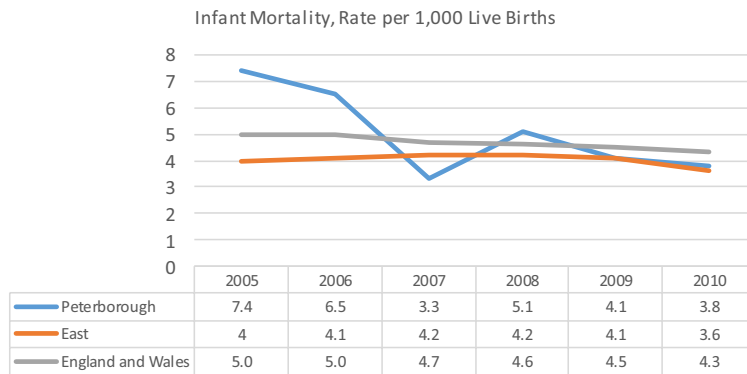
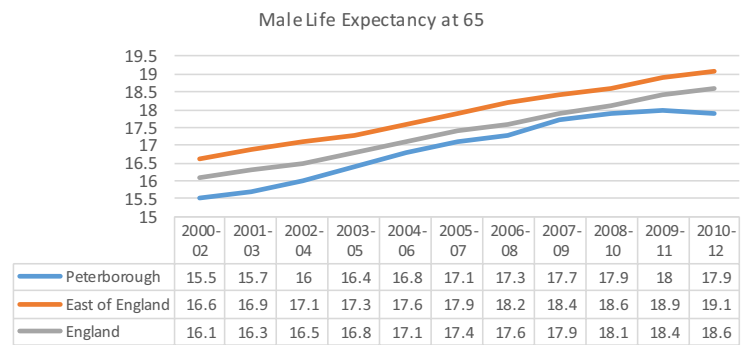
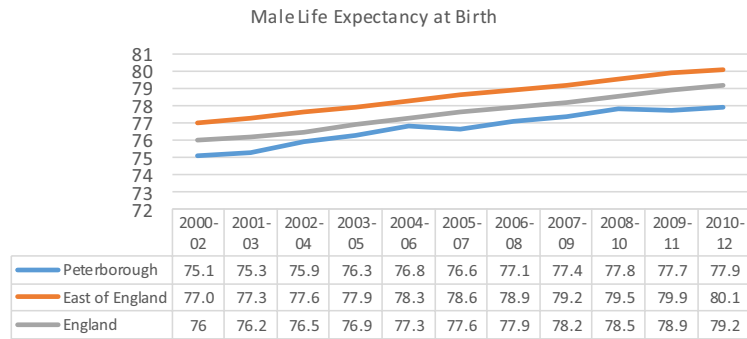
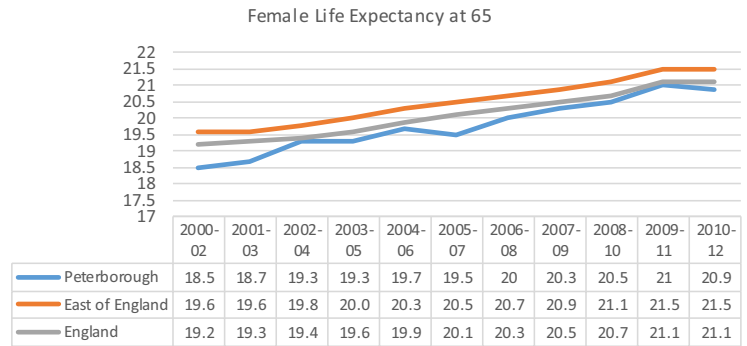
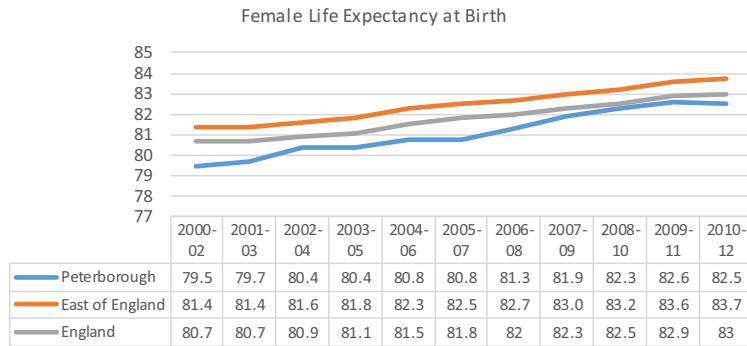


England - Full time median salary (£)



The living wage (not inclusive of London) is currently £7.65, the current minimum wage is £6.31, therefore, in Peterborough, part time males salaries are significantly lower than the living wage, and broadly in line with the minimum wage. These graphs also show that Peterborough's hourly wages are lower than the region and country, as well as demonstrating that female part-time workers are paid in excess of their male counterparts and vice versa regarding full-time wages.

Health Issues

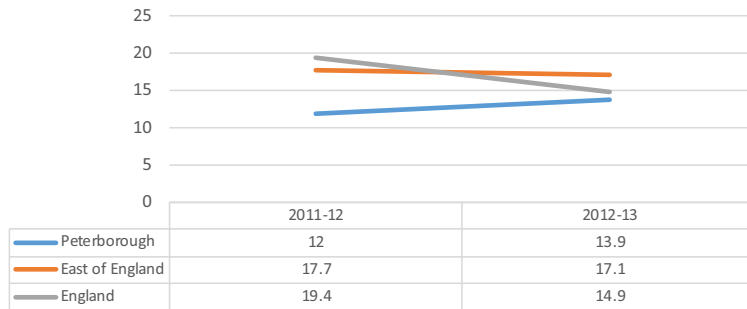


The above four graphs show that life expectancy in Peterborough, regardless of sex and stage of life, is below the region and country, although is improving at a similar rate.

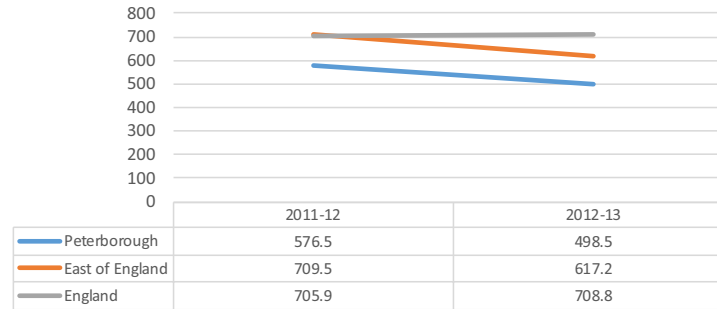
The graph to the left shows that infant mortality has declined from significantly above the regional and national rates in 2005 to in line with both in 2010.

Health Issues

Care Home Admission (18-64), Rate per 100,000 Residents



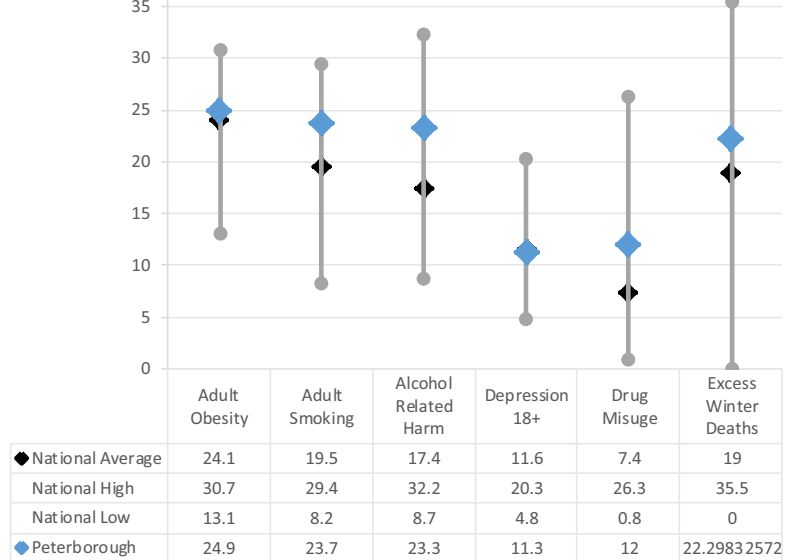
Care Home Admission (65+), Rate per 100,000 Residents



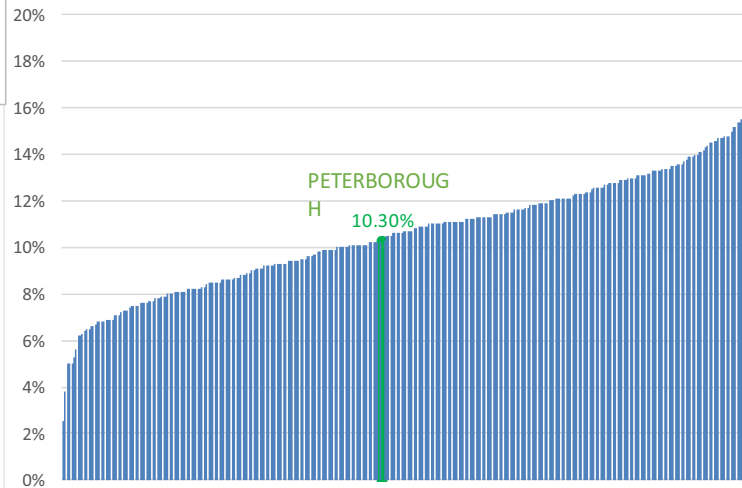
The above two graphs show that Peterborough has less care home admissions per 100,000 people than the region or country, although the trend for the ages of 18-64 suggests Peterborough will soon exceed both in this area.

This graph below shows the range of various health indicators per 1,000 residents with the national average and Peterborough's score superimposed. These show that Peterborough exceeds the national average in all but one indicator, that of Depression 18+.

Health Indicators, Rate per 1,000 Residents



Percentage of Household's Experiencing Fuel Poverty by Local Authority

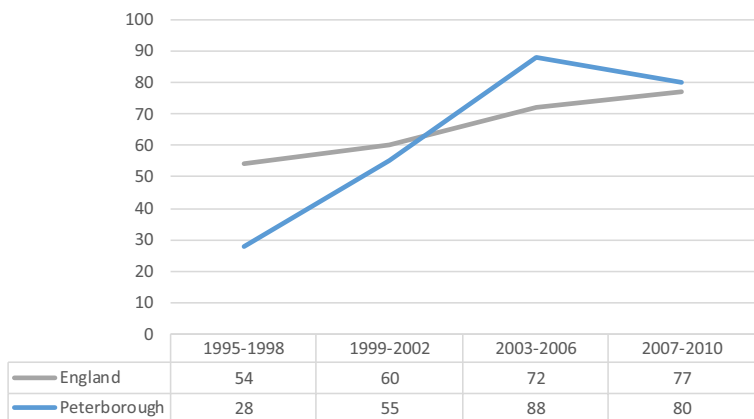


- Peterborough's rate of fuel poverty is 10.3%, better than the median of all comparable English local authorities of 10.7%. This places Peterborough 150th out of 326 local authorities with a percentile of 46%.

- There is a significant range in households experiencing fuel poverty in Peterborough's 104 LSOAs. The highest was 35.8% in one of Central's 6 LSOAs which accounted for 177 households, while the lowest was 3.1% in one of Orton Waterville's 5 LSOAs which accounted for 23 households. Across the 104 LSOAs Peterborough's average was 10% while the median was 9.4%.

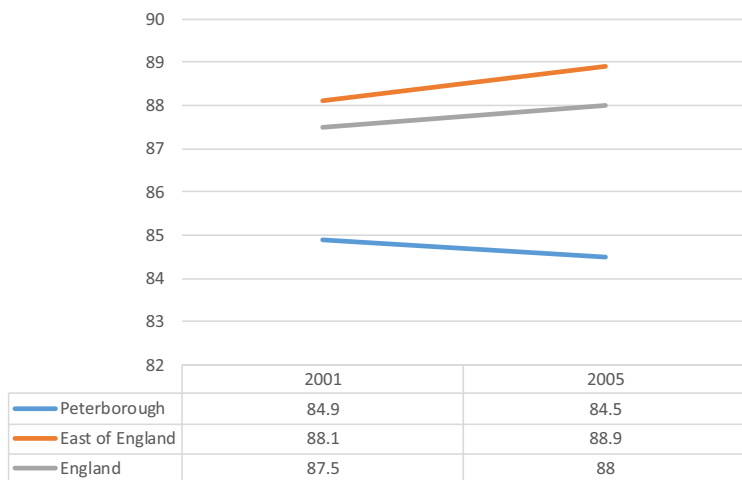
Rural Communities

Proportion of New Dwellings on Previously Developed Land



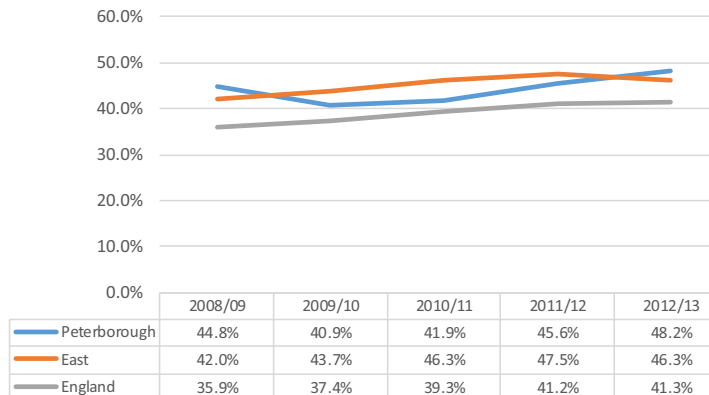
This graph shows that in recent years Peterborough has exceeded the country regarding the percentage of new dwellings built on previously developed land.

Percent of Green Space Land

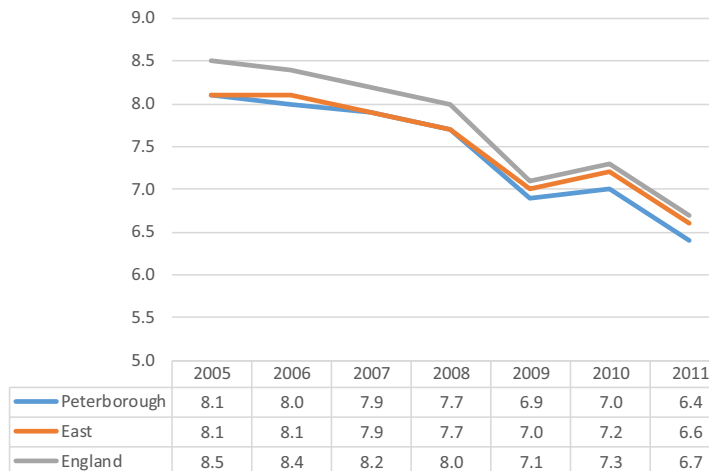


While the percent of green space land appears to have increased at both a regional and national level, Peterborough has noticed a very slight reduction.

Percent of Local Authority Collected Waste Sent for Recycling/Composting/Reuse



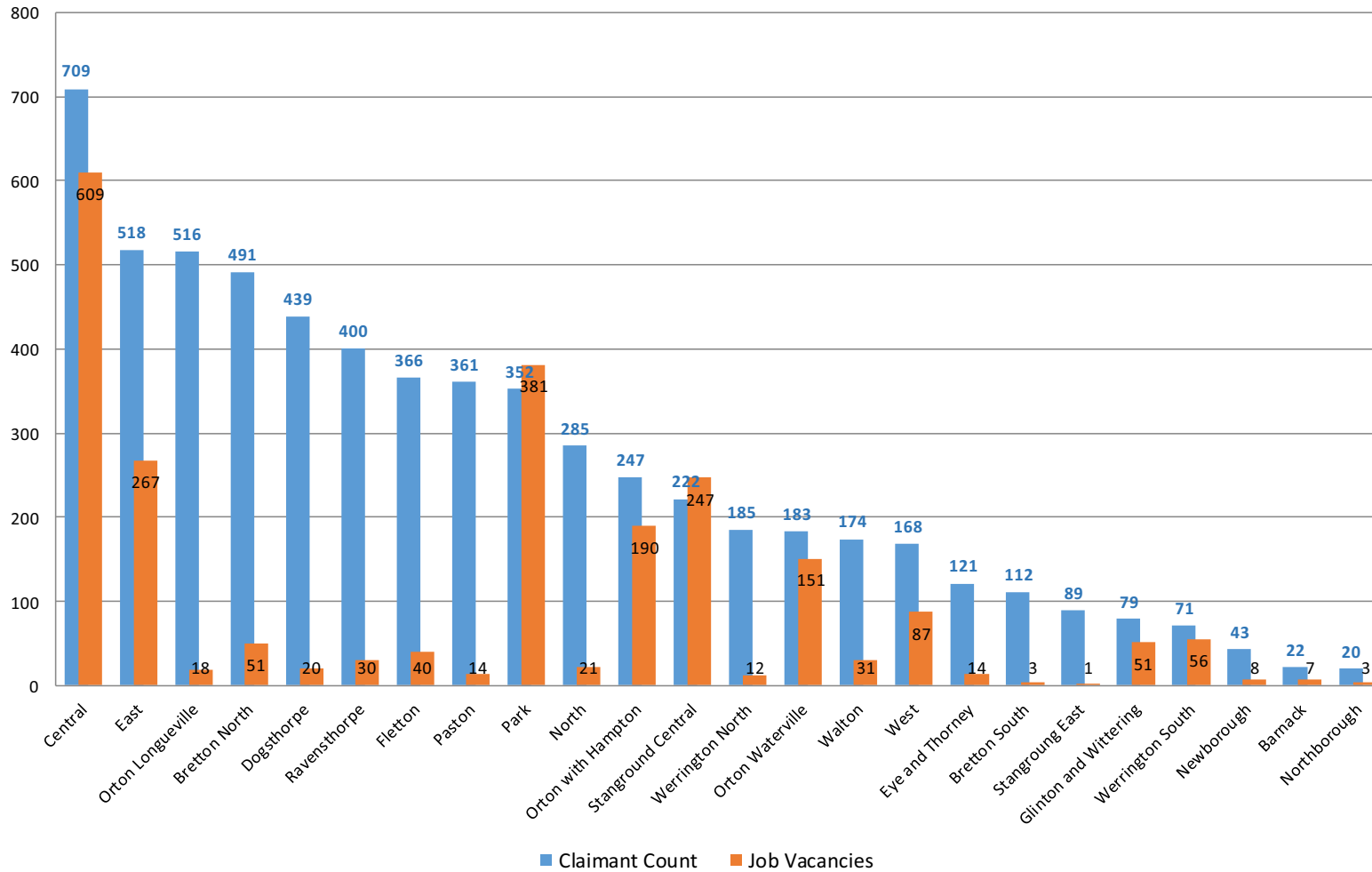
Total Per Capita CO2 Emission Estimates (t)



The above two graphs show that Peterborough is in line with the region and country regarding recycling, composting and reusing collected waste and also CO2 emissions.

Rural Communities

Average number of monthly claimant counts and Job vacancies by Ward (Dec2011 - Nov 2012).



There are clear disproportions regarding the volume of claimants by ward when compared to job vacancies by ward, this is likely to effect those living in rural communities as well as those less mobile claimants ability to easily commute to work without rely upon transport.

APPENDIX 4: THE 'EVIDENCE' SESSION QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

N.B. Correct answers are bold and underlined

Question 1

What is the Median Gross annual pay in Peterborough?

- a) £15,756 **b) £20,799** c) £23,539 d) £26,925

Question 2

There are approximately 40,000 children living in Peterborough, what % are classed as living in poverty?

- a) 6% b) 11% c) 18% **d) 24%**

Question 3

In 2001, 6% of households lived in either a council house/Registered Social Landlord property, what is the % 10 years later in 2011?

- a) 4% b) 6% **c) 13%** d) 19%

Question 4

What proportion of Peterborough's over 16 population have NO qualifications?

- a) 5% b) 15% **c) 25%** d) 35%

Question 5

Of Peterborough's 16-74 year population, what % is in full time employment?

- a) 23% b) 33% **c) 43%** d) 53%

Question 6

Of Peterborough's 16-74 year population, what % is classed as unemployed?

- a) **5%** b) 8% c) 12% d) 16%

Question 7

With the aforementioned question in mind, what proportion of prison entrants are unemployed?

- a) 24% b) 36% **c) 54%** d) 62%

Question 8

Peterborough has 80 Fixed Odd Betting Terminals spread over 20 licensed premises across the city, each arguably in the most deprived areas of Peterborough. How much money was lost over the last 12 months in these 80 machines?

- a) £40,000 b) £300,000 c) £1 million **d) £4million**

Question 9

With the last question in mind, how much money was actually gambled/put into these machines over 12 months?

- a) £1 million b) £5 million c) £50 million **d) £100 million**
(£127,363,700, equivalent to £1,103 per voteable adult)

Question 10

England and Wales has circa 7500 wards, each has been ranked according to its deprivation levels based on the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, With 1 being the least deprived and 7500 being the most deprived, where on this scale do you think Peterborough's least deprived ward sits and where does Peterborough's most deprived sit?

Least deprived is **Glinton ranked 1337**

Most deprived is **Central at 7256**

Question 11

The Peterborough Community Assistance Scheme has been in operation since April 2013. From then up to December last year, what is the average number of loans given out each month by the Credit Union?

- a) 22 b) 45 **c) 95** d) 327

Question 12

How much on average does the credit union effectively loan out?

- b) £ 58 b) £92 **c) £376** d) £820

This equates to an average of over £31,000 being loaned out per month.

APPENDIX 5: TRANSCRIPT FROM THE 'BIG QUESTIONS' SESSION

Question: We had the scenarios about people with not a lot of money buying ready meals and snacks and also the food banks. Is there anywhere or anybody that gives out recipes that people can use where they can buy bigger bags of say, rice and pasta and mixer. Is there anything out there where there are recipes whereby people can put down the cost of buying ready meals?

Answer: Through the public health service we work with a range of different communities, and it's not just about the recipes. In some cases and for some of the members in our communities it's about some very basic early learning about how to prepare and actually cook the food, so the support we provide goes beyond just providing recipes and looking at particular food which preserves longer, but also helping people choose the correct food and helping them prepare and cook that food, which we've found to be quite a challenge in certain communities. So we undertake that type of work both within communities – we run educational programmes within schools and we try and go the most appropriate place to access the people rather than seeking members of a community to try and find that information. We use a range of different health champions in the community that allows us to access those communities that are in most need.

Question: I was going to make the comment that eating properly is essential to both physical and mental health, and if people are suffering from a lack of money, that's going to be exacerbated. Now, I know that people try their hardest to help with food parcels, but a food parcel doesn't give a family a proper diet, certainly it doesn't give people fresh fruit and I was wondering what was being done to address this? And I can't help but add that as one of the richest nations in the world, it seems utterly appalling that we have to even consider this type of thing.

Answer: First of all, we are aware that giving people good menus would be something that we've got to look to in the future and we are working with volunteers, but just coping with what we are doing is taking our priority at the moment. The Food Bank gives out shopping lists to people which have been worked out nutritionally by the Trussell Trust and we know that it's all tinned food, dried food and we haven't got fresh food and we haven't got facilities to store that at the moment, but we are aware of it and we are thinking further ahead in the work we're doing. And we're aware that with some people we have to ask a question: do you have a tin opener? So there are problems out there which we are trying to cope with.

Question: One of the things we were able to see this morning looking at the Experience Session was looking at a number of different 'zones' and feedback looking at everything from adolescent intervention to domestic abuse, and there seemed to be a recurring theme: that many of those individuals access the services by referral, because they wouldn't have had access directly or known of the different services available. It seems that with lots of agencies and partners together today, there must be some kind of common ground on how we can improve awareness for the general public so they could access directly some of these services.

Answer: I'm primarily responsible for crime reduction, however it's much wider than that and I think we've accepted that one of the things we really need to work upon in the next phase of our work is being proactive in getting the messages out. We've got a very strong partnership in the field we've been working in.

One of the strongest partnerships, I daresay, in the country around community safety and crime, so we've got a strong statutory membership that works well together. The key for us, as I say, is in being more proactive rather than just waiting for referrals and I can assure you that that will be something that's in our plan for the next three years. It's one of the key things we've already identified and we will make sure that it happens. In particular, picking up on a meeting that we had earlier this week – it's not just the city, it's the rural areas as well which have very distinct issues for us.

Answer: We are going out and visiting all the community groups in Peterborough that are registered with us (PCVS) – we've got about 500 registered groups at the moment. Every week we have views of groups that have come forward – we had Women's Groups that have come just last week saying that they want to set up. So I think it's important that the questions that we're asking those groups are: what are the issues that you're facing? What are you currently doing to support people in your community? So I think that's the place that we need to get information to those groups out about what's available, to make sure that they are aware.

Question: Can I come back on that? I think it's a positive strand, because there's so many things discussed this morning that I wasn't aware of and we've confirmed other people couldn't access. Perhaps the suggestion for consideration is: rather than lots of individual groups finding means to spread the message, if they were consolidated, it might be a more effective way.

Answer: Just two things I wanted to come back on. One is that we do have a new communities directorate that does bring together the services we're talking about alongside the adolescent intervention services and all of the 0-19, and interestingly we do have a meeting actually set up with PCVS to look at how we can bring the services the Council provides – targeted services – with the voluntary and communities sector. In terms of letting people know, we do actually have a locality tool that is a web-based tool that is updated on a termly basis, which is services available to children and families at the moment, but we actually want to extend that to wider services, so we are going to build on that and I'd be happy to send that link out again.

Question: Do the members of the voluntary sector here look to leadership from the City Council, or would we be better funding a separate body to co-ordinate a response to the welfare changes? Because I'm conscious that we're delivering the welfare changes, so we're not necessarily the people that people would automatically come to for assistance.

Answer: What we have done very recently is gone out to the whole of the voluntary sector and asked them if they would be interested in setting up a partnership for voluntary organisations to look at how we can meet things that are coming up in the city and some of those partners are here today. I think of course the issue for us is – our intention – is to look at all of the issues that are coming up, we know that there's a strategy that you are currently delivering with the Council that was written with the voluntary sector. So we know that what we need to do as a sector is come back to you and say "this is how we think the best outcomes can be delivered", which may not be just about helping people fill out benefit forms. It might be about the whole need of a family, of their carers involved and basically we need to be able to come back to you and say that we've made a difference.

So the voluntary sector partnership and the community involvement partnership are coming together to do that. Where the challenges are, of course, as always, are around resourcing. What we're doing is coming back to local authorities and saying "with this amount of money, we can make this much difference". I also want to say something I think is very important – there are a lot of groups out in the communities – 98% that we believe with a little bit of resource could be delivering a lot more than they're currently doing. I've been in contact with people on the ground – they're the people that can be trusted to be honest about what's happening and where we can really make the changes.

I think it's also important to recognise that every time someone walks into a voluntary sector organisation, it's an opportunity for us to make a difference in that person's life all round.

Question: One thing that happens is that many people see councillors as the one-stop-shop. They come to us for the signposting that's been referred to, and I think that picks up from what was said earlier. What would be handy for me as a councillor and what I think would be even more handy for new councillors, is to have a list of all the agencies that are there to help and what they specialise in, so we can say – "have you tried so-and-so". Not that you'd do it off the top of your head and you're thinking it as you're there talking, but it would be handy to have a checklist in front of you, and I wonder whether other people would find that useful and whether our offices have considered that. I find trawling through the Council website when you're in a hurry is a hard slog.

Answer: I think that's something very practical we can do fairly easily from today, and I think it would be useful to have one set of information and not have multiple sets of information, so assuming there is general support for that approach, I think that's something that could be achieved.

Question: Peterborough is growing in its population and its diversity. Since often that growth in diversity is unplanned, how is it that we can work together to ensure that the poverty level of the people that are coming in are not going to be majorly affected. How do we work together to alleviate that?

Answer: I work as Community Cohesion Manager at the Peterborough City Council. In fact, it is very important that in tackling poverty that none of the communities are left out, whether they are new or settled communities. It's very important, particularly in groups that PCVS mentioned such as the Timorese, and other community groups are not left out because of the language they use, but the bulk of the issues dealt with are as I say, as evidenced by the people that are seeking help at least, are coming largely from the British White communities as they are 60% of the people seeking help, but there are growing numbers of other communities. But the Councillor is absolutely right – it's important for us to make sure that the others are not neglected and that's an important part which in the city is being done by the Community Cohesion Board and the work that we do with the Diversity Forum is linked with that.

Question: Can I just follow up on the question given by the Councillor and the reply given by the Community Cohesion Manager? People in the main, and we've been talking about councillors and their situations – Councillor Khan's and Councillor Peach's wards are a lot more challenging than mine. Five years ago I had five percent Eastern Europeans. This year, in my ward, I have 20%. In some wards there are 25%. One thing that came out to me this morning and worried me a great deal was the fact that one out of every eight is White British and the changing pattern in the population. Now, I can't speak these languages, and we're the councillors that represent, and there's been a 140% increase in those that have come from Eastern Europe in the past four years. They may be in poverty, but they don't know how to come to me and I don't know how to go to them, so how do we look into that?

Answer: We've been talking about this within the new Communities Directorate and saying that what we need to do now is more around community development, but when we talk about is getting into the community to identify people that can help us to provide information to the different people from the different cultures and that's something we're keen to major on in this coming year.

Answer: In my own church we have a big international community and we've found that by nominating a representative to each group that they can then come forward to the clergy and say that they've got problems. The East Timorese were one in particular, as they are a young community of young men especially living on their own, living in multi-occupancy houses.

The other thing we have being set up is an African Group being set up because we see that our African population is growing within our church. I think that churches have a role in this to help the Council by realising what they've got in their own churches, and there are many international churches using the state churches here in Peterborough and it's trying to keep up with them. And unfortunately, some of the groups split – they're not happy with their church leaders, so they go off, but I am aware of where people are from various groups, but I'm sure the churches could help.

Answer: I'd like to respond to the support available to the councillors, because it is a crucial area. So apart from the community development work that we've talked about and also the important work that the faith communities are doing – I think this could be a good opportunity for us to see what support we can give to the councillors. It's not about training for languages – it's about understanding the way of life of different communities. So in fact that could be something we can explore further with the Democratic and Governance services to see what we can do in terms of understanding different communities. We've done something similar for the Roma community and I know City College are in the process of organising it further, so that could be one of the starting points and I can discuss details with Governance services on that.

Answer: As a businessman and some academics and people from voluntary sectors – I'd watch this space because we're actually going to trial something in Peterborough which is about exactly this issue, which has been hopefully picked up nationally, which is a cross-language communication device, which allows doctors, legal professionals and people like ourselves to communicate without the language knowledge. So the issue has created an opportunity which looks like it could work.

Question: Helping people with crisis support is perhaps when people first go to the voluntary services – how do you currently help people in poverty that maybe have long-term mental health problems in the long term?

Answer: We are part of the community assistance scheme so we do provide support with crisis in the short term, but it isn't what we provide long-term support with, but we do provide support with the recovery style which looks at all aspects of life – everything that encourages living full life in the community, so money, employment, having a social life, hobbies is all part of that. We have a 12-step recovery program which is an outcomes-focused model that looks at the whole life. But there are links between poverty and depression, and they go hand-in-hand.

Question: I don't think any individual or family has a single-issue problem and if our approach to solving problems is to hit each crisis as it comes, we'll end up with families still in crisis. One example in a very small way in which St. Marks is trying to get to the root of a person's lifestyle and choices is we've partnered with the Hope Into Action project which is based in Peterborough. Between us we've purchased a house in our ward and we've installed three tenants there – three young men who we look after. So they have to make their way in life – they've had problems with homelessness, drug-taking and employability and we're applying a team of people who are befriending them over the long period, which could be years, in order to help them turn their lives around and become practical, valuable citizens which they want to be, but they find they're trapped within the lifestyle they've been brought up in. But it's about building that long, healthy relationship rather than just hitting individual crises.

Question: This is one of the key strands you picked up on at the beginning and I guess links into lifestyle and choices which, I guess, is the gambling theme that was highlighted this morning, and some of the numbers were presented during the quiz session. It appears there's less controls over the licensing of gambling than there is perhaps for alcohol, but I wonder if there was any grand plan of what can be done locally to limit the proliferation moving forward?

Answer: There is a national campaign for local authorities to come together to use aspects of the Localism Act to restrict the number of gambling shops on the high street. That would be one approach. We, like many authorities, have been asked to sign up to that. We are currently producing thoughts on whether that's a viable option, but I've had some discussion with Simon Machen to limit the number of licensed premises.

Answer: The largest difficulty we face is that under the planning system there is the ability to change the use of a property from one thing to another without the need for planning permission. Local authorities do have the opportunity to remove those automatic rights, but all that does is require someone to apply for planning permission for that change of use which they otherwise wouldn't have to do. If you're in a situation whereby planning permission is required for that change of use, what you've got to have if you're going to refuse those planning applications, is a body of evidence that can demonstrate that the new use into this area would be proven to cause harm, and that's where the challenge lies.

Question: I just wonder if there's been any studies done it really affects the amount of gambling – the number of gambling establishments. So for example if on a particular road there's a couple of gambling establishments and a third one wants to open, does that increase the amount of gambling in that area, or will those who want to gamble go to the existing two? I actually do think there's too many gambling establishments around, but I wonder if there's been any studies on whether the actual numbers increase the amount of gambling or if it just spreads it around a bit?

Answer: I don't know if we have the answer, but not meaning to pass the buck at all, I wonder if that wouldn't be a recommendation by the Sustainable Growth Committee this afternoon?

Question: Most people claiming benefits are actually genuine and I believe there's a stigma attached to claiming benefits. As a result people that are disabled might be more at risk of being a victim of a hate crime. What are the Council doing to reduce that, to protect vulnerable people in our city and to take that stigma away?

Answer: I don't know if I can say from my perspective whether there is stigma attached to being a benefit claimant. I can't answer that positively or negatively. But the issue around vulnerable groups and vulnerable people is something that we started people on over the course of this current year to try and make sure that our services were proactive in identifying vulnerable groups, and we've already discussed how many groups there may be in the city that could be vulnerable to different types of issue. That's a theme that will carry on in earnest through the Safer Peterborough Partnership throughout the next year, and as has been said the reorganisation of the Council into a communities directorate gives more scope and grip around that issue and it should be more joined up now than it has been in the past, so I think the direction in which we're travelling is positive. However, the issue of stigma I can't make a comment on.

Answer: I think it's hard to feel generally whether there is a stigma or not. I think some people feel about benefit claimants in a different way to how others do. So whereas some may sit in judgment, others may not necessarily. I think nowadays due to the financial crisis there's less negativity because I think there's an understanding that some people have found themselves in a difficult situation. So the fact is, however, that the benefits system has been and is sometimes exploited and when you have a situation where there is a degree of exploitation, there'll be a degree of negativity around it. I mean – even bankers have a stigma now.

Answer: I feel a lot of the stigma could be self-perceived, which is a difficult one to tackle – if people feel they're letting themselves down. Certainly one thing I've found in the Council offices there's no stigma at all. Certainly with housing, Sean has been fantastic and his team are very good at sorting out those sorts of problems – they're all too willing to help, and the same goes with benefits departments too.

Answer: On stigma being self-inflicted. I meet a lot of people who want a job and don't have one, and they feel shame that they can't provide what they want to provide for their families – when schools come with letters saying it's another £40 for a trip somewhere, it's a real challenge. Having been involved in giving out some money to people in need from another charity. People cried when they were given it – cried because they needed it, cried because they've been given it, but they also there was an element of “why do I need this – I shouldn't need this, but I do”.

Question: Has anybody actually looked at the impact that Universal Credit will have on Peterborough, bearing in mind online applications, if people don't know how to fill in the forms. How will that impact on Peterborough?

Answer: The welfare reform action group put together a paper on what we thought the effects of Universal Credit would be when we thought it was coming in last year, which I believe was published?

Answer: Yes, it was fairly widely circulated. Sheffield Hallam University did a study which is probably more scientific and that shows a breakdown of the costs and impact of various welfare reforms so we can circulate that.

Question: I'm interested – we talked about firefighting post-crisis. I'm interested in what the voluntary sector would say are the solutions pre-crisis. In other words – what are the solutions that they see the Council could deliver i.e. better housing, licensing issues – that type of thing. What do they think?

Answer: We feel very strongly that the first point of contact in the voluntary sector is to pick up issues that aren't picked up. If, for example, I come to Bayard Place for an issue – I'm unlikely to tell you that I'm unable to feed my child because social workers might work two floors above, and maybe a social worker will then come and take my child away. But if I go and see a voluntary sector I'm more likely to trust them and open up more to what the issues might be and to accept that.

One of the important things about our partnership is that once we've got the outcome on the table we can come back and say "this is what we think" and we know that it's a difficult budget time and there's cuts, but whatever funding may be available left over to deal with poverty – this is the best way we think it should be dealt with, we're on the ground day to day – this is the best way we think your outcomes can be achieved. And this would be up to you to decide if you agree. This decision would be made by key voluntary organisations that have seen the changes as they occur. I think I should refer to my other colleagues.

Answer: The Council don't take children into care because their parents are unable to feed them so that isn't something we would like the voluntary sector to communicate to them.

Answer: My point is that people are not likely to tell the full story to the Council.

Answer: I accept that.

Question: The economy is slowly coming out of the doldrums that it's been in and it's now growing, inflation rates are down. This is likely to lead to an interest rate increase. Do members of the voluntary sector or members of the officer team have any expectations as to how that will impact on people. Will the situation for welfare claimants and others in need get worse before it gets better?

Answer: This is a major issue we see across England and Wales. Lots of people in work doing their best to keep their families together are right on the edge. Salaries and wages haven't grown over the last two or three years but the cost of living has grown exponentially. Those people who are either in mortgage properties or whose landlords bought buy-to-let properties, if the mortgage rate starts to rise you will either see people in mortgaged or tenanted properties struggling to move forward.

So I keep lobbying the council because this is the next major issue in the city and in areas like Hampton which are relatively new communities, where people struggle to get on the property ladder in the first place, I think that'll be a key area in the city, moving forward.

Question: In the voluntary sector, if someone rung up today asking for an appointment, how long would it be until they were able to see somebody?

Answer: It depends. We do an initial assessment from everyone who comes to see us. Different people get different service. We've moved from the bad old days where we'd spend an afternoon with you and someone suffering domestic violence would have to wait in the queue. If it's an urgent issue we will try and see you in the same day or same week. We've seen demand on our service rise 35%. In the first week of January we doubled the amount of clients we saw in the same week last year, so it's a resource issue and whilst we've had increased funding from some funders, other funding from, say, legal aid, has been reduced, so it's a balancing act. But what we try and do is if it's an urgent case we try and see you in the same day or within a few days. If it's something that is challenging to you as an individual but in the real world isn't so material, you may have to wait two or three weeks, or even longer I'm afraid. It's very much down to resource and prioritisation.

Answer: We'd agree with that as well - various waiting times. If it's urgent we will see immediately, we will always do an initial assessment within two weeks. But the demand is so high – in our advocacy service which helps with a wide range of issues from housing benefits to family law, civil law, two thirds of the waiting list is benefits at the moment and welfare reform. We just cannot cope with that sort of demand, so one of the things we're trying to do to meet that demand. One thing we've done recently is introduce clinics where we have a full day where people spend 45 minutes with an advisor so we can at least get them started with the forms. But some of the clients are so ill that they can't even talk. I recently did a home visit with one of our advocates because the person was too ill to leave the house and to speak. The thought of them having to manage filling in the form is impossible. They won't be able to do it by themselves. So we are doing everything we can to meet the demand because if we're not there to help then I don't know where else people will go, so it is a concern.

Question: Migrants are lured to this country with the promise of good pay, but when they get here they find that they're exploited and given poverty pay and end up in poverty. They're basically exploited by business and landlords that take too much money for accommodation. They also end up paying travel costs and things like that. So the reality is that when they arrive here they're exploited and they're able to undercut the amount that local people will work for. So my question is an issue of enforcement – how are we enforcing the national minimum wage in this city to make sure people aren't coming here and ending up in poverty?

Answer: Do you want to hear an answer on behalf of the Council? We're looking at whether it would be feasible to introduce a living wage. What we have found is that it isn't as simple as it appears because it would have repercussions on the local authority schools as well, which would then possibly present a problem for them that we hadn't foreseen, so it's wider than just the Council. So that's what we're looking at from the Council's point of view. It's not a no, it's just we're looking at what it means.

Answer: There are some other examples of how we can eat away at these issues - you mentioned housing officers who can identify problems in accommodation and see what we're providing and they have a great relationship with other agencies such as the UKBA. So whilst it doesn't directly tackle the issue of minimum wage, it is a way of enforcing and encouraging certain behaviours from landlords, employers and so on.

Answer: I think we have good and bad examples in Peterborough, in not just the minimum wage, but living wage employers. In our day-to-day work we do come across bad examples which we treat as a social policy issue and try and address it on behalf of our clients, but on the other hand we do have examples of workers being treated equally and properly.

Answer: You heard my presentation early on this morning and seen some of the reality of what vulnerable people and those in poverty face in Peterborough. The one main positive thing out of this is the very positive working relationship between the voluntary and statutory sectors – we've broken down the barriers and have very adult, realistic conversations and we drill down, find out what the issue is and we're moving forwards in a very positive way to assist people. Predominantly that major piece of work has been funded by the DWP through the welfare support grant. That ends in March 2015. We spoke about interest rates rising, we know about zero hours contracts, we know about the minimum wage. The problems are not going to go away – potentially they will get greater. My challenge to the Council is – what are you going to do to support the vulnerable and poor in our city in March 2015?