

3.1.3 Poverty in Bradford district

Context

When families and children experience poverty and deprivation, they have a standard of living that is well below average and which most people would consider unacceptable in Britain today. Tackling income poverty and material deprivation must be at the heart of the agenda for promoting fairness and opportunity for all.

The research evidence shows that low income and material deprivation are at the core of a complex cycle of interaction between material resources, environmental factors and family circumstances. Poverty blights the lives of families and can prevent children fulfilling their potential, leading to intergenerational cycles of poverty and disadvantage¹.

The Child Poverty Act 2010 places a duty on national and local government to develop child poverty strategies and to promote co-operation between partners to tackle child poverty.

Although specific measures and targets exist for issues such as employment, unemployment, worklessness and fuel poverty, there is no overarching requirement for national and local government in relation to adults of working age or older. This highlights the need for a detailed understanding of the nature and extent of poverty at a local level and for strong partnership arrangements to ensure that poverty is addressed across all parts of the population.

National and local targets

The government has a national target to eradicate child poverty by 2020 but there are no formal targets relating to working age or household poverty. Related national and local targets include increasing employment rates, increasing earnings, reducing unemployment rates, lowering dependency on work related benefits, raising education and skills attainment.

We have included an employment related national indicator in our Local Area Agreement (LAA).

- NI 153: Working age people claiming out of work benefits in the worst performing neighbourhoods

Current performance against this indicator is summarised below.

There has been a further rise in the out of work benefit claimant rate in the worst performing neighbourhoods in Bradford, taking it to 31.8%. The rate continues to be pushed up as a result of the increasing numbers of people claiming Job Seekers Allowance, which is the major component of out of work benefits, as the recession continues to impact on unemployment. Targets are currently being revised in line with guidance from Government Office Yorkshire and Humber. It is anticipated that the revised targets, which will take the effects of the recession into account, will be met in Bradford.

Relevant strategies and local documents

- The Big Plan 2008 - 2011: the Sustainable Community Strategy for Bradford District
- Joint Housing Strategy for Bradford 2008 – 2020
- Economic Strategy for Bradford District 2007 – 2020
- Bradford District Local Economic Assessment 2010
- Bradford District Child Poverty Strategy (due Spring 2011)
- Employment and Skills Strategy for Bradford District 2011-2015 (completion pending)

What do the data tell us?

- The Bradford district is ranked the 32nd most deprived Local Authority district in the country² (of 354).
- 40% of the Bradford district population live in the 20% most income deprived lower super output areas in England³. It is estimated that there are almost 120,000 people who are income deprived in the Bradford district, which is the 4th largest absolute figure for all Local Authorities.
- 27% of Bradford district households have an annual household income of less than £15,000, compared to 22% for Great Britain as a whole⁴. Wards with the highest proportion of households on less than £15,000 are Little Horton (46%), Manningham (45%), and City (44%) wards. Wharfedale (12%) and Ilkley (14%) are the wards with lowest proportion of households on less than £15,000.
- In August 2007, almost 40,000 children and young people aged 0-18 years in the Bradford district were living in households whose equivalised income was less than 60% of the contemporary national median. This equates to 31.4% of the population 0-18 year olds and is notably higher than the figure for Yorkshire and the Humber (22.2%) and England overall (21.6%).
- A total of 61% of children in the district live in low-income households, compared with 44% nationally. Average household incomes are approximately 80% of the national average.
- At £410, average weekly earnings for full-time workers are 10% lower than the regional average and 20% lower than the national average.
- In May 2010, 17.8% of the district's working age population were claiming out of work benefits, higher than both the regional (15.6%) and national averages (14.7%). The largest numbers of applicants were claiming Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) and incapacity benefits, which is the same as both the regional and national patterns.
- In May 2010, 14,200 (4.4%) of the district's working age population were claiming Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), compared to 4.1% regionally and 3.5% nationally. Although the proportion of JSA claims of over 12 months has historically been relatively low in the Bradford district where most claims are for 6 months or less, there appears to have been an overall nation-wide shift to longer-term claims.
- In April 2010, just over 16,000 families in the Bradford district were classed as 'out of work'. This equates to 23% of all families and is higher than the national figure of 19%.
- Larger families are more likely to live in poverty and families with four or more children are twice as likely to live in poverty when compared with families of one or two children.
- In the Bradford district a slightly higher proportion of children in poverty live in families headed by a couple than in families headed by a lone parent. This is not reflected in national data, where a higher proportion of children in poverty live in lone parent families.
- Higher proportions of disabled children and children with Special Educational Needs (SEN) live in poverty or in areas of high deprivation. The costs associated with caring for a disabled child, and the difficulties parents face in obtaining and maintaining work, can mean that is difficult for these families to move out of poverty. The proportion of pupils who are SEN without a statement (School Action or Action+) at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4 are high in the Bradford district than in England overall.
- Bradford district is ranked 60th out of all 380 local authority districts in Great Britain in terms of demand for third sector affordable credit provision according to a 2007 report by the HM Treasury Financial Inclusion Taskforce. Bradford is ranked as the 29th most mismatched authority in regard to the supply and demand for affordable credit.
- Debt levels in Bradford have increased during this recession. Between April and December 2007, financial advisers based at Citizens Advice Bureau offices in Bradford dealt with £8,864,758 worth of debt. Between April and December 2009, this had risen to £17,505,995. This is more than double the amount dealt with in 2007 and a 32 % increase on the previous year.

Future needs and gaps in provision

- The uptake of formal childcare by low income families is lower in the Bradford district (14%) than national (18%) and is not increasing at an equivalent pace. Parents may still perceive a lack of affordable childcare as a barrier to looking for or returning to work.
- The Bradford district has a high proportion of private sector rented accommodation and a high proportion of all homes are classed as 'non-decent', often for energy efficiency hazards. The high incidence of non-decent accommodation combined with low average incomes may mean that families are spending disproportionate amounts on heating and need to, but cannot afford to, maintain or repair their accommodation.
- 53,000 adults across the district have no qualifications. This equates to 16.4 % of the working-age population and is the highest of all the local authority districts in the Leeds City Region. Growth forecasts for the Bradford district (2009-2019) suggest that the strongest growth is likely to be seen in those parts of the service sector that typically employ highly-skilled staff.
- Raising skills levels will be key to ensuring local people are equipped to take up employment in higher value occupations, both within and outside the district. Many employers, particularly those offering high-wage jobs, are looking for people with qualifications at Level 3, which is equivalent to one or more A levels, and above.
- Tackling debt and financial exclusion through provision of debt advice, access to affordable credit and financial literacy training is a key element in reducing poverty. A Financial Inclusion Action Plan has been developed by the Financial Inclusion Working Group. This involves staff from the Council, Incommunities and Department for Work and Pensions Champions led by the Assistant Director Regeneration for Housing at Bradford Council. A financial inclusion pledge has also been developed through the Local Strategic Partnership.
- Tackling fuel poverty, reducing homelessness and increasing access to affordable housing is another important strand in reducing poverty.

Summary of priorities

Securing Employment

- Increase employability through effective basic skills training and targeted language programmes.
- Introduce new measures for supporting lone parents into work and modernisation of the New Deals for both younger and older people.
- Help disabled people into work through rolling out the Pathways to Work programme.
- Support those older people who want to, or need to, work through targeted employment services and by encouraging employers to tackle age discrimination.

Raising Skills

- Raise educational attainment at Level 2, which is equivalent to five GCSEs, grades A* - C, develop vocational qualifications and make sure people have the necessary skills to get a job and to stay in work.
- Improve workforce skills at Level 3, which is equivalent to two A levels, maximise the impact of the Learning and Skills Council's Train2Gain programme and strengthen the relationship between the university and colleges and the private sector to develop higher level skills.

References

- ¹ Ending Child Poverty: Everybody's Business
- ² Index of Multiple Deprivation 2007
- ³ Index of Local Conditions 2007
- ⁴ CACI Paycheck 2010