

Birmingham
Child Poverty Commission
A fairer start for all our children and young people

An independent report

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Foreword

In the spring of 2015, Birmingham City Council invited me to chair the independent Birmingham Child Poverty Commission. We have been privileged to undertake this enormously ambitious task of looking at the causes of child poverty in the city and what can be done to reduce and, ultimately, reverse them.

More than 1.1 million people call Birmingham home and the city contains huge potential. With almost 250,000 of Birmingham's residents under the age of 15 and more than 500,000 are under the age of 30, it is clear that the future of the city depends on what we do now. The youth and diversity of Birmingham is widely envied but with significant deprivation and fettered aspiration this potential runs the risk of going to waste. The children and young people of Birmingham deserve better.

The City Council, in setting up this Commission, have made their ambitions and their priorities clear: they recognise the potential in the city and that that potential is bound in its children and young people. However, more needs to be done. Too often the challenges children and young people face is considered to be the sole purview of the Council's Children, Young People and Families Service. It is undeniable that the service has a huge role to play, but the vast array of statutory and non-statutory services also need to recognise and respond to their responsibilities to children and young people.

There is some fantastic work being done across Birmingham to support and develop children and young people to get out of poverty and to get on. But too often these services are disparate and lacking a co-ordinated approach. The private, voluntary, educational and wider public sector within Birmingham all need to demonstrate their determination and commitment to play their part in addressing these challenges.

With 37% of the city's children and young people living in poverty, this report is not intended as a 'how to' guide to solving child poverty in the city: the recommendations do not contain a silver bullet. The recommendations we have made provide tangible starting points for the city in its long-term task to reduce levels of child poverty and increase prosperity and aspiration amongst our young people. We propose a clear strategy of raising aspiration, mitigating the impact of existing poverty, shared responsibility across the city, and breaking the cycle of poverty.

Our recommendations are certainly ambitious, but they are eminently achievable and all will have a significant and positive impact on the children and young people in the city who are currently living in poverty.

I am hugely grateful to the Commissioners for their expertise and commitment to the this work, and collectively we are immensely appreciative to the people, young and less young, of Birmingham who have generously shared their stories, enriched our insights and shaped our recommendations. Thank you.

Herein the Commission presents its findings and recommendations: the hard work to implement them must now begin. It is in everyone's interests to consign child poverty in Birmingham to the past.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matthew". The letters are cursive and fluid, with a large initial 'M'.

Matthew Reed

Independent Chair of Birmingham Child Poverty Commission
and Chief Executive of The Children's Society

Methodology and Themes

There are many contributing factors that result in a child growing up in poverty. These range from the income in the family home – either through low paid employment or entitlements to benefits – to educational outcomes and housing. Some of these drivers sit at the level of central Government, namely entitlement to benefits and Tax Credits. Some are able to be addressed at the local level, such as access to safe and suitable accommodation, support with employment and skills and raising aspiration through education and lifelong learning for parents.

This report seeks to develop local policy recommendations for change that can be adopted by Birmingham City Council and partners across the city to tackle the level of child poverty in the city. The Commission therefore chose to focus on five themes, around which this report is structured:

1. Health
2. Housing
3. In-work poverty
4. Economy and worklessness
5. Education and lifelong learning

This report is based on:

- A survey of 200 parents of children aged under 18 living in Birmingham.
- Evidence and consultation sessions held across the city (see appendix A).
- Fair Schoolsⁱⁱ consultation sessions in local schools – 3 primary schools, 2 secondary schools and 1 Pupil Referral unit – hearing the views of 336 young people in group discussions with further small group interviews with 72 children and young people.
- In-depth interviews with families living in Birmingham.

Child poverty: definition

The causes and impacts of child poverty are complex. Throughout this report we have used the accepted measurement of child poverty, namely that children are said to live in relative income poverty if they live in households with income below 60% of the household median. This relative child poverty measure recognises that it is not enough that children's basic needs are met, but they also have the resources necessary for them to participate in the same activities as their peers. While this measurement relates to absolute poverty, we have included substantial commentary throughout the report on the impact of subjective poverty.

Ethics: Protecting participant identities

Some biographical details of the families and children who have contributed to this report have been changed to ensure anonymity. The case studies presented in this report are based on the data collected from in depth interviews with our case study families. However, certain biographical information has been altered in order to protect participant identities.

The Birmingham Context

Birmingham is England's second city; home to more than 1.1 million people.

It is a diverse, vibrant and young city with more than 22% of its residents aged under 15 and 46% of residents under the age of 30. Over 4 in 10 residents are from an ethnic group other than White British.

This diversity brings with it rich language skills where school-age pupils speak more than 100 languages, in addition to English. Birmingham has huge strengths and huge potential. The city's young people – its future leaders - need to be supported out of poverty and encouraged to raise their aspirations to meet this potential.

Recommendation

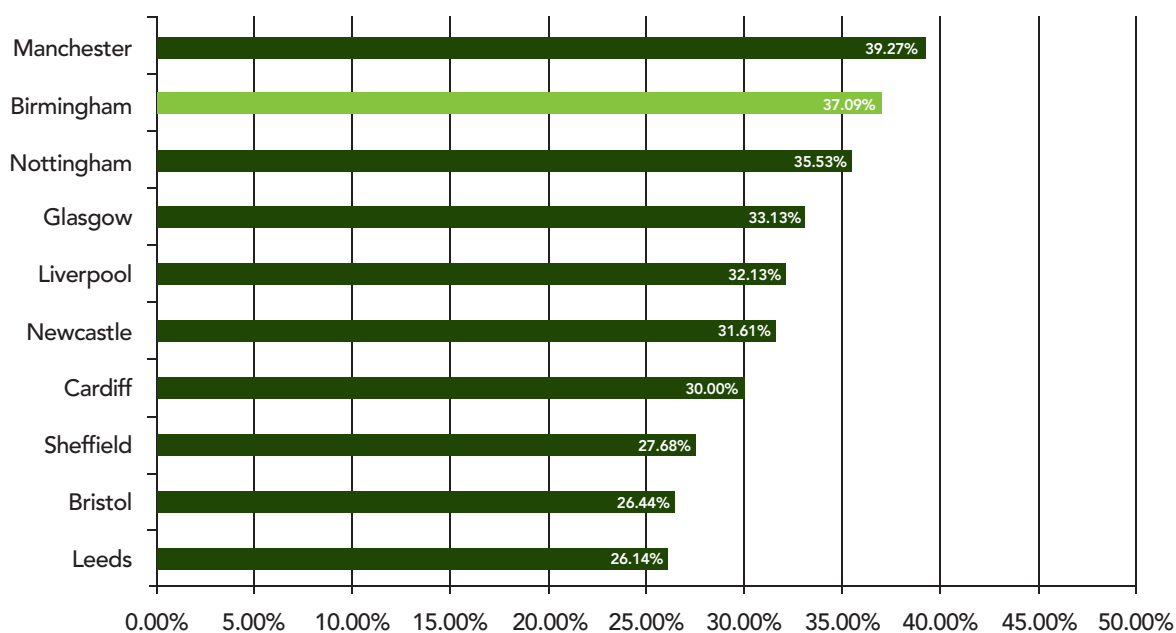
An annual or biennial 'Best of Birmingham' event should be introduced by July 2017 to showcase and celebrate outstanding children, young people and the adults that support them.

While there is a more equal distribution across the income scale in Birmingham than exists nationally, average earnings are still more than 10% below the national average.

Child poverty in the city is too high. In Birmingham there are over 100,000 children living in poverty, the equivalent of 37% of all children in the city (after housing costs). This is the second highest rate of child poverty across the UK's core cities.

**In Birmingham there
are over 100,000 children
living in poverty**

Percentage of children living in poverty



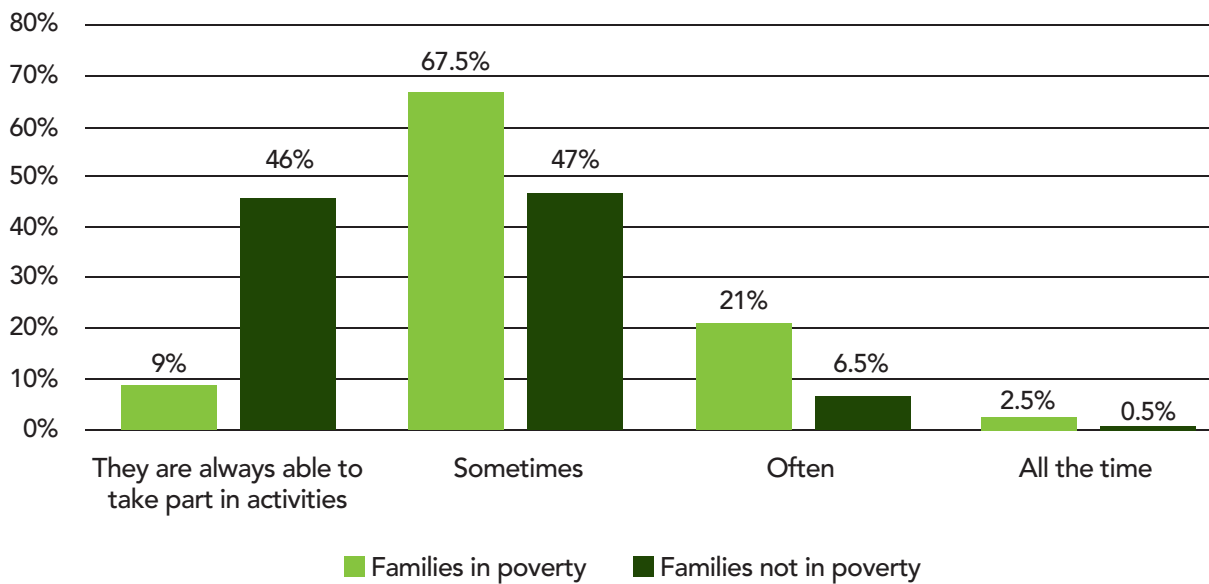
Source: **End Child Poverty, October 2014**

The challenges of tackling child poverty in the city and making a difference to children growing up with the disadvantages that life in poverty brings are varied and complex.

- Nearly half of Birmingham's children live in the 10% most deprived areas in the country – with nearly 8,000 living in the 1% most deprived areas.
- Almost 3 in 10 (29.8%) households with children in Birmingham are living in lone parent households, against an England and Wales average of 25%.
- Birmingham Ladywood Constituency has the third highest level of child poverty in the UK among parliamentary constituencies with 47% of children living in poverty after housing costsⁱⁱⁱ.

Children living in poverty struggle to make the most of the city they call home – prohibited by the cost of transport, the financial means of their parents and the cost of family activities. A survey we conducted of Birmingham families found that almost half of parents (46%) not in poverty (as defined by the Government's relative low income line^{iv}) say their children are always able to take part in activities irrespective of costs, compared to less than one in ten (9%) of families in poverty.

How often are your children unable to take part in activities because of cost?



Source: Survey of Birmingham parents n=200, p value = 0.000

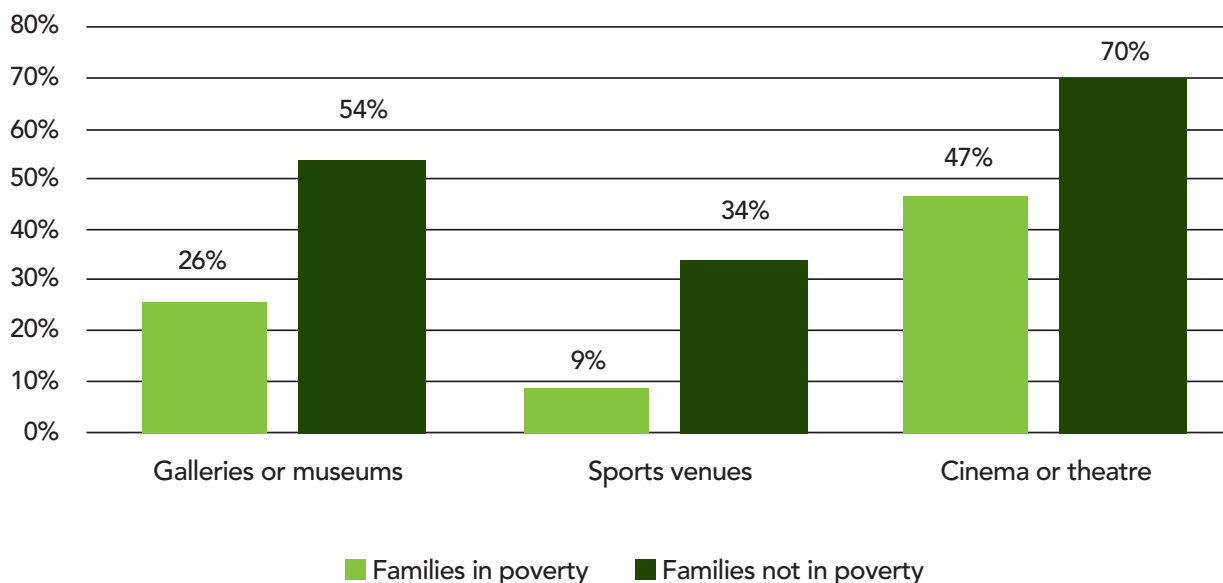
Accessing the assets of the city is challenging for parents in poverty – survey results indicated that over half of families (55%) who are not in poverty have accessed the city’s galleries and museums, compared to just a quarter (25%) of families in poverty. 72% of those families in poverty find the cost of public transport in Birmingham affects how often they travel, compared to just 38% of those not in poverty. This means families in poverty are almost twice as likely to have difficulties in accessing public transport than those not in poverty.

During Commission engagement sessions with young people, an overwhelming issue being fed back to Commissioners was the lack of social and leisure activities available to young people, they emphasised the importance of having youth centres and affordable transport so they could visit different parts of the city. They stated that not being able to visit places outside their immediate areas limited their opportunities and experiences while also hindering development and social networks. It was suggested that young people should be involved in the design of solutions and make them aware of opportunities to help improve social mobility.

Recommendation

By April 2017, Birmingham City Council should explore the potential for subsidised transport for young people within city localities, using Merseytravel’s ‘My ticket’ scheme as a model.

Places families are able to access in the city



Source: Survey of Birmingham parents n=200, p value = 0.004

Over half (54%) of parents in poverty believe their children will have a worse life than their own

The Birmingham Child Poverty Commission want to ensure children growing up in Birmingham feel positive about their future and are able to achieve in the city. Unfortunately, many parents and children today feel their economic circumstances and the daily poverty they face holds them back and disadvantages them. Parents living in poverty are more pessimistic about their children's future; with over half (54%) of parents in poverty believing their children will have a worse life than their own, compared to just 30% of those parents not in poverty. Young people are aware of the limitations poverty places on them and their peers – speaking of how not being able to visit places outside their immediate area limits their opportunities and experiences.

“There's lots of gangs around where I live and it's easy to get into a gang if you have nothing to do”

Secondary age school girl

Birmingham City Council and its partners have told us they want to go further in tackling child poverty in the city and highlighting the assets the city has to offer its young people. The drivers and causes of child poverty are complex and preventing child poverty cannot be tackled by one organisation alone. The task must be shared by the city as a whole, working with central Government, to improve the life chances of children in Birmingham. As the elected representative body, Birmingham City Council must continue to provide the coordination and leadership – demonstrated by the instigation of this Commission – to meet this challenge.

Recommendation

By September 2016, there should be a named Cabinet Member with responsibility for poverty.

Theme One: Health

The health and wellbeing of children in Birmingham is vital to supporting them out of poverty, having healthy lifestyles and actively contributing to the life of the city. Unfortunately, infant and child mortality rates in Birmingham are poorer than the England average and life expectancy across the city is extremely variable.

Since the Health and Social Care Act 2012 local areas have a statutory duty through their local Health and Wellbeing Board to collectively tackle health inequalities across the local area. The primary mechanism for this is through a joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy, informed by a local profile of need – the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This strategy in turn informs local authority, clinical commissioning groups and NHS England commissioning plans. The Commission would recommend this commitment to public health is further integrated into decisions taken by Birmingham City Council through a proactive assessment of public health implications.

Supporting children to have active and healthy lives will improve their wellbeing and health outcomes when they become an adult.

Recommendation

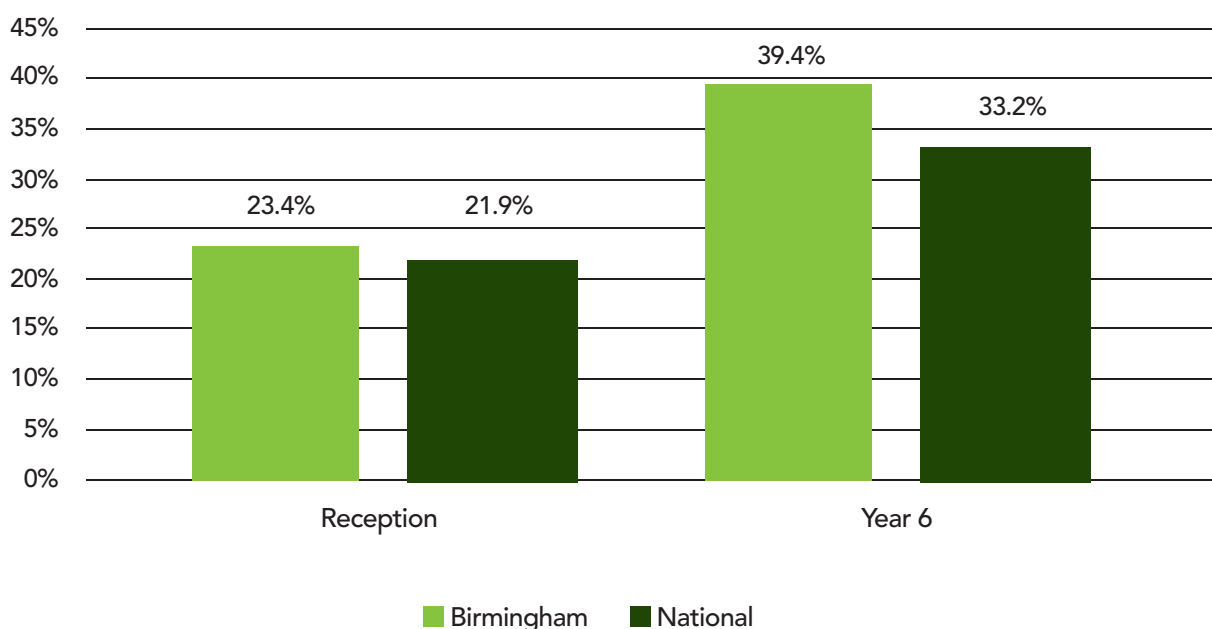
By January 2017, all Birmingham City Council approved strategies should include a mandatory section on the public health and health inequality implications of the issue under consideration.

Childhood obesity

In 2014/15 almost a quarter of reception-aged children in Birmingham were either overweight or obese, slightly above the national average. This difference between Birmingham and the national average increases further by the time children reach Year 6 (age 11), with 4 in 10 children of this age measured as either overweight or obese – remaining stubbornly high over the years. The 2014/15 figure is an increase on previous years and approaching the high of 2011/12^v.

This suggests tackling obesity at primary school is a critical time to intervene to encourage healthy lifestyles in the city's children.

Percentage of obese children in Birmingham



Source: 2014/15 figures taken from the Birmingham Child Poverty Needs Assessment 2015

It is welcomed that the current Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Strategy has set targets to reduce childhood obesity, seeking to reduce the proportion of children overweight in Reception to 22.6% and those overweight in Year 6 to 33.9%^{vi}. The Commission endorses this focus on childhood obesity.

Obesity prevalence for children living in the most deprived areas is more acute than for their peers living in least deprived areas, with obesity prevalence among reception year children in deprived areas reaching 12%, compared to 5.7% among those living in the least deprived areas. In Year 6 these figures were 26.8% and 11.2% respectively.

Obesity prevalence for children living in the most deprived areas is more acute than for their peers living in least deprived areas

Recommendations

By January 2018, there should be a planning restriction in place preventing new fast food outlets within 250 metres of schools.

A targeted obesity programme in primary school to reduce the rise in childhood obesity should be in place by September 2017.

Child and adolescent mental health

There is evidence that being born into poverty can increase the risk of mental health problems in children and young people, which in turn can have long-term consequences for their educational outcomes and social relationships.

The Children and Young People's Mental Health Coalition highlighted that 'being born into poverty puts children at greater risk of mental health problems and, for many, this will lead to negative consequences through their lives'^{vii}.

The most recent assessment of mental health of children and young people across the country dates back to 2004 estimates that 1 in 10 children and young people aged 5 – 16 had a clinically diagnosed mental disorder^{viii}. If this data was applied to the Birmingham population this would mean 28,000 children were in need of mental health support, although the prevalence is likely to be much higher due to a range of factors including improvements in diagnoses.

Based on data The Children's Society collected from Birmingham Children's Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, 3,270 Tier 3 referrals were received by the Trust in 2014-15. This equates to 3.4% of the Trust's local population if we equate one referral per child aged 10 to 17^{ix}. The same study of 34 providers across England estimates the national average to be 4%.

There has been welcome investment in child and adolescent mental health services in recent years, tailored to local need through Transformation Plans, however waiting times for referrals into Birmingham's CAMHS (Children's & Adolescent Mental Health Services) community service over the past years have unfortunately increased.

| Period | Waiting time (weeks) |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2013 | |
| Average of Referral to Assessment | 6.0 |
| Average of Assessment to Treatment | 3.4 |
| Average of Referral to Treatment | 9.2 |
| 2014 | |
| Average of Referral to Assessment | 5.8 |
| Average of Assessment to Treatment | 6.4 |
| Average of Referral to Treatment | 11.8 |
| 2015 | |
| Average of Referral to Assessment | 7.8 |
| Average of Assessment to Treatment | 7.8 |
| Average of Referral to Treatment | 15.3 |

Source: Birmingham City Council, March 2016

Supporting children who do not meet the threshold for CAMHS but do need support to cope with their mental health needs is an increasing challenge. Evidence gathered through a visit to Oasis Academy highlighted that whilst the school did not have a high number of students with formal SEND (Special Educational Needs & Disability) status, many pupils without a formal Educational Healthcare Plan had severe needs. The school had employed a private Education Psychologist to work with these children, although these assessments of need were not recognised by Birmingham City Council and so did not contribute towards the development of a formal statement for the children.

Forward Thinking Birmingham

A new 0-25 mental health service was launched in Birmingham in April 2016. This service has been jointly provided between Birmingham Children's Hospital, Worcestershire Health and Care Trust, Beacon UK, The Children's Society, and the Priory Group. This new service will ensure consistent support for children and young people between 0-25, without the need for patients to move to a new team when they reach 16 or 18. There is also a brand new city centre hub to provide advice and support.

Recommendations

By March 2017, an audit should be completed on the number of schools that have access to counselling support and do a cost analysis of providing outreach counselling service to schools with the highest proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium.

The new city centre hub Pause should be advertised in services accessed by children and families, including the School Health Advisory Services and children's centres.

Theme Two: Housing

Access to appropriate housing that is high quality, affordable and adequately sized for families is of the utmost importance to children, as is living in a home that is warm and safe. Living in a home that is cold and damp can have serious consequences for the health and wellbeing of children and young people^x.

Overcrowded accommodation and entitlement to support

The number of people in the household can have a direct impact on the experiences of children and young people growing up in poverty, meaning children are unable to sleep and do not have a quiet place to do their homework. Young people described the effects of living in overcrowded housing, which ranged from sharing bedrooms with siblings, not having any privacy and being unable to invite friends round.

Birmingham has been identified as having the highest concentration of overcrowded properties in the West Midlands. As of March 2016, there were 8,330 applicants on the housing register in overcrowded accommodation. The quality of housing has an impact on a number of outcomes for children and young people, particularly their physical and mental health^{xi}. This is shown to be a result of the number of people living in the accommodation, the ability to adequately heat it, and the type of accommodation itself^{xii}.

Research by the Chartered Institute of Housing^{xiii} in 2013, which looked at tenure and access to accommodation, found that 655,000 households in England are overcrowded with half being in London and the West Midlands.

The housing situation in Birmingham will be further complicated by the changes in the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. The measures as set out in the Act will see the Benefit Cap outside of London reduced from £26,000 to £20,000. This reduction, which will primarily affect low-income households with higher rents (particularly those renting in the private rented sector), comes from reductions in Housing Benefit making it more difficult for families with children to afford appropriate housing solutions. Analysis undertaken by Birmingham City Council's Benefits Service has identified that households with children will be significantly impacted by the changes.

Case study: Michelle

Michelle is 38 years old and lives with her husband and four children in a four bedroom house in a deprived area of Birmingham. Her husband works full time as a caretaker, money is tight but they just about manage.

Michelle has recently been diagnosed with a debilitating condition that affects her mental and physical health – which she sees as inextricably linked. As a result, she finds it difficult to carry out household chores and childcare duties and instead relies on her children and husband to do these things. She finds it difficult to leave the house and mostly stays at home.

As a result of her ill health, Michelle has not been able to work for the past four years. Before she worked as a support worker and she loved her job. Now her family have to rely on her husband's small wage. In order to cope Michelle has to count every last penny; she is meticulous with her budget and rarely deviates from it. If her husband accidentally buys branded food, instead of the supermarket's own brand, she has to account for the extra few pounds and take it off some other expenditure. They manage, but only just. Michelle knows that going back to work would relieve their financial difficulties, however her mental and physical ill health currently make this impossible.

Michelle finds it difficult to get a same day appointment at her GP surgery as she is rarely considered an emergency, and is instead offered an appointment for the following week. Michelle finds this frustrating as her illness is unpredictable, she doesn't know how she will feel from one day to next and just wishes she could speak to someone on the days she reaches out. It would make a huge difference to Michelle if she could see the same doctor at each appointment; having to explain her problems over and over again gets her down. She finds navigating GP surgery appointments stressful and would appreciate the opportunity to speak on the phone with the doctor, or for there to be a local support group that she could attend, to speak to other people in similar situations. Despite being offered counselling when she first became depressed seven years ago, Michelle has not been any offered anything since.

Percentage of households by number of children in Birmingham affected by the Benefit Cap

| Capped Household | Number of Children in Household | | | | |
|-------------------|---------------------------------|--------|-----|-----|-----------|
| | 0 | 1 or 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 or more |
| Couples Household | 1% | 19% | 34% | 26% | 20% |
| Single Household | 19% | 12% | 38% | 20% | 11% |

The freezing of Housing Benefit for the next four years further compounds this. Research by Shelter predicts that 80% of working households in England claiming support to help meet rental costs in the private sector will be affected by the four-year housing benefit freeze. The cash shortfall will affect families living in places not traditionally associated with high rents, such as Birmingham, as well as expensive postcodes in London and the South East. The study shows that the monthly gap between private rents and Local Housing Allowance on two-bed homes in the cheapest areas of each local area will be significant in growth areas such as Manchester (£240), Bristol (£236), and Birmingham (£107).

The city has seen an increase in the number of households seeking help for issues to do with homelessness in the last year. This is a situation that can be seen across the country, and can in many instances affect vulnerable young people who are on their own. There are also over a 6,500 families placed in temporary accommodation, which can be insecure and expensive.

As of March 2016 there were 8,330 applicants on the housing register in overcrowded accommodation. Some of these families may have presented to the local authority as homeless and have received temporary accommodation and others may need a larger home due to their family growing or children getting older and being unable to share a bedroom.

As of March 2016 there were 8,330 applicants on the housing register in overcrowded accommodation.

Number of families in overcrowded accommodation in Birmingham

| Register Type | Overcrowded |
|---------------|--------------|
| General Needs | 5,214 |
| Transfer | 2,109 |
| Homeless | 1,007 |
| Total | 8,330 |

Source: Birmingham City Council, March 2016

There are a high number of people registered as homeless who are in employment and should be supported by the council to find a stable solution to their housing needs. The latest data from Birmingham City Council shows that 20% of those in temporary accommodation or change homes during one year are in employment. This means that these families are in periods of fluctuating stability with regards to their accommodation, which can make it harder to maintain employment. It can also mean that children have to change schools, which has the potential to disrupt their education.

Main applicant for housing by employment status

| Employment status | Total |
|-------------------|--------------|
| In Employment | 263 |
| Not in Employment | 1,049 |
| Total | 1,312 |

Source: Birmingham City Council, March 2016

Recommendation

By June 2017, Registered Social Landlords should commit to introducing a minimum of three-year tenancies, allowing for greater stability for tenants and landlords. By September 2017 this information should be made available for families on Birmingham City Council's website.

Recommendations

By April 2019, Birmingham City Council should adopt a policy that no low-income family with children under 18 can be declared intentionally homeless.

By January 2018, Birmingham City Council should undertake a formal review of their housing standards enforcement, with a view to introducing a landlord accreditation scheme such as that in operation in Newham.

Case study: Anna

Anna is 13 years old and lives with her mum, dad and sister in a three bedroom house in a deprived area of Birmingham. Her mum works part time as a care worker and looks after the children and home, and her dad does shift work in a factory. Anna thinks of herself as 'not posh' but not really hard up either. With the bargains that her dad finds second hand online, she can just about afford to have the things that allow her to join in – and fit in – with her peers.

At home, Anna and her sister have a small bedroom each, and her parents share a room. On the whole she is content where she lives. She is happy to have a bedroom of her own and she appreciates having the privacy and space, however small. She likes her local area – she has lots of friends nearby and there are family members living just round the corner. They know everyone on their road and enjoy welcoming new residents and helping them settle in. This really matters; perhaps without quite knowing it, Anna is busy creating and expanding her social networks and through these, her social capital, both widely recognised as important protective factors in mitigating against the effects of poverty.

A couple of weeks ago Anna's mum was told she would have to pay 'bedroom tax' on one of the rooms in the house. Apparently it has been deemed an extra room, although to Anna its necessity is clear, as her sister needs her own space to study for school exams and in Anna's bedroom space is already tight. Household finances are managed with total precision and there is currently no room for manoeuvre in the budget.

No-one in the family knows what is going to happen with the payment for the 'extra' room. What is clear is that their options are severely limited, and that they will struggle immensely to do what it takes to keep their modest home, where they are settled and supported and managing – despite the odds – to contribute to their local community.

Theme Three: In-work poverty

Worklessness is unquestionably a key driver of child poverty. However, the most recent Households Below Average Income (HBAI) statistics outlines how almost a two-thirds of children (62%) nationally live in households where at least one parent is in work. This suggests that while families are moving into work, they aren't moving out of poverty, with the UK currently having one of the highest rates of low pay in the developed world: over 20% of full-time employees earn less than two-thirds of the pay of the median full-time worker compared to 16% in the OECD as a whole.

One of the key ways that families are able to return to work is through the availability of affordable childcare. This has been recognised by the Government who have recently extended free childcare to 30 hours a week, in an effort to make it easier for these parents to work and fulfil their commitment to make work pay.

There has been a substantial rise in the numbers of 3 and 4 year olds benefitting from funded early education places in Birmingham since 2010, with take-up increasing from 85% in 2010 to 94% in 2014.

While the take-up of the disadvantaged 2 year old offer has significantly improved from 49% in the summer term of 2015 to 57% in the spring term of 2016, learning from increasing the 3 and 4 year old offer should be applied to improve this figure further. Birmingham still remains below the England average of 58%, but is now performing better than the West Midlands average of 56%^{xv}.

The most recent Childcare Sufficiency Strategy for Birmingham sets out that issues with childcare are causing some problems in relation to work or study but overall these are manageable. Satisfaction rates with childcare are very high and very few parents/carers highlight specific improvement suggestions for the childcare that they use. This suggests that there are few structural gaps in the childcare market. The main issue that has prevented families from taking up childcare arrangements has been the cost, with a third of parents (32%) stating that this was a barrier to access for them. The focus group with the Big Lottery Fund found that jobs do not fit with families due to the lack of flexible hours – but that if parents do not take the job they could find their benefits sanctioned.

The cost of childcare can mean that if parents return to work that they are not always significantly better off. This is further complicated by the rates of pay that are available in the city. Average earnings in Birmingham are more than 10% below the national average. However, there is a more equal distribution across the income scale than exists nationally.

There has been a substantial rise in the numbers of 3 and 4 year olds benefitting from funded early education places in Birmingham since 2010

The Living Wage Commission, chaired by the former Bishop of Birmingham, Dr John Sentamu, has found that almost a quarter of workers in the West Midlands are not paid enough to live on, whereas one in five workers in Birmingham (18%) are paid below the living wage. This is the agreed amount for a socially acceptable standard of living and quality of life for residents, and Birmingham City Council is one of 75 local employers in the city that have formally committed to paying the living wage. This figure, it should be noted, is broadly comparable to figures in the rest of the country, apart from London and the South East where rates of low pay are considerably better than the national average.

In 2012, the council introduced the Birmingham Living Wage. This saw 3,000 council employees paid the Birmingham Living Wage that July, at the rate set independently by the Living Wage Foundation. Following the annual review of the Living Wage rate, a further 400 employees became eligible in 2013/14 along with another 400 agency workers, meaning that approximately 2,800 staff have benefited. The Birmingham Business Charter for Social Responsibility also introduced a requirement for contractors to pay the Living Wage to those employees working on Birmingham contracts. This is a situation that will be further improved by the recent announcement that local authority employees will be paid at least the Birmingham Living Wage of £8.25 from April 2016. It is also important to note this rate is significantly better than other local authorities in the West Midlands.

At the beginning of April 2016, the Government introduced the National Minimum Wage (NMW). This means that if you are working, aged 25 or over and not in the first year of an apprenticeship, you are legally entitled to at least £7.20 per hour. The regions with the largest number of minimum wage jobs are the North West, which has 184,000, and the West Midlands, with 140,000. The introduction of the NMW in 2016 will see 220,000 people in the West Midlands receive this new, higher wage^{xvi}. The introduction of the new higher minimum wage however needs to consider alongside reductions to in-work support, as deductions from benefits mean that low-income families with children will keep very little gains in earnings. Birmingham City Council and its partners therefore needs to continue to make the case to Government to retain in-work support for families, alongside becoming the first Living Wage City.

**Birmingham City Council is one of 75
local employers in the city that have
formally committed to paying the
living wage**

Recommendations

Birmingham City Council should use its powers as a commissioner and champion of Birmingham to work with local businesses and the Living Wage Foundation to make Birmingham the first Living Wage City where all employers pay this minimum amount, by January 2019.

By December 2016, Birmingham City Council should work with JobCentrePlus and employment support providers to ensure that parents of two year olds taking up funded early education are specifically targeted with employment and skills support that encourages starting work or training, and that wrap-around childcare is sufficiently affordable and flexible to enable those parents to sustain and increase their employment opportunities.

It is interesting to note that the Social Mobility Index that has been published by the Child Poverty and Social Mobility Commission has found that Birmingham has levels of social mobility that are close to the national average, whereas other cities such as Norwich, Nottingham and Derby are performing significantly worse. The city is also doing better than many other local authorities in the region.

Case study: Karen

Karen is 42 years old and lives in a deprived area of Birmingham in a housing association property where she has lived for the past six years. Karen is a single parent and has three children, two girls aged ten and sixteen and a twelve year old boy. She works part time as a cleaner, money is scarce and at the moment she is struggling to make ends meet.

Five years ago Karen was diagnosed with a debilitating condition that causes widespread pain all over her body. Due to her ill health Karen found it difficult to carry out even the smallest of everyday activities, and to fulfil her duties in her job as a cleaner. As a result she was unable to work for three years. Over time she was able to return to work and for the past two years she has been working part time.

Karen enjoys working, and although the extra monthly income is modest, it does give her family a bit more financial security. However, she has recently suffered a series of financial setbacks. Each month Karen receives working tax credit, child tax credits and child benefit. A few months ago she was told that her working tax credit had been overpaid and that in order to repay it would be reduced by £50 each week, totalling £200 a month. Karen cannot spare this money as she needs it to buy food for her children, and so she applied to have her repayments reduced or staggered. Despite explaining her situation her application was declined.

Furthermore, Karen used to receive Disability Living Allowance but during the transition to Personal Independence Payments, her rate was reduced and she now receives around £60 a month less.

In total, Karen has £260 less each month to cover all her bills and to provide for her children. As a result she has had to make some adjustments, including cancelling her TV and internet and having water and electricity meters fitted. Money was tight before, but now it is even tighter. Despite returning to work Karen struggles to pay for even the basics, and it doesn't look like it will get any easier soon.

Council tax debt

One of the primary and priority debts that families can face is when they have fallen behind on paying their council tax. For many families, council tax arrears are the result of several factors combined – driven principally by demands for full annual payment just seven days after a first reminder following a missed payment, which can be hundreds of pounds. Council tax arrears can be a particular problem for families already struggling to maintain the everyday costs of supporting children.

In Birmingham, an estimated 21,000 children are living in 11,800 families that are in council tax debt. The council, of course, has a duty to reclaim council tax payments. However, our research has found that although the city council employ other methods of collecting council tax arrears, such as attachment of earnings, they have a particularly high use of bailiffs compared to other authorities. Further, Birmingham's official policy states that the city council only uses bailiffs if 'alternative ways of collecting the amounts owed, such as deduction from benefit or attachment of earnings is not appropriate'. The council should also be willing to recall the debt following a referral to bailiffs and negotiate a repayment plan with families, at any point along the enforcement journey. Islington Council has an explicit policy of not engaging bailiffs for families in receipt of Council Tax Support and maintained higher than average collection rates in doing so.

In addition, several councils across the country, including Cornwall and Stockport, have instituted a local 'breathing space' scheme which places accounts on hold for 21 days when a family gets in touch with the council to enable the family time to seek independent debt advice. Birmingham City Council does not appear to have an explicit policy on this, and whilst there is some signposting to debt advice, this is for a council run service and is not independent.

Recommendation

By April 2017, Birmingham City Council should adopt a local 'breathing space' placing council tax accounts on hold for 21 days when a family gets in touch with them so as to enable the family time to seek independent debt advice. The council should also adopt an explicit policy of not engaging bailiffs for families in receipt of Council Tax Support.

One particularly vulnerable group for council tax debt is care leavers. Often, when care leavers move into independent accommodation they begin to manage their own budget fully for the first time. Evidence from The Children's Society's services shows how challenging care leavers can find managing their own budgets and how scary they found falling behind on their council tax.

Cheshire East has introduced an exemption for council tax for care leavers until the age of 25, including those placed out of borough. This was based on research by The Children's Society, which showed how quickly care leavers could fall into financial difficulty. It is expected that this proposal will result in a decrease in emergency payments made to care leavers in crisis such as well as further reducing the dependency of these young people on other services. The council costed this at £17k per annum^{xvii}, with £11k for those placed in Cheshire East and £6k for those placed out of borough.

Our interviews with young people in this situation have told us that managing and understanding council tax bills for the first time is frequently a challenge, and that they aren't aware of their entitlements around exemption or support. Many expressed concern as to how quickly bailiffs are sent round and felt the council should not send bailiffs to these young people so quickly, with bailiff visits being the cause of stress and sleepless nights for some of the young people we spoke to.

Recommendation

By April 2017, Birmingham City Council should exempt care leavers from council tax up to and including the age of 25.

Theme Four: Economy and worklessness

The most recent Local Economic Assessment for Birmingham outlined how the city has the largest concentration of businesses outside London, with over 30,000 companies including almost 900 international firms such as Jaguar Land Rover, Cadbury, Amey and Deutsche Bank being based there.

This means that the city is doing well to attract private investment and jobs, and has seen rapid growth in high value added sectors such as financial and professional services. However, where the city has struggled compared to the other core cities in the UK is having the necessary skills to match the opportunities that are available, and as a consequence fully realise the potential economic benefits of this. This is expressed through the number of low skilled residents, gender employment rates, and overall worklessness.

The city fares poorly when compared to the national indicators for male, female and overall employment rates, with Birmingham performing worst on female employment rates which stand at just 52%, compared to 67% nationally. The city has sought to address this in a number of ways, including through the Creative Future Strategy^{xviii}. This strategy sets out the intention of Birmingham City Council to support young people in the city to develop an interest in arts and culture, but also see this as a possible route to future employment and training. The strategy states that Birmingham City Council will honour their commitment by ensuring:

- Support for programmes and initiatives which enable greater understanding among young people and teaching professionals of employment (including self-employment and entrepreneurialism), training and development opportunities within the cultural and creative industries, including more effective provision of high quality, impartial and creative careers advice.
- A co-ordinated approach to engaging higher education and creative businesses which supports young people's access to and understanding of placement, apprenticeship and sustainable employment opportunities within the cultural and creative sector

However, no action plan has yet been developed for implementing the strategy.

The importance of family income is noted in the recent research by the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission^{xix} which highlights that "*Children from less advantaged family backgrounds who were high attaining in early cognitive skills assessments are found to be less able or at least less successful at converting this early high potential into career success.*" The report goes on to explain, "*Families with greater means at their disposal, financial and otherwise, are assisting their children to accumulate skills, particularly those which are valued in the labour market.*"

The number of children in Birmingham who live in workless households is considerably higher than the figure nationally, with almost one third of children in Birmingham (29%) compared to fewer than one in five nationally (19%) in this regard. Birmingham also has higher rates of worklessness than other local authorities in the West Midlands, who have an average of 11.2% of households without work, compared to 15.4% in Birmingham. However, it is worth noting that there are several wards with high concentrations of worklessness and others with low concentrations, with the four Sutton wards having rates of less than 10%, compared to Kingstanding, Lozells, Shard End and Sparkbrook which have rates of over 22%^{xx}.

Recommendation

Through existing resources and by January 2017, the Department for Work and Pensions, working closely with schools, Birmingham City Council and voluntary sector, should rotate benefits and other financial advisers around those schools/children's centres with high levels of need offering an outreach financial inclusion service.

This can be seen to be a reflection, in part, of the proportion of the city that has high level qualifications. Only 1 in 4 working age residents (26%) have a degree level or higher qualification, which is well below the national average. While this has increased over the past four years, this has happened at a slower rate than that of the other core cities, meaning that there is a widening gap in terms of skills between Birmingham and the other major economic contributors in the UK. As with the rates of worklessness discussed above, there are large disparities across the city in terms of particular wards that have higher or lower skilled residents.

Low levels of education qualification may be reflected in families not feeling confident supporting their children with their schoolwork. Our research revealed that parents in poverty are four times (11.5% compared to 3%) more likely to not feel confident at all in supporting their children with their education and schoolwork. This could be further compounded by parents' views of what the future holds for their children. Parents living in poverty are more pessimistic about their children's future; with over half of parents (53.5%), believing their children will have a worse life than their own, compared to just 30% of those parents not in poverty.

Our research revealed that parents in poverty are four times more likely to not feel confident at all in supporting their children with their education and schoolwork

Related, many residents that have low skills or no formal qualifications (currently almost one in five – or 17% - of residents hold no formal qualifications). This compares poorly against other core cities in the UK, with Bristol being the best performer with a rate better than the national average.

Recommendation

By June 2017, the tendering process should be used to ensure that new projects over £500,000 encourage greater numbers of quality apprenticeships offered to young people from low-income families in Birmingham and the wider West Midlands.

There is a discrepancy amongst worklessness single male and female parents. The most recent available data shows that 45% of male lone parents are not in work, and 50% of lone female parents are not in work. Both of these figures are above the national average, but this is particularly pronounced for male lone parents.

Case study: Elaine

Elaine is a single parent and lives with her children in a three bedroom house in a deprived area of Birmingham, where they have lived for a number of years. Elaine hasn't worked for the past fifteen years and struggles to afford the basics for herself and her children.

Despite being entitled to a number of benefits, over the past two years Elaine has experienced several benefit sanctions and these have affected her capacity to balance the household budget. There is more money going out than there is coming in and she struggles to buy food, clothe her children and keep her house warm. The only way she has been able to keep the family afloat has been to rely on various forms of informal support but these have proved precarious, for example as funding to charitable organisations has been cut and contact with her outreach worker proved inconsistent.

Elaine has suffered from mental health problems for a number of years. She finds it difficult to leave the house, especially alone, and mostly stays at home. When she does venture out she has to rely on one of her children or friends to go with her, but this is rare. She has been taking medication for the past ten years, but only offered counselling once. She found this useful and felt a positive effect but because she had to rely on a volunteer to escort her to the sessions, they stopped when the volunteer left, as she could not make her own way there.

Elaine would like to work – she has thought about becoming a teaching assistant or perhaps setting up a small business. She feels that going to work would not only help her financial situation but her mental health as well. However, but she doesn't feel confident, well supported or informed enough to re-enter the world of work.

When she had children under the age of five Elaine had a volunteer come to her house to help her out with the children and with accessing local services, and she found this really helpful. She wishes a similar form of support was available for parents with older children, and thinks that if she had the right support, it could help her navigate her future.

Money was tight before, but now it is even tighter. Despite returning to work Karen struggles to pay for even the basics, and it doesn't look like it will get any easier soon.

Economic activity in Birmingham

Birmingham is a city of industry and commerce, yet it struggles to translate this into high levels of employment for its residents. In 2011, 69% of working age residents in the city were economically active, against the national figure of 77%. This may in part be due to the lower levels of educational attainment in Birmingham compared to other core cities.

Just over one quarter of the working age population in Birmingham have a degree or a higher-level qualification (NVQ 4+), compared to 35% in other core cities and 32% nationally, and there are large disparities in the skill levels between different ethnic groups. 35% of (16-74 year old) Pakistani and Bangladeshi residents have no qualifications, compared to White Other (15%) and Chinese (16%) residents in the city. By way of comparison, 30% of White British residents aged between 16-74 have no qualifications^{xxii}.

Lone parent households find it particularly difficult to move into employment, due to a variety of factors including childcare availability and costs. Only 50% of lone parent households in Birmingham are in some form of employment, compared with 59% across England and Wales. Of these households, 55% are in part-time employment with 45% in full-time employment, which is in line with national averages.

There are also wide variations in economic activity between different ethnic groups and genders, for example, 74% of Pakistani males are economically active but only 34% of females (against a national figure of 67% of women).

Improving access to adult education and English as a Second Language (ESOL) courses would help to support lone parents and groups struggling to access the labour market across the city. The focus group we held with voluntary sector groups and the Big Lottery Fund recognised the need to support adult learning for parents, suggested the use of literacy classes and ESOL classes to empower parents.

Recommendations

By December 2016, Birmingham City Council should partner with JobCentrePlus and employment support providers to ensure that parents of two year olds taking up funded early education are specifically targeted with employment and skills support that encourages starting work or training.

Where required, parents should be encouraged to take up ESOL classes, particularly for groups whose language is a barrier to the labour market. These should be scheduled in schools around pick up/drop off times for children. This system should be in place by Spring Term 2017 and led by the ESOL providers in the city.

Theme Five: Education and lifelong learning

Children in poverty have lower educational outcomes than their peers, leading to disadvantage in later life, a greater struggle to achieve good GCSEs and a challenging entry into the labour market.

The education profile in Birmingham

Results from 2014 indicate progress with the gap between disadvantaged children and their peers narrowing. However, this positive trend is crucially not the case at Key Stage 4 where the gap at GCSE A* - C including English and Maths widened from 21% in 2013 to 24% in 2014. This suggests that there should be specialist support services considered for the most disadvantaged children at KS4.

This enhanced support at this age would build on the work done to date, with data showing that despite the attainment gap widening, 43% of disadvantaged children in Birmingham are achieving at least 5 A*-C grades at GCSE level compared to 41% of disadvantaged children nationally. Building on this through targeted interventions would further improve outcomes for disadvantaged pupils compared to their peers.

While girls continue to outperform boys, there is some indication that this gap is closing. At Key Stage 2 in 2011 the gap between the proportion of girls achieving level 4+ in reading, writing and maths and the proportion of boys was 10%, by 2014 this figure had fallen to 6%.

The ethnic diversity in Birmingham's schools leads to a large number of languages spoken in schools across the city – with almost 40% of secondary age pupils having a first language that is known or believed to be other than English. The national average is just 14%.

There is a significant gap in performance at GCSE level according to the ethnic group of pupils, their gender and whether or not they are eligible for free school meals. 82% of Indian girls achieve five or more A* - C GCSEs, including English and Maths, compared to just 29% of White British boys eligible for free school meals^{xxiii}.

The number of young people aged 16-18 not in employment, education or training is higher in Birmingham when compared to the West Midlands, particularly for young people aged 17 and 18.

Young people spoken to as part of the Commission's research themselves spoke of their limited aspiration, with education seen as an important route to improve social and economic mobility. They however felt held back by high university fees and a perception of employers recruiting only from elite universities.

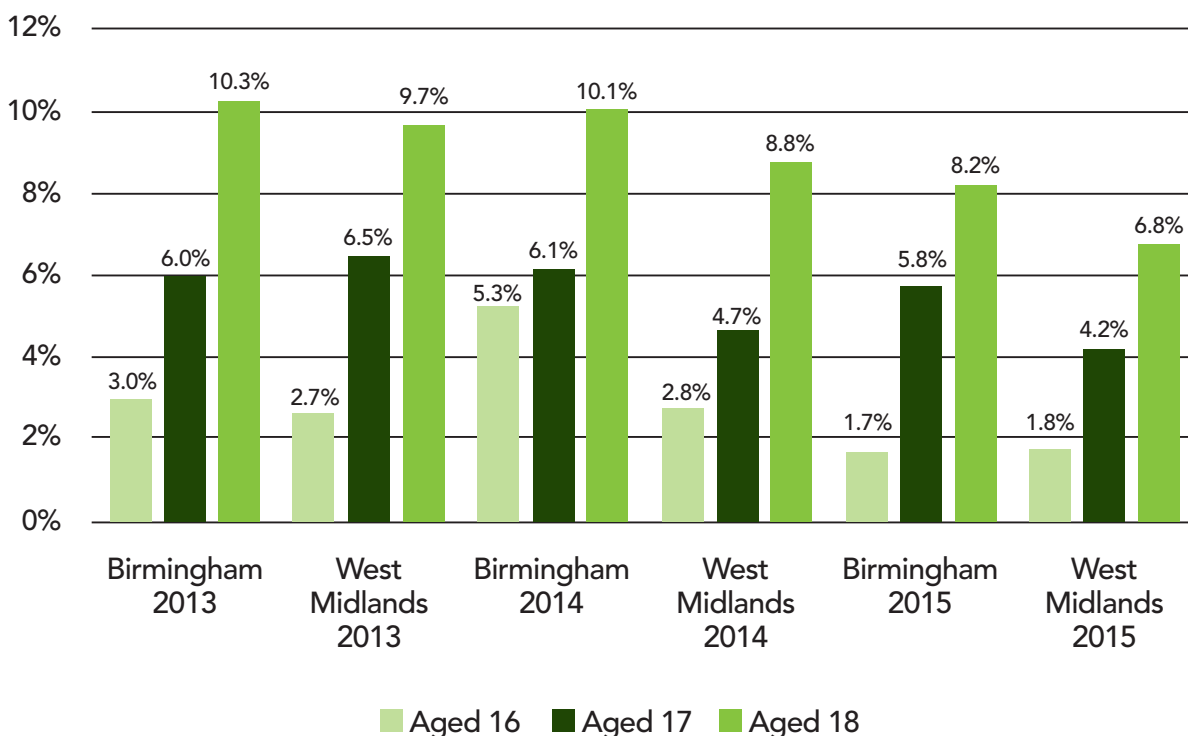
Almost 40% of secondary age pupils have a first language that is known or believed to be other than English.

“Schools should give free one to one tuition to help with grades” Ahmed, young person, Aspire & Succeed

“Some parents can’t afford to pay for tuition and the Government should help them” Darnish, young person, Aspire & Succeed

Engagement with the business community across the city found that businesses have an appetite and a crucial role to play in career advice and development. Members of the business community can make a valuable input not only in advising pupils on the range of career opportunities available but also drive the direction of schools through for example, sitting on their governing bodies.

Young people not in education, employment or training



Source: NEET data by local authority, Department for Education

Engagement with the business community across the city found that businesses have an appetite and a crucial role to play in career advice and development.

Recommendations

By September 2017, the Birmingham Secondary Schools Forum working with Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Education Partnership and Business leaders should develop a specific offer for disadvantaged pupils at KS4 to provide intensive support to narrow the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children at this level.

There is the potential that this could be funded through the pupil premium. It is proposed that a mentoring scheme with local businesses could be run alongside or be part of this specific offer for KS4 pupils.

The roll out of this scheme should focus initially on the lowest performing groups at KS4.

Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Education Partnership should assist schools to establish formal partnerships with universities, both in the UK and abroad. The purposes of so doing include: raising students' awareness and aspirations of the opportunities for higher education; enhancing partnerships between schools and universities for professional development; and influencing standards of teaching and learning.

This recommendation should be carried out by June 2017.

Case study: Niall

Niall is twelve years old and lives with his dad, grandmother and two older siblings in a housing estate in Birmingham. Neither his dad nor his grandmother is currently working, and his dad hasn't worked since before Niall was born. Niall spends a lot of time at home; no-one in the family goes out very much as there is not a lot of money around at the moment and his siblings both suffer from debilitating health conditions.

Niall started secondary school last year and to him it feels big. The move from primary went ok; his older siblings attend the same school and a few friends from his old school moved with him. On the whole secondary school is stricter than primary, there are some nice teachers and some really strict ones, and some nice and not-so-nice children. Niall's favourite subject is Geography. He's doing okay in his lessons, although he gets into trouble quite a lot for talking. It's important to him that he knows exactly who he would go to if he needs support, for learning and for help dealing with problems amongst his peers.

Niall has big dreams for his future: he would really like to be an ambulance man when he's older. He doesn't know what he would have to do turn this dream into reality, apart from study hard at school and learn about science, but he says that being an ambulance man is what he would really like to do most.

Niall has also resigned himself to the idea that his big dream will remain just that – something he once aspired to but never fulfilled. He says 'I don't think that's what I will be but that's just what I would like to be'. We ask why he thinks he won't become an ambulance man and he says: 'I would think it's because, like dad wanted to be that when he was younger, he wanted to be that as well. I don't know. I just think because dad didn't, I won't either'.

Poverty in the school day

Education is accessible to all children irrespective of costs – yet there are often hidden costs to the school day, which alienate and further disenfranchise children living in poverty. Children in poverty often miss out on a nutritious meal during the day – and in some cases face stigmatisation if they take up support on offer – they can also miss out on school trips in term time and during the holidays. These trips present not only an educational and development opportunity but a chance to form relationships with their peers and build friendships. Schools we visited had a range of different policies related to trips, with some schools paying for all trips, some subsidising them and some expecting families to pay the whole cost.

“In this school, you know the people who can’t afford it, I don’t think they’ll reduce money or nothing, if they can’t afford they just can’t afford and they won’t be able to come” Secondary age schoolboy

When paying for trips most schools that we spoke to operate systems that allow parents to pay in instalments. This eases the financial burden on families with low incomes.

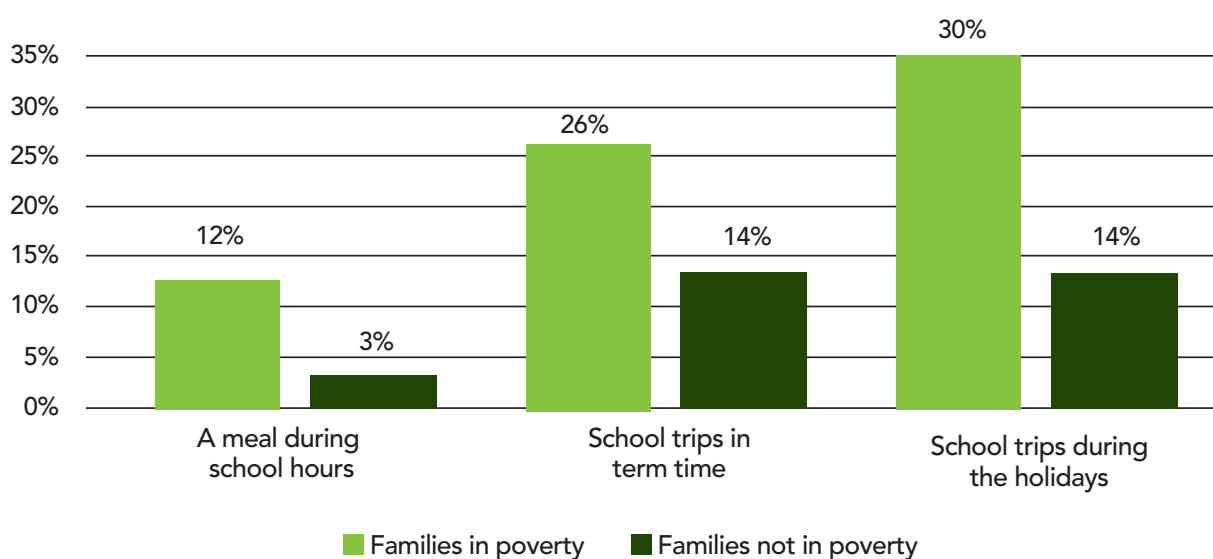
“We have to pay in money or instalments or online” Secondary age school girl

How schools communicate with home regarding money related queries or issues can cause significant challenges for children from low income families. Examples were given of parents being contacted directly about payments, avoiding children having to give a financial account on behalf of their parents. However children also spoke of names being called out in front of their peers regarding late payments or money owed, which the children find very embarrassing and upsetting, both for themselves and for their friends.

“I got this big red letter and then the teacher read it out in front of the whole class. It said ‘urgent, dinner money needed’ but we had paid it all, and she read it to the whole class. It was upsetting, they were all kind of like laughing.”

Primary age school girl

Support or activities children miss out on because of cost



Source: Survey of Birmingham parents n=200, p value = 0.000

Under current guidance schools are expected to take cost into account when deciding their school uniform policy, however it does not need to be a primary consideration and the current guidance is not binding for schools. In November 2015 the Government announced that they will be placing this guidance on a statutory footing, after a Department for Education survey revealed that nearly one-fifth of parents and carers reported that they had suffered financial hardship as a result of purchasing their child's uniform. Until such a time as this guidance is statutory cost should still be a primary consideration of any school's uniform policy.

There are a wide range of styles employed by schools, and these range from very formal, such as a full blazer, jumper and tie, to a more informal polo shirt and jacket. The result of this is that the price parents pay for school uniform varies greatly, with the cumulative cost when there are several children in the family proving particularly challenging. A recent report by The Children's Society found that on average parents overspend on school uniforms by £170 per child each year, a significant cost for families^{xxvi}.

One young person that the Commission consulted with said:

"I think it's expensive, especially the jumpers; they're too expensive. They're like ten pounds or sometimes fifteen pounds from some shops"

Secondary age school girl

At secondary school the impact of uniform requirements continues and in most cases the cost and scrutiny increases. Secondary pupils we have spoken to highlight that there are a range of uniform requirements across Birmingham schools, with some requiring extensive specific items that have to carry a logo whilst others require a more simple uniform with one item that carries a specific logo. Young people also told us how this is more of a financial burden when there are siblings who also require school uniform. Shoes and PE kit were as demanding as the more obvious elements of school uniform and add considerable costs to the overall uniform, especially when they are branded or items with a school logo.

“When we first started having PE my mom had to pay like £24.00 just for the tee-shirt and shorts.”

Secondary age school boy

Some schools have a designated uniform supplier and often that supplier is based out of town.

“It can be really far away, and the car might not work. They would have to walk it here and it would be really hard for them.” Secondary age school girl

One of the secondary schools we went into has a very simple uniform. The young people here reported being under less scrutiny as well as facing less expense for their families.

Too often parents are facing higher costs as a result of limited options to choose where to buy their uniforms. The current guidance is clear that cost should be the top priority in determining school uniform supplier. The Commission believes schools in Birmingham can take a proactive role in supporting their children on low incomes by reviewing their school uniform policy to make cost a primary consideration.

At secondary school the impact of uniform requirements continues and in most cases the cost and scrutiny increases

Recommendation

By July 2017, all schools should adapt their school uniform policy to ensure affordability is a primary consideration.

Adult education

The council have sought to invest in adult education to increase the overall number of working age adults who have higher levels of qualifications. Our survey has found that the take up of adult learning was impacted by whether or not parents in poverty lived with their spouse or partner the majority of the time. For those who lived with a partner the majority of the time 63% went on to access adult learning, dropping to 36% for those who live alone with their children.

There are a number of adult education opportunities available across the city which could go some way to addressing this issue. BCC's Adult Education is one provider in Birmingham running ESOL classes at 13 venues and in this academic year 1,270 learners have accessed courses. This is important for families with children in poverty, as our research has found that over half of parents (53.4%) living in poverty have investigated adult learning compared to 3 in 10 (32%) families not in poverty. There are also a number of other institutions that provide similar support, as well as family learning classes that are available at children's centres and family support hubs. However, there is not the data available to adequately analyse the reach and impact of these courses.

This commitment to adult education has been matched at a national level, with the Government making £2.5bn available nationally for a mixture of apprenticeship and non-apprenticeship adult learning. The Skills Funding Agency (SFA) has announced that contract values for the forthcoming year have been maintained at the same level as the previous year. In his letter to the Chief Executive of the SFA, Nick Boles MP set out how *'funding for adult non apprenticeship core education has been protected in cash terms, in recognition of the contribution that adult further education can make^{xxvii}'*. Importantly, there has been a 19% increase nationally on delivery over the 12 months from December 2014 to November 2015 for 19+ apprenticeships allocations. There is no data available for specific cities, but the decision of the SFA to enable grant funded providers to use their adult education budget more freely and flexibly in line with local priorities by allocating these funds as a block grant offers Birmingham the opportunity to respond better to their specific needs.

By continuing to invest in adult education, the council has an opportunity to upskill its working age population, leading to more residents being in a position to take on better paid work. This, in turn, has the potential to reduce the overall number of children living in poverty or suffering material deprivation in the city. This has important consequences for the long term economic outlook of the city, and the region more broadly. Birmingham is the dominant economic force in the region, with research demonstrating that the city accounts for over a fifth of regional output^{xxviii}.

Recommendation

By January 2017, adult education providers to provide data for all Birmingham City Council courses so that the reach and impact of adult education in the city can be appropriately analysed.

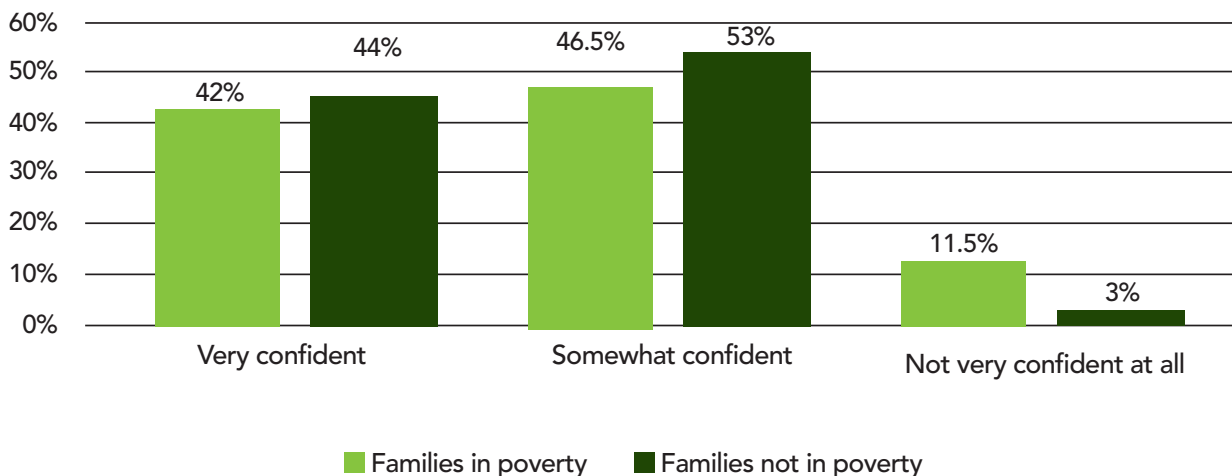
Learning in the home

Supporting children outside of school with their education has an impact on their ability to learn in school and progress with their learning, with children in our engagement work describing how parental support with school work being a key factor to educational success. Parents need to be supported to feel confident in helping their children with their homework and learning, particularly so where they may not have received high academic outcomes themselves or may be not be able to speak English themselves.

“My mum doesn’t speak English so she can’t come to my parents evening.” Secondary age school boy

The survey of Birmingham parents found that parents in poverty are four times more likely not to feel confident at all in supporting their children with their education and schoolwork.

How confident do families feel in supporting their children with their education



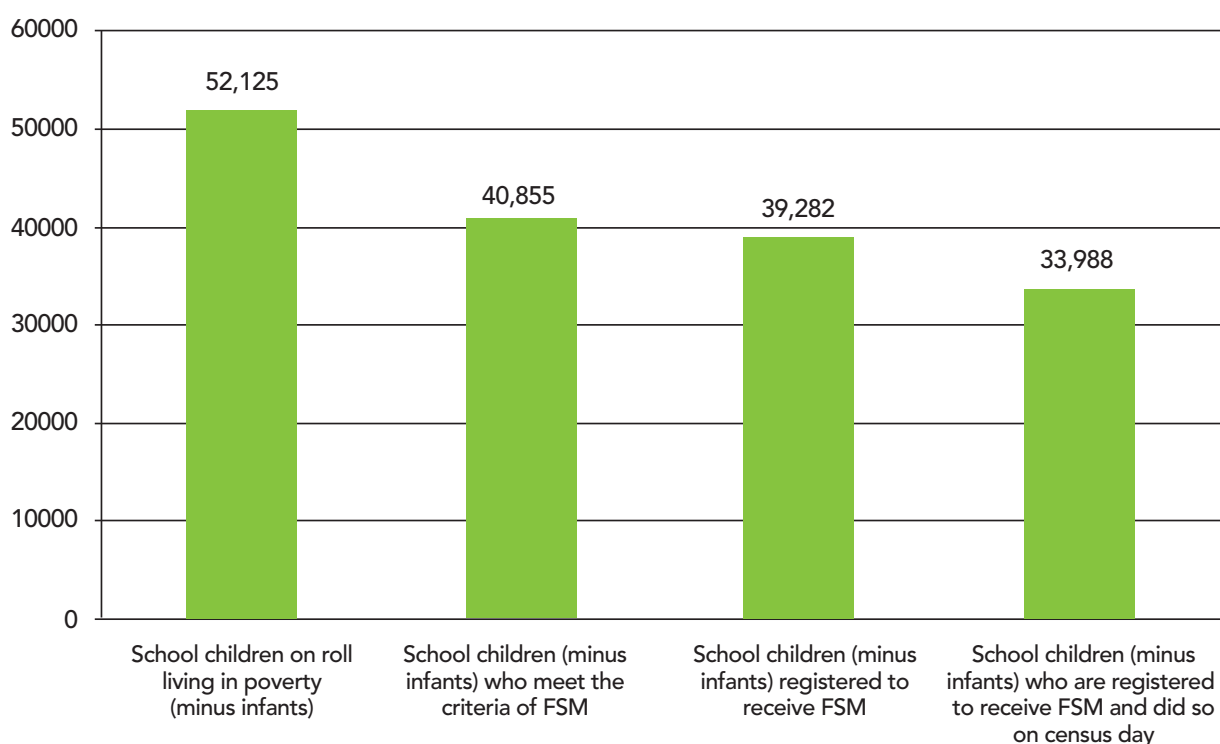
Source: Survey of Birmingham parents n=200, p value = 0.078

Free school meals

Access to healthy food and nutritional snacks is not an equal experience in school when they have to be purchased and even small costs can limit equal access. Having access to a healthy and nutritious school meal during the day is particularly beneficial for children in poverty. Young people themselves consulted with as part of the Commission's work were themselves aware of the importance of free school meals, as it might be a child's only healthy meal in a day.

The latest data available shows that there are 40,000 children on the school roll who meet the criteria for free school meals, with 37,000 (91%) registered to receive it.

There are 40,000 children on the school roll who meet the criteria for free school meals



Source: **Schools, Pupils and their Characteristics data, Department for Education**

In 2014, the Government announced it would be providing free school meals for all infant pupils. This is a welcome step in ensuring all children have access to a warm and nutritious meal during school hours.

Although each school's system is different in terms of administration and recording, schools often strive to maintain anonymity for their free school meals pupils. However, pupils often become aware of the circumstances of others, leaving some children feeling embarrassed and stigmatised.

"It's your biggest secret if you are on free school meals." Primary age school girl

When staff are particularly sensitive to the issues of free school meals pupils very much appreciate it.

"Last time when we went on a trip...they made it creative and they had these boxes and it was like a pirate box for boys (like a McDonald's Happy Meal box). It's still visible, like you can see that you're free school meals but it's kind of cool."

Primary age school boy

"The teacher marks off, on a computer, whether you're school dinners or packed lunch when you go into the hall. You can't see it's just a computer." Primary age school boy

The young people we spoke to noted that there was often greater choice at meal and snack times in secondary schools compared to primary schools. These options do increase the likelihood of poorer pupils having less food than others and the cost of snacks and meals is something pupils were acutely aware of. Most exposing is the ticket system, where the young people who get free school meals have to queue twice at lunchtime, whereas their peers only queue once.

Young people noted that free school meal underspend is removed from their account daily. This situation is not unique to Birmingham schools but it remains unclear why this is the case and where the money goes. Having any underspend rolled over would help young people to have more choice of what to eat.

One of the schools consulted, operates a system similar to primary school whereby all pupils received the same amount of food at no cost. These pupils had little negative to say about the food and were appreciative about the lack of cost.

Some local authorities have made substantial efforts to ensure those children and young people eligible are able to access free school meals. Bolton and Liverpool local authorities proactively identify children entitled to free school meals from the benefit data they hold, with the latter claiming that 1,000 additional children claim free school meals each year as a result of this proactive approach. In Liverpool, if families claiming benefits have school age children, the children are automatically deemed eligible for free school meals, even if parents haven't applied. If parents do not want their children to be listed as receiving free school meals, they are given the opportunity to opt out. Bolton, as a much smaller local authority, has a different approach. It is using specifically designed benefits application forms and software that is able to identify children eligible for free school meals. This data is then shared with schools through a regularly updated website that is available for head teachers to view^{xxix}. Proposals to set up a school food trust with the aim of introducing universal free school meals in primary schools is a promising start. In a city the size of Birmingham, Birmingham City Council has understandably undertaken to introduce this policy incrementally^{xxx}.

Recommendations

By December 2016 Birmingham City Council should establish the School Food Trust to provide free school meals for all school pupils whose families are in receipt of working tax credits, child tax credits and universal credit (when rolled out), with the ultimate aim of providing universal free school meals.

By June 2017, Birmingham City Council should have reviewed how improved data sharing processes could be used to automatically enrol children for free school meals in order to increase take up.

Recommendations and conclusion

There is no easy way to prevent or mitigate the impact of poverty in childhood: it is not within the gift of a single organisation or body; the solutions are not simple; and it manifests itself in many different ways. However, over the course of the Commission we have kept returning to five broad themes that, if appropriately tackled at the local level, can have a significant and positive impact on reducing and mitigating child poverty in Birmingham. Under each of these broad themes, we have made a range of recommendations. Based on the evidence we have collected, the people and organisations we have spoken to, and the best practice we have looked at, we have arrived at a set of recommendations.

The need to support families and their children out of poverty is a task which sits across all levels of the statutory sector, the voluntary sector, private business and other partners. Without safe and suitable accommodation, the ability to access the city you call home and the unfettered aspiration that should characterise all children's lives, Birmingham's children will be disadvantaged by poverty, and continue to be so. In concluding the Commission has sought to not only mitigate the impact of existing poverty, but also look to the future, to raise aspirations amongst our children and young people and tackle the cycle of inter-generational poverty. It is a shared responsibility, but one which the council as the civic heart of the city must lead.

A. Raising aspirations

Children we have spoken to have told us about their aspirations to be nurses, computer engineers and teachers, before immediately rebuking themselves with "But it will never happen". Childhood should be a time when aspirations are limitless.

Birmingham is England's second city. The city is home to more than 1.1 million people, with almost 22% of residents being under 15 and 46% of residents being under the age of 30. The city needs to raise its aspirations and those of its residents. Birmingham should be challenging the economic heft of London and competing with the creativity of Manchester.

1. By September 2017, the Birmingham Secondary Schools Forum working with Birmingham City Council, Birmingham Education Partnership and Business leaders should develop a specific offer for disadvantaged pupils at KS4 to provide intensive support to narrow the attainment gap between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged children at this level.

There is the potential that this could be funded through the pupil premium. It is proposed that a mentoring scheme with local businesses could be run alongside or be part of this specific offer for KS4 pupils.

The roll out of this scheme should focus initially on the lowest performing groups at KS4.

2. An annual or biennial 'Best of Birmingham' event should be introduced by July 2017 to showcase and celebrate outstanding children, young people and the adults that support them.

3. Birmingham City Council and Birmingham Education Partnership should assist schools to establish formal partnerships with universities, both in the UK and abroad. The purposes of doing so include: raising students' awareness and aspirations of the opportunities for higher education; enhancing partnerships between schools and universities for professional development; and influencing standards of teaching and learning.

This recommendation should be carried out by June 2017.

B. Mitigate the impact of existing poverty

While we can seek to reduce child poverty and even, ultimately, eradicate it, we must also support those currently facing it. With an average of almost 30% of children and young people in Birmingham living in poverty, families need to be supported with the day-to-day challenges poverty brings.

4. By September 2016, there should be a named Cabinet Member with responsibility for poverty.
5. By January 2017, adult education providers to provide data for all Birmingham City Council courses so that the reach and impact of adult education in the city can be appropriately analysed.
6. Through existing resources and by January 2017, the DWP (Department for Work & Pensions), working closely with schools, Birmingham City Council and the voluntary sector, should rotate benefits and other financial advisers around those schools/children's centres with high levels of need offering an outreach financial inclusion service.
7. Where required, parents should be encouraged to take up ESOL classes, particularly for groups whose language is a barrier to the labour market. These should be scheduled in schools around pick up/drop off times for children. This system should be in place by Spring Term 2017 and led by the ESOL providers in the city.
8. By January 2018, Birmingham City Council should adopt to undertake a formal review of their housing standards enforcement, with a view to introducing a landlord accreditation scheme such as that in operation in Newham.
9. By January 2018, there should be a planning restriction in place preventing new fast food outlets within 250 metres of schools.
10. By April 2017, Birmingham City Council should adopt a local 'breathing space' placing council tax accounts on hold for 21 days when a family gets in touch with them so as to enable the family time to seek independent debt advice. The Council should also adopt an explicit policy of not engaging bailiffs for families in receipt of Council Tax Support.

11. By July 2017, all schools should adapt their school uniform policy to ensure affordability is a primary consideration.
12. By December 2016 Birmingham City Council should establish the School Food Trust to provide free school meals for all school pupils whose families are in receipt of working tax credits, child tax credits and universal credit (when rolled out), with the ultimate aim of providing universal free school meals.

C. Share responsibility

Improving the lives of children and young people is not the sole responsibility of the City Council's Children, Young People and Families Service: it is the responsibility of all of Birmingham.

The impacts of poverty can be felt across the city and so require a city-wide approach to addressing them. Tackling child poverty isn't just a job for the City Council and voluntary sector: education providers, business groups and employers all need to accept responsibility and share the role of improving the outcomes and experiences of children and young people in Birmingham.

13. By December 2016, Birmingham City Council should work with JobCentrePlus and employment support providers to ensure that parents of two year olds taking up funded early education are specifically targeted with employment and skills support that encourages starting work or training, and that wrap-around childcare is sufficiently affordable and flexible to enable those parents to sustain and increase their employment opportunities.
14. Birmingham City Council should use its powers as a commissioner and champion of Birmingham to work with local businesses and the Living Wage Foundation to make Birmingham the first Living Wage City where all employers pay this minimum amount, by January 2019.
15. By June 2017, Registered Social Landlords should commit to introducing a minimum of 3-year tenancies, allowing for greater stability for tenants and landlords. By September 2017 this information should be made available for families on Birmingham City Council's website.
16. By March 2017, an audit should be completed on the number of schools that have access to counselling support and do a cost analysis of providing outreach counselling service to schools with the highest proportion of pupils in receipt of pupil premium.
17. The new city centre hub Pause should be advertised in services accessed by children and families, including the School Health Advisory Services and Children's Centres.
18. A targeted obesity programme in primary school to reduce the rise in childhood obesity should be in place by September 2017.

D. Break the cycle of poverty

Poverty perpetuates poverty

Child poverty leads to poor education attainment, which leads to fewer job opportunities, which leads to fewer better-paying jobs, which creates more poverty. This cycle can only be broken with concerted effort at each stage of the cycle. So many of the parents we spoke to who were in poverty grew up in poverty, with many of their children expecting their lives to reflect their parents'.

19. By June 2017, the tendering process should be used to ensure that new projects over £500,000 encourage greater numbers of quality apprenticeships offered to young people from low-income families in Birmingham and the wider West Midlands.
20. By January 2017, all Birmingham City Council-approved strategies should include a mandatory section on the public health and health inequality implications of the issue under consideration.
21. By April 2017, Birmingham City Council should exempt care leavers from Council Tax up to, and including, the age of 25.
22. By April 2019, Birmingham City Council should adopt a policy that no low-income family with children can be declared intentionally homeless.
23. By April 2017, Birmingham City Council should explore potential for subsidised transport for young people within city localities, using Merseytravel's 'My ticket' scheme as a model.
24. By June 2017, Birmingham City Council should have reviewed how improved data sharing processes could be used to automatically enrol children for free school meals in order to increase take up.

Appendix A

COMMISSIONER BIOGRAPHIES

Matthew Reed: Chair

Matthew is passionate about social justice, opportunity and inclusion. Since 2012 he has been Chief Executive of The Children's Society and is leading the charity to develop its work with many of the most disadvantaged children in the UK through further tackling the effects and causes of child poverty and neglect. Matthew was previously Chief Executive of The Cystic Fibrosis Trust and Marketing Director at Christian Aid.

Matthew has a degree in Theology from the University of Oxford, a degree in Engineering and Management from the University of Nottingham, and a Masters in Management from the University of Surrey.

He is a Member of the Chartered Institute of Marketing, a Fellow of the RSA, and a trustee of Children England.

Sam Monaghan: Vice Chair

Sam originally qualified as a graphic designer, but re-trained as a social worker in 1988. Over the first 15 years he worked as a child care practitioner, manager and senior manager in three Midlands local authorities. Whilst gaining his MBA, Sam moved to work in the voluntary sector, joining children's charity NCHJ as Deputy Director in 2003.

In 2006 he moved to take up the post of Director with Barnardo's in the Midlands. Sam took up the position of Interim Director of Children's Services UK in January 2013. He was appointed to the position of Executive Director of Children's Services on 1 September 2014.

Prof Pete Alcock

Pete has been teaching and researching in social policy for forty years. He joined the University of Birmingham in 1998. From 2003-2008 he was Head of the School of Social Sciences at Birmingham, from 2008-2014 he was Director of the Third Sector Research Centre (TSRC), and since 2013 he has been Director of the University's ESRC Doctoral Training Centre.

He is author and editor of a number of leading books on social policy including *Social Policy in Britain 4e* (2014), *The Student's Companion to Social Policy 4e* (2012), *Understanding Poverty 3e* (2006), *International Social Policy 2e* (2009) and *Why we need welfare* (2016). His research has covered the fields of poverty and anti-poverty policy, social security, and the role of the UK third sector.

Dr Jason Wouhra

Jason is Director and Company Secretary of East End Foods plc; the UK's premier producer of ethnic food ingredients and Cash and Carry wholesaler.

Having worked for the family business since 1998, he is currently Operations Director of its flagship £11 million Cash and Carry facility on the site of the ex HP Sauce factory in Aston and the company's Digbeth depot. Jason is also responsible for the East End Foods Group HR, Legal, Intellectual property and company Secretarial functions.

He holds a BA in Law with Business Studies, Masters in Commercial Law and is the youngest IoD Chartered Director and fellow of the Institute of Directors in the UK. Jason was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Aston University in July 2014 for services to Business and Charitable causes both regionally and nationally.

Jason is currently Chairman of the Institute of Directors West Midlands and also Non-Executive Director of University Hospitals Birmingham Foundation Trust. This is Queen Elizabeth hospital, which is Europe's largest hospital.

Previously Jason has been Vice Chairman of the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership and also Chairman of the Library of Birmingham Advisory Board.

Alison Moore

Alison has been working for St Paul's Community Development Trust for fourteen years, establishing one of the first Sure Start Local Programmes in Birmingham and her role has evolved over that time into her current position of Head of Children's Services managing a group of children's centres in Balsall Heath. The organisation achieved 'outstanding' from Ofsted, under the new framework, in September 2014.

Alison's career spans 34 years with strong roots embedded in early years and family support roles that have enabled her to make significant impact on the lives of children, young people and their families. Her current position has enabled her to draw upon her accumulated knowledge, skills and experiences and enabled her to develop as a strong voluntary sector and community advocate.

Her current PhD study at the University of Wolverhampton is to research: 'How can the voice of the child be effectively heard and used to facilitate change in children's centres in a locality?'

Peter Hay

Peter is one of a team of strategic directors working within the city council to transform outcomes for Birmingham's residents. Peter's responsibilities include Adult Social Care, Children's Social Care and Safeguarding, Education and Schools and coordinating the Health and Wellbeing Partnership.

Other responsibilities include housing needs and hosting Public Health functions. The city council has been transforming care to meet the demands of personalised care. It is also driving through improvements in children's safeguarding and school governance and working with Government appointed commissioners. With reduction in budgets more effective use of scarce resources and better outcomes are demanded.

From joining Birmingham in 2003, Peter has overseen major changes in residential and community provision of care. The council now offers individual budgets for all citizens receiving public funding alongside a growing emphasis on universal information, prevention and enablement.

In June 2012, Peter was awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours - the citation is for services to social and health care, and his role as president of ADASS.

Dr Dennis Wilkes

Dennis is a full time Consultant in Public Health for Children, Young People and families in Birmingham. He has also been a General Practitioner (North West England, West Midlands, and New Zealand), a Consultant in Public Health (Solihull, Coventry, and South Staffordshire), and Solihull's Director of Public Health (2002-2007).

His concern about the impact poverty has upon families has been formed through the experience of serving communities in Liverpool, Oldham, Stockport and North Solihull as a General Practitioner. In addition, having five children and serving in Solihull MBC at the time of the development of Every Child Matters, has aroused concerns about the limitation of educational and training opportunities for families, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

Cllr Robert Alden (Con)

Robert was elected as Leader of the Conservative Group in 2014 having previously been the deputy of the group since 2011. Robert was first elected to the council in Erdington Ward in 2006, where he lives and remains one of the Councillors for the Ward. In his time on the city council Robert has previously been Chairman of the Equalities and Human Resources Committee and a member of the Integrated Transport Authority (ITA) since 2007.

As a member of the ITA, Robert had been the Lead Member for the Environment and subsequently Finance until Conservatives lost control in 2012.

Prior to being elected as a councillor, Robert worked at Aston Villa Football Club Catering Company. Robert has a degree in Geography and a Post Grad Diploma in Air Pollution and Control and Management from the University of Birmingham (Edgbaston).

Cllr Roger Harmer (Lib Dem)

Roger has represented Acocks Green in three spells; from 1995-2001, 2008-12 and 2014 onwards. He is Deputy Leader of the Lib Dem Group on the council. He is currently a member of the Housing and Homes Overview Scrutiny Committee.

He lives in Acocks Green where he is also a School Governor and a Trustee of the Charles Lane Trust.

Roger studied Politics, Philosophy and Economics at Oxford University. He then came to Birmingham and after starting as a sales manager for an international chemicals company, switched to the voluntary sector. He has since worked for Business in the Community, the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit in what is now DCLG (as a secondee) and Groundwork UK. He is currently Head of Income Generation at Garden Organic.

Cllr Waseem Zaffar (Lab)

Cllr Waseem Zaffar MBE is the Birmingham City Council Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality and has represented the people of Lozells and East Handsworth, where he was born and brought up, since 2011. Previously Chair of the Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee and a CEO of a not-for-profit organisation, Waseem was awarded an MBE in recognition of his services to the voluntary sector in June 2012.

Waseem's Transparency, Openness and Equality portfolio is the first of its kind in the country. His role will see a massive transformation of how both citizens and corporate citizens interact with Birmingham City Council. Waseem will be delivering the Council's commitment to open data and publishing information used to make decisions ensuring citizens cannot just judge value for money for themselves, but will be encouraged to co-design services.

In 2015, Waseem was proud to be re-elected Councillor for Lozells and East Handsworth, with an increased majority. He lives in the ward with his family, is a Governor of the primary school he attended, member of Unite the Union, a lifelong (yet still optimistic) Aston Villa fan and enjoys spending Summer weekends playing cricket.

Appendix B

Terms of Reference

2015

Purpose

No child growing up in Birmingham should have their childhood or future life chances scarred by living in poverty. The Leader's Policy Statement 2014 makes a commitment to reduce child poverty. One of the key recommendations is to set up a Birmingham Child Poverty Commission that will work with schools, social care, health services, voluntary and community sector and employers to tackle poverty across the city.

Overall Aim of Commission

Examine the extent and impact of poverty and inequality across Birmingham, identify the key challenges and issues; and report on causes and possible solutions.

Role of Commission

- Establish clear future targets for child poverty
- Update the child poverty needs assessment to understand the scale of the challenge
- Produce a Birmingham child poverty strategy/framework for action, building on local and national practice and exploring new approaches.
- Establish a coordinated approach to reducing child poverty by bringing together fora that address child poverty
- Identify and determine the impact of poverty on different groups, communities and geographical areas most at risk
- Make policy recommendations on integrated approaches that mitigate the effects of child poverty

Proposed Membership of the Commission

The Commission brings together experts and practitioners to identify solutions that mitigate against the effects of child poverty. Members of the Commission are individuals with the expertise, knowledge and experience that will help meet the objectives of the Commission. The composition of the Commission includes the following organisations and experts:

| | |
|---|---|
| Chair | Matthew Reed , Chief Executive, The Children's Society |
| Vice Chair | Sam Monaghan , Executive Director of Children's Services, Barnardo's |
| Public Health | Dr Dennis Wilkes , Specialist Public Health lead for Children's Health & Wellbeing |
| Children and Families, Birmingham City Council | Peter Hay , Strategic Director of People |
| Voluntary and Community Sector | Alison Moore , Third Sector Assembly |
| Birmingham City Council | Cllr Waseem Zaffar , Cabinet Member for Transparency, Openness and Equality |
| Expert Commissioner | Prof Peter Alcock , Birmingham University |
| Private Sector | Dr Jason Wouhra , Regional Chair of Institute of Directors |
| Birmingham City Council | Cllr Robert Alden (Conservative) |
| Birmingham City Council | Cllr Roger Harmer (Liberal Democrat) |

Governance

Chair: An independent chair will be appointed for the lifetime of the Commission.

The Child Poverty Commission is commissioned by Birmingham City Council. Findings and recommendations will be reported to Birmingham City Council (BCC).

The Commission will gather evidence from research, expert witnesses and children and families to draw up recommendations accordingly.

The accountable officer for delivering the Commission's recommendations will be the CEO of BCC, Mark Rogers, and the accountable Elected Member will be the leader of BCC, Cllr John Clancy.

Duration of Commission: Time limited for 10 months. However, timescales will be reviewed by the commission.

Work Strands

1. Develop a communications strategy to promote the work of the commission
2. Research and Review
 - Undertake desktop research to understand and examine successful approaches and policy interventions that look to address child poverty locally, nationally and internationally
 - Undertake a needs assessment that will help to identify the extent of the challenge and the causes of child poverty in Birmingham
 - Include the work already taking place under the national social inclusion declaration that makes recommendations to support families out of poverty.

3. Activities to support evidence gathering

Organise a series of focus sessions to explore:

- Symptoms and causes
- What action is needed?
- Identify existing activity and what works

Invite policy makers, practitioners, Councillors, communities from a range of sectors with knowledge, expertise and experience to explore the challenges and identify solutions that will help reduce child poverty.

Undertake a series of dialogues with children, young people and families to ensure the lived experience of poverty is reflected in the recommendations.

Secretariat: The Commission will be supported by Equalities, Community Safety and Cohesion Service, BCC:

Dr Mashuq Ally, Assistant Director, Equalities, Community Safety and Cohesion Service, BCC

Suwinder Bains, Partnership and Community Engagement Manager, BCC

Appendix B – Organisations and individuals consulted with as part of the Commission

The Commission would like to thank all the individuals and organisations that contributed their time and expertise to this report, including:

Contributors who offered their support and expert advice

Caroline Wolhuter, Head of Social Inclusion Ashram Moseley Housing Association
Ashram Housing Association

Professor Diane Kemp, Birmingham City University

Doddington Green Children's Centre

Gordon Lee, Chief Executive, Malachi

Helen Davies, Senior Economic Development Officer, West Midlands Integrated Transport Authority

Immy Kaur, Impact Hub, Birmingham

Jean Templeton, St Basils

John Short, Chief Executive, Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Trust

Rt Hon Liam Byrne MP

Marcia Lewison, W.A.I.T.S

Nilmini Perara, Attwood Green Children's Centre

Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP

Pauline Harrison, South and City College

Dr Simon Pemberton, University of Birmingham

Fred Rattley, The Church of England Birmingham

Shaz Manir, Amirah Foundation

Tim Evans, Chief Executive of Worth Unlimited

Revd Janet Knox, St Boniface Church

Birmingham Business Leaders focus group

Professor Helen Higson, Aston University

Birmingham Health and Wellbeing Board

Birmingham Faith Network

Focused discussions facilitated by **Suwinder Bains** and supported by **Samantha Tinsley Hunt**, Equalities, Community Safety & Cohesion Team, Birmingham City Council including:

Big Lottery roundtable with the Ladywood voluntary and community sector organisations hosted by **Manisha Patel**, Big Lottery

Birmingham Financial Inclusion Partnership hosted by BCC

Allen's Croft Project parents focus group session hosted by **Jacky Mulveen**

The Factory Youth Centre young people's focus session hosted by **Jan Collymore**, Senior Youth Worker and **Becky Crampton**, Youth Worker

Gateway Family Services: Katherine Hewitt CEO, **Jane Piggot Smith**, Departmental Manager and **Pregnancy Outreach Workers: Blossom Smith, Kadijah Irving, Jacqueline Smith**.

Kikit Pathways to Recovery CIC: Mohammed Ashraf, CEO and young people,

Future First School, young people workshop hosted by **Mohammed Majid**, Head Teacher

Aspire and Succeed, young people's event hosted by **Shale Ahmed**, Senior Youth Worker

'**Big Conversations**' with parents, Balsall Health Children's Centre hosted by **Alison Moore** and **Melanie Tovey**

Neighbourhood project visits to **Oasis Academy, Amirah Foundation** and **St Boniface Church** hosted by **Tim Evans**, Chief Executive of Worth Unlimited

Summerfield children's Centre, Focus group session with parents hosted by **Tracey Dickens**, Service Manager,

Supporting People Domestic Violence Forum hosted by **Maureen Connolly**, CEO, Birmingham and Solihull Women's Aid

Young people's focus group, The Light House Youth Centre, Aston hosted by **Darnish Amraz**, Youth Worker

Young People's CPC group: Luke Holland, Alia Khan, Samira Ali, Billie Power, Hasan Zeb, Ciara O'Donoghue, Faizah Jamil, Harun Saleh

Written Submissions:

Peter Richmond, CEO and **Lisa Martinali**, Community Regeneration Director Castle Vale Community Housing Association

Jude Deakin, Project Manager: Gateway to Birmingham Advice Services

Project workers who led the participation work with schools across the city

Angharad Lewis – The Children's Society

Cath Morris – The Children's Society

Claudia Moynihan – The Children's Society

Esther Elliott – The Children's Society

Helen Maitland – The Children's Society

Jim Davis – The Children's Society

Joanna Petty – The Children's Society

Nicole Fassihi – The Children’s Society

Sorcha Mahony – The Children’s Society

Yvonne Bacon – Barnardo’s

Birmingham City Councillors and Council Officers who provided support

Councillor Sir Albert Bore, Former Leader of the Council

Richard Browne, Intelligence Manager

Kevin Caulfield, Childcare Quality and Sufficiency Manager

Parminder Garcha, Education Commissioning

Councillor John Clancy, Leader of the Council

Peter Hay, Director of People

Councillor Paulette Hamilton, Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing

Councillor Brigid Jones, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Schools

Councillor James McKay

Mark Rogers, Chief Executive Birmingham City Council

Natasha Bhandal, Communications Manager, Equalities, Community Safety and Cohesion

Councillor Shafique Shah

Samantha Tinsley-Hunt, Partnership and Engagement Officer

Dr Dennis Wilkes, Public Health Lead for Children’s Health and Wellbeing

Parminder Garcha, Education, Employment & Skills, Birmingham City Council

Richard Shewring, Homeless & Pre-Tenancy Services, Birmingham City Council

Liz Stearn, Birmingham Adult Education Service, Birmingham City Council - ESOL

Commission Secretariat: Mashuq Ally, Assistant Director for Equalities, Community Safety and Cohesion

Suwinder Bains, Partnership & Community Engagement Manager, Equalities, Community Safety & Cohesion

Thank you also to **Tom Redfearn**, **David Ayre** and **Lucy Capron** of The Children’s Society who undertook significant research for the Commission and drafted this report.

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