

Tackling Poverty in East Suffolk

Community Partnerships Annual Forum - March 2024

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Introduction

- Welcome / Who's in the room?
- Understanding Poverty in East Suffolk – brief presentation
- Poverty Proofing the School Day Work – key findings
- World Café Questions and Activities – please circulate and visit each table
- Feedback and Lunch(!)

Poverty is measured by the disposable income a household has available for spending and saving after direct taxes (income tax, NI and council tax) and median income – the income of the ‘middle person’ if everyone in the UK was lined up from the poorest to the richest.

However, ‘poverty’ is about more than just money – people in poverty lack the resources to access a diet, have living conditions and participate in the activities that are usual in society.

Median income for non-retired households was £34,000 in 2021/22

Relative poverty – less than 60% of median household income (£24,000)

Deep poverty – less than 50% of median household income (£17,000)

Very Deep Poverty – less than 40% of median household income (£13,600)

What is Poverty...

Almost 18% of people in Suffolk live in relative poverty – but this is more than 40% in some parts of East Suffolk.

“unless you have lived on a low income you have no idea what it is like”

“I get so angry when people put others down who need the food bank. They don't know the person's situation. They think they should get off their backside and get a job – hang on...they are probably working but still can't afford food because the prices are so high”

Reasons for Poverty

Life Events

- Loss of an earner in the household due to illness, disability or death
- Becoming a carer which limits ability to work / work as many hours
- Relationship breakdown leading to lone person or lone parent household
- Redundancy leading to a lower income (potentially benefits) in the short or long term

Structural Reasons

- High housing costs (especially renters)
- Housing Related Support not keeping pace with costs/inflation
- Low earnings
- Benefits not keeping pace with inflation
- Wages not keeping pace with inflation
- Rises in the cost of living – particularly essentials like heating, housing and food

Barriers to Moving out of Poverty

- Digital exclusion
- Barriers to employment e.g. childcare
- High costs prevent children accessing educational and extra-curricular activities
- Cost of healthy food
- Impact of having been a child in care
- Cost of training and childcare to attend training
- Worse off getting a job due to travel costs and/or childcare costs
- Complexity of current systems to access support
- Cheaper housing isn't available in many areas
- Housing, fuel and power cost more for those on low incomes
- Impact of having been in debt and having a poor credit rating e.g. future borrowing more expensive

Thoughts on Poverty...



"By the time I would have driven 45 minutes to work and paid for childcare, I wouldn't earn enough to make a difference"



"The zero hours contracts were the hardest, I was better off not working. But the trouble is that I get all depressed when I'm not working...I have to work for my own sanity"



"I often can't afford to put my heating on, sometimes it is really cold and a blanket doesn't help...it's cold at home and I have nowhere to go"

Poverty Proofing the School Day

- Work commissioned by SCC and delivered by Children North East
- 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' © tool for identifying the barriers that children in poverty face to engaging fully with school life
- 16 key themes identified, the top priorities for parents/pupils were:
 - Food
 - Celebrations
 - Rewards, Behaviour and Attendance
 - Uniform

Food – Issues/Barriers

- Portion sizes at school are small
- Quality of food is variable
- No breakfast at home – arrive hungry
- Poor/no breakfast provision at school
- Cost of school dinners
- Letters re dinner money debt sent via pupils
- Quality of packed lunches
- Stigma – FSM children identifiable
- Limits on FSM spending

Celebrations – Issues/Barriers

- Teachers asking questions about holidays – stigma and peer pressure
- Birthday celebrations/parties
- Pressure to buy gifts for teachers
- Non-Christian religions can be left out of Easter and Christmas fun
- Dress up celebrations e.g. Christmas jumper day – extra cost for parents
- Cost of leavers hoodies/t-shirts/books

Rewards – Issues/Barriers

- Correlation between poverty and attendance
- Inconsistency in delivery
- Whole class rewards or punishments which don't flex e.g. Covid or broken arm
- Does bad behaviour get more attention than good?
- Rewards sometimes require pupils to bring items from home

Uniform – Issues/Barriers

- Cost of uniforms – particularly if branded items and/or larger sizes
- Unable to pay in instalments – up front cost
- Sometimes required to purchase from a designated supplier
- Peer pressure to have branded bags and shoes
- Poor awareness of support available/uniform grant
- Challenges washing and drying uniform (particularly in winter)