

THE WEB OF POVERTY: AREA-BASED POVERTY AND EXCLUSION IN ENGLAND

KEY FINDINGS

This report highlights the inequalities between the most deprived areas in England – where most of CUF’s work is targeted – and wealthier areas. It combines first-hand information from projects that we support with national statistical data to show how deprived communities are trapped in a ‘web of poverty’ that impacts on almost every aspect of human well-being. The key findings are:

- In a survey of local community-based projects, unemployment/lack of job opportunities is seen as by far the most important issue affecting deprived communities. The other most commonly cited issues are: low income/pay; inadequate local services; low self-esteem; drug and alcohol misuse; poor education; poor or unaffordable housing; crime and anti-social behaviour; family breakdown; and lack of community cohesion;
- All these problems are closely interlinked, trapping individuals and whole communities in a ‘web of poverty’: poor education dampens aspirations; unstable home lives and domestic abuse are triggers for homelessness and drug and alcohol misuse; unemployment and lack of opportunities promote crime; low income makes healthy eating unaffordable; dependence on benefits disempowers people; mental health problems lead to social isolation; and the closure of local services damages community cohesion.
- Nearly every aspect of people’s emotional, financial, and social well-being is negatively associated with area-based deprivation. Of the 66 indicators examined in the full report, 55 are clearly worse in more deprived areas, six are about the same, and five are better. For example, disability-free life expectancy is up to 13 years shorter in more deprived areas; youth unemployment is 2-3 times higher; reported problems with anti-social behaviour are 3-4 times greater; and homelessness is 5-10 times greater. On the other hand, people living in deprived areas see their relatives, friends, and neighbours more frequently than their counterparts in wealthier areas;
- The problems associated with poverty are not confined to the most deprived areas. For most of the indicators, there is a clear gradient between the least and most deprived areas, whereby areas in the middle of the deprivation scale are significantly better off than the most deprived areas, but significantly worse off than the least deprived areas.

AREA-BASED POVERTY AND EXCLUSION IN ENGLAND

ISSUES AFFECTING DEPRIVED COMMUNITIES

In our survey of over 200 CUF-supported groups, project leaders were asked to name the main issues affecting their local community. The list of issues they raised affirms our own understanding that poverty is about much more than a lack of money. Unemployment/lack of job opportunities is by far the most important issue highlighted by projects – mentioned (unprompted) by nearly half of all respondents. The other most commonly cited issues are: low income/pay; inadequate local services; low self-esteem; drug and alcohol misuse; education; poor or unaffordable housing; crime and anti-social behaviour; family breakdown; and lack of community cohesion. Also mentioned frequently are: problems with the benefits system; isolation; debt; ill health; mental health problems; low aspirations; cost of living; homelessness; dependency culture, and barriers to accessing services (see diagram below).



WHAT PROJECTS SAID:

"Young people are not being given the skills to enable them to find jobs, engage socially, or even access basic life choices. They are then passing this on to their own children. Life aspirations are low, and people do not believe life can be better. People here do not believe that they are worth anything more than they have."

John, Streetspace WSM, Weston Super Mare

"We see a sense of hopelessness as being a major issue. Often this is caused by domestic abuse or relationship breakdown, but also by a general emptiness in people's lives. Increasingly, alcohol is seen as the answer to every problem."

Hazel, Good News Family Care Homes, Derby

"The lack of a community has been exacerbated by the closure of local community facilities and meeting places. The area has many nationalities and languages which makes community cohesion virtually impossible. The red light district can flourish as the local community is weak owing to its utter diversity."

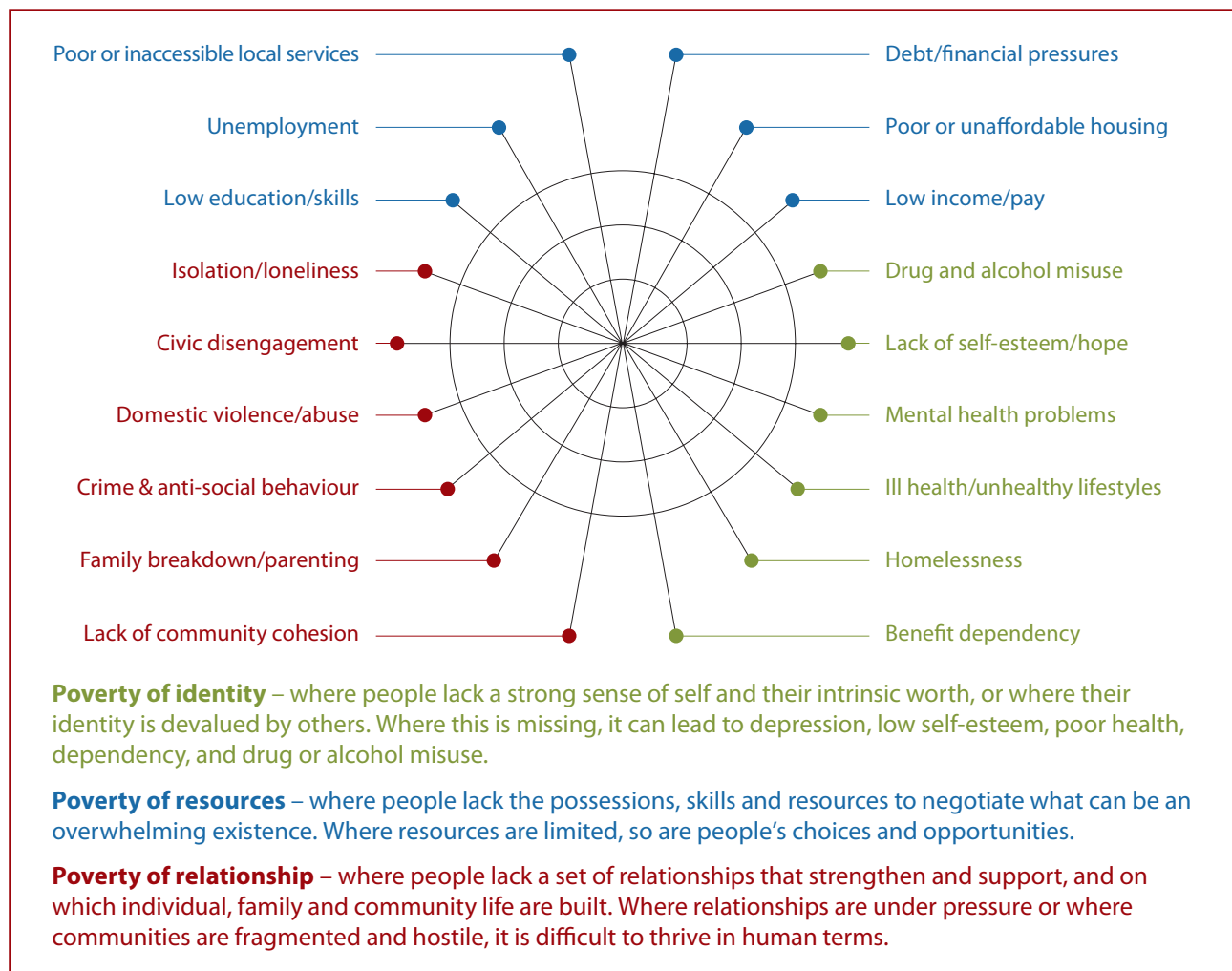
Richard, Jericho Road Project, Nottingham

"More people are having benefits suspended, leaving them with nothing to live on. Housing is harder to find. There is more financial pressure on clients due to increased heating and fuel costs, as well as food prices."

Mervyn, Brighton and Hove City Mission Basics Bank, Brighton

THE WEB OF POVERTY

These issues are complex, so it is difficult to disentangle causes and consequences. In describing the issues affecting deprived communities, the quotes opposite show how these problems are closely interlinked, trapping individuals and whole communities in a 'web of poverty' (see diagram below). Poor education dampens aspirations; unstable home lives and domestic abuse are triggers for homelessness and drug and alcohol misuse; unemployment and lack of opportunities promote crime; low income makes healthy eating unaffordable; dependence on benefits disempowers people; mental health problems lead to social isolation; and the closure of local services damages community cohesion.



INDICATORS OF AREA-BASED POVERTY

Where possible, we have attempted to find relevant indicators for each of the issues identified in the 'web of poverty', some of which are summarised in the table overleaf. Of the 66 indicators examined in the main report, 55 are clearly worse in more deprived areas, six are about the same, and five are better.

What is striking is the breadth and strength of the association between these indicators and area-based deprivation, showing how virtually every aspect of human well-being is impacted by poverty. People in deprived areas are more likely to suffer depression and low self-esteem; to misuse drugs and alcohol; to be disabled and to die prematurely. They are more likely to be unemployed and to live in sub-standard housing in areas with higher levels of crime and lower social capital. Their children do less well at school, are more likely to experience family breakdown, and to be taken into care.

AREA-BASED POVERTY AND EXCLUSION IN ENGLAND

SELECTED INDICATORS OF AREA-BASED POVERTY			
	20% most deprived	20% middle	20% least deprived
Poverty of identity			
Age-standardised suicide rates (per 100,000 males)	23.2	17.5	12.6
Alcohol-related hospital admissions (per 10,000 males)	215	115	85
% of adults who are unhappy or depressed	22%	18%	14%
Disability-free life expectancy in years (men)	54.5	62.4	67.0
No. of households in temporary accommodation (per 1,000)	3.8	2.3	0.6
% of adults dependent on out-of-work benefits	23%	11%	6%
Poverty of resources			
% of children in poverty	34%	14%	7%
% of pupils achieving 5+ A*-C grades at GCSE	40%	56%	72%
Unemployment rate among young people aged 16-24	27%	18%	13%
% of adults who have fallen into debt in the last year	15%	7%	4%
% of households in overcrowded housing	6.6%	2%	0.7%
% satisfied with local services for young people	31%	29%	33%
Poverty of relationships			
% of adults living on their own	22%	16%	13%
% of children in lone parent households	40%	22%	16%
No. of children in care (per 10,000 children)	89	65	38
% of adults who have (formally) volunteered in the past year	29%	39%	51%
% who have been burgled in the last 12 months	3.3%	2.1%	1.3%
% who think that racial or religious harassment is a big problem	16%	6%	3%
*See the main report for further details of each indicator and sources.			
**To find out where a particular area lies on the deprivation scale, go to the Neighbourhood Statistics website (http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/) and enter your postcode in the right hand panel.			

FURTHER INFORMATION

A copy of the full report, including charts of all the indicators, is available as a free download from www.cuf.org.uk/research. For more information about this study, please contact **Tom Sefton** at the Church Urban Fund (tom.sefton@cuf.org.uk).

Church Urban Fund, Church House, Great Smith Street, London SW1P 3AZ
 T 020 7898 1667 F 020 7898 1601 E enquiries@cuf.org.uk W www.cuf.org.uk
 Registered Charity number 297483.