

6. CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND THEIR FAMILIES

6.1 Child and Family Poverty

Child and family poverty is about more than just income and includes a wide range of factors which are known to increase childhood disadvantage, including parental unemployment, low parental educational attainment and qualifications, being part of a larger family or a one-parent family, and parental ill health. The Government has also identified in its new *Child Poverty Strategy*¹, vulnerable groups of children, who are often relatively few in number and not always captured in datasets used to monitor child poverty nationally, but who are at increased risk of child poverty. These include in addition to the groups identified above, children with a disabled parent, those from specific ethnic groups, children in local authority care, Gypsy/Roma/Traveller children, teenage parents, refugees and children with parents who misuse substances or are ex-offenders.

6.1.1 The impact of child and family poverty

Child and family poverty matters. The Child Poverty Action Group states that 'children growing up in poor homes are more likely to die at birth or in infancy than children born into richer families. They are more likely to be left behind in education; by the age of three, poorer children are estimated to be, on average, nine months behind children from more wealthy backgrounds. They are almost twice as likely to live in poor housing. Children in poverty also miss out on experiences that most of us regard as a normal part of growing up; for example, they don't go on school trips, can't invite friends round for tea, and can't afford a holiday away from home².'

Growing up in poverty has immediate and wide-ranging effects on a child's health, social circumstances and life chances, as well as longer term impacts which make a difference to their entire life experience, reducing their chances of getting into and staying in well-paid work and being healthy. There is also an increased risk of their children living in poverty, which continues what has been termed the 'inter-generational cycle of poverty'.

6.1.2 Measuring Child Poverty

The data available about families living on low incomes, and in some cases in poverty, are complex, and definitions and datasets from different sources do not always match. This was evident when compiling Buckinghamshire's Child Poverty Local Area Needs Assessment³ in 2010. Currently, available data do not take into account all the risk factors mentioned above, but the Government has recently consulted on how data can be developed to better understand the numbers of

children involved and poverty trends over time, particularly within the smaller groups affected. Three currently used measures of child and family poverty are:

- Children in Low Income Families local measure
- Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI)
- Households Below Average Income (HBAI)

6.1.2.1 Children in Low Income Families local measure

This is defined as *the number of children living in families in receipt of Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit, whose reported income is less than 60% of the median income, or in receipt of Income Support or (Income-Based) Job Seekers Allowance.* This number is divided by the total number of children in the area (determined from Child Benefit data) to give a proportion for 'Children Living in Low Income Families'⁴.

6.1.2.2. IDACI

This is a subset of the Income Deprivation Domain, one of the Indices of Multiple Deprivation⁵ (see JSNA section 4.1), and measures the *proportion of all children aged 0 to 15 living in income deprived families.* The definition of low income used includes both people that are out-of-work, and those that are in work but who have low earnings (and who satisfy the respective means tests). A score and rank for the IDACI can be produced for each lower layer super output area (LL-SOA) which can be combined to give a relative measure of income deprivation affecting children in a larger geographical area, for example at ward or Local Authority level.

6.1.2.3. HBAI

This dataset gives a national view of the prevalence of low income households⁶. The most recent data published in June 2015 is an analysis of income distribution in from 1994/95 to 2013/14.

6.1.3 Information on Child Poverty in Buckinghamshire

Table 1 shows data from the Children in Low Income Families measure for Buckinghamshire in 2013 and 2012. In 2013, 9.6% of children aged under 16, and 9.2% of dependent children aged under 20, were living in low income families, similar proportions to 2012. The proportion of Buckinghamshire children living in low income families was about half that nationally, and about 70% of the average for the South East. Within Buckinghamshire, Wycombe District had the highest prevalence of children in low income families (10.9% under 16 and 10.7% under 20) followed by Aylesbury Vale (9.8% and 9.2%); South Bucks (8.9% and 8.5%) and Chiltern (7.2% and 7.0%). However all areas of Buckinghamshire were below the South East and national averages.

Table 1 Number and proportion of children in Buckinghamshire in low income families, August 2013 (August 2012)

	Number of children in families in receipt of WTC or CTC (<60% median income) or IS/JSA		% of Children in low-income families	
	<16 years	<20 years	<16 years	<20 years
Buckinghamshire	9,420 (9,525)	10,640 (10,725)	9.6% (9.7%)	9.2% (9.3%)
South East	219,485 (226,55)	245,960 (252,795)	13.7% (14.2%)	13.3% (13.6%)
England	1,854,005 (1,912,310)	2,097,005 (2,156,280)	18.6% (19.2%)	18.0% (18.6%)
Aylesbury Vale District	-	-	9.8%	9.2%
Chiltern District	-	-	7.2%	7.0%
South Bucks District	-	-	8.9%	8.5%
Wycombe District	-	-	10.9%	10.7%

WTC: Working Tax Credit ; CTC: Child Tax Credit; IS: Income Support; JSA: Job Seekers Allowance
 Source: *Children in Low Income Families Measure (HMRC, 2015)*

Table 2 and figure 1 show data on the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) in Buckinghamshire. A score is derived from the Index for each Local Authority area, with a national average for District Local Authorities in England of 0.145, ranging from a minimum of 0.057 (least deprived) to a maximum of 0.290 (most deprived)⁷. The rank shows how a Local Authority's score compares to all the other Districts in England, ranging from 1 (most deprived) to 326 (least deprived). Buckinghamshire has an average score of 0.098, lower (less deprived) than the South East (0.134) and national averages (0.145), and ranks 15th out of the 18 upper tier Local Authorities in the South East (4th least deprived in the South East). Wycombe (0.113) is the most deprived district in the county ranking 258 out of 326 nationally, and Chiltern (0.074) the least deprived ranking 319 out of 326. However there are still pockets of deprivation in each area and it is worth noting that even though Chiltern district is the 8th least deprived in the country, it still has some LSOA areas that are in the most deprived 10% nationally.

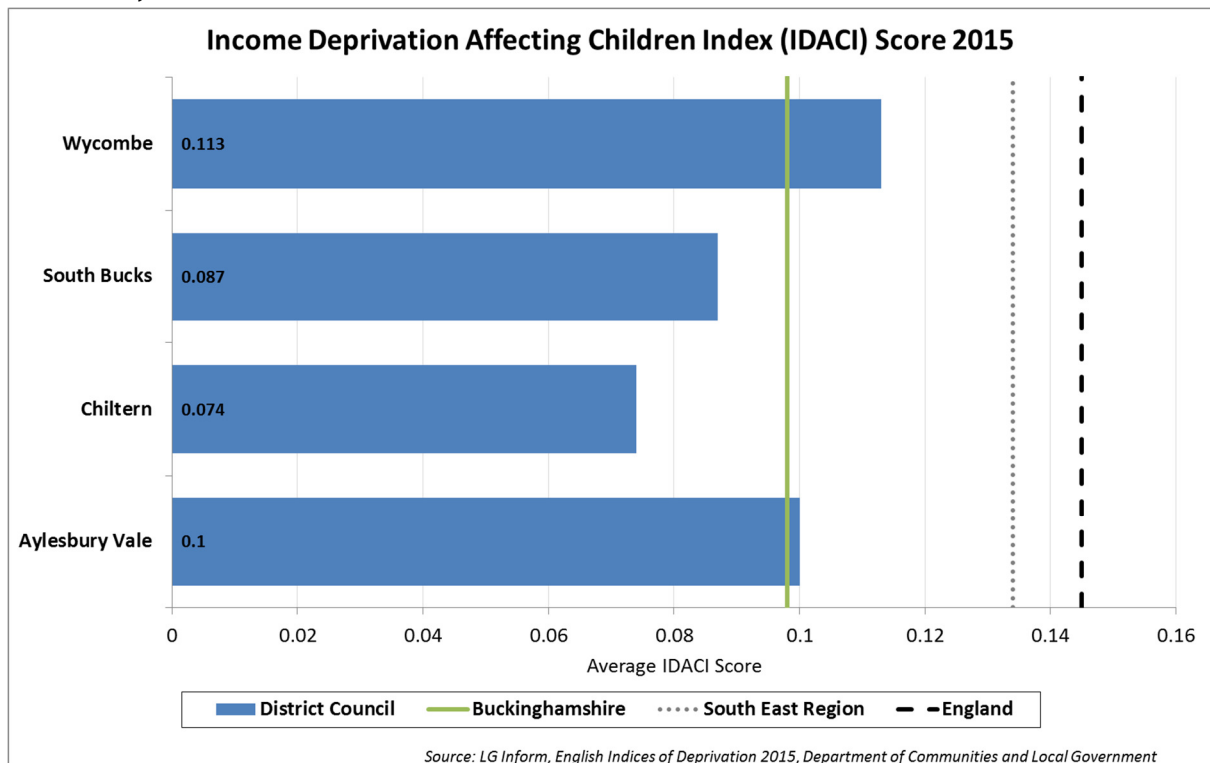
There are estimated to be over 10,000 children in Buckinghamshire living in low income households, including over 1,100 in each of Chiltern and South Bucks, over 3,600 in Aylesbury Vale and over 4,400 in Wycombe.

Table 2 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI), Buckinghamshire and Districts, South East and England, 2015

	Average score (lower= less deprived) Range 0.057-0.290	Rank of average score (lower = more deprived) Range 0-326	Proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally	Rank of proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally Range 0-233	Estimated number of children living in low income households (2010 data)
Buckinghamshire	0.098	-	-	-	10,587
South East	0.134	-	-	-	-
England	0.145	-	-	-	-
Aylesbury Vale District	0.1	281	0	233	3,623
Chiltern District	0.074	319	0.0175	199	1,142
South Bucks District	0.087	297	0	233	1,181
Wycombe District	0.133	258	0	233	4,407

Source: LG Inform

Figure 1 Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index, Buckinghamshire Districts, 2015



Source: LG Inform

The Households Below Average Income data are only available at a national level. The most recent report in 2015 stated that 17% of children across the country are living in households in ‘Relative low income’ (defined as below 60% of contemporary median income). This figure rises to 28% after housing costs are taken into consideration.

6.1.4 Demand

It is crucial to intervene early to tackle child poverty and prevent its damaging effects on children’s lives in the short and longer term, and to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. If the numbers of children living in poverty rise as predicted by some this will place an increased burden on statutory bodies as well as voluntary and community sector organisations to provide support services to those families.

The latest data on the implementation of Buckinghamshire’s Child and Family Poverty Strategy showed that at the end of September 2015, 746 children and families had benefited from it, against a target for the year to March 2016 of 1,000.

6.1.5 Horizon scanning

The Child Poverty Act 2010 set the Government a goal of ending child poverty with a range of targets to meet by 2020⁸. Some analysts believe this is not achievable⁹. The Government's national Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017 directed policy towards getting and keeping people in work, decreasing the cost of living to help low income families, improving people's health and raising educational standards.

Radical changes to welfare benefits and support are now underway under the proposed Welfare Reform and Work Bill, due to become law by April 2016, and the roll out of Universal Credit began in Buckinghamshire in November 2015. The Bill also includes the removal of income based measures and related targets for reducing child poverty and introduces a new way of measuring child poverty through a new duty on the Government to report annually on 'life chances' indicators. The Chancellor's Spending Review and Autumn Statement November 2015 also included proposals which will have an impact on low income families and children living in poverty, for example relating to the availability of free childcare, funding for universal infant free school meals, school funding for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, and a cap on housing benefit for renting in the social sector.

The impact of all these changes on the levels of child poverty nationally and locally and the impact of new ways of measuring child poverty is not yet clear. Some analysts predict that child poverty nationally is likely to rise, due in part to the impact of welfare reforms, with a projection of 4.2 million children living in poverty by 2020⁹. While the proportion of children living in poverty is lower than in many other local authorities, Buckinghamshire has followed national trends in the past. It is anticipated therefore if there is a national increase in child poverty, the overall numbers of children living in poverty in Buckinghamshire will also rise.

Work to mitigate the effects of child poverty locally is underway through the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Plan 2014–2018 and the Buckinghamshire Child and Family Poverty Strategy, both of which are delivered in partnership with other organisations. This includes projects and other work to support children, young people and their families and which are aligned to the national initiatives.

6.1.6 Public views

The three Local Children and Young People's Partnership Boards use the outcomes of the Children and Young People's Voice survey¹⁰ to drive their work which includes projects relevant to child poverty. For example, in the 2015 survey only 66% of primary school pupils said they felt 'very happy', 'happy' or 'OK' about moving to secondary school. In response a project is currently being scoped to develop an on

line resource for children and young people around transitions between educational stages. 60% of respondents to the survey also said that they do not have enough information and support to help them plan their future, and a Youth Zone on the Family Information Service website is being developed to provide additional advice and guidance to young people about this.

6.1.7 Conclusions

Growing up in poverty has immediate and long-term effects on a child's health, social circumstances and life chances, which make a difference to their entire life experience. Various measures of child poverty are used, which suggest that child poverty in Buckinghamshire overall is significantly lower than that nationally, in the South East, and in a number of comparator Local Authorities. Within Buckinghamshire, Wycombe has the highest levels of child poverty, and Chiltern the lowest, but all Districts are below the national average.

However there are still estimated to be over 10,000 children in Buckinghamshire living in low income households, there are areas of deprivation within all 4 District Authority areas. For example, even though Chiltern district ranks as the 8th least deprived area out of 326 in the country, it still has some small areas that are in the most deprived 10% nationally.

It is not clear what the impact will be of the changes to welfare benefits and support that are now underway, alongside new ways of measuring child poverty, but some analysts predict increases in child poverty nationally over the next few years, which are likely to be mirrored in Buckinghamshire. Interventions to tackle child poverty early are important to prevent its damaging effects on children's lives in the short and longer term, and to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty.

In Buckinghamshire, work to mitigate the effects of child poverty is underway through the Buckinghamshire Children and Young People's Plan 2014–2018 and the Buckinghamshire Child and Family Poverty Strategy, both of which are delivered in partnership with other organisations.

Pam Curtis
Programme Manager, Children's Partnership Team
June 2016

References

¹ DfE (2014) *Child Poverty Strategy 2014-2017* <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/child-poverty-strategy-2014-to-2017> (accessed 22 January 2016)

-
- ² Farthing R (2013) *Local authorities and child poverty: balancing threats and opportunities*. London: Child Poverty Action Group
- ³ Buckinghamshire County Council (2010). Even in Bucks: Child Poverty Local Area Needs Assessment PDF 995KB (Full document)
Even in Bucks: Child Poverty Local Area Needs Assessment SUMMARY PDF 442KB (Summary document)
- ⁴ HMRC (2015) *Children in Low Income Families Measure*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/personal-tax-credits-children-in-low-income-families-local-measure-2013-snapshot-as-at-31-august-2013> (accessed 22 January 2016)
- ⁵ DCLG (2015) *English Indices of Deprivation 2015*
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2015> (accessed 22 January 2016)
- ⁶DWP (2015) *Households below average income*
https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/437246/households-below-average-income-1994-95-to-2013-14.pdf (accessed 22 January 2016)
- ⁷<http://lginform.local.gov.uk/search?s=IDACI&s2=IDACI&op=Search&dates%5Bfrom%5D=&dates%5Bto%5D=&author=> (accessed 12/2/2016)
- ⁸ HM Government (2010) *Child Poverty Act*
http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/9/pdfs/ukpga_20100009_en.pdf (accessed 22 January 2016)
- ⁹ M Brewer, J Browne, R Joyce (2011). *Child and working age poverty from 2010/2020*. Institute for Fiscal Studies.
- ¹⁰ Buckinghamshire County Council. Children and Young People's Voice Survey 2015
<http://www.buckschildrenstrust.org.uk/media/3544680/Final-CYP-Voice-Survey-2015.pdf> (accessed 12/2/2016)