

Tackling Child Poverty in the Barnsley Central constituency

A campaign by Dan Jarvis MP
and Barnsley Central Labour Party.
Spring 2016

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Introduction

Child poverty in Barnsley is a serious problem.

Statistics in this report demonstrate that **22.8%** of children (aged 16 years or younger) in the **Barnsley Central constituency** are living in poverty.

This places our constituency **157th** out of **650** constituencies in the UK (where 1=highest).

I have written this report because I do not believe it is acceptable that one in five of the children who grow up in my constituency do so in poverty.

The last Labour government was committed to tackling child poverty and made significant progress in this area. We introduced Sure Start, increased financial support for childcare and significantly increased spending on education. We tried to give all children the best start in life, no matter what their background.¹

However, more could have been done then, and more should be done now.

Current discussions about child poverty tend to focus on the definition. But we don't need a new definition to know that some of our children are not getting the best start in life.

When I first announced my intention to tackle this important issue I was heartened by the number of people locally who came forward and offered their support.

That is why Part 1 of this report is about what we can do.

I don't have all the answers. Indeed, I think we must reach out to those in our community who have relevant experience and expertise.

However, what I can do is ensure that this campaign gets the profile and backing it deserves, and bring together the many people who want to make a difference.

Part two of this report contains background information about ways in which organisations are trying to co-ordinate work to tackle this important issue. There is some good work going on in Barnsley, and indeed across the country.

But my focus is on what the rest of us can do.

I hope people will join me and many others in the Barnsley Central constituency to make a lasting difference to our children's lives.



Dan Jarvis MP
Barnsley Central

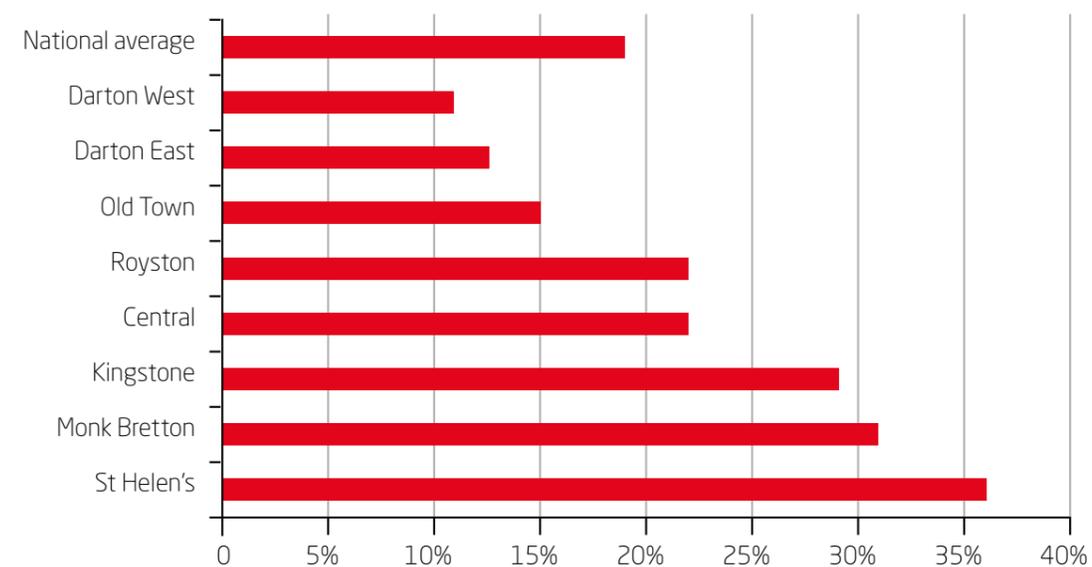
“At least one in five children in Barnsley Central are living in poverty.”



Child poverty in Barnsley Central²

In the Barnsley Central constituency most of the wards have a higher rate than the national average of children living in poverty:

% of children living in poverty by ward



“Over 40% of children in Barnsley are in poverty or one step away from poverty.”

“Barnsley Central has been ranked second from bottom amongst constituencies, for social mobility – that is the performance of disadvantaged children from early years to professional life.”

²HMRC, Children in low-income families local measure: 2013



“In St Helen’s ward over a third of children live in poverty... this places it in the bottom 3% nationally.”

“Unemployment in Barnsley is higher than the national average.”

What does every child deserve?

A decent childhood should be a right, not a privilege.

It is the foundation upon which a person's future is built, greatly affecting the life they will live as an adult.

In order for children to thrive, they need to have five basic needs met:

1. To be healthy
2. To have somewhere safe and warm to live
3. To learn
4. To live in a community with a strong local economy which supports finding decent jobs
5. To feel supported





Home

A safe and stable home environment is essential for any family.

But for many, securing a warm, safe place to live is becoming more difficult.

Low-income families are increasingly facing significant hardship due to cuts in benefits and inadequate access to well-paid, permanent work. This, coupled with the lack of social housing and the difficulties in finding decent, privately rented homes, means that many children end up on the brink of homelessness.

This is a very real problem in Barnsley. Over the last few months, my office has dealt with an increasing number of cases of families who have been affected by the introduction of the benefit cap. Many can no longer afford their privately rented properties, but are struggling to find cheaper alternatives, as the demand for social housing far out-strips supply. Berneslai Homes have told me that an average of 27 people apply for every property they advertise - with desirable homes often chased by up to 100 families.

Even if they can afford to rent privately, I receive many complaints from constituents about irresponsible landlords, either failing to take action against tenants who subject their neighbours to persistent anti-social behaviour, or failing to ensure their properties are maintained at an acceptable standard.

Housing: what can be done?

In order to effectively tackle child poverty, housing must be a priority. There needs to be greater work done to reduce the insecurity associated with private renting, and to drive up standards in both private rented and social housing.

On a local level, I have raised the need to better **regulate the private rented sector** with Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC). I am pleased that the Council are introducing a scheme to require and encourage private landlords to improve the management, amenity and safety standards of their properties and to tackle anti-social behaviour and other related problems.

On a national level, I will be **opposing the government's proposals to extend the Right to Buy scheme to include the housing association sector**. At a time when demand for social housing is so clearly outstripping supply, we should be bolstering the social housing sector, not selling it off.

“An average of 27 applicants are applying for every property advertised to let by Berneslai Homes.”

Health

Any plan to tackle both the **symptoms** and **causes** of child poverty must have improving the health and well-being of children at its core.

This must start before the child is even born. Barnsley continues to have unacceptably high levels of drinking and smoking during pregnancy and therefore too many babies are born with a low birth weight, and associated health problems. This, coupled with low-breastfeeding rates in Barnsley, means that many of our babies are not being given the best start in life. Targeting high risk groups is vital to support expectant mothers to make the right choices.³

Once a child reaches school age, it is essential that they have access to regular and healthy meals. The link between inadequate nutrition and poor educational attainment is well established. Support must be provided to those families that are struggling to meet this need.

As well as healthy eating, all children should be able to access regular physical activity. Whilst all children take PE lessons at school, many parents can't afford the extra-curricular opportunities offered by after-school and sports clubs.



“Barnsley's rates for starting breastfeeding are good – however, after 6 to 8 weeks the numbers drop to much lower than the regional and national rates.”

All of this is essential if children are to live healthy and happy lives. But when things are not going well, it is crucial that children have swift access to appropriate mental health services, a key challenge both nationally and here in Barnsley, due to the acute pressure on **Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)**.

Health: what can be done?

Having seen the significant impact that the **Barnsley Maternity Stop Smoking Service** had on reducing the numbers of mothers smoking at the time of delivery, I was dismayed to learn that this service has lost its funding and urgently raised this with the Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group. I am pleased that they have now found interim funding for this post until October, while they undertake a review of its cost-effectiveness.

I am also currently working closely with the Director of Public Health, who is leading on the development of a strategic, multi-agency plan to reduce **Excess Winter Deaths (EWD)** in Barnsley. I have twice directly **questioned the Prime Minister** about what the Government is doing on this vital issue.

On a national level, I continue to **challenge the Secretary of State for Health** on this Government's record on the **NHS**, recently challenging him on funding for **CAMHS**, resources for local authorities to tackle EWD and vision screening for children.

Access to affordable but good quality food is also essential. The **social supermarket** in Goldthorpe is a model which other areas of Barnsley should consider. I am pleased to see that a similar shop will open in Athersley soon.

³ Public Health England, Health Profiles Tool. <http://fingertips.phe.org.uk/profile/health-profiles>

Learning

There is no doubt that a good education is the most important route out of poverty for many children.

Any approach to tackling child poverty will need to ensure that children have access to an **exceptional standard of formal education** and the **extra-curricular activities** that provide experience and inspiration to aim high.

Our young people must have the **opportunity** to attend a good school, which helps them access a broad curriculum, make good progress and prepare for their next steps in life.

There is also the need for **inspiration**. Children should have the opportunity to meet people from Barnsley who have gone on to achieve great things. If we are to break the cycle of poverty that is the reality for many families, it is necessary for children to understand that there are no barriers to what they can achieve. Allowing them to meet and be inspired by those who have gone before will help to ensure they do not set unnecessary limits on themselves. Role models and mentoring are key to making this happen.

“Schools can miss out on £1,320 a year of funding per pupil because there is no automatic registration for Pupil Premium.”⁴

Learning: what can be done?

I work closely with head teachers of both **secondary and primary schools**, supporting their plans to improve our schools and campaigning on their behalf whenever it is useful.

Currently there is no **automatic registration** of pupils for schools entitled to **£1,320 of Pupil Premium funding**. This has been proposed in a Bill by Frank Field MP. If this is not successful, I will be supporting other attempts to bring in this legislation. It is heartening to see councillors in St Helen's ward distributing leaflets encouraging families to sign up to free school meals.

Some organisations, such as **Action Tutoring**, offer educational support to pupils at schools which have a



high rate of Pupil Premium students. They are always looking for volunteers to spare an hour or two to tutor in Maths or English. This could be an excellent way for local residents, particularly those who are retired, to contribute directly to the fight against child poverty.

A child who lives in a household where a parent is engaged with their school work stands a much better chance of doing well at school. I have been a keen promoter of **parents reading with children** and believe that men, in particular, should be encouraged to be role models for reading – and that **‘real men read’**.

I am delighted that my **Proud of Barnsley** campaign is still going strong and supported by the Barnsley Chronicle. Every year, a prize is awarded to a Young Superstar. This award recognises the many achievements of children and young people in our borough, aiming to challenge stereotypes and highlight the young role models who positively influence their peers.

I am a supporter of **Team Activ**, a great local organisation working with young people to develop their self-confidence through physical activity programmes.

I am also extremely proud to be Patron of **Barnsley Youth Choir**. This fantastic organisation brings together over 250 young people from a variety of backgrounds, encourages them to be the best that they can be and gives them a brilliant opportunity to be part of one of the top youth choirs in the UK. Their recent success in both the European and World Choir Games gave many of their members their first trip outside of the UK.

For all of these opportunities, money is often the first barrier. Some organisations have fundraisers working all year round. This is an area where our local community could have a real impact – perhaps by setting up **bursary schemes**, and contributing to local fundraising efforts.

⁴‘School funding: Pupil Premium’, House of Commons Briefing Paper, Number 06700, November 2015



Jobs and Welfare

Worklessness and lack of access to employment is unquestionably a key factor of child poverty.

Where one or more parents are out of work as a result of illness or unemployment, households are considerably more likely to be in poverty.

Ensuring that there are **decent, secure jobs** for Barnsley residents is vital – as is ensuring that local people have the skills needed to do these jobs. This means the local Barnsley economy must be attractive to businesses and investment.

The town must not just be a good place to live but a good place to do business in too. Businesses must be encouraged to invest in training and apprenticeships. And local people must be trained in the skills that employers need.

Welfare must work in a way which means it pays to get a job. It should act as a safety net for those in need, but provide incentives for people to get off benefits and into decent jobs.

⁵<http://www.theguardian.com/society/2016/jan/12/what-behind-deprivation-east-london-newham-unemployment>
⁶Intergenerational transmission of disadvantage in the UK & EU, Office for National Statistics, Serafino and Tonkin, September 2014.

Jobs: what can be done?

I put forward a **Private Members’ Bill** to increase the **national minimum wage** and will continue to support such measures.

I continue to work with the council to market Barnsley as a **good place to do business**, and am in regular contact with local businesses to find out how they can be supported and what could be improved about the town.

I have also supported Barnsley College in their important work with local employers to establish more **apprenticeships**.

“Those adults who lived in a workless household at age 14 are around 1.5 times as likely to be in poverty, compare with those where one adult was working.”⁵



Support

As mentioned under 'Health', **emotional well-being** is paramount if children are to grow into healthy, successful adults. There needs to be clear mechanisms in place to support children through the difficult process of growing up. Even with the other requirements in place, there will still be times when children need additional **guidance** to help with the challenges they face.

This guidance can come from both within their family and outside support. Therefore, parents need to be able to access guidance on how to parent. Crucially, we need to safeguard our children, and support BMBC, schools, professionals and all relevant agencies with their strong commitment to child protection.

Support: what can be done?

Over the last couple of years, many constituents have contacted me to raise their concerns about the waiting times for assessment and treatment with the **CAMHS**. I have raised these concerns directly with the South Yorkshire Partnership Foundation Trust, who have carried out a review on this service over the last 6 months. I am currently waiting to see the outcome from this review.

In the meantime, I was pleased to learn that Therapies for Anxiety, Depression and Stress (TADS), a voluntary group, has won Big Lottery funding for a project working to support people aged 11 to 18 with their mental well-being. Whilst it is encouraging to see that some schools nationally have been able to provide in-house counselling services for students, not all can afford to do so. That is why I think there should be provision within the PSHE (Personal, social, health and economic) curriculum to teach these basic skills and discuss therapeutic services.

I continue to work closely with BMBC and South Yorkshire Police to tackle the issue of **'legal highs'**. Currently I am supporting the Police and Crime Commissioner with his legal highs campaign. Working with local sporting personalities, the campaign is raising awareness of the dangers of legal highs, sending out the message to young people that these substances can have a devastating impact on their lives.

On a national level, I have been pushing the government to move forward with legislation to

ban 'legal highs', and am pleased that the **Psychoactive Substances Bill** has resulted in a blanket ban coming into force on 1 April 2016.

Whilst I acknowledge that use of legal highs is often a symptom of other underlying problems, I believe it is vital that we stop the sale of these substances to children – which is currently allowed under law. Local people have witnessed users fitting and vomiting after taking these unregulated substances and there are reports from across the UK, and Barnsley itself, of people dying after consuming them. They are a clear threat to our young people, who often believe they are 'safe' because they are 'legal'.

“The number of children turning up in A&E with mental health problems is now double what it was in 2010.”

Next steps

It is clear that much of what needs to be done to tackle the underlying causes of child poverty sits with national government and the local authority. Councillor Jenny Platts from BMBC takes these matters seriously and is working hard to address them.

So what can local people do to help when they don't control the national and local 'levers' that can bring about the change needed?

I believe that, much as the Labour movement did one hundred years ago, we need to draw on the skills and resources we have in our communities.

This could be by partnering with already existing organisations who are working in particular areas, or by setting up our own initiatives.

We know, for example, that having a parent who is engaged in a child's learning, greatly increases their chances of doing well at school. So why not set up a local initiative to encourage parents to read at home with their children?

If we have retired residents who want to make a contribution, why not partner with an organisation such as Action Tutoring, who can target support for students in struggling schools?

These are just a couple of suggestions. I am sure local people have many more good ideas. Many people have expertise – through their job or their own personal experiences – and I want to hear their ideas.

However, given the challenging economic situation, many of the changes we might wish to implement will require local or national government funding. Therefore, with the current Government's drastic cuts to local authority funding and elsewhere in public services, there is little room to manoeuvre financially. But there are things that we can be doing.

So I want to ask everyone to draw upon their own experience and expertise and answer this question:

'If you could change **just one thing** to help tackle child poverty in the Barnsley Central constituency, what would it be?'

'Just One Thing' – your ideas to help tackle child poverty... is a campaign that will be rolled out across the constituency. It will include postcards sent to the public but also to specialist workers, such as child social workers, child psychiatrists, teachers, nurses, health workers, etc.

They will be asked, what one thing would they suggest which, from their experience, could make a difference to the problem of child poverty?



To help do this, our local Labour Party will bring together a campaign group of those interested in driving this campaign forward. I want to draw on our community's expertise and find real, practical ways in which we can all contribute and work together.

If you are interested in getting involved, or have ideas to help tackle child poverty, please get in touch with me.

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Thank you for reading this report.

Child poverty in Barnsley Central

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1. What is child poverty?

The measure of child poverty, also known as the 'Children in Low-Income Families Local Measure' is defined as the proportion of children living in families in receipt of out of work (means-tested) benefits or in receipt of tax credits where their reported income (before housing costs) is less than 60% of median income. Having less than 60% of the median income is a common measure of poverty.

1.1 Why child poverty matters

The **Child Poverty Action Group** (a national charity committed to campaigning on this issue) summarises succinctly why child poverty matters:

- **It damages childhoods.** Growing up in poverty means being cold, going hungry, not owning belongings that others consider essential

and not being able to join in activities with friends. It also impacts on health, educational outcomes and the overall experience of childhood.

- **It destroys life chances.** Leaving school with few qualifications translates into lower earnings over the course of a working life. Poorer childhood health results in more complicated health histories over the course of a lifetime, again influencing earnings as well as overall life quality.
- **It imposes costs on broader society.** Governments forgo prospective revenues and commit themselves to providing services in the future if they fail to address child poverty now.

2. Government approaches to child poverty

In March 1999, the Labour Government announced a commitment to "eradicate" child poverty in the UK by 2020. Gordon Brown announced Labour's intention to enshrine in law the 2020 child poverty target in a speech to the Labour Party Conference on 23 September 2008.

The **Child Poverty Act 2010**, which received Royal Assent in March 2010, fulfilled the commitment to enshrine the child poverty target in legislation. It established four separate child poverty targets to be met by 2020/21, requires the UK Government to publish a regular UK child poverty strategy, requires the Scottish and Northern Irish Ministers to publish child poverty strategies, paved the way for a Child Poverty Commission to provide advice, requires the UK Government to publish annual progress reports, and places new duties on local authorities and other "delivery partners" in England to work together to tackle child poverty.

The coalition Government amended the 2010 Act to expand the remit of the Commission to also provide advice on, and monitor progress towards improving, social mobility. The **Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission**, chaired by Alan Milburn, published its first annual **State of the Nation report**⁶ in October 2013. It concluded that the 2020 child poverty target was likely to be missed by a considerable margin, and that progress on social mobility could be undermined by the twin problems of youth unemployment and falling living standards. In December 2015 the Commission published another report, with the following key recommendations:

- a new stretching ambition is needed to bring life to the objective to become "a high wage, low tax, low benefit" society. The government should put the UK on a par with the best-performing countries for low pay in Europe by halving the proportion of people who earn less than two thirds of median hourly pay
- welcome extra resources for childcare should be accompanied by new reforms to put the UK alongside the best in the OECD by halving the development gap between the poorest children and the rest at age 5, and halving the gap in maternal employment between England and the best-performing nations - both by 2025
- a new drive is needed to close the attainment gap which sees low-ability wealthy children overtake their high-ability poorer peers during school, and sees only 24% of poor white British boys gain 5 good GCSEs (against the national average of 57%). Learning from

the successes in London, the government should look to raise the attainment of poor children across the country to the current rate of inner London schools by 2030, reducing the attainment gap by two thirds

- a new scale of ambition is required to improve teaching where a teacher shortage and low entry-level pay are deterring too many good young teachers from going to the worst schools. New teacher pay should be improved to compete with other graduate employers, fees for initial teacher training should be scrapped and new incentives to encourage teachers to move to challenging schools should be trialled - including a teachers' 'Help to Buy' scheme.

The report coincided with the Government's decision to scrap the child poverty target and replace it with a new duty to report levels of educational attainment, worklessness and addiction, rather than material disadvantage. The focus is on measures to tackle the "root causes" of child poverty by breaking the cycle of disadvantage.

The old target, based on the percentage of households with below average income, will continue to be published as a government statistic - but will no longer be seen as a target.

The **Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission** reflected on this change the targets for child poverty in their December 2015 report:

"This may be our last report on the current legal basis. Legislation before Parliament will change our terms of reference so that we lose our child poverty remit. This is part of the Government's wider intention to move its focus from the targets enshrined in the 2010 Child Poverty Act towards improving life chances. It has long been obvious that the existing child poverty targets are not going to be met. In fact they will be missed by a country mile. That is a matter of deep regret. A country that is the fifth richest in the world should not have 2.3 million children officially classified as poor. The Commission has long argued that a more rounded way of measuring poverty - taking greater account of causal risk factors - is sensible. The life chances of children, the poorest especially, depend on many things including good parenting, childcare, education and employment. For that reason we think the Government is right to want to measure worklessness and educational attainment as part of its new focus on improving life chances. But it is not credible to try to improve the life chances of the poor without acknowledging

⁶State of the Nation 2013: social mobility and child poverty in Great Britain, Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission, October 2013

the most obvious symptom of poverty, lack of money. Without the specific inclusion of an assessment of income, these new measures are inadequate. And unless the Government sets a clear target for improving the life chances of the poorest families its agenda for healing social division in our country will lack both ambition and credibility. It will end up measuring life chances but not working towards a clear goal of improving them.

Abolishing the legal targets does not make the issue of child poverty go away. It remains a deep scar in the fabric of our nation. The issue is less how child poverty is measured and more how it is tackled. Far more needs to be done to make sure that the poorest families share in the proceeds of economic growth.”

I agree with the Government's assertion that “where you start in life should not determine where you end up”. Their goals of supporting families to increase their household income, improving living standards and educational attainment are all key areas that need to be tackled. But the reality is that the current Conservative-led Government's endless programme of cuts and reform of the Welfare State are plunging increasing numbers of families into hardship. Their emphasis has been on pushing people into jobs, whatever the quality or security of those jobs. They also believe that more affordable homes will come from selling off our current social housing – which is unlikely if there is not sufficient funding for the building of replacement stock.

3. Child poverty in Barnsley

With 22.8% of children in **Barnsley Central** living in poverty, this is higher than both the average for the **Yorkshire and the Humber** region (19.8%) and the **United Kingdom** as a whole (18.2%).⁷

In 2007, prior to the onset of the global recession, only 20% of children in Barnsley were living in poverty.⁸

The most recent statistics regarding child poverty are from 2013 and are broken down by each local authority ward. The wards for the **Barnsley Central** constituency are presented in the table below, along with their position among all the wards in the **Barnsley Metropolitan Borough** area and their position among all wards in **England**.

Ward	% of children in poverty	Numbers of children in poverty	Ranking among all BMBC Wards (out of 21)	Rank out of 7,663 wards in England (1=highest)
St Helen's	36	935	2	228
Monk Bretton	31	700	4	522
Kingstone	29	695	5	694
Central	22	470	12	1,554
Royston	22	525	13	1,568
Old Town	15	350	16	2,811
Darton East	13	270	17	3,555
Darton West	12	260	18	3,686

Table 1: Figures are a snapshot as of August 2013 showing, by local authority ward in Barnsley local authority, the estimated numbers of children living in families in receipt of Child Tax Credit whose reported income is less than 60% of median income, or living in families in receipt of median income, or living in families in receipt of Income Support or (income-based) Jobseeker's Allowance.

Figures include all dependent children under the age of 20 and are based on household income before housing costs are deducted.

Data are rounded to the nearest five.

Source: HMRC, Children in low-income families local measure: 2013

To take an example from the table above, **St Helen's** ward has the second highest rate of child poverty in **Barnsley**, and the highest of any ward in the **Barnsley Central** constituency. St Helen's has the 228th highest rate of child poverty in England, out of 7,663 wards. This places it in the top 3%.

3.1 Barnsley Poverty Needs Assessment 2014 - Key Findings⁹

This report was drawn up by BMBC to assess poverty across the whole of the Barnsley borough. It provides a useful insight into child poverty and the factors which cause it.

3.1.1 Children Affected by Poverty

There are wide inequalities in the levels of child poverty, not only across the country but within the **Barnsley Metropolitan Borough** area as well. In some areas of **Barnsley**, children are eight times more likely to live in a household with one parent out of work than in others. Similarly, the likelihood of child poverty is six times greater in some areas than in others.

3.1.2 Education

Poverty has a profound effect on children's educational success and their future prospects. Significant numbers of children who receive free school meals do worse in their education. These children

are more likely to end up in low skilled, insecure jobs and continue the cycle of poverty in their families.

3.1.3 Worklessness¹⁰

Unemployment in the borough is higher than average. Barnsley's job density rate is low, indicating that there are not adequate jobs in the local area to support all the people available for work; and that there is a mismatch between the skills of local people and the jobs that are on offer. The implications of this are that a considerable number of Barnsley residents have to commute to find employment.

The evidence indicates that younger children were more likely than older children to live in families where nobody works. Whilst the evidence was a snapshot at the time and may of course change as those particular children age, it does seem to reflect the difficulty of combining work with childcare, particularly before children are in full-time education.

Children in working families can also experience child poverty, and just over half of the families receiving child tax credits are working families. Childcare is a key barrier to parents entering employment, with childcare costs escalating and outstripping the average mortgage. 25 hours of childcare in **Barnsley** costs on average £85 per week or £4,500 per year. The recent closure of some of the local authority nurseries in Barnsley may exacerbate this situation.

3.1.4 Family Size and Stability

Single parents are at a high risk of living in persistent poverty, with the highest entry rates into poverty and the lowest exit rates. Single parents in **Barnsley** are twice as likely as parents who are in couples to live in the most deprived wards, with a higher chance of living in poverty as a result.

3.1.5 Health and Lifestyle

Rates of teenage pregnancy are higher in **Barnsley** than the regional and national average, but are reducing over time. Rates of smoking in pregnancy and low birth weights are lower in **Barnsley** than they are regionally. This leads to poorer health outcomes in the longer term for those babies.

3.2 Child Health Profile: Barnsley

According to the most recent Public Health England report¹¹, the health and well-being of children in **Barnsley** is generally worse than the **England** average.

In terms of childhood obesity, the percentage of children aged 4-5 who are obese in **Barnsley** is lower than the **England** average, while the percentage of children aged 10-11 who are obese in **Barnsley** is higher than the **England** average. In terms of all weight categories, the figures for **Barnsley** are very similar to those for **England** as a whole.

There have been some improvements in the number of young people under 18 being admitted to hospital because they have a condition wholly related to alcohol, such as alcohol poisoning. Although the level is still slightly higher in **Barnsley** than the average for **England**, it has fallen substantially between the 2006/7-2008/9 period and the 2011/12-2013/14 period.

There is a greater level of self-harm among young people compared to the rest of **England** however. The rate of admission to hospital as a result of self-harm in the 10-24 age bracket is around 400 in 100,000 people in **Barnsley**.

In 2013/4, 2.2% of women giving birth in the **Barnsley** area were aged under 18 years. This is higher than the regional average, national average, and European average that stands at 0.9%.

Smoking during pregnancy is high and A&E attendees have a noticeable but slight likelihood of being a child than in England at large.

Barnsley does particularly badly in STIs and low birth weight. While the figures for tooth decay are similarly disappointing, there have been recent initiatives set up to tackle this.¹²

3.3 Entrance into poverty

A concerning aspect of the child poverty statistics is the fact that 20% of households in Barnsley are “one step away” from child poverty¹³. These are households that can currently cope, but are one big payment or bill away from being in poverty. There are no savings, no equity in their homes, and they will often already be behind on their rent or mortgage payments.

3.4 Child Benefit Statistics

Child Benefit payments are a significant amount of money for families on low incomes. It is currently £20.70 per week for the first child and £13.70 for subsequent children. This will remain the same until April 2016 when the Government may change them.

Proposed changes, put forward by the Conservatives at the general election and reaffirmed in the recent Budget, would see Child Benefit reduced to £13.70 for the first and second child, and then no further assistance. Therefore, someone with one child would lose a third of their support and someone with four children will lose over half.

The changes to Child Benefit, along with the decrease in the benefit cap (the current Government reduced the maximum a house can claim on benefits from £26K to £23K), will push people further into poverty, particularly the 20% that are “one step away” from poverty highlighted previously.

3.5 Food Bank Use

There are no national, official statistics on the use of food banks. However, the Trussell Trust, who run the majority of food banks in this country, do keep statistics on their usage¹⁴.

In 2011-12, food banks were used by 3,011 people in **Yorkshire and the Humber**, including 1,040 children. In 2014-15, however, there was a huge increase, with 60,186 users, of which 21,197 were children. Increasingly, these are children with working parents, but whose parents can no longer afford to feed their families properly.

According to the Barnsley Foodbank Partnership, 3,783 people were given food parcels in 2013-14, of which 1,411 of those were children.

The top reasons for a person going to a food bank were low incomes and debt, which differs from the national picture that cites benefit delays, benefit sanctions, and low income.

⁷ Personal tax credits: Children in low-income families local measure: 2013 snapshot, HM Revenue and Customs, September 2015

⁸ This can be found at: <https://www2.barnsley.gov.uk/media/Chief%20Executive%20-%20Performance%20and%20Delivery/CentralResearchTeam/Barnsley%20Key%20Fact%20sheet%202012.pdf>

⁹ Barnsley Poverty Needs Assessment 2014 Key Findings, Edited by Research & Business Intelligence Team, Available at: https://www2.barnsley.gov.uk/media/3774175/pnakey_findings.pdf

¹⁰ Barnsley Poverty Needs Assessment 2014 Key Findings, Edited by Research & Business Intelligence Team.

¹¹ Child Health Profile (June 2015) Barnsley, Public Health England, Available at: <http://www.chimat.org.uk/resource/view.aspx?RID=152708>

¹² <http://www.barnsley-chronicle.co.uk/news/article/11649/toothbrush-clubs-set-up-to-tackle-decay>

¹³ Almost a Quarter in Poverty, Shocking Figures Reveal, We Are Barnsley, Available at: <http://www.wearebarnsley.com/news/article/3870/almost-a-quarter-in-poverty-shocking-figures-reveal>

¹⁴ These statistics can be found at: <http://www.trusselltrust.org/stats>

Area of Barnsley	Local Authority Wards	No. of people fed by food banks
Central	Central, Dodworth, Kingstone, Stairfoot, Worsborough	873
North	Darton East, Darton West, Old Town, St Helen's	279
North East	Cudworth, Monk Bretton, North East, Royston	453

Table 2: Figures from Barnsley Foodbank Partnership from each geographical area of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough. It shows the number of referrals to a food bank for each year in the year up to September 2014. Note that a referral may be more than one person, depending on the family composition.¹⁵

3.6 Social Mobility

Child poverty does not have to prevent children from achieving at school; children are often able to improve their prospects, particularly if they get access to university courses.

The Sutton Trust¹⁶ has ranked the 533 parliamentary constituencies of England by performance of disadvantaged children from early years to professional life, and have used the data to create a social mobility index for each constituency¹⁷. **Barnsley Central** ranked 532nd, higher than only **Derbyshire South**. The performance indicators were as follows:

- Performance of disadvantaged pupils in early years tests: 507/533
- Performance of disadvantaged pupils in Key Stage 2 tests: 399/533
- Performance of disadvantaged pupils at GCSE level: 498/533
- Progress of non-privileged graduates to professional occupations: 433/533.

The data shows that in many of the key indicators of social mobility, **Barnsley Central** ranks below most other constituencies in England.

4. Local Initiatives to tackle child poverty

There are a range of local initiatives and the ones listed below is just some of the good work being undertaken in the borough.

4.1 BMBC Anti-Poverty Delivery Group (APDG)

The APDG was recently established by the council to drive the local response to the agenda set out by its anti-poverty strategy. It was formerly known as the Anti-Poverty Board but changed its governance to take on a more task focused role.

It aims to 'check and challenge' the work of partners and their activity. It reports to the Stronger Communities Partnership Board, which sits underneath the Health and Wellbeing Board in the council.

The council published its Anti-Poverty Strategy in 2013, which covers the period from 2013 to 2016 and focuses on three specific aims: promote employment; foster (economic) independence; and protect the vulnerable.

An Anti-Poverty Action Plan is currently being drafted to cover 2015-2018 and aims to take account of the widening gap in income and living standards, and the disproportionate effects of welfare reform and austerity, which impact negatively upon the health, well-being and prosperity of affected residents.

It has identified four specific challenge areas for their joint action with their partners:

1. Increasing financial inclusion and capability.
2. Reducing child poverty in households.
3. Improving employment prospects and skills.
4. Building healthier communities.

I greatly welcome this emphasis on child poverty as a distinct area to target.

4.2 Children's and Family Centres

These centres are a vital tool in helping to support and educate families, so they can find routes out of poverty. BMBC recently had to restructure these services because of the drastic cuts in their funding from central government. They have tried to retain as many of the services as possible and find innovative ways to provide them. This has meant that some centres have more scheduled, rather than drop-in services, but the intent has very much been to keep what works, even if at a less frequent level of service.

4.3 Barnsley Children's and Young People's Trust

This is a local partnership that brings together interested people and groups in order to improve the well-being and life chances of every child in the borough. They share a commitment to working together to improve children's lives by making sure they have the support they need to help them be healthy, stay safe, enjoy life and achieve well at school and beyond, be active citizens and earn a good living.

The council's Executive Director for People, Rachel Dickinson, has overall responsibility for safeguarding and securing the well-being of children and young people in Barnsley, and for helping them achieve their full potential. Rachel is accountable for the services provided by Barnsley Children and Young People's Trust. Barnsley MBC Cabinet Spokesperson (Achieving Potential) Councillor Tim Cheetham, is politically accountable.

The Trust was established in 2009, and forms part of the Borough's local strategic partnership, One Barnsley¹⁸, which has created a Community Strategy for Barnsley¹⁹ as part of achieving the overall vision for the borough as '...a successful, uniquely distinctive 21st

Century market town that offers prosperity and a high quality of life for all.

Under the Children Act (2004) Barnsley MBC, as a Children's Services Authority, has a duty to plan, review and commission quality, integrated services (including social services) for children, young people and families. A key factor in commissioning and providing such services is partnership working between all the agencies involved.

The Trust Executive Group (TEG) is a small executive group of the wider Trust, chaired by the BMBC Executive Director for People. Through the TEG, we have a strong, integrated governing board representing all key delivery partners at senior level.

A wide group of stakeholders and partners working and caring for children and young people is reflected in the Trust membership. Children and young people have opportunities through a variety of arenas to influence aspects of the planning, commissioning and delivery of services.

Overall the Trust and its members have a responsibility to understand the particular needs of children and young people and how well services are meeting those needs. They use this information to develop children's services through the Children and Young People's Plan²⁰.

The Trust has encouraged young people and children to have a say in what its priorities should be. After its consultation, it adopted the following priorities for 2013-16:

- Keeping children and young people safe.
- Improving education, achievement, and employability.
- Tackling child poverty and improving family life.
- Supporting all children, young people, and families to make healthy lifestyle choices.
- Encouraging positive relationships and strengthening emotional health.
- Improving staff skills to deliver quality services.

The Trust is also accountable for:

- leading and co-ordinating the strategic development of a fully comprehensive and integrated Children and Young People's Service
- developing the children's workforce
- promoting strong joint planning and commissioning of services
- using resources flexibly and creatively, for example by aligning or pooling budgets
- listening to the views of children and young people and their families and giving them the opportunity to influence the way services are delivered
- undertaking a needs analysis and developing and publishing the Children and Young People's Plan, which underpins the work of the Trust.

Workforce Strategy

A Workforce Strategy²¹ has been developed on behalf of the Trust, called 'We Know We Can ... Make a Difference'. The name is

based on the I Know I Can movement which is intended to promote aspiration and self confidence in Barnsley's children and young people. The strategy reflects the aim that each member of the workforce is committed to and assisted to make a difference through the support they give to children, young people and families to help them achieve all they can.

Barnsley Health and Wellbeing Board

Barnsley's Health and Wellbeing Board has formal responsibility to carry out a joint strategic needs assessment and subsequently develop a health and well-being strategy²² for young people in the borough.

4.4 Local Welfare Assistance Scheme

The Local Welfare Assistance Scheme has been set up to help people who are in financial crisis due to an emergency or other unexpected circumstances. It provides loans for essentials such as food, electricity or gas bills, or household items.

It is intended to prevent people from turning to alternative measures, like sleeping rough, loan sharks or not eating.

To be considered for a loan you must be:

- living in Barnsley and be a tenant, joint tenant or owner occupier of the address where you live
- aged 16 or over and not in full time education
- a British citizen or have proof of your entitlement to benefits in the UK
- in receipt of one of the following benefits (or have a household income of less than £16,400 a year)
 - > Job Seekers Allowance
 - > Employment Support Allowance
 - > Income Support
 - > Pension Credit
 - > Universal Credit

More information can be found in their guidance note²³, policy²⁴ and online form²⁵.

4.5 Barnsley Church Action on Poverty

This is a local branch of the charity, Church Action on Poverty, chaired by Reverend Mick Neal. The group is primarily engaged in helping to run the local foodbanks, and a local starter packs scheme. A starter pack is a parcel given to homeless people starting out in new accommodation, full of useful items like pillows, duvets, toasters, crockery, utensils, and cleaning products.

4.6 Conclusion

As can be seen from the many examples listed above, there are a number of organisations working hard to combat child poverty in Barnsley. The main challenge is how to ensure their efforts are effectively co-ordinated – something that Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council is attempting to tackle.

¹⁵ Barnsley Foodbank Partnership, a project set up by the Trussel Trust. Available at: <http://barnsley.foodbank.org.uk/resources/documents/key-stats/Key-Stats---Sep-14.pdf>

¹⁶ The Sutton Trust, Mobility Map: How Does Your Constituency Compare? Available at: <http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/interactive-mobility-map/>

¹⁷ The exact nature of the five measures used can be found at: <http://www.suttontrust.com/researcharchive/mobility-map-background/>

¹⁸ <https://www2.barnsley.gov.uk/about-us/the-councils-corporate-plan/one-barnsley>

¹⁹ <https://www.vabarnsley.org.uk/pdf/onebarnsley/sustaincom08.pdf>

²⁰ <http://www.vabarnsley.org.uk/pdf/onebarnsley/sustaincom08.pdf>

²¹ https://www2.barnsley.gov.uk/media/3261271/barnsley_children_and_young_people_s_plan_2013-16_master.pdf

²² https://www2.barnsley.gov.uk/media/3264578/barnsley_children_s_trust_workforce_strategy_2013-16_final_agreed_15112013.pdf

²³ https://www2.barnsley.gov.uk/media/3383157/young_peoples_health_and_wellbeing_strategy_2013.pdf

²⁴ <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/1561/lwa-guidance-notes.pdf>

²⁵ <https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/1562/lwa-policy.pdf>

²⁶ <https://barnsley.egovhub.net/Orig/Production/Apps/Gwa/Launch.aspx>

5. Regional, national and international initiatives to tackle child poverty

5.1 Save the Children

Save the Children have several reports²⁶ regarding the need to tackle child poverty. Contained within these reports are a greater number of useful statistics about the factors that cause child poverty and what effect child poverty has on achievement in school, life chances and health outcomes.

5.1.1 Children's Zones

An innovative idea that has developed in recent years is "Children's Zones". These are areas that take a rounded approach to child poverty and take all the causes of child poverty as opposed to just focussing on one specific aspect. This means that child poverty is attacked on a broad spectrum.

In 2013, Save the Children argued that England needed these in order to tackle child poverty effectively. They wrote,

"If such zones were to marshal a range of powerful interventions, there is every reason to believe that they would offer a comprehensive strategy for addressing all of the disadvantages experienced by children and young people in highly disadvantaged areas."

This wide-spectrum approach appears to have greater effects on child poverty than one single intervention on a specific issue. While a single-strand intervention, such as Preventative Programmes can be useful and effective, multi-strand approaches are much more because they tackle several problems at once.

5.1.2 FAST

Families and Schools Together (FAST) is an initiative run by Save the Children. It looks to bring parents, children, and teachers together to ensure the best support for young people in education.

FAST works by building bonds between parents, pupils, and schools in order to make sure children get the support they need for a good education.

FAST supports families by:

- Helping children improve their skills in reading, writing, and maths – as well as encouraging good behaviour and a positive attitude to school and learning.
- Helping parents to become more involved in their child's education, so that they can support learning and development at home.
- Encouraging stronger bonds between parents and their child, their school's school, other parents, and the wider community.

A large number of families have already been supported by FAST, and they aim to increase that number to 50,000 by 2017²⁷.

5.2 Regional collaboration

With proposals for regional devolution on the political agenda, it is worth considering how regional collaboration could support efforts to tackle child poverty.

An anonymous case study from a report published by The Local Government Group on 'Local Authority Progress in Tackling Child

Poverty'²⁸, highlighted how Labour controlled local authorities with similar levels of deprivation and poor employment prospects – and therefore a common aspiration to tackle child poverty – collaborated to improve their work in this area.

One of the contributors said: 'We wouldn't have been so advanced without this model.'

Each local authority had established its own partnership, focusing on the local-level context and priorities, but lead officers from each local partnership also met on a monthly basis to share ideas and good practice on, for example, approaches to data collection and governance. The partnership lead reported that this minimised duplication of effort within each local authority. The regional collaboration has produced a 'city-wide skeleton', or template, for the strategy, which each member local authority would adapt for its own area. A regional strategy was also being developed, drawing together the priorities of the region as a whole.

5.3 Conclusions

It is very important that we learn from the experiences of national and international organisations. There have been considerable successes in tackling the **symptoms** and **causes** of child poverty in some areas. Although any model from elsewhere would need to be adapted to suit the needs of the Barnsley community, it is clear that an innovative and experimental approach, that focuses on the importance of education, has delivered some impressive results.

Appendix

List of organisations supporting families in Barnsley and the UK

Barnardo's: Children's Charities
t 0208 550 8822
w www.barnardos.org.uk

Barnsley Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS)
t 01226 433163
w www.barnsley.gov.uk/services/childrens-health-wellbeing-and-social-care/childrens-health-and-wellbeing/child-and-adolescent-mental-health-services-camhs

Barnsley Children and Young People's Trust
t 01226 772620
e cyptrust@barnsley.gov.uk

Barnsley Church Action on Poverty
e revmickneal@googlemail.com
w www.church-poverty.org.uk

Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group
t 01226 730000
w www.barnsleyccg.nhs.uk

Barnsley Council
t 01226 770770
w www.barnsley.gov.uk

Barnsley Foodbank Partnership (Coordinator: Alan Rouane)
e alan@barnsley.foodbank.org.uk
w www.barnsley.foodbank.org.uk

Barnsley Health and Wellbeing Board
w www.barnsley.gov.uk/about-us/how-we-work/decision-making-process/barnsley-health-and-wellbeing-board

Barnsley Youth Choir
w www.barnsleyyouthchoir.org.uk

Be Well Barnsley (health and wellbeing services)
t 0800 016 9133
w www.facebook.com/BeWellBarnsley

BMBC Welfare Rights Advice Line
t 01226 772360
w www2.barnsley.gov.uk/services/advice-and-benefits/welfare-rights

Child Poverty Action Group
t 020 7837 7979
e info@cpag.org.uk
w www.cpag.org.uk

The Children's Society
t 0300 303 7000
w www.childrenssociety.org.uk

Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB)
t 03444 111 444
w www.citizensadvice.org.uk

DIAL (advice on community care, housing and benefits)
t 01226 240273
Open Monday to Thursday 9am to 4pm, Friday 9am to 2pm

Family Lives (formerly Parentline)
t 0808 800 2222
w www.familylives.org.uk

Home Heat Helpline
t 0800 33 66 99/0333 300 33 66
w www.homeheathelpline.org.uk

National Debtline
t 0808 808 4000
w www.nationaldebtline.org

Northern College
t 01226 776000
w www.northern.ac.uk

Public Health England
t 020 7654 8000
e enquiries@phe.gov.uk
w www.gov.uk/government/organisations/public-health-england

Save the Children UK
t 020 7012 6400
w www.savethechildren.org.uk

StepChange Debt Charity
t 0800 138 1111
w www.stepchange.org

TADS: Therapies for Anxiety, Depression & Stress
t 01226 320122
w www.tadsbarnsley.co.uk

Team Activ
t 01226 720700
w www.teamactiv.org

The Trussell Trust
t 01722 580180
e enquiries@trusselltrust.org
w www.trusselltrust.org

South Yorkshire Credit Union
t 03030 300010
w www.sycu.co.uk

²⁶Details of these can be found on the Save the Children UK website, available at: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/what-we-do/child-poverty/uk>

²⁷This information can be found at: <http://www.savethechildren.org.uk/about-us/where-we-work/united-kingdom/fast>

²⁸Nelson, J., O'Donnell, L., Filmer-Sankey, C. (2011). Local Authority Progress in Tackling Child Poverty, Available at: <https://www.nfer.ac.uk/nfer/publications/LGCP01/LGCP01.pdf>

Images of Barnsley children from the past



Photos courtesy of Experience Barnsley museum, showing Nicholas Street in early 1930s, plus town centre houses which were part of the slum clearance programme in the late 1900s to early 1920s.

More than one in five children in Barnsley live in poverty. We want to change that and we want to enlist your support in our campaign.

So we are asking people, **"If you could change just one thing to tackle child poverty in Barnsley, what would it be?"**

Write your idea here...

Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode: _____

Tel no: _____

Email address: _____

You can find out more about our campaign by emailing me at dan.jarvis.mp@parliament.uk or visiting www.danjarvismp.co.uk

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You can find out more about our campaign by emailing me at dan.jarvis.mp@parliament.uk or visiting www.danjarvismp.co.uk

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