

# **Our commitment to tackling poverty & improving social mobility**

May 2019

## Introduction

*Cambridgeshire is a relatively prosperous county with a buoyant economy. Yet for some of our citizens, we recognise that this isn't their reality. I want Cambridgeshire to be a place where everyone has high aspirations and knows how to achieve them. This is our commitment to take action to widen access to good job opportunities and a better quality of life through help with finances, education and skills. In this way, we can help to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and improve social mobility across the county.*

Councillor Steve Criswell, Chair of  
Cambridgeshire County Council's  
Communities and Partnerships Committee

Cambridgeshire County Council's Communities and Partnership Committee has focussed on developing four overarching strategic priorities to direct its work since its inception in 2017:

- **Community resilience**
- **Tackling Deprivation**
- **Economy and Skills**
- **Partnership Working**

The Committee's initial focus to take forward work to tackle deprivation is to understand the cause of, and address the issues associated with, poverty.

The council has a statutory duty in relation to Child Poverty and is already delivering significant work towards tackling poverty and improving social mobility, but there is likely to be more we can do through better coordination and joined-up thinking across the organisation and our wider partnerships.

**This statement of commitment sets out our planned approach for 2019-20 and fulfils our statutory duty.**

This commitment has been developed with a cross-party member working group and a workshop held with key members of staff from across the Council.

We will continue to report to the Communities and Partnerships Committee on our progress against the actions set out in this document.

Over the next 12 months, we will work alongside partners in all sectors to develop a shared approach to tackling poverty and disadvantage in the future. This includes aligning with work being undertaken by the Public Health Reference Group on behalf of the Health and Wellbeing Board on optimising local policy statutory levers to maximise community wealth and health in order to tackle health inequalities.

## Understanding Levels of Poverty in Cambridgeshire

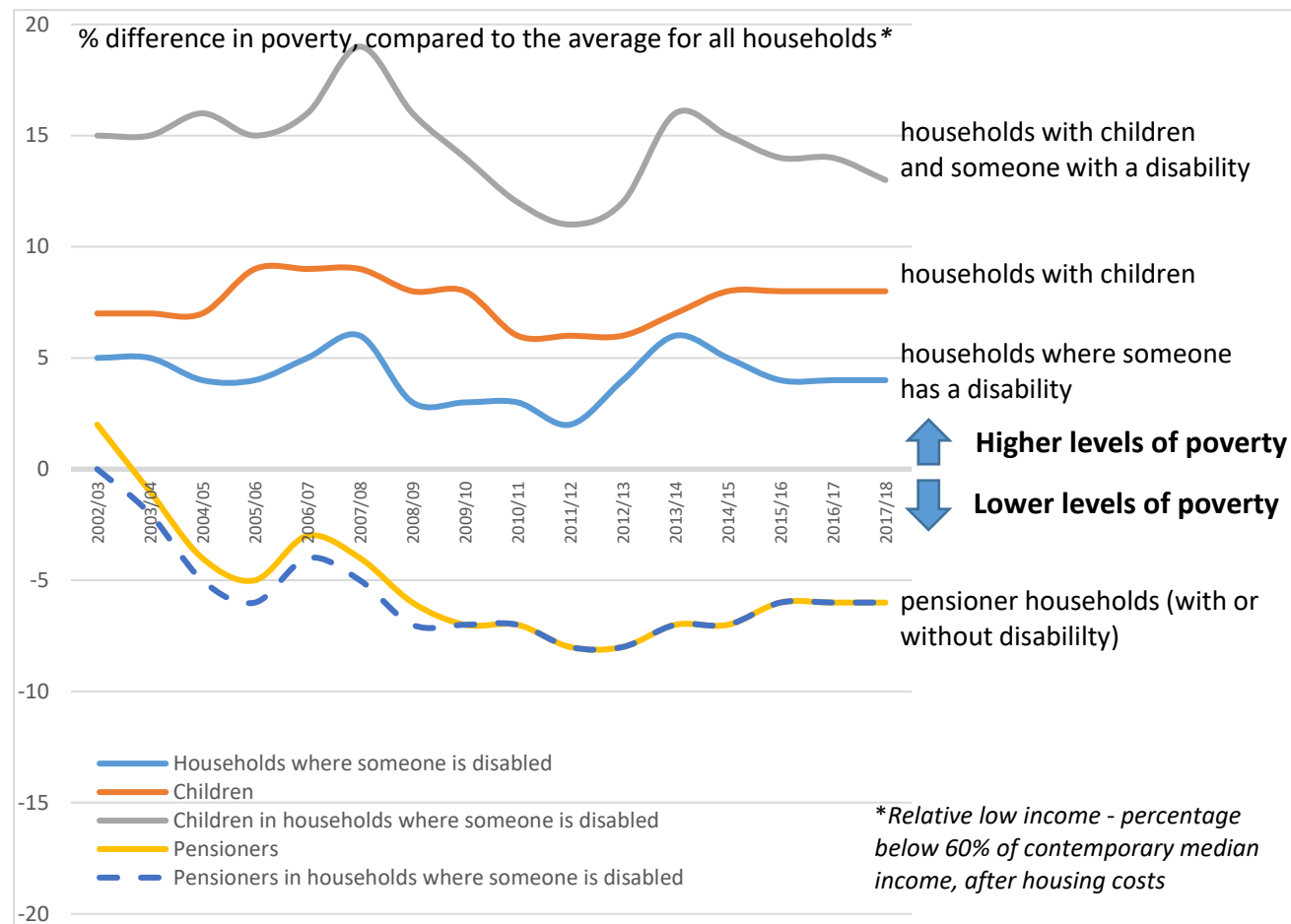
There is a difference between understanding people's material circumstances (the extent to which someone is living in poverty) and looking at the various aspects pertaining to their personal lives or wider neighbourhood that leads to the persistence of the state of being in poverty (even across the generations), often referred to as multiple deprivation.

In England and Wales, the main measure of material circumstances takes a 'poverty threshold' approach with that poverty threshold being where household income is less than 60 per cent of the median national household income.

The graph on the right shows the difference in poverty for specific household types compared to the average for all households. Generally speaking, pensioner households have lower and decreasing risk of being in poverty whereas households with children and/or

with someone who has a disability have a much higher and increasing risk.

### Variation in relative poverty over time for different population groups in the UK



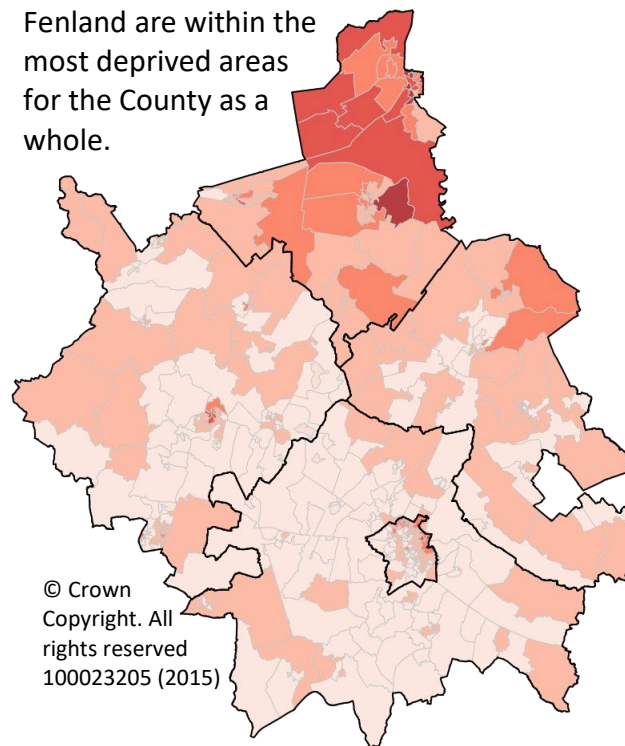
After housing costs the percentage of children in poverty has increased since 2010 and are roughly at levels seen in 2005/06 to 2009/10.

For Cambridgeshire, the percentage of people living with this level of very-low income ranged from over 18% for parts of Wisbech, Huntingdon and Cambridge down under 9% for parts of Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire. This means approximately 71,000 people in Cambridgeshire are living in poverty, just over one in ten of the County's population. Local research also shows that high housing costs in some areas make a significant difference to the numbers above or below the poverty threshold<sup>1</sup>.

An alternative way of looking at the threshold at which point people may suffer hardship is to look at the numbers claiming benefits. One indicator that can be used is the number of people (of working age) on key-out-of-work benefits. Recent data shows just over 30,000 claimants fitting into this category with high numbers appearing within areas of social housing, including within new developments such as Cambourne.

<sup>1</sup>Deprivation and Disadvantage in Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Cambridgeshire County Council Research Group, 2017

The main measure of multiple deprivation is the Indices of Multiple Deprivation or IMD 2015 which are based upon 37 separate indicators which are combined and appropriately weighted to form a general picture of deprivation at Lower Super Output Area (LSOA) level (around 250 households). The map below<sup>2</sup> shows that over 20% of LSOAs within Fenland are within the most deprived areas for the County as a whole.



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<sup>2</sup><https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/deprivation/indices-of-multiple-deprivation/>

<sup>3</sup>Child Poverty Estimates, ONS, September 2017

In addition, it is estimated that approximately 14,500 children are living in poverty in Cambridgeshire<sup>3</sup>. Whilst recognising that not all children in poverty live in areas of deprivation, the highest concentrations of child poverty for each district are in:

- Waterlees, Fenland - 36.7%
- Abbey, Cambridge - 32.45%
- Huntingdon North, Huntingdonshire - 31.64%
- Littleport West, East Cambridgeshire - 22.6%
- Cottenham, South Cambridgeshire - 20.8%

The Social Mobility Index shows that Cambridgeshire has challenges around social mobility. The significant gap in skills and income between different parts of Cambridge has led to it being labelled as the UK's most unequal city<sup>4</sup>. Elsewhere the issue of relatively low attainment in our schools for children on a low income (claiming free school meals) has led to East Cambridgeshire and Fenland being identified for additional action.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.centreforcities.org/blog/focusing-inequality-best-way-tackle-poverty-uk-cities/>

## Think Communities

Think Communities is Cambridgeshire's approach for creating a shared vision, approach and priorities for building community resilience across partner organisations in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. Our intention is to be fully aligned and to collaborate where it makes sense and there is agreement to do so.

**The Think Communities approach will be critical to supporting our ambitions to improve outcomes and opportunities for citizens of Cambridgeshire, which will make a difference in tackling deprivation.**

A consistent approach will enable communities to have a single conversation with Think Communities partners focussed on local priorities. Think Communities partners will provide support and resources to enable communities to decide how they wish to deliver their local priorities. Working in an aligned way will enable each Think Communities partner to still specialise in their own areas of service

delivery and expertise, to work independently or with a shared approach across the partnership, which is compatible and consistent, enabling joint projects to still happen.

Think Communities will take a People, Places, System approach to building resilience and supporting communities. We are working with a number of prototype areas to test and develop this approach. Approaches to tackling poverty will be included in all of these pilots.

**Four themes which will help to shape our work for 2019-20 and beyond:**

### **Awareness and capacity**

Poverty and social mobility cuts across so much of our work. However, a lot of our work happens in small pockets with constrained resources. One of our aims for this year is to raise awareness of the work that is already being done. This will help us to join up what we do in a way that makes sense to people, and therefore make better use of our resources. Our move from Shire Hall and the development of a number of spoke offices will help us all to get a deeper and richer understanding of the places where we work.

### **Using every conversation**

We will develop how we can use every conversation that we have with people to consider whether poverty is adversely affecting them. Where it is, we will work with them, and colleagues, to ensure that they are able to access the support that they are entitled to.

### **Broader approaches instead of 'services'**

Our work indicates that rather than just providing people with services, taking a broader approach works more effectively. We will therefore continue to invest in strength-based approaches to working with people that do not focus purely on their needs and the services we have traditionally provided.

### **Inequality within communities as well as specific areas**

Whilst there is a spatial element to poverty and social mobility as demonstrated by the Indices of Multiple Deprivation, there are also people affected by poverty within our more affluent areas. As well as focussing on those areas of higher need, our work will look to understand and address these inequalities.

## Actions for 2019-20

The [Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#) (JRF) estimates that £78bn of public spending is linked to dealing with poverty and its consequences, including spending on healthcare, education, justice, child and adult social services. In its 2016 report, 'We Can Solve Poverty in the UK', JRF set out a series of suggested measures that could be taken to have a positive impact on levels of poverty. The five point plan priorities have been helpful in focusing the development of our 2019/20 action plan.

### Priority One: Boosting incomes and reducing costs

We will continue to:

- a. Deliver targeted advice services that ensure people are aware of and accessing the benefits, services and support to prevent poverty
- b. Promote [Cambridgeshire Energy Switch](#) to help residents secure cheaper energy deals
- c. Commission [Cambridgeshire Local Assistance Scheme](#) to work with local partners to provide information, advice and one-off practical support and assistance to individuals and families facing unexpected financial difficulties and hardship, with the aim of increasing their financial resilience in the long term
- d. Work with Housing Authorities to influence planning regarding affordable housing

- e. Work with employers to create workplace environments that support the health and wellbeing of their workforces through the Workplace Support Programme, with a particular focus on workplaces with manual and routine workers who are most at risk of poor health and the associated absenteeism or unemployment issues
- f. Work with partners in all sectors to tackle the barriers to labour market participation for those living in poverty and disadvantaged
- g. Provide grants to Community Transport organisations and support to Community Driver schemes, enabling them to provide free or low cost travel to target groups such as people in isolated or rural communities or who have limited mobility
- h. Use Libraries to signpost to credit unions, legal services, food banks, emergency and health information

In addition, we will:

- i. Develop [Business & Intellectual Property Centres](#) in libraries to support start-up businesses and small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)
- j. Offer free welfare benefits training for Voluntary and Community Sector organisations
- k. Support a pilot [Community Heat Scheme](#) to move Swaffham Prior off expensive oil onto renewable heating, with a view to rolling out if successful
- l. Pilot two projects in March with voluntary and community sector partners - a volunteer-run Food Pantry to give access to low cost food and a daily summer holiday food and activity programme for young people in receipt of free school meals



## Priority Two: Improving early literacy, education standards and raising skills

We will continue to:

- a. Encourage the take up of [Free School Meals](#) and [Early Years Pupil Premium](#)
- b. Encourage the take up of [free childcare for 2 year olds](#) to low income families
- c. Boost children's communication, language and literacy in target areas through [Talking Together in Cambridgeshire](#)
- d. Encourage take up of the [National Citizenship Service](#) by all young people regardless of their background, by supporting young people from marginalised groups to overcome barriers to participation
- e. Support parents and carers to understand the importance of school homework and have the confidence to get involved in their child's learning
- f. Encourage access to [Homework Clubs](#) in our main libraries to support children's learning
- g. Deliver [Summer Reading Challenge](#) in every library, targeting areas of highest need, to encourage children to keep or take up reading through the summer holidays
- h. Deliver [Bookstart](#) and regular story times and rhyme times to boost young children's communication, language and literacy and boost carers' confidence in growing their child's skills
- i. Focus on schools causing concern and ensure that all our schools are delivering a good standard of education
- j. Raise the profile of improving outcomes for disadvantaged pupils in schools, offering support at an individual, local and countywide level, to disseminate ideas and share best practice
- k. Support all pre and post 16 education providers in the delivery of high quality Careers Education, Information, Advice and Guidance to inspire and motivate young people and to broaden their career aspirations
- l. Support all pre and post 16 education providers to supply parents with the knowledge they need to help their young people make successful transitions
- m. Promote Cambridgeshire County Council as a licensee and awarding body of the national Quality in Careers Standard in all pre and post 16 providers
- n. Support adults with learning difficulties move towards volunteering or work through skills plans and vocational profiles
- o. Commission the Healthy Schools Support Service to create environments that will support children and young people to build the skills and resilience for good health and wellbeing, which is associated with improvements in school engagement and attainment outcomes. Schools in higher needs area will receive more information, support and evidence-based programmes through the 'Universal Plus' service

In addition, we will:

- p. Deliver the [Opportunity Area Programme](#) to increase social mobility and life chances for disadvantaged young people in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland
- q. Deliver the Essential Life Skills Programme to help disadvantaged young people in East Cambridgeshire and Fenland develop life skills such as resilience, emotional wellbeing and employability

## Priority Three: Strengthening families and communities

We will continue to:

- a. Deliver targeted support for families through [Child and Family Centres](#) in areas of high need to alleviate poverty
- b. Work with partners and communities to support projects in areas of high need including advice, information, training, tools and, if needed, funding [Examples include: [Healthy Fenland Fund](#), [Innovate and Cultivate Fund](#), Community Reach Fund, [Wisbech Community-Led Local Development Plan](#), [Support Cambridgeshire](#), Sport England Families Fund, [Time Credits](#)]
- c. Promote 'AskSARA' to support people to stay in their homes for longer by having access to advice and support in Libraries
- d. Target the delivery of public health services in the areas of greatest need, including smoking cessation, healthy eating, staying warm and well in winter
- e. Deliver [Library Presents](#), offering reduced priced tickets for performances to families eligible for free school meals and taster sessions in high need areas, as well as volunteering opportunities
- f. Promote the use of the [Think Family](#) model across the Council and partner agencies as the most effective approach to addressing poverty
- g. Commission [Handypersons Service](#) to over 65s and people with a physical disability
- h. Support the development of micro-enterprises that can offer flexible and localised care and support to residents, as set out in the [Adult Social Care Market Position Statement](#)

- i. Encourage local projects to allow access to hygiene products for those in poverty, for example, 'Sue's Essentials'
- j. Support the ongoing development and consistent delivery of the Military Covenant in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, ensuring those who served in the armed forces and their families are treated fairly and are not disadvantaged by their service
- k. Provide free access in libraries to materials to learn English, activities and reading materials for children and families, a community space to use for learning and networking and a trained workforce who can signpost to local education, local community networks, health and wellbeing services

In addition, we will:

- l. Develop the Best Start In Life Programme to boost social mobility
- m. Develop a Commissioning Strategy that allows a collaborative and community-focused approach
- n. Deliver Asset-Based Community Development through our newly commissioned Recovery and Community Inclusion service, promoting social inclusion and reducing social isolation and stigma for people with mental health needs in their local communities
- o. Develop the [Think Communities](#) approach with local councils, community organisations and other partners, to take an asset-based approach to strengthening families and communities



## Priority Four: Delivering an effective benefit system

We will continue to:

- a. Provide assisted digital support in libraries to help residents with low IT skills with benefits claims, including those applying for and in receipt of Universal Credit
- b. Work with DWP and partners to provide consistent and integrated support and advice to residents
- c. Promote free [computer use](#) in our libraries for Job Seekers, people on benefits, children and young people, and people using GOV.UK websites and CCC website
- d. Commission Housing Related Support (HRS) services to ensure clients are maximising their income and dealing with debt
- e. Commission Floating Support Service to ensure that people are supported with any financial issues as part of their tenancy sustainment work
- f. Commission finance & benefits advice for carers, and people with physical disability and sensory impairments
- g. Commission the [autism support service](#) to provide advice and information including representation at benefit tribunals
- h. Commission an [Advocacy Service](#) to enable people with a range of needs to access benefit and financial advice when they may be unable to access it themselves.

In addition, we will:

- i. Ensure that our workforce are able to provide basic benefit support or appropriately signpost, to make the most of every contact
- j. Work with our partners (voluntary organisations, local authorities and Job Centres) to share information and advice to benefit claimants
- k. Clarify and promote clear support pathways through our services and with our partners

## Priority Five: Promoting long-term economic growth benefiting everyone

We will continue to:

- a. Deliver a range of volunteer opportunities, which give people a route back into work.
- b. Address low aspirations, poor numeracy and poor literacy
- c. Support those who have a lack of understanding of what it is to work, how to get into work, stay in work and know what skills you need to get work
- d. Help those with long term health conditions to stay in work or get into work including improving referral processes with mental health services and other providers
- e. Develop and evaluate the pathways for people with a range of mental health problems to return to the labour market, through a range of commissioned services and funded projects which support people to gain employment or move closer to the labour market
- f. Work with the Combined Authority to commission and provide public bus services where there is demonstrable need and commercial services are not viable; enabling people to continue to travel for work, education and access to essential services

In addition, we will:

- g. Develop a volunteer offer specifically designed to help people with mental health issues back into work
- h. Examine national and local data to understand employment rates among those with criminal records and identify ways we can increase these employment opportunities