



PEABODY

Understanding and tackling child poverty on Peabody estates

February 2012

Understanding and tackling child poverty on Peabody estates

February 2012

Nicholas Pleace, David Rhodes and Deborah Quilgars

Contents

Foreword	6
Preface	6
Acknowledgements	7
Disclaimer	7
Report	8
Overview	8
Child poverty in London and on Peabody estates	8
The effects of child poverty	8
Tackling child poverty	9
Ways forward	9
1 Introduction	10
About the research	10
Research aims	10
Background	10
Research questions	11
Methods	11
The desk-based review	11
Secondary analysis	12
Focus groups with parents living on Peabody estates	12
Interviews with frontline workers	12
Interviews with national and London based experts in child poverty and experts in social housing	12
Limitations in the research design	13
2 Child poverty in London	13
Introduction	13
Defining child poverty	13
Statistical overview	16
The households living on Peabody estates	16
Overview of child poverty in the boroughs where Peabody has estates	18
Mapping relative levels of child poverty in London	20
The different domains of child poverty	22
Perceptions of child poverty in London	24
Research evidence	24
The views of parents living in Peabody estates	25
The views of frontline workers	28
The views of experts in child poverty and social housing	31
Different perspectives on child poverty in London	33

3 Views on tackling child poverty	34
Introduction	34
Viewpoints on the range of services needed	34
The Government view	34
Research evidence	35
The views of parents on Peabody estates	37
The views of frontline workers	38
The views of experts on poverty and social housing	39
Different perspectives on tackling child poverty	42
4 Recommendations	43
Introduction	43
Understanding and tackling child poverty in London	43
Material needs	43
Negative influences	43
Unequal life chances	43
Seeking a balanced understanding of child poverty	43
Practical ways forward	44
Further service development by Peabody in context	44
Potential new roles	45
Enhancing services through participation	45
Challenging stereotypes and giving a voice to families experiencing child poverty	46
Appendix 1	47
The data used in this report	47
Peabody anonymised administrative data	47
The Index of Multiple Deprivation	47
Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index	47
The Child Wellbeing Index	47
Appendix 2: Detailed Tables	48
IMD, IDACI and CWI for the LSOAs in which Peabody estates are situated	48
London in comparison with the rest of England	51
Appendix 3: Density of Peabody Households by LSOA	53

List of Tables

Table 2.1: Household type	17
Table 2.2: Ethnic group of Peabody HRPs compared with all social rented HRPs within Greater London	17
Table 2.3: London borough locations of Peabody households	19
Table 2.4: 2010 Average IMD and IMD domain scores for Peabody/non-Peabody LSOAs	23
Table 2.5: 2007 Average CWI and CWI domain scores for Peabody/non-Peabody LSOAs	23
Table 3.1: Summary of existing research on child poverty policy interventions	36
Table 3.2: DWP Projections of the Impact of the Household Benefit Cap	40
Table A2.1: IMD, IDACI, and CWI scores for the LSOAs in which Peabody estates are situated	48
Table A2.2: 2010 Average IMD and IMD domain scores and IDACI index for the Government Office Regions	51
Table A2.3: 2010 Average CWI and CWI domain scores for the Government Office Regions	52

Foreword

In 2009/10 the latest headline child poverty rate (using the 60 per cent of median before housing costs measure) was 20 per cent – the lowest it has been since 1981. In 2010 the Child Poverty Act was passed containing a statutory obligation to reduce that rate to 10 per cent by 2020. In 2011 we published a book¹ which concluded that out of 48 indicators of the well-being of children, 36 had improved and only 4 had got worse over the last 10 years. One of the most welcome results of the child poverty strategy has been increased attention from local authorities and housing associations. This report for Peabody is a very good example.

However, this report is being published in a much more challenging era. Real incomes have been falling. The Coalition's cuts in response to the crisis and the deficit have hit families with children harder than other groups. Unemployment, which initially increased rather less than in previous recessions, is increasing rapidly and youth unemployment is already horrendous. In the recent Autumn Statement, the Government reneged on their earlier commitment to protect poor children with a higher than inflation uprating in child tax credit. Even absolute child poverty rates will now rise and we can expect a sharp increase in child deprivation – right through to 2020. The Child Poverty Strategy is in tatters and the Child Poverty Commission has been emasculated.

In the face of all this it is easy to despair. But Peabody cannot despair. They have a very important job – to do what they can to protect the children of their tenants from the worst of the economic and social context. This report provides a very solid evidence base to help them do this.

Professor Jonathan Bradshaw CBE, FBA

University of York

Preface

We live in challenging times which, for many, are not likely to improve anytime soon. That's why understanding and alleviating child poverty has never been more important.

I am very grateful to everyone in the Centre of Housing Policy at the University of York for their sterling work and efforts in delivering this report. It has given us at Peabody a roadmap for our ongoing efforts to help the families living on and around our estates.

I also believe, however, that this report will help to light the way for others too, so they can move forward and make a difference to the lives and futures of our young people. The results will also add to the debate about child poverty and build on the knowledge in this very significant area.

I want to thank too everybody who took time out to help with this – from my colleagues at Peabody to the parents whose voices you can hear here. It's important to listen to what they and many others have to say and to give them opportunities to speak again and again.

Stephen Burns

Executive Director, New Business

Peabody

1. Bradshaw, J (ed) 2011 The well-being of children in the United Kingdom, Third Edition, Bristol: Policy Press.

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the support of a large number of individuals and organisations. We would like to thank Peabody for choosing to work with the Centre for Housing Policy and thank Louisa Cox and Martin O'Donnell from Peabody for their help. We are very grateful to the Peabody tenants and staff who took the time to be interviewed for the research and would also like to thank the Cardinal Hume Centre, the Children's Society, the Child Poverty Action Group, the City of Westminster, the Daycare Trust, the Department of Communities and Local Government, the London Borough of Waltham Forest, the Metropolitan Police and the National Housing Federation for their help with the research. We would also like to thank our colleague Professor Jonathan Bradshaw for his assistance with the research.

Nicholas Pleace

David Rhodes

Deborah Quilgars

December 2011 Centre for Housing Policy, University of York

www.york.ac.uk/chp/

Disclaimer

This report represents the views of individuals and agencies interviewed by University of York researchers and the interpretation of data and opinion by University of York researchers. The views and interpretations expressed do not necessarily represent those of Peabody. Responsibility for any errors lies with the authors.

Report

Overview

This research was designed to investigate child poverty on Peabody estates and to look at how Peabody might use its own resources and work collaboratively with others to tackle this. Alongside an evidence review and comparative statistical analysis, the research team conducted three tiers of qualitative interviews and focus groups with experts in child poverty and with parents and frontline workers who were living and working on Peabody estates. Peabody commissioned the work described in this report as part of the commitment described in 21st Century Peabody to creating communities in which no child is living in poverty and to support its 2011-2014 business plan. The research was undertaken between April and July 2011.

Child poverty in London and on Peabody estates

Child poverty is measured in two main ways. The first method is centred on material deprivation and includes measures of disposable income in the household in which a child lives, the access that a child has to various material goods and other factors such as the quality of their diet. The second way of measuring child poverty concerns life chances; these can be defined in terms of educational performance and outcomes but also in terms of social development. Alongside assessments of how well a child seems to be doing at school, these measures can encompass the extent to which they are able to mix and play with other children and their access to safe green space. Extensive comparative research has shown that the UK experiences higher rates of child poverty – both in terms of material deprivation and in terms of life chances – than are found in many other societies with comparable levels of economic development.

London's children experience poverty at relatively higher rates than are found in other English regions. Peabody estates are largely located in inner London boroughs which are areas that are among the most economically deprived in England, according to the Indices of Multiple Deprivation and which, according to the Child Well-Being Index, have among the highest rates of child poverty in England.

The effects of child poverty

The experts in child poverty interviewed for this research discussed material deprivation and its impact at length, but this was less of an immediate concern for the parents of children living in Peabody estates and the frontline workers who delivered services in those estates. The parents and frontline workers were most concerned about the life chances of children and the negative personal and cultural influences to which they felt children were being exposed. Several interrelated issues were reported by parents and frontline workers:

- High rates of crime and anti-social behaviour which 'normalised' these social problems, with low-level crime being so commonplace as to be viewed as simply a part of day-to-day existence. This 'normalisation' of some forms of crime raised specific concerns about how children were influenced by what they saw around them. Local exposure to the instant and (from the perspective of children) significant material gains associated with crime was also a concern.
- A lack of secure and reasonably well-paid employment and restricted options for further education or training. This was both a concern in terms of life chances, but also again because of the negative images that younger children were exposed to. Children saw that their parents, siblings, relatives and neighbours were often not succeeding in the conventional sense. On one level this was seen as a lack of direct positive role models, but on another level it created a wider social context in which people getting access to relatively well-paid work was something that was rarely or never seen.

From the perspective of some parents and frontline workers, a belief that children and young people became accustomed to a negative social norm, against which they set and monitored their own behaviour. One key effect of this pattern was that children and young people lacked confidence and self-belief, in that there was little around them to suggest that a socially and economically 'normal' life was a realistic option for them. Children would therefore not engage with schooling and avoid or reject attempts at positive diversionary activity, in part because they did not feel they could perform well at those activities. Some parents and frontline workers identified an overcompensation for this basic lack of self-belief, with some children having wholly unrealistic expectations and drawing on mass media images which suggested that instantaneous wealth and success were possible with little effort.

- Concerns about both a lack of 'diversionary activity' and the quality and nature of some of the diversionary activity available. Some respondents thought that diversionary activity was sometimes failing to engage children because it took little account of their social norms, interests and culture, which meant that it could (inadvertently) intimidate, bore and alienate the children and young people it sought to engage with.
- From the perspective of frontline workers, families were getting into debt because of difficulties in managing restricted finances and women with children facing financial and debt problems when they escaped domestic violence.

- Greater risks of experiencing overcrowding and material deprivation for children in larger families that, in the view of frontline workers, were associated with specific cultural and ethnic minorities.
- Concerns that the physical environment of London restricted the experience of childhood because safety concerns meant children had to be supervised if they were outside the family home.
- Barriers to paid work for parents that included affordable childcare, access to paid work that generated sufficient income and also attitudinal barriers, including lack of confidence and self-belief.

Tackling child poverty

Experts in child poverty focused on the need to reduce material deprivation and improve life chances. The shift in national policy emphasis towards improving life chances was widely noted. Some concerns were raised that while the previous Labour administration had perhaps placed too great a focus on material deprivation, the current Coalition government's new focus on improving life chances was only addressing part of the problem and not enough effort was being put into tackling material deprivation. Some planned changes to the welfare system were widely viewed by experts in child poverty as likely to increase levels of material deprivation among children in London, but as these changes had not yet been introduced at the time of writing, it is not yet clear if this will be the case. Improving access to adequate and affordable housing was thought to be a major issue in relation to tackling child poverty in London.

Some research and policy has taken the view that the negative cultural norms reported on some estates and within some neighbourhoods is a deep-seated problem that is difficult to solve. This was not the perspective of the frontline workers or the parents, who tended to view the issues around the life chances and attitudes of children as something that could be addressed. Expenditure was necessary, but the parents and frontline workers believed that the following interventions would do much to address the situation and improve the life chances of children living in Peabody estates:

- Enhancement of discipline in schools and a greater emphasis on pushing children to learn, an increased police presence on the streets, more affordable childcare and expansion of advice and information services.
- Providing meaningful and productive diversionary activities for older children and teenagers for when they were outside school was a priority. These activities had to be based around what attracted children and teenagers and there was a need to build their participation into service design in order to achieve this. Experiments were being undertaken on Peabody estates with giving more choice and control to older children and teenagers to try to improve engagement. Emphasis was placed on boosting the self-confidence of children.
- Advice and support services were an ongoing need. While cuts were a concern, central London remained a service-rich environment, but families sometimes needed help to successfully navigate their way to the various services that could help them. In outer London, the range of services available to families was significantly more restricted than was the case for central London.
- Services that supported parents and teenagers who recently left school into education, training and employment and more access to affordable childcare were advocated as ways of improving access to paid work.
- Assistance with parenting skills for those who needed support and help in bringing up their children.

Ways forward

In addition to offering high-quality affordable housing, something that in and of itself helps counteract the risk of material deprivation among children in London, Peabody's community development work also helps tackle child poverty. This research suggests that the following activities might be considered by Peabody to enhance its response to child poverty on its estates:

- The expansion and extension of the existing Peabody Tenant and Families Services team. This might include the provision of specialist workers for children and specific support for parenting. Good-quality welfare advice seems likely to become increasingly important to poor families, as does advice and help with managing money and debt.
- The expansion and extension of existing Peabody Employment Broker services, perhaps including specific services for parents with young children and lone parents with young children.
- Direct support of good-quality employment opportunities for parents. This might include loans and support for those seeking to set up small businesses and the direct or indirect support of development of social enterprises that provide flexible but relatively well-paid work for parents living on Peabody estates. Models such as Time Banking are already being actively explored by Peabody.
- Direct or indirect support of credit unions that offer an affordable alternative to poor families when they need to borrow money.
- Direct or indirect support for childcare service provision for Peabody residents. Indirect support might include the conversion of empty or underused buildings which might be provided at a very low or nominal rent to childcare services.

- Supporting provision of positive, productive and engaging activities for children and teenagers, including after-school activities, activities during school holidays and for teenagers who leave school at 16. This might include joint working and cooperation with local schools and children's centres and with the children and youth services provided by boroughs and charities. Promoting self-esteem and a sense that life potentially offers much wider horizons than children have grown up with was important from the perspective of parents and frontline workers.
- Consideration of the use of innovative methods of promoting community cohesion and minimising intergenerational tensions through techniques such as community philosophy.
- Consulting with residents and frontline workers on Peabody estates about cuts to local services and reviewing whether or not Peabody might directly or indirectly support valued services that are under threat of constriction or closure.

Looking towards enhanced participation of families on Peabody estates as a way to improve service provision and exploring the use of models such as peer support systems to help address child poverty and its consequences. More generally, this research has shown that the voices of parents and frontline workers engaged with children in poverty are not as present in London-wide and national level debates about child poverty as they could be. It is arguably the case that a lack of any real voice in the political process is one of the defining characteristics of the families experiencing child poverty. One of the reasons why policy responses are not always as effective as hoped may be that they take little account of the views of the families and children concerned. Enhancing the voice of parents and children in poverty in London may be key to tackling this social problem and this is a challenge that Peabody might consider.

1 Introduction

About the research

The purpose of the report is twofold. First, it is designed to review the current state of knowledge on child poverty, to ascertain the specific dimensions of the problem within London and to look specifically at child poverty on Peabody estates. Second, the report is designed to help Peabody consider ways in which it might deploy its own resources, work jointly with other agencies and with the people it houses to tackle child poverty in its own housing and within the neighbourhoods in which it works.

The report is divided into four chapters. This first chapter is this introduction, which explains the questions the research was designed to answer and briefly describes the approach taken by the research team. The second chapter looks at child poverty in London, reviewing definitions and providing a statistical overview which contrasts the position of children living in Peabody estates with other children in London. This chapter then considers the research on the nature of child poverty in London and also explores how child poverty is perceived by parents and frontline workers on Peabody estates before reviewing expert opinion. The third chapter draws on the views of parents living on Peabody estates, frontline workers and experts interviewed for the research on what is needed to help tackle child poverty. The fourth chapter makes some recommendations about new areas of service activity Peabody might consider as a means to help tackle child poverty.

Research aims

Background

Peabody was established in 1862 by the American philanthropist George Peabody to deal with slum living conditions and poverty across London. Peabody now manages more than 19,000 homes across London. Alongside providing high-quality, affordable housing Peabody also plays an important role in promoting cohesive communities and enhancing opportunities for low income people throughout the largest city in Europe. In its 2009 strategic review, *21st Century Peabody*, seven core principles for community development were identified¹:

- An exemplary community is one where people feel they belong.
- It is a place where people have homes that meet their needs and are suitable for the changing circumstances of life.
- It is a place where the landlord's service is tailored to the individual.
- It is a place where no child is living in poverty.
- It is a place where all residents are supported in their daily lives and in their longer term aspirations.
- An exemplary community feels part of the wider, local area.
- An exemplary community has a sustainable environment.

1. See: <http://www.peabody.org.uk/about-us/21st-century-peabody.aspx>

This research is focused on one of the 21st Century Peabody principles, which is creating communities in which no child is living in poverty, but following this principle supports pursuit of the other six principles, as all seven are interdependent. The research is also designed to support the 2011-2014 Business Plan for Peabody² which identifies a range of strategic goals for the organisation centred on providing high-quality services and homes, building thriving communities, achieving influential growth, both in the sense of developing new homes and drawing attention to social need, and in achieving business excellence. In particular, this research supports three of the 2011-2014 business plan goals:

Goal 4: To provide opportunities for people in our communities to get the most from life, including “creating opportunities for young people to be engaged in civic life and a range of educational, cultural and leisure activities”.

Goal 5: To create desirable neighbourhoods where people want to live.

Goal 7: To shape and influence the national and local agenda including “stimulating debate on key social issues, including child poverty, through undertaking and promoting evidence-based research”.

Research questions

The research had two main aims and a number of more detailed objectives. The first objective was to review the current state of knowledge on child poverty in London. This involved a number of goals:

- Analysing definitions of child poverty.
- Reviewing evidence on the scale of the problem in London.
- Contrasting the situation of children and young people living on Peabody estates with that of other children and young people in London.
- Determining which groups of children and young people are in greatest need.
- Considering the impact of poverty on the well-being of children and young people in terms of their current lives and in terms of their chances in life or ‘well-becoming’.
- The second aim of the research was to help Peabody consider ways in which it might deploy its own resources, work jointly with other agencies and with the people it houses to tackle child poverty. The concern being both with children and young people in its own housing, within the neighbourhoods in which Peabody works and across London as a whole. This again involved a number of goals:
- Exploring the role that Peabody can take in helping meet the needs of children and young people on its estates, with an emphasis on providing practical services with realistic goals.
- Exploring the potential of partnership working to tackle child poverty.

Methods

The research began in April 2011 and concluded in July 2011. This work combined a review of existing research, statistical analysis, interviews with parents living on Peabody estates and frontline workers with a canvassing of opinion of experts in government, the charitable sector and social housing. This mixed methods approach employed five main elements:

- A desk-based review of relevant literature and policy.
- Secondary analysis of existing statistical evidence on child poverty combined with analysis of anonymised data on the households living in Peabody estates.
- Interviews with experts in child poverty and social housing, both at national level and within London.
- Focus groups with residents who were parents on three Peabody estates.
- Interviews with frontline Peabody staff and frontline staff from other agencies working within and around the three Peabody estates where the parent focus groups were held.

The desk-based review

A desk-based review was undertaken as the first stage of the research. The research team contained two experts in child poverty, Professor Jonathan Bradshaw and Deborah Quilgars, who designed a specific search strategy that would encompass relevant work on London. The emphasis of this element of the research was on ensuring that the team were fully aware of any London-specific issues which existed and also to ensure that recent work in the field was incorporated into the research design. This analysis is referred to throughout the report.

2. See: <http://www.peabody.org.uk/media/7115972/businessplan2011-14.pdf>

Secondary analysis

Secondary analysis of existing data was conducted with two purposes in mind. First, it was important to set the research, its findings and recommendations in a wider context, i.e. to understand what the extent and nature of child poverty was across all of London in order to appreciate the context in which Peabody was working. Second, a key concern of the research was to look at what the situation was on Peabody estates relative to the rest of London, comparing and contrasting those areas in which Peabody estates are located with the surrounding areas and with London as a whole.

The data sets that were analysed included a database on Peabody residents which the research team constructed from anonymised household profiles that Peabody provided for each estate. In addition, the research team made use of the Child Well-Being Index (CWI), the Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI). This analysis is presented in Chapter 2 of this report.

Focus groups with parents living on Peabody estates

Focus groups were conducted with three groups of parents on three Peabody estates. Following discussions with Peabody, it was agreed that a £10 Marks and Spencer's voucher would be provided to thank residents for giving up around 90 minutes of their time to support the research. Peabody undertook to approach and recruit participants directly to allow respondents to remain anonymous. The groups took place in Islington, Westminster and Hillingdon. There were 13 participants of whom eight were mothers and five were fathers or grandfathers³. Participation was anonymous in order to allow parents to speak freely about what the issues were and how, in their view, those issues would be most effectively tackled. Individuals are not identified in any material presented in this report and nor are the specific locations in which they and their children lived. The results of this exercise are reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report.

Interviews with frontline workers

Interviews were conducted with people working in and around the three Peabody estates where the parent focus groups took place. A mix of face-to-face interviews and focus groups was employed as the fieldwork had to fit around the working day of the participants. Most of the arrangement of these interviews was undertaken with the assistance of Peabody staff. The term 'frontline worker' is used in the report to convey that the individuals interviewed had direct contact with Peabody residents and spent time on the three Peabody estates, but the range of people interviewed was varied. Those who took part included neighbourhood managers, employment brokers and community development staff employed by Peabody, workers employed by various charities, local councillors, officers from the Metropolitan Police and employees of London boroughs. Participation was anonymous and in total, 14 frontline workers participated in either a focus group or face-to-face interview. The results of these interviews are discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 of this report.

Interviews with national and London-based experts in child poverty and experts in social housing

A series of interviews and discussions were conducted with experts based at agencies that were focused on child poverty and/or social housing. This part of the research was designed as a consultation exercise that would allow exploration of the most current and innovative thinking on how best to understand and tackle child poverty. Participants were selected and approached by the research team. To allow respondents to speak freely, participation was anonymous in the sense that no statement would be presented in this report that could be traced back to a specific individual or agency. The results of these discussions are presented in Chapters 2 and 3. The agencies that participated in this part of the research were as follows:

- Cardinal Hume Centre
- Children's Society
- Daycare Trust
- Department of Communities and Local Government
- National Housing Federation
- Child Poverty Action Group CPAG
- London Borough of Waltham Forest
- City of Westminster
- Save the Children
- Experts in child poverty based at the University of York

3. The research included grandparents with a direct role in parenting their grandchildren.

Limitations in the research design

Three caveats to the findings and recommendations in this report should be noted. First, this research was a relatively small exercise and not an exhaustive examination of all aspects of child poverty in London. Second, the response to the invitation to parents to attend a focus group received only a very low response on one estate. Third, the research did not directly seek the views of children and young people. The reasons for this omission were linked to the timetable available, which could not encompass the complex procedures for ethical approval that are required whenever University social researchers work with children. This was a limitation because participation may help some child poverty services be more effective (see Chapters 2 and 3) and also because it is important to try to give a voice to this often marginalised group of children.

2 Child poverty in London

Introduction

This chapter of the report discusses the nature and extent of child poverty in London. The first part looks at the definition of child poverty. The second part is a statistical overview of child poverty across London that contrasts the living situations of children on Peabody estates with those of other children in London. The next section looks in detail at differing perspectives on child poverty, reviewing the research evidence and exploring the views of the parents, frontline workers and the experts interviewed for the research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings.

Defining child poverty

Child poverty is widely understood as the effects of material deprivation. This encompasses the impacts of low or inadequate household income on child well-being, which can range from inadequate housing to poor diet. Child poverty is also widely understood in terms of a restriction of the social mobility of poor children. This refers to factors associated with poverty that limit the chances a child has in life, sometimes known as 'well-becoming', but referred to in this report as 'life chances'. The extent to which child poverty is seen as material deprivation and/or in terms of life chances varies with differing perspectives, though many interpretations regard material well-being and life chances as interlinked.

The 1997–2010 Labour governments focused particular policy attention on child poverty and established the commitment to end child poverty. The Child Poverty Act (2010) had the goal of eradicating 'child poverty', in terms of the definition used by the Act, by 2020. The Act also set the following interim targets, all of which were based on measures of material deprivation:

- Reduce the level of relative poverty, the percentage of children living in households with less than 60% of contemporary median income both before and after housing costs, to below 10% (the current level is 21%).
- Reduce levels of absolute poverty based on the 2010/11 median income, with children living in households with less than 60% of 2010/11 median income to be reduced to less than 5% (the current level is 12%).
- Reduce deprivation by bringing down the percentage of children living in households with less than 70% of contemporary median income and a score of 25 or more on the prevalence weighted material deprivation index. The target rate was less than 5%, the current level is 10%.
- Reduce persistent poverty, that is reduce the percentage of children living below 60% of contemporary median income in three out of the last four years, both before and after housing costs.

The original intent of the Labour government had been to halve the level of child poverty by 2010/11 based on the levels that had existed in 1998/99. Based on a measure of 60% of median income before housing costs, levels of child poverty have fallen in overall terms. The number of children in poverty was 3.4 million in 1998/99, this dropped to 2.7 million in 2004/05, but then increased to 2.9 million in 2007/08 before falling back again to 2.8 million in 2008/9. Data for 2010/11 are not yet available, but it is not anticipated that the target reduction to 1.7 million children will be achieved⁴.

Alongside a concern with material deprivation, central government has also focused its attention on the life chances of children. What this has meant in practice has been a focus on trying to improve educational outcomes for poor children, with a view to maximising their chances of getting into paid work as young adults. Adopting a policy approach that focused on increasing life chances among children in low income households required a definition of what constituted a situation of poor life chances. The main definitions were education and qualification-based, the key concern being to avoid a situation in which a child made the transition to becoming a young adult who could be classified as 'NEET' (Not in Education, Employment or Education).

4. Kennedy, S. (2010) Child Poverty Act 2010: a short guide Parliamentary Briefing Paper.

Relatively recent estimates (based on 2008 data) suggested that 208,000 young people aged 16-18 were NEET in England, rather higher than the 2002 estimate of 160,000⁵ (although some of the difference was simply because there were more 16-18 year-olds in 2008 than in 2002). However, there was also evidence of a proportionate rise from 9.7% of 16-18 year-olds NEET in 2007 to 10.3% in 2008, as the recession began to have an impact. Recent data suggest a figure of 10% of 16-18 year-olds being NEET⁶.

Academics have attempted to understand and measure inequality in life chances in the UK. Dorling notes the growing division between educational outcomes for rich and poor children in the UK, a return to a situation in which only an affluent elite who are educated privately, or within state schools in highly affluent areas, perform very well at school and have far better access to the top universities. He describes what he views as a disturbing trend in assuming that poorer children have a lower intrinsic capacity to learn and achieve than is the case for the children of more affluent parents. Scientific research has shown this assumption to be incorrect as there are no inherent consistent differences in cognitive ability between social classes. However, difference in outcomes at school can be very closely statistically related to household income. In other words, if a typical child from a lone parent family in a deprived neighbourhood was put through the whole of the educational system available to a typical child of an affluent middle class household, that child would be just as likely to perform well in their exams as a middle class child⁷. Research commissioned by the Sutton Trust has mapped very significant social segregation in the state education system, with poorer children often being effectively denied access to the better state-funded schools⁸.

Since the change of government in 2010 more policy attention has been directed to alternative ways of measuring poverty and life chances among children and young people. The Field report⁹, commissioned by the Coalition government, argued for shifting the basis on which child poverty was measured, placing less emphasis on material deprivation and more on life chances. The areas for measurement of child poverty the Field report suggested were:

- Cognitive development at around age three (including language and communication).
- Behavioural, social and emotional development at around age three.
- Physical development at around age three.
- Home learning environment.
- Positive parenting.
- Maternal mental health.
- Mother's age at birth of first child (women from lower income households tend to have their first child earlier, making this an indicator that child poverty is more likely).
- Mother's educational qualifications (again lower educational qualifications are associated with poverty, making child poverty more likely).
- Quality of nursery care.

These measures are relatively complex and are partially focused on 'predictive' indicators, i.e. measures designed around known associations and designed to find those children who are in need of support if they are to have equal life chances with the general population. The Field report takes the example of the home learning environment, based on measures within the Millennium Cohort Study of children and defines a good home learning environment as one in which a parent reads to their child, takes their child to the library, helps them learn the alphabet, basic maths, songs and nursery rhymes and encourages drawing or painting at home. The current government's poverty strategy A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families' Lives¹⁰ reflects some of these ideas and has signalled a move away from the focus on 60% of median income and towards the development of new 'life chance' indicators (see Chapter 3).

There are potential risks in using a few specific measures of this sort to define and measure 'child poverty'. One risk is that even combinations of indicators may only give a partial picture of need. Another risk is that overemphasising the indicators of material deprivation might risk downplaying the level of need around life chances and vice-versa. For example, a focus just on household income to measure material deprivation could be seen as arguably de-emphasising the impact of poor housing and negative 'area effects' on children. While the evidence is mixed, issues like damp, restricted privacy and a lack of room to play at home or an absence of green space and an environment in which children cannot be left unsupervised, may all have detrimental effects on children¹¹.

5. See Coles, B.; Godfrey, C.; Keung, A.; Parrott, S. and Bradshaw, J. (2010) Estimating the life-time cost of NEET: 16-18 year olds not in Education, Employment or Training York: University of York

6. Source: Department for Education NEET Statistics - Quarterly Brief February 2011

7. Dorling, D. (2010) Injustice: Why Social Inequality Persists Bristol: Policy Press.

8. Smithers, A. and Robinson, P. (2010) Worlds Apart: social variation among schools London: The Sutton Trust.

9. Field, F. (2010) The Foundation Years: preventing poor children becoming poor adults London: HM Government.

10. Published in April 2011.

11. The evidence is 'mixed' in the sense that it can be difficult to disentangle the effects on children of poor housing and problematic neighbourhoods from living for sustained periods on a low income, as low-income households tend to be concentrated in poor housing and problematic neighbourhoods, see Quilgars, D. (2011) 'Children, Housing and Neighbourhoods' in J. Bradshaw and E. Mayhew (eds) The Well-Being of Children in the United Kingdom (Third Edition) Bristol: Policy Press.

Academic research has therefore tended to define child poverty in rather broader terms than governments, using a wider range of measures in an attempt to encompass its full extent and nature. However, this can have the effect of significantly multiplying the measures used by academic researchers to define and assess material deprivation and poor life chances among children.

Academic attempts to measure child poverty might sometimes be difficult for non-expert audiences to follow. The range of factors that can affect a child's well-being, development and life chances, once everything is taken into account, can comfortably get into hundreds of individual indicators covering everything from material deprivation through to social development and physical and mental health. There is so much that should potentially be measured that it is easy to become lost in terms of which indicators should be given less weight than others.

Attempts to develop statistical indicators of child poverty have tried to take the issue of complexity into account and have aimed to develop summary measures that account for many factors but which produce only a small number of indicative statistics. The Child Well-Being Index (CWI)¹² has indicators on material well-being, health, education, exposure to crime, poor housing and environment. CWI employs clusters of indicators to create scores under specific 'domains'. This means that several measures of issues like educational disadvantage are employed and then summarised statistically to produce an overall score. The CWI uses 51 variables (individual measures) which are organised into eight clusters that cover the following areas:

- Material situation.
- Housing.
- Health.
- Subjective well-being.
- Education.
- Children's relationships.
- Civic participation.
- Risk and safety.

The CWI then takes these eight domains and creates an overall CWI 'score'. In this way a wide range of measures can be employed and yet also be summarised in a relatively clear and accessible way, enabling the identification of concentrations of child poverty in specific groups of the population (such as some ethnic minorities) and in particular parts of the UK. An analysis looking at children and young people on Peabody estates using the CWI and other indicators follows this part of Chapter 2.

Another key element in academic research has been the use of relative measures of child poverty through the employment of internationally comparative research. This adds another dimension to how child poverty is defined and measured, because it looks at how children in low income households in the UK are faring compared to other countries with an equivalent level of economic development.

In 2009, for example, an OECD report ranked the UK beneath Denmark, Sweden, France, Hungary and Switzerland in terms of the proportion of children living in households with less than 50% of median household income, although the UK significantly outperformed some other countries such as the USA¹³. On some other measures, such as low birth weight babies per thousand births, the UK was close to the USA and behind most of Western Europe, something that was also the case in relation to teenage pregnancy (though the overall trend was down). The UK also scored poorly on one indicator of life chances, showing that lifetime earnings were very strongly predicted by parental earnings, i.e. that social mobility was relatively limited¹⁴. Research within the EU on child poverty reached similarly mixed conclusions about the comparative levels of child poverty in the UK¹⁵.

Such work draws attention to the complexity of what is meant by 'child poverty' and how doing relatively well on one measure should not necessarily be read as an overall success. Understanding the nature and extent of child poverty is a matter of looking at a range of indicators¹⁶.

Some argue that UK data collection on child poverty is insufficient and that better and more focused indicators are required. There is also the potential to use existing administrative data sets, such as those held by the Department of Work and Pensions, to more effectively count and map the extent of child poverty, though some issues exist in relation to data protection legislation¹⁷.

12. Bradshaw, J.; Bloor, K.; Huby, M.; Rhodes, D.; Sinclair, I.; Gibbs, I.; Noble, M.; McLennan, D. and Wilkinson, K. (2009) Local Index of Child Well-Being Summary Report London: Communities and Local Government.

13. The OECD average was 11.5% of children living in poor households, the UK level was 10.1%, it is important to note the measure used was beneath 50% of median household income, whereas the Child Poverty Act (2010) defines 'poverty' as below 60% of median household income. OECD (2009), Doing Better for Children.

14. OECD (2009), Doing Better for Children

15. Social Protection Committee (2008) Child Poverty and Well-Being in the EU Current status and way forward Brussels: European Union.

16. Bradshaw, J., Hoelscher, P. and Richardson, D. (2006) An index of child well-being in the European Union, Social Indicators Research

17. Pleave, N and Bretherton, J. (2006) Sharing and matching local and national data on adults of working age facing multiple barriers to employment London : DWP

Experts in child poverty interviewed for this research emphasised the need for balance in measures of child poverty. It was important, from their perspective, that not too much emphasis was placed on any one indicator or set of indicators.

But by just targeting income you miss so much as well, we all understand that income isn't necessarily the best measure... you can meet and go over that threshold, but in real terms, you may be out of child poverty but your life is not significantly better. So I think some of those well-being measures add further flavour and in some ways are a bit more realistic, I don't think you should go one way or the other, but have a mix of the two, just to make it a little bit more nuanced. Expert.

Several experts stressed what they saw as the need to maintain a focus on material deprivation. The reasons for this were twofold. First, some experts had the view that the income measures gave clear operational targets for social policy. Second, some experts believed that a shift in focus to 'life chances' under the current government was de-emphasising the immediate damage to children from living in households without enough money to live on (see Chapter 3).

I think there's an important role at the moment for organisations in refocusing on income, on the income threshold, because there's a lot of worries about movement away from that. Expert.

Some of the experts also talked about the ways in which poverty may influence the image that children and young people have of themselves. There was discussion of how poverty could undermine self-image, making children less likely to feel confident that they can accomplish things or pursue success. This was viewed as quite difficult to measure, but was regarded as important.

I'm sure self-esteem is an important part of that, it's an important part of living a normal life and feeling like you're able to be included in normal social activities, it's really important for a child's self-esteem, feelings of self-worth and aspiration. Expert.

The next section of this report looks at the extent of child poverty in London using the CWI and other measures and also undertakes some comparative analysis looking at children and young people on Peabody estates.

Statistical overview

This section of the report uses data employing varying measures of child poverty to look at the extent of child poverty in London and explore how far the experience of children living on Peabody estates mirrored that of children living elsewhere in London. The research team combined anonymised data on households living on their estates provided by Peabody with data from the 2008/09 Family Resources Survey (FRS); the 2010 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), which includes the Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI); and the 2007 Child Wellbeing Index (CWI)¹⁸. Details of these data sources and the classifications used in the analysis are set out in Appendix 1.

The households living on Peabody estates

Table 2.1 compares the types of households living in Peabody housing with all social rented households in London. There were a higher number of single person households in Peabody housing (53% compared to 44% across all social housing in London) but a lower proportion of couples with no children (11% compared to 18%). There were also more lone parents in Peabody housing than across social housing in London as a whole (22% compared to 14%) and a similar proportion of couples with children (11% compared to 15% across all social rented housing in London). There was also a lower proportion of multi-adult households living in Peabody housing than in the social rented sector more generally (2% compared to 9%).

18. The datasets employed were the most recent available.

19. The concept of HRP replaces the previous Head of Household. HRP is the person in whose name the accommodation is owned or rented, and in the case of jointly named people is taken as being the person with the highest economic activity classification in the order of full-time job, part-time job, unemployed, retired, other. In cases where people have the same economic activity, the HRP is taken to be the oldest.

Table 2.1 : Household type

Household type*	Proportion of Peabody households (%)	Proportion of all social rented households* (%)
Single person	53%	44%
Couple no children	11%	18%
Couple with non-dependent children only	4%	<1%
Couple with dependent child(ren) aged 6-16	5%	6%
Couple with dependent child(ren) aged 0-5	2%	9%
Lone parent with non-dependent children only	9%	6%
Lone parent with dependent child(ren) aged 6-16	9%	7%
Lone parent with dependent child(ren) aged 0-5	4%	1%
Multi-adult household	2%	9%
Total	100%	100%
Base	15,022	702,604

Sources: Peabody Administrative Data and 2008/9 Family Resources Survey

*Analysis of social rented HRP living in Greater London in 2008/09 FRS

Table 2.2 compares the ethnic origin of Peabody Household Reference Persons (HRPs)¹⁹ with social rented housing tenants throughout London. It shows that people living on Peabody estates had a similar pattern in ethnic backgrounds to that found across London as a whole. Peabody HRP described themselves as White at a near identical rate to HRP across social housing in London as a whole (59% compared to 58%) . Seven per cent of Peabody HRP and eight per cent of all social renters were of an Asian ethnic group; and five per cent of both Peabody and all social renting HRP were of a mixed ethnic group. A slightly higher proportion of all HRP across all social housing in London were Black British (25% compared to 20% of Peabody HRP).

Table 2.2 : Ethnic group of Peabody HRP compared with all social rented HRP within Greater London

Ethnic group		Proportion of Peabody HRP (%)	Proportion of all social rented HRP ¹ (%)
Asian	Bangladeshi	2%	2%
	Indian	1%	3%
	Pakistani	1%	1%
	Other	3%	2%
Black	African	12%	14%
	Caribbean	6%	10%
	Other	2%	1%
Mixed	African/White	1%	2%
	Asian/White	1%	<1%
	Caribbean/White	1%	2%
	Other	2%	1%
White	British	46%	50%
	Other	13%	8%
Chinese		1%	1%
Other		8%	3%
Total		100%	100.00%
Base		11,821	729,324

Sources: Peabody Administrative Data and 2008/9 Family Resources Survey

Overview of child poverty in the boroughs where Peabody has estates

The postcodes contained within the anonymised Peabody administrative data were used to identify the corresponding Lower Level Super Output Areas (LSOAs)²⁰ which were used to identify the London boroughs within which Peabody estates were located. Table 2.3 shows these local authority areas along with summary figures from the IMD and CWI for these boroughs.

Higher scores in the IMD and CWI indicate a higher level of general poverty and a lower level of child well-being, so that boroughs with the highest scores on IMD and CWI had the highest levels of child poverty and lowest levels of child well-being. These scores are relative in the sense that they show the highest and lowest scores across many variables, there is no score that shows whether levels of child poverty and well-being are 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable', just where levels are relatively high or relatively low compared to the rest of England.

Table 2.3 also shows the ranking of the boroughs relative to all local authorities. What this indicator does is show the position of a local authority relative to all the other local authorities in England. The lower the IMD ranking, the worse the level of poverty and deprivation, so if an authority is ranked at number two, which LB Hackney is, that means it is the second most deprived local authority in England. The ranking for the CWI is, rather confusingly, the other way around. This means that the worse the relative CWI score, the higher the local authority is ranked. This means with a ranking of 325, LB Tower Hamlets is one of the authorities that has among the very worst levels of child well-being in England according to the CWI.

The great majority of Peabody households were located within inner London boroughs (88 per cent). There are 13 inner London boroughs, and only one (City of London) did not contain any Peabody housing. The highest concentrations of Peabody households were in Westminster (18 per cent), Islington (15 per cent), Wandsworth (12 per cent), and Hackney (11 per cent).

Since most of the inner London boroughs are classified as being in the most deprived quintile on the IMD (eight), and as having the lowest child wellbeing on the CWI (ten), the boroughs containing Peabody housing usually scored poorly in these respects. The boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets score poorly on both indicators, with the IMD ranking them respectively as second and seventh worst local authorities within England; and the CWI respectively as fifth and second worst within England.

20. See Appendix 1.

Table 2.3: London borough locations of Peabody households

London borough	Proportion of Peabody households (%)	IMD 2010	CWI 2007			
		LA average score	Rank of LA average score ¹	Quintile of LA average score ³	LA average score	Rank of LA average score ²
Inner London	Camden	<1%	25.43	74	2	244.45
	Hackney	11%	42.89	2	1	305.08
	Hammersmith and Fulham	5%	27.48	55	1	237.80
	Haringey	2%	36.10	13	1	262.74
	Islington	15%	35.87	14	1	305.46
	Kensington and Chelsea	5%	23.31	103	2	155.00
	Lambeth	4%	31.24	29	1	271.98
	Lewisham	<1%	30.97	31	1	250.73
	Southwark	9%	29.73	41	1	283.63
	Tower Hamlets	7%	39.59	7	1	334.48
	Wandsworth	12%	21.46	121	2	170.03
Westminster	18%	24.59	87	2	247.42	
Outer London	Barking and Dagenham	1%	34.20	22	1	257.64
	Barnet	2%	16.64	176	3	129.79
	Brent	<1%	30.50	35	1	226.02
	Enfield	<1%	26.06	64	1	177.63
	Greenwich	2%	31.94	28	1	237.02
	Harrow	<1%	15.49	194	3	125.05
	Havering	<1%	16.63	177	3	128.16
	Hillingdon	3%	19.81	138	3	155.37
	Newham	2%	41.84	3	1	250.05
	Redbridge	1%	20.37	134	3	134.17
Total	100%					
Base	15,022					

1. LA rank of the average IMD score, from 1 to 326, where 1 is the most deprived. 2. LA rank of the average CWI score, from 1 to 326, where 326 is the most deprived.

3. Quintiles of all English local authority areas, where 1 is the most deprived quintile and 5 is the least deprived quintile. Each Quintile represents 20% of all authorities, i.e. the 20% authorities that were the most deprived were in Quintile 1.

Mapping relative levels of child poverty in London

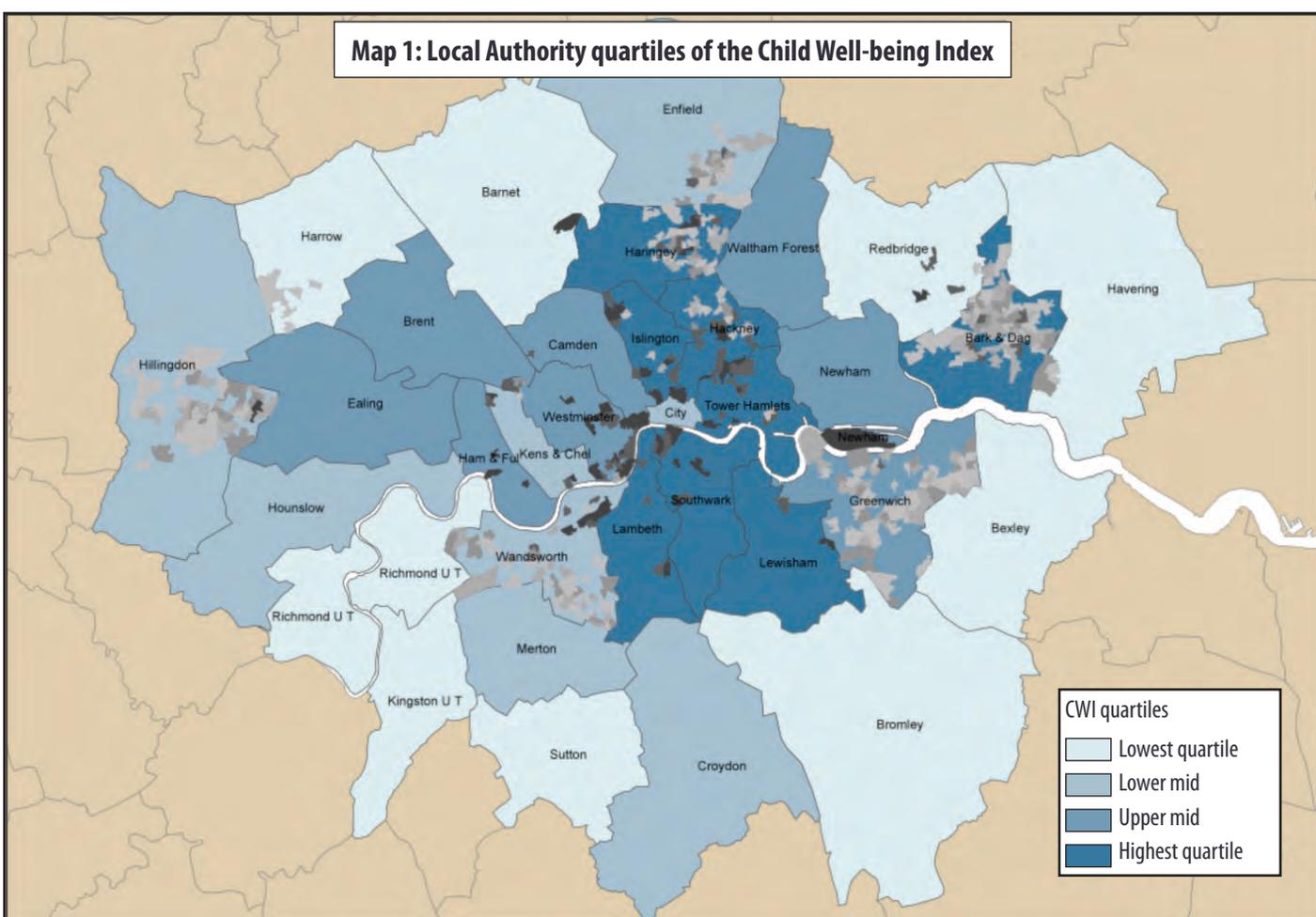
For the purposes of this report the summary CWI, IDACI, and IMD scores²¹ were divided into quartiles for all local authority areas in England. Each quartile contained 25% of the local authorities in England, the most deprived 25% going into 'most deprived' group and the least 25% of authorities going into the 'least deprived' group. This allows relative comparison of the London boroughs with the rest of England in terms of these three measures of child poverty and deprivation.

Maps 1 to 3 indicate the London boroughs according to these quartiles, where the darkest shade of blue is the highest, and most deprived, quartile for each of the three indicators; and the lightest shade of blue is the lowest, and least deprived, quartile for each. The locations of Peabody housing are superimposed on the maps, shown by the grey shading. The areas in which Peabody housing is concentrated are shown by the darkest shading, those areas in which Peabody housing is present in low numbers are shown by the lighter shades of grey²².

These locations are based on the LSOAs corresponding to the postcodes of Peabody households in the anonymised data, and as such the maps locate the Peabody households but do not give a visual indication of their number, or density, within each area.

Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Tower Hamlets are in the highest quartile on all three maps. Collectively 35% of Peabody households live in these boroughs (as shown in Table 2.3). Westminster, where the largest single proportion of Peabody households reside, is shown not to be in the top quartile for any of the three indicators: it is in the upper mid-quartile for the CWI, and the lower mid-quartile for the IMD and IDACI. Few Peabody households live in the relatively least deprived boroughs on the three measures. Map 1 shows that less than 4% were collectively located in Barnet, Harrow, and Redbridge, for example.

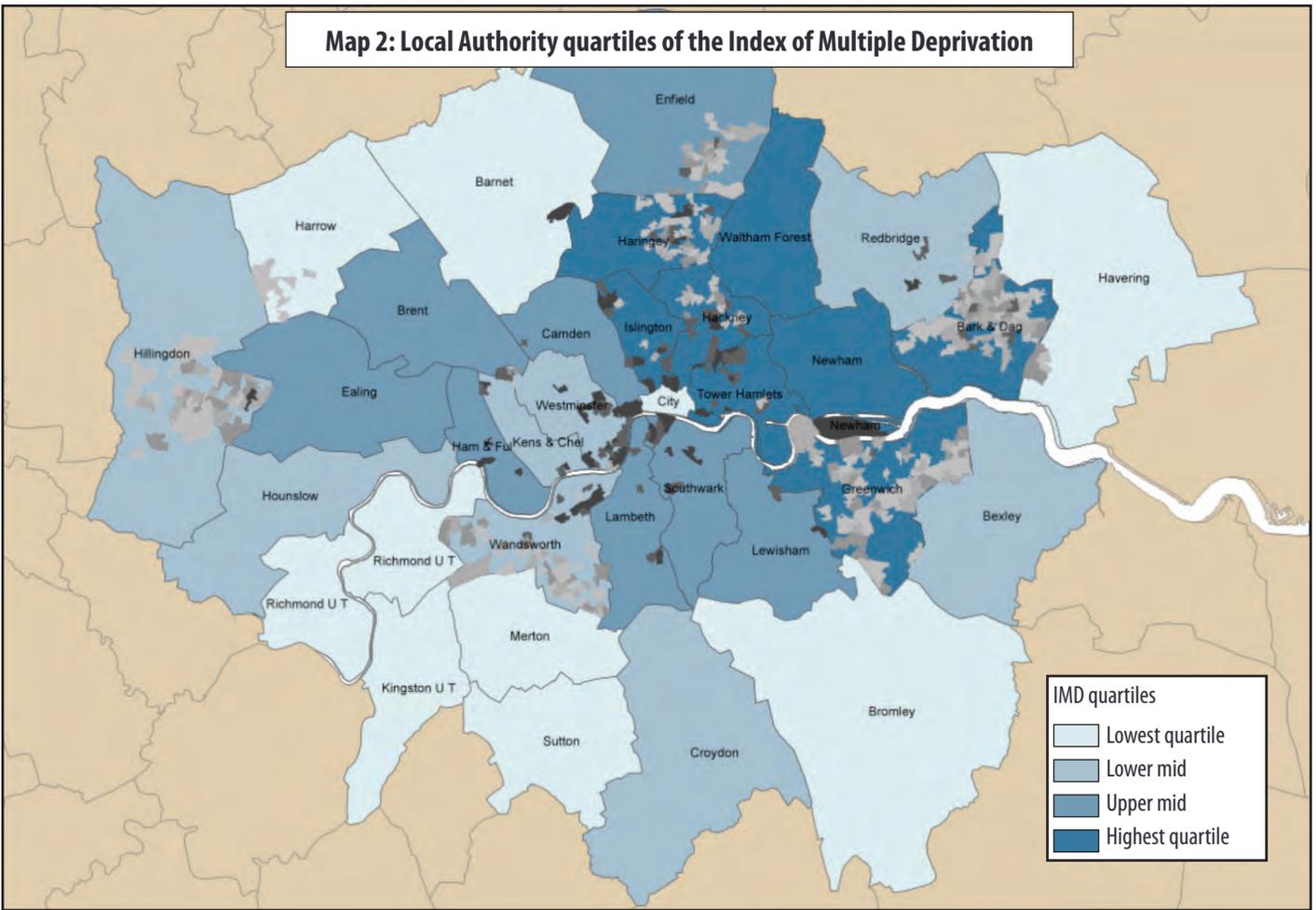
Detailed national comparison tables are presented in Appendix 2 and a map showing the relative density of Peabody housing in different parts of London is presented in Appendix 3.



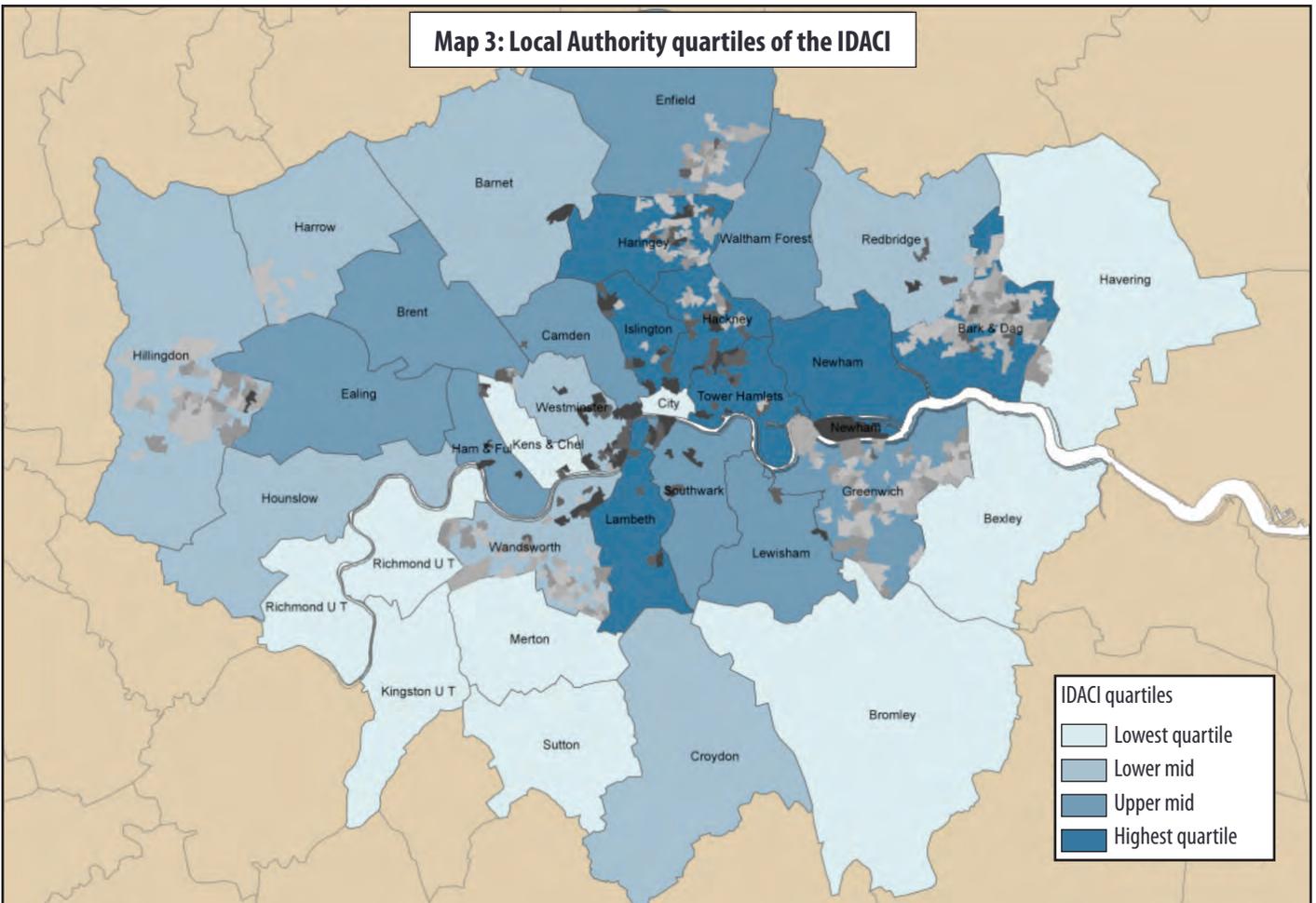
21. See Appendix 1 for details of these measures.

22. The shades of grey are based on quintiles showing the level of Peabody housing within the LSOA in which it is located, the four lighter shades show 1, 2, 3-5, 6-66 households, the darkest shade shows between 67-652 households in a LSOA.

Map 2: Local Authority quartiles of the Index of Multiple Deprivation



Map 3: Local Authority quartiles of the IDACI



The different domains of child poverty

Tables 2.4 and 2.5 show the average scores for the overall IMD and CWI and also for their individual 'domains' for the LSOAs containing Peabody housing. As noted above, each 'domain' covers a set of indicators or measures about one aspect of deprivation or well-being, and these domains are combined to produce an overall score. Tables 2.4 and 2.5 show each domain for inner London, outer London and all of London, comparing the LSOAs containing Peabody estates with the figures for those areas as a whole. For both of these overall indexes and their individual domains, a higher score again indicates a higher level of deprivation (Table 2.4) or lower level of child wellbeing (Table 2.5).

It is important to be clear what these data mean. The LSOAs refer to all the people living in areas in which Peabody housing was located, not just the people in Peabody housing. This is the lowest level of analysis that can be achieved with these data sets, i.e. it is not possible to confine the analysis just to Peabody estates and the people within them, only to look at the people in the (relatively) small areas of London covered by the LSOAs in which they were located.

With just one exception within the IMD scores (barriers to housing and services within outer London), the LSOAs containing Peabody housing scored more highly on average than LSOAs within London containing no Peabody housing. The IDACI also had the highest average score for the Peabody LSOAs (Table 2.4).

A slightly less categorical pattern exists with the CWI, although the LSOAs of Greater London containing Peabody housing often had higher scores on average, and therefore lower levels of child well-being, than the LSOAs containing no Peabody housing. Within inner London, the overall CWI score was highest for the Peabody LSOAs, as were the domain scores for material well-being, health and disability, and education. The average scores within inner London for the domains of crime, housing, and environment were lower for the LSOAs containing Peabody housing, indicating that the LSOAs containing no Peabody housing had lower average levels of child wellbeing in these respects. The pattern within outer London was clearer, however, where the LSOAs containing Peabody housing scored more highly on each of the individual measures and overall compared with those containing no Peabody housing. The net result for Greater London as a whole, was that LSOAs containing Peabody estates had the highest average scores overall and on each individual domain, and therefore the lowest level of child well-being.

Appendix 2 contains a detailed table showing the IMD, IDACI and CWI scores for the LSOAs in which individual Peabody estates are situated

Table 2.4: 2010 Average IMD and IMD domain scores for Peabody/non-Peabody LSOAs

Area of London and whether or not LSOAs contain Peabody housing	IMD domain average scores										Income deprivation affecting children index (IDACI)
	Overall average IMD score	Income	Employment	Health deprivation and disability	Education, skills and training	Barriers to housing and services	Crime and disorder	Living environment			
Inner London	Peabody LSOAs	32.99	0.24	0.12	0.44	14.49	38.44	0.55	44.02	0.42	
	Non-Peabody LSOAs	30.33	0.21	0.11	0.26	13.56	36.76	0.52	43.16	0.37	
	All	30.66	0.22	0.11	0.28	13.68	36.97	0.53	43.26	0.37	
Outer London	Peabody LSOAs	31.82	0.25	0.12	0.33	26.99	28.78	0.75	28.86	0.39	
	Non-Peabody LSOAs	21.56	0.17	0.09	-0.36	13.33	30.14	0.34	27.42	0.26	
	All	22.28	0.17	0.09	-0.31	14.28	30.04	0.37	27.52	0.27	
Greater London	Peabody LSOAs	32.39	0.24	0.12	0.38	20.81	33.55	0.65	36.35	0.40	
	Non-Peabody LSOAs	24.54	0.18	0.09	-0.15	13.41	32.38	0.40	32.76	0.29	
	All	25.24	0.19	0.10	-0.10	14.07	32.49	0.42	33.08	0.30	

Table 2.5: 2007 Average CWI and CWI domain scores for Peabody/non-Peabody LSOAs

Area of London and whether or not LSOAs contain Peabody housing	CWI domain average scores									
	Overall average CWI score	Children in need	Material wellbeing	Health and disability	Education	Crime	Housing	Environment		
Inner London	Peabody LSOAs	258.21	0.05	0.46	0.26	23.12	0.20	43.54	25.88	
	Non-Peabody LSOAs	247.34	0.05	0.40	0.07	22.18	0.31	43.91	29.66	
	All	248.70	0.05	0.41	0.09	22.30	0.29	43.87	29.19	
Outer London	Peabody LSOAs	228.19	0.05	0.39	0.31	28.34	0.79	31.88	21.39	
	Non-Peabody LSOAs	153.55	0.03	0.26	-0.17	13.91	0.28	28.60	19.25	
	All	158.76	0.03	0.27	-0.14	14.92	0.32	28.83	19.40	
Greater London	Peabody LSOAs	243.02	0.05	0.42	0.28	25.76	0.50	37.64	23.16	
	Non-Peabody LSOAs	185.38	0.04	0.31	-0.09	16.72	0.29	33.80	22.78	
	All	190.52	0.04	0.32	-0.06	17.53	0.31	34.14	22.86	

Perceptions of child poverty in London

Research evidence

Research evidence tends to argue that London does not have unique forms of child poverty but that the city contains high concentrations of child poverty. This concentration is relative, a higher proportion of London's children are poorer than those living in other areas of the UK. In its final report in 2010, the London Poverty Commission noted²³:

In spite of being the wealthiest region in the UK, London has the highest rate of child poverty after housing costs are taken into account – 39 per cent in 2005/6 to 2007/08. This means over 600,000 children in London are living below the national poverty threshold of 60 per cent of median income.

In April/June 2010, ONS data showed that 22.4% of London children were in workless households (29.1% of children in inner London and 18.3% of children in outer London), compared to 16.1% across the UK. This equated to 365,000 children across London as a whole²⁴.

Research has also drawn attention to the issue of housing costs and housing conditions in London. It has been argued that indicators that do not control for housing costs give a poor representation of child poverty in London, as higher rates of benefit payments to help meet relatively high rents make London household incomes look higher than those elsewhere²⁵.

There is evidence of what is sometimes termed 'in-work' poverty in London. This describes a situation in which one or both parents are in lower paid part or full time paid work but facing a situation in which housing, transport and other costs are relatively higher than elsewhere in the UK. In its final report²⁶, the London Child Poverty Commission concluded that:

Almost half (49 per cent) of children in poverty in London are in families where at least one parent is working – a higher proportion than three years earlier (41 per cent). London has far fewer dual-earner households with children than the UK average.

The reasons for a higher proportion of one-income households are thought to be linked to the low availability of affordable childcare and high public transport costs. These points are revisited below.

Research suggests there are complex and varied relationships between ethnicity, culture and child poverty in London. Research has concluded that child poverty rates tend to be lowest among White British Londoners, but that higher rates of child poverty exist for some ethnic and cultural minorities, such as Black British and Traveller children²⁷. Other research, based on analysis of the Families and Children Study (FACS) indicates that specific ethnic origins can be associated with likelihood of children living in poor quality housing of certain types. Specifically, children whose mother was Black British were more likely than other children to live in unfit accommodation, and especially so on a persistent basis (that is, lasting three to five years). Children whose mother was Black British were also the most likely to live in accommodation with inadequate heating on a persistent basis²⁸.

Child poverty is concentrated in the social rented sector in London. However, it is important to be cautious before drawing any association between tenure and poverty, i.e. poorer people will naturally be concentrated in the most affordable tenure. This may particularly be the case in the London context, in which the private rented sector is relatively expensive and owner occupation is out of reach of what would be regarded as middle income households elsewhere in the UK. Housing conditions within affordable housing in London are also reported to be relatively poor²⁹.

London is also unusual in the sense that it contains what are sometimes termed 'hollowed out' neighbourhoods. These are areas in which only the very affluent can afford to buy or rent and the only other households are those that live in the remaining social housing³⁰. These areas are 'hollowed out' because there are few middle income households and only the very affluent and the least affluent remain. There are academic arguments that neighbourhoods that mainly contain only very rich people and people on very low incomes face particular challenges in developing a sense of community³¹.

23. London Poverty Commission (2010) London Child Poverty Commission – Legacy Report London: London Councils, p.9.

24. See: Office for National Statistics (2010) Work and worklessness among households 2010

25. Buck, N.; Sutherland, H. and Zantomio, F. (2007) Tackling child poverty in London: Implications of demographic and economic change London: The London Child Poverty Commission. Wilcox, S. (2007) Can't Buy: Can Rent: The affordability of private housing in Great Britain – summary report London: Hometrack.

26. London Poverty Commission (2010) London Child Poverty Commission – Legacy Report London: London Councils, p.11.

27. Buck, N.; Sutherland, H. and Zantomio, F. (2007) Tackling child poverty in London: Implications of demographic and economic change London: The London Child Poverty Commission

28. Barnes, M., Butt, S. and Wojtek, T. (2008) The dynamics of bad housing: The impact of bad housing on the living standards of children London: Eaga-CT and Shelter.

29. Wilcox, S. (2007) Can't Buy: Can Rent: The affordability of private housing in Great Britain – summary report London: Hometrack.

30. Burrows, R. 'Geodemographics and the Construction of Differentiated Neighbourhoods' in J. Flint and D. Robinson (eds) Cohesion in Crisis? New Dimensions of Diversity and Difference Bristol: Policy Press, 219-237, 2008

31. Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2011) 'A Difficult Mix: Issues in achieving socioeconomic diversity in deprived UK neighbourhoods' Urban Studies, Published online before print March 8, 2011, doi: 10.1177/0042098010396233

In summary, research within London has suggested that:

- London has greater levels of child poverty than much of the rest of the UK, both in terms of the relative level of child poverty and the absolute numbers of children in poverty (based on measures of material deprivation).
- Children in London are relatively more likely to be in workless households than elsewhere in the UK.
- Child poverty exists at significant levels within London households that contain one or more adults in paid work.
- Housing costs in London are very high, creating a need to assess poverty in terms of income available after housing costs. There are concerns about the condition of some of the more affordable housing.
- There are particular concentrations of child poverty in social housing, but this reflects the relative lack of affordable housing in London.
- There are some associations between some ethnic and cultural minorities and child poverty in London.
- London contains neighbourhoods in which extremes of wealth and poverty exist alongside one another, which may have impacts on the potential for community development.

The views of parents living in Peabody estates

There was a high degree of consensus among parents living in Peabody estates who took part in focus groups as to what the key issues were in relation to child poverty.

The environment of the three Peabody estates and the standard of housing provided were generally praised by parents.

Housing's pretty good in Islington, got a lot, especially Peabody, got some beautiful properties...they are spending a lot of money at the moment on their properties, they are doing the annual thing and that, so they really are, not just the interiors, doing all the exteriors and that as well, including the communal gardens and stuff like that. So they do spend quite a lot of money on their properties bringing them up to scratch, not that they are particularly run down, so that's very positive. Parent.

The thing I like about the estate is that you can hear them, you can see them all the time, so it's nice that they can play out in the sunshine...we're in a courtyard and the kids all communicate and play well together, so that's a good thing. Parent.

Two of the Peabody estates in which fieldwork was conducted were in central London, one being located in Westminster and the other in Islington. Access to affordable shops, amenities, transport and good-quality schools and services in these two areas was described positively by the parents.

There's loads of parks, loads of parks for like young kids, definitely. Parent.

I like the location, it's central. Because of the location we have many advantages, like close to schools, doctors, shopping, transport...our children they go to three different schools and maximum it's eight minutes walking distance, so that is a good thing. Parent.

There were however some more negative aspects about life on Peabody estates reported by a few of the parents. These concerns centred on a perceived lack of amenities for children on two estates and what was seen as the isolated nature of the estate situated in an outer London borough, where shops, schools and services were some distance away and public transport links were not seen as adequate. There was also some evidence of overcrowding from the fieldwork .

They are not really meant to be playing outside, but there's nothing really, nowhere else for them to go, apart from the other block that has a park, but sometimes that's not always possible for them because sometimes older ones come in and take over, so they get kind of get pushed out. Parent.

I've got three and my partner as well, there's five of us in total in a two bedroom, we've got the two babies, the two boys, in the bedroom with us, one cot either side of the room and my daughter's got her own room at the moment. We're up at least two or three times a night. Parent.

Most of parents' concerns about their children centred on their perceptions of the society in which they were living and what they perceived as the negative impact that society had on the life chances of their children. Four interrelated issues were reported:

- A lack of engaging activities for older children and teenagers.
- High rates of crime and anti-social behaviour.
- A lack of options and employment for teenagers leaving school.
- Children having distorted personal goals linked to local influences and to mass media.

Activities for children and young people ranged from community events organised by Peabody and residents' associations through to the provision of youth centres and activities for children organised by various charities, the boroughs and, in central London, by major cultural institutions. In the two central London estates, provision for young children was generally seen in positive terms, with access to services like children's centres being mentioned. However, parents in central London reported a lack of activities for older children, not in the sense that there were no opportunities or no services, but in the sense that there were not many services that older children and teenagers wished to engage with.

There's parks and that for kids, obviously younger kids, but when you get to the teenage years, there's nothing for them...so a lot of them are running around doing silly things. Parent.

... anyway my mate lives two doors away and she texts me and says they're doing such and such in the church, they are doing drama for the kids, they are doing computers for the kids and a few of the younger ones, nines, tens, elevens, are going in there. But it's very hard to make an older teenager go to a youth club, because my son, when I lived up the road a bit, there was a good little youth club that was run, as you say, 12-17 and they used to do football tournaments, they used to do snooker, the PlayStation on in there, but nine times out of ten, the kids would not go round there and I used to go 'Why don't you go round there, congregate somewhere safe, have a game of football' and they didn't go. Parent.

For us we are busy in our work and other stuff, for our children we have to find something that can use their time, not to be bored inside the house... very unhealthy for them. Parent.

The situation in central London, was not perceived to be one in which there was literally nothing for older children and teenagers to do. It was more a case of nothing being on offer that they actually wanted to do and as a consequence they did not engage. By contrast, on the outer London estate, there was perceived to be a general lack of activities for children of all ages.

The arguments presented by the parents about the consequences of a lack of positive activity for older children and teenagers were nuanced. Child poverty, from the perspective of these parents, existed in the sense of a poverty of ambition. Legitimate activity that would generate significant disposal income as, according to the parents, seen as out of reach by children and teenagers and also in some senses as 'unnecessary' because status was reinforced by material possessions rather than legitimate professional status. From the perspective of the parents, these influences existed in mass media but also in terms of lived experience, as children could also see that the local drug dealers had expensive cars, designer clothes and high-end mobile phones. The legitimate employment options that looked to be realistically available offered hard work with little opportunity for advancement and what looked like a comparatively very small financial reward. Exposure to these influences could, according to the parents, start at a very young age.

These kids want to get a pound quickly, they don't want to earn money, and I can say that about my generation as well...and they think 'well, I can go to college for two years and I can go to uni for another couple of years and then be set up and have a career, or I can start selling...work my way up through the ladder, sell a bit more harder drugs, get more money, then I'm driving around in an Audi'. Parent.

I see a couple of guys, I never see them there, they were selling drugs innit, and I just ask the guy like how much money you make on that innit and he started saying to me that he used to work, he got fired. . . so he needed a quick way to make money, he needed to buy this and that...and I was saying if you work you contribute to society and he was saying 'No, if you work you get like £2,000 and you pay tax'. Parent.

It is important to note that the parents in central London reported that Peabody estates worked hard to successfully contain anti-social behaviour. While there were still some incidents and those produced concerns when they happened, the management of physical security on the estates themselves tended to be viewed positively. Crime and anti-social behaviour nevertheless existed in the areas surrounding the central London Peabody estates. On the outer London estate, levels of criminality and anti-social behaviour appeared to be higher than in central London.

The concerns of parents centred on what they perceived to be a lack of holiday and after-school activity that would show their children a positive alternative to the local environment and society and which diverted them away from the potentially harmful aspects of that environment. Although the term was not used by the parents, much of what they said focused on a need for holiday and after-school activities that would socialise their children in accordance with the norms of wider society, rather than have them influenced by the 'harmful' social norms that existed on surrounding streets, where criminality and anti-social behaviour had become 'normal' behaviour.

The parents often had the view that schools were not effectively counteracting these influences. In particular, some parents referred to what they perceived as a lack of discipline and lack of teacher control in schools and a belief that their children were not always receiving sufficient encouragement to learn.

In the learning environment, I think there is limited authority for teachers and that makes a lot of difference. If I'm talking about my son, he's a very, very bright young man, very sharp, 14, but for some reason he hasn't been pushed enough I believe to motivate him and he's not really achieving what he is capable of. Parent.

You have to make your own chances to some extent, but they'll never have the same chances as children going to private schools, the education there is a lot different, most of the children who go to private schools will then go on to university whereas ours probably won't, they won't get the chance to do that moneywise, they'll go to a college or something like that. Parent.

A scarcity of relatively well-paid work was seen as providing further reinforcement of these problems. Children saw unemployed people, including their parents and older siblings, all around them. A tight job market was viewed as a difficult place in which to secure well-paid work by most of the parents.

Especially if you are young and you come out with like no education, like I went to uni and everything and I struggled to get a job, so imagine someone that does not do very well at school for whatever reason, does not go to college, uni and obviously it's tough, it's tough for anyone now and especially if you're a single mum and stuff like that, you've got virtually no chance of getting a job, because there's so many people out there now, they're obviously going to choose the person without a child, that's not been out of work a long time, because some single mums have been on income support for a long time, it's so difficult to get back into work. Parent.

But then is there jobs for them when they come out of university? I work for a department store and a lot of people coming out of university end up coming in to train as managers, that's probably not what they wanted to do, but at the end of the day that's all they can get. Parent.

A few parents regarded these issues as gendered. Positive male role models were at least present in the mass media, though many negative images from mass media and the local environment also existed. Positive female role models were very few and far between from the perspective of these parents.

As a young female as well, I think there's no good role models, like female role models as well, blokes have got like footballers or politicians or whatever and there's loads of like male role models but the female role models that young women look at and that, there was like a statistic that like sixty-eight per cent of young women wanted to be a page three model or a footballer's wife. Parent.

Another concern reported by parents was how easy it was for an older child's or teenager's life chances to be severely damaged by being caught committing even the lowest level of criminal acts. The perception was that once a teenager had a criminal record, the shutters of society came down and blocked access to legitimate economic activity. A teenage mistake that resulted in a criminal justice intervention was seen by some parents as stigmatising a child and was viewed as likely to push them further into criminality.

A lot of people these days, a lot of young people and their parents, people growing up, they have been criminalised already. You're growing up, you've got no qualifications, there's no jobs out there and now you're criminalised as well... you got no chance whatsoever basically of getting a job, so therefore what else are you going to do? You can sit at home and do nothing, or you can go out and earn a bit of money illegally, but in your eyes it has become like normal...if you talk to a group of like 17 and 18 year-olds on a corner selling a bit of puff [cannabis] like, making a bit from a bit of gear [drugs], they don't even look on that as like criminal activity. Parent.

The parents voiced concerns that services for children and young people in their areas were being closed down and that funding for schools was being cut. This was generally viewed as exacerbating the risks to older children and teenagers that existed.

I think that's all over the place, like youth clubs closing down... a lot of cutbacks going on everywhere. Parent.

You know there is quite a lot of good schools, but they seem to be really overrun at the minute, from when I speak to parents, friends of mine...there seems to be a lot of money draining out... Parent.

In summary, parents identified the following issues:

- For those living in central London amenities and services were thought to generally be good, though this was not true for the outer London estate.
- The condition of Peabody housing and the environment on Peabody estates was generally viewed positively.
- A lack of engaging activities outside school for older children and teenagers, interlinked with concerns about unrealistic expectations, poor self-image, the impact of mass media imagery, limited opportunities, school performance and local exposure to the instant and significant financial gains associated with crime. This created worries about the impact of the social environment on their children.

The views of frontline workers

The frontline workers interviewed for the research were people working within the estates where the focus groups with parents were held. This group of frontline workers represented some of the people to whom Peabody residents went to when they had a problem or needed help.

Frontline workers spoke about some issues that were not identified by the parents in the focus groups. One of the key issues from the perspective of frontline staff was limited skill in managing very restricted household budgets. Difficulties in managing money was associated by some frontline staff with the use of loan sharks and spiralling debt that families could not cope with. The impacts on children centred on material deprivation and on living in households in which the parent or parents were constantly under stress because of worries about how to manage, or failing to manage, on a restricted income.

The thing that shocks us most is financial capability, the lack of it. I think that's a theme that runs through families and it seems to be a huge barrier to getting people out of poverty and into work. So when we start working with families, you know trying to get them into work, we often uncover huge levels of debt and lots of need of awareness or how to manage money. **Frontline worker.**

Debt issues were also reported in relation to the experience of domestic violence by women. One of the elements within domestic violence and abuse was male control of the household finances. A woman and children escaping an abusive male could be confronted with debts that he had accumulated, or left with nothing because he had spent what money was available. This could leave women and children at risk of domestic violence with effectively no financial reserves or assets of any other kind.

Sometimes when people are in an abusive relationship and there is domestic violence in the home it seems to go hand in hand with the partner who is being abused not having any control over the finances. So they don't know what's being spent and they don't have much control over their own finances and so if they leave the family home, they are sort of starting from scratch, but there may be debts in their name. **Frontline worker.**

Like the parents in the focus groups, frontline staff did not report problems with the condition of Peabody housing. Overcrowding could be an issue and - unlike the parents - frontline staff drew associations between ethnic and cultural minorities and the tendency for households containing children to be overcrowded. Frontline staff also sometimes reported the view that larger, often ethnic minority, families had relatively less money for each child than smaller households. A child from some ethnic and cultural backgrounds, from the perspective of frontline staff, might be more likely to be experiencing overcrowding and a higher degree of material deprivation than at least some of the white children on the same estate.

...ethnic communities that culturally have a tendency of having larger families, that has an impact on child poverty because obviously if your family has six or four or five children. So if someone has a hundred pounds and two children, or a hundred pounds and six children, those are the sort of issues...families grow, but particularly [estate] is a largely Bengali community and in my experience unless you carry out these exercises that update information on the tenancies, you hardly get to know whether or not the household composition has changed or not, up until, for example, the residents approach us and say 'well, look we are overcrowded'. **Frontline worker.**

Frontline workers talked about migrants who had settled in the UK might have children whose spoken English was rather better than their own. This could place pressures on children who were used as interpreters when the parents tried to use support and other services. In addition, where no-one in the household had sufficient command of English to interact effectively with services, it could mean that parents, children and young people were not always getting all the help that was technically available to them. It was also difficult to take issue with service providers when a family's command of English was limited.

A lot of the families we work with are speakers of other languages and I think a lot of the children in those families are often at a disadvantage because they might have to take on responsibilities for the family...like acting as interpreter sort of thing at medical appointments. I think the family's access to services might be limited because of the lack of English spoken in the house, so that can affect the child in getting access to services, but when they do they can often have the burden of trying to manage things, because the parents don't speak any English.

Frontline worker.

Cultural difference could also produce tensions within families according to some of the frontline workers. In essence, this reflected the impact of the culture and nature of London, particularly central London, on the children and young people in migrant households, who started to absorb the vibrancy and the multicultural nature of the city around them.

They turn into Londoners, and for them suddenly it's ok to stay out till five, six pm when they are supposed to be home from school at three o'clock...

Frontline worker.

Frontline workers shared some of the concerns of the parents in the focus groups about what the wider environment might be doing to children and young people. There was seen to be a need for more diversionary activity for older children and teenagers that would keep them away from negative influences. The point that some parents made about there being a lack of positive activities with which older children wanted to engage, was echoed by some of frontline workers. However, frontline workers were also likely to identify an overall shortage of activities as an issue.

We talk about poverty in terms of finance, but there's also a poverty of aspiration...it's encouraging them to engage with opportunities and one of the things we've noticed is that young people... who've come from other countries as refugees have no problem in engaging with every opportunity you put their way. Clients who have been referred to us by, say, social services, say leaving care, will have a different attitude, will not recognise opportunities as being that, but might see them as an imposition. And it's a constant challenge to engage young people with realistic opportunities, I mean obviously you've got peer pressure from those around them, from stuff that's in the media and on telly about celebrity wealth and fame and so on, so I think there's some really important work to be done in developing things that are seen as cool but are a way of first step engagement, just getting young people doing something... **Frontline worker.**

As we know as a nation, nationally, there is an issue with kids and what they are able to tap into to stop them from committing crime and anti-social behaviour when they get to certain ages. And obviously the ages are getting younger and younger, where they are committing crime and anti-social behaviour. **Frontline worker.**

Those services capture some young people, but there are other young people who have not had the opportunity of being occupied and getting opportunities, who are falling into crime and anti-social behaviour. **Frontline worker.**

A few frontline workers also identified what they saw as a tendency for 'pilot' or short-term services for children and young people to appear and disappear in neighbourhoods. Services would be there for two or three years and then funding would cease, then another service would appear. This created uncertainties and a lack of continuity.

The problem is when you start, stop, start, stop, even the young people themselves will not have faith because they just wonder how long is that going to go on for, so there is limited incentive to commit. There is this group that is helping me get back into college or into vocational training but then the funding gets withdrawn and you're left in the lurch... **Frontline worker.**

A lack of positive role models for children and young people was also identified as an issue by frontline staff, though unlike the parents, they were not likely to see the issue in terms of mass media influences and were more likely to refer to what they perceived as an absence of positive role models closer to home. Views were mixed on this issue. Some frontline workers thought that there was something in the idea that being surrounded by worklessness 'normalised' the idea of being unemployed for long periods for children. However, others thought that exposure to workless people did not necessarily create attitudinal barriers to education, training and work in children or that, if such barriers were generated, that they could not be overcome. Most thought parental influence and encouragement were important.

You might be working with families who haven't ever had a model of employment in the family, you know haven't seen parents working and now they themselves are parents and they're not working. So there is a kind of reluctance, especially as there's a lot of anecdotal stuff that kind of puts people off getting into work because they hear scare stories of how it will mess up your benefits. **Frontline worker.**

But one of the issues that I notice in terms of you know, what part do the parents play, conflict in the home, you find that if you are a parent and you are suddenly telling your child 'go to work, get an education' and personally yourself you are not making an effort...so suddenly you lose respect... **Frontline worker.**

Again I think, yes some children will be disadvantaged, but I think family, parents, have a strong part to play in the success of their children, because I think there are many opportunities. **Frontline worker.**

There is something in it, I don't think it's as great as perhaps government would lead you to believe, I believe that there are a lot of people, who if they are shown a route, would take a route out of being workless and get back into work...I don't sign up so much to the idea of it being infectious. I think that there can be pockets of people who haven't been in work for a while and they've got into the habit of being workless, but I find it difficult to believe that it's infectious, you know that 'because this group of people don't work and I know them I'm not going to work'. . . I don't totally sign up to that. **Frontline worker.**

Frontline workers also talked about the impact of the physical environment of London on children's development. Perhaps the best way of phrasing this was a view among some of the workers that London restricted childhood because concerns about safety, including crime, as well as busy roads and other physical dangers, meant that parents could not let younger children out unsupervised. Only a relatively small number of Londoners have access to private gardens and so childhood, other than school or supervised after school or holiday activities, could mean a lot of time at home.

Children will grow up not as free as you would want, because naturally there's no open spaces, but also as children grow they see the environment, so there's no getting away from them seeing their older brothers or sisters standing on the corner, you know misbehaving, and you know certainly that will have an impact on their childhood. **Frontline worker.**

You can't go for a walk in the countryside, you know everything you do has to be supervised. So often either you are confined to the house or school and that can have an impact on children growing up...there's things outside, you can't just let them go. **Frontline worker.**

The frontline workers often talked about barriers to paid work and the role of paid work in addressing child poverty at greater length than the parents did. An absence of affordable childcare and some difficulties in accessing the 15 hours of free childcare now available to three and four years olds were viewed as major barriers to paid work for parents.

*Childcare is a definite. I get quite a lot of lone parents...who say to me 'I can only do part time work because I can't get anyone to pick up and drop my kids at school'. Again we try to refer them to agencies that can give them advice on that, but there is not that much that can be done really, as far as I can see, to overcome that problem. I think that quite a few of the lone parents that come to see me would be prepared to go back into work, but they're really concerned about what's going to happen to their children, that's a big barrier I think. **Frontline worker.***

Alongside childcare, barriers to paid work for parents that centred on the quality of work available were identified by the frontline workers. Much of the work that was available was perceived to be short-term, insecure, part-time and low-paid, making it difficult for parents to see what, if any, advantage it brought compared to reliance on benefits.

*At the moment I think that a problem is, and this is a general thing really, but there is a lot of part-time work around at the moment or temporary work. Now, the whole thing about getting them back into work is about trying to get them into sustainable work. A lot of employers, what they are doing at the moment is that they are saying 'this work is for a month' or 'this work is for how many weeks.' What they are actually doing is that they are reducing the risk to them...they see these types of jobs and think 'well, I'm not going to go for that, that's only a month', so what that does is actually reduces the chances of them getting into work. **Frontline worker.***

And then I think there's the whole thing about are there enough jobs. You know, are there enough suitable jobs? Because there's the cultural thing about getting people into a position where they are ready to apply for work and they have their skills, got their finances reasonably in order, got their childcare sorted out, but then what jobs are there for them to apply for? I think it's undeniable that there aren't enough jobs of the kind people need, you know flexible hours that will accommodate picking up children from school and things like that, ones in the local area...

Frontline worker.

Attitudinal barriers towards seeking paid work among parents were also talked about by frontline workers. These barriers were viewed as centred on confidence and self-belief among parents. Sometimes the issue was a lack of work experience, sometimes a lack of qualifications and sometimes past history. Frontline workers reported their belief that an expectation that employers would reject an application led some parents not to feel confident about applying for work or in interview situations.

I think the problems I have faced in helping people...there are drug problems, and also there's quite a high proportion of lone parents in this area, so the main problems for me are actually trying to motivate those people. Because a lot of them, because they have not worked for a while, either they feel that they are not capable of work, or they just don't want to work...but sometimes when people think that, when they come across as they don't want to work, I think it's a defence mechanism sometimes, because they feel they are going to be rejected, they don't want to play that game.

Frontline worker.

In summary, frontline workers identified the following issues:

- Families getting into debt because of difficulties in managing restricted finances.
- Women with children facing financial and debt problems when they escaped domestic violence.
- Greater risks of experiencing overcrowding and material deprivation for children in larger families that in the view of frontline workers were associated with specific cultural and ethnic minorities.
- A lack of engaging positive activity for children and young people, linked to concerns about children and young people becoming involved in anti-social behaviour and crime.
- A lack of positive role models in the sense of being surrounded by often workless people, though some frontline workers put greater emphasis on this than others.
- Concerns that the physical environment of London restricted the experience of childhood because safety concerns meant children had to be supervised if they were outside the family home.
- Barriers to paid work for parents that included affordable childcare, access to paid work that generated sufficient income and attitudinal barriers, including confidence and self-belief.

The views of experts in child poverty and social housing

The experts in child poverty and social housing interviewed for the research included people who had knowledge of the national picture and were also specialists on the situation within London. These respondents worked at a strategic and planning level and generally had little day to day contact with poor families or frontline services.

Housing conditions and costs had not been mentioned by the parents or the frontline staff living and working in Peabody estates. However, from the experts' perspective poor housing conditions had significant impact on child poverty in London as a whole. Two key issues were thought to be the quality of some of the private rented sector housing that was affordable to families relying on benefits and limited access to the social rented sector.

For people in the private rental sector especially, low-income families are hugely discriminated against by living in London. At the moment it makes it very hard, and a lot of families already find it very hard to afford private rental housing of a suitable quality within Housing Benefit. Expert.

[In some private rented sector housing] Exposed wires, people who have basically built an outhouse or shed, no proper heating and renting these out to people for £150-£200 a month. We're talking about appalling conditions. Expert.

Some of the experts also reported concerns about the age of much of the housing stock in London. Quite a lot of London's housing was viewed as approaching, or past, a hundred years old. This meant the available stock could be ill-suited to families. Both the private and social rented sectors also contained a lot of one and two bedroom flats, with larger homes in the private rented sector being both relatively scarce and expensive and homes with three or more bedrooms being very difficult to find in the social rented sector.

The impact of poor housing on health and well-being were noted by a few of the experts, though usually with reference to the same caveats attached by academic research on housing poverty, i.e. it is difficult to separate specific 'housing' effects from the known effects of poverty on the health and well-being of children. Academic ideas about area effects, including the idea of 'residualisation' (i.e. that an area can become additionally disadvantaged because workless and vulnerable people are concentrated there³²) were also reported by some experts in relation to poor housing conditions. Some experts also talked about the challenges raised by very high concentrations of child poverty in individual wards in some of the boroughs.

Poor housing is not the driver, it's often the symptom. There are issues around residualisation, certain factors there, because of the physical environment, it can compound the other effects, I think it can have that role... Expert.

For experts in social housing, the relative concentration of poverty in the social rented sector had created new challenges for all social landlords. As new residents in social housing were seen as increasingly being people who were facing sustained worklessness and sometimes had support needs, the traditional provision of good quality, secure and affordable housing for rent had become an insufficient response to their needs. Peabody has increasingly focused on community development and the well-being of residents on its estates and there is strong evidence that other housing associations and local authorities have followed a similar path³³, increasingly concerning themselves with the well-being of their residents as well as with housing management. The motivations for social landlords in taking this route lay both in their origins as providers of social housing designed to improve the lives of poorer people and also in the belief that tackling social problems helped them deliver their housing management role more effectively.

I would assert that successive governments have increasingly sought to target social housing and social housing assistance on the very poorest and so that's increased the problems of worklessness or residualisation and put a greater premium on neighbourhood and community investment work... as housing associations receive less and less government support in terms of capital grant to fund new homes and any sort of deficit grant/revenue support has long since disappeared they are moved into an environment that is far more commercial and business-like and they are properly now social businesses with an equal emphasis on both parts. And I think it's very clear that not only can you deliver your charitable or industrial providential outcomes, all that kind of activity, they can also make the rest of the day job of running the stock, running the organisation work much more efficiently. Expert.

This raised the question of whether the experience and situation of children and young people in poverty who are living outside social rented housing is more negative than those living within social housing in London. Child poverty, from this perspective, had what might be called a tenure dimension to it, because social landlords were assuming responsibility for tackling poverty and worklessness in their housing. This was not a role private rented sector landlords could be expected to adopt.

32. Atkinson, R. (2008) Gentrification, Segregation and the Vocabulary of Affluent Residential Choice, *Urban Studies*, 45, 12, pp. 2626–2636.

33. National Housing Federation (2008) *In Business for Neighbourhoods: The Evidence: The scale and scope of housing associations activity beyond housing* London: National Housing Federation.

What might be termed another 'area' effect identified by the experts centred on the very visible discrepancies between rich and poor in London. This linked to some academic ideas about the difficulties of community development in a context in which most of the people in an area are either very rich or very poor³⁴, but was also thought to have negative effects on the self image of children and teenagers.

In terms of the reality for children in London, a lot of the social aspects tend to be more noticeable, because for children in London, if you go down to Tower Hamlets for example, they can look across the river and look at Canary Wharf and look at all the people in their Prada suits paying £10 for a coffee, the relational aspects of it are much more amplified. Expert.

It's going to have the highest extremes, in terms of extreme affluence and extreme poverty kind of next door and it's hollowed out in some locations, Chelsea and Westminster, the whole middle, the socioeconomic middle is almost completely absent and I think that creates problems, this is sort of cod psychology, but I imagine that could exacerbate your feelings of exclusion and feeling that it simply isn't fair, because you're surrounded by extreme wealth and you're in extreme poverty and I would have thought that would exacerbate people feeling there is no conventional route out. Expert.

The relative cost of living in London was also an issue identified by the experts. It was thought that poorer families containing children would often struggle to meet their daily living costs and this included some families in which one or both parents were in full or part time paid work.

Families who live below the poverty line, have a not much worse time of it, but because of the sheer cost of things in London like getting the tube, you know food's more expensive, they tend to be really, really hard up. Expert.

The basic issue is that living costs are very high, so that impacts on housing, therefore knocks back on quality of housing and the amount of living space people have as well as then the proportion of people's income that is spent on housing. . . the barriers that are there for parents wishing to work. . . which are quite complex, on one level it's about whether the kind of wage that a parent will be able to earn will cover the costs of living in London and I think that pushes the threshold of making work pay higher than elsewhere. Also because travel times are longer in London, if you are living in cheaper housing and commuting, that means the time you need for childcare is longer so the cost is higher. Expert.

Like the frontline workers, the experts spent some time discussing the barriers to paid work for the parents of children in poverty. Childcare was again identified as a major issue by the expert respondents, who also identified issues with access to the 15 hours of free childcare for three and four year-olds in London.

...private nurseries, who deliver a lot of these free hours, the way that they make their businesses sustainable is by charging parents for extra hours...but if the parent is working full time, they might buy an extra 20 hours or 25 hours or whatever, so providers can be sustainable. The problem then in poorer areas is that fewer parents are able to, or wish to, buy those extra hours, so there's kind of an issue there for providers... there's market issues there. Expert.

Issues were also said to exist around access to informal childcare. London in general and central London in particular were characterised by high degree of population churn, people moving into and out of London in large numbers and also migrating within the city. This could mean that families were often out of the range of the support networks who might provide informal childcare, such as grandparents, uncles, aunts, adult siblings and so forth. When working full time in London a parent or parents would often have to assemble a 'package' of childcare that involved formal childcare and informal childcare; this was difficult when informal childcare was not accessible.

London has the lowest concentrations of informal childcare in the country. Because you've got the largest concentration of international and within-country migrants... yet at the same time it's got the most expensive childcare in the country, childcare providers feel the fact that it's more expensive is out of their control, related to premises cost and supply... so parents are effectively stuck often between having very few support networks, family and friends and very high cost of formal childcare, coupled with a longer commute and expensive transport costs. They actually need more hours to do the same job. And we think this is why the female employment rate in London is lower than anywhere else in the country. Expert.

Experts also talked about the physical environment of London, drawing attention to a lack of green space in some areas and concerns about the physical safety of younger children and the consequent need to ensure they were supervised. Unlike other respondents, the experts raised questions about whether the perceived risks of crime were more important in understanding parental responses than the actual level of crime. From this perspective, media images of crime and a violent gang culture existing in parts of London were as important as direct experience of crime in making parents want to keep younger children at home.

34. Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2011) 'A Difficult Mix: Issues in achieving socioeconomic diversity in deprived UK neighbourhoods' *Urban Studies*, Published online before print March 8, 2011, doi: 10.1177/0042098010396233.

In summary, the experts identified the following issues:

- Poor housing conditions affecting many poor families.
- Possibly worse housing and neighbourhood conditions for some poor families living in the private rented sector in comparison with families living in social rented housing, particularly as many social landlords undertook a community development and sustainment role.
- An ageing and sometimes unsuitable rented housing stock in London and a shortage of affordable homes for larger families.
- Negative impacts on community development and the self-image of poor children and young people from extremes of poverty and wealth being next to one another.
- Generally high living costs in London.
- Barriers to accessing formal and informal childcare, creating an obstacle to paid work for parents.
- Parents not wanting to let younger children out unsupervised in London.

Different perspectives on child poverty in London

Different levels of experience brought different perceptions of child poverty in London. From a research perspective, in which the secondary statistical analysis in this chapter can be included, child poverty in London exists at a relatively high level compared to much of England and the wider UK. The cost of living in London is high and there is evidence that child poverty is particularly concentrated among some cultural and ethnic minorities and to some extent within social housing as a tenure.

The experts interviewed for this research added detail and nuance to the picture of child poverty in London that can be derived from academic research and the large-scale datasets on child poverty. Their interpretations of the issues did not differ radically from what the statistical and research evidence suggests. Experts drew attention to housing conditions, housing affordability, the potential for tension in communities comprised largely of very affluent or poor people and the generally high costs of living in London. Attention was also focused on barriers to paid work by the experts, who highlighted issues including access to sufficient formal and informal childcare.

As the fieldwork moved closer to the direct experience of child poverty the nature of what was emphasised by respondents began to change. There was not any actual discrepancy with the descriptions of child poverty provided by statistics, research and expert opinion, but frontline workers and parents tended to pay less attention to material deprivation and were more concerned about negative effects from the society that surrounded poor children and teenagers. For parents, the London immediately outside their homes and the Peabody estates was a potentially hostile place for children and teenagers and contained many potentially negative influences. The emphasis that frontline workers placed on the need for positive activity to divert children away from the surrounding streets reflected a similar concern.

The crime in areas around the central London estates was perceived as presenting an accessible, financially rewarding, alternative to children and young people who were seen – and who saw themselves – as having only very limited chances of accessing a legitimate career. As noted, there were more direct problems with crime and anti-social behaviour on the outer London estate. Education was not always seen as providing a viable route to success and what legitimate paid work was available did not seem to offer much financial reward compared to the criminal activity children and teenagers saw.

Routes into criminal activity were perceived – by parents and frontline workers – as beginning in anti-social behaviour and low-level crime, which in turn was thought to be linked to a lack of engaging positive activities being available to older children and teenagers and to failures in education. Beyond this, some of the parents thought that mass media filled their children's heads with images of an alternative lifestyle based on illegal activity and instant materialistic gain that made a legitimate career seem unattractive. Frontline workers and experts did not ascribe the same level of negative influence to mass media as the parents, with frontline workers often citing a lack of positive local role models as an issue.

These findings are in line with those of other research. Evidence has been increasing that the UK has become a very economically divided society and also a country in which social mobility has started to constrict. In 2010, a major review of social inequality conducted for the then Government Equalities Office concluded:

Many of the differences we examine cumulate across the life cycle, especially those related to people's socio-economic background. We see this before children enter school, through the school years, through entry into the labour market, and on to retirement, wealth and resources for retirement, and mortality rates in later life. Economic advantage and disadvantage reinforce themselves across the life cycle, and often on to the next generation. By implication, policy interventions to counter this are needed at each life cycle stage³⁵.

35. Hills, J. et al (2010) An anatomy of economic inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equality Panel London: Government Equalities Office, p. 386.

In 2009, Joseph Rowntree funded review of poverty research and policy in the UK over the last century reported the following findings:

These studies have concluded that many aspects of contemporary 'social evils' appear to have come about not just because some groups in society have been excluded from recent general prosperity (though there has certainly been much of that), but because the very nature of that prosperity has been in certain respects deformed, corrosive of interpersonal and communal ties, even pathological in its influence on individual and collective human behaviour³⁶.

This findings from this research, drawing on a review of the existing data, discussions with parents, front-line workers and experts, present a picture of child poverty in London that is as much about constraint of the options available to poor children and young people as it is about material deprivation. The next chapter of this report reviews the research base and draws on the opinions of the research respondents to discuss what can be done to counteract this social problem and the role that Peabody can undertake in tackling child poverty.

3 Views on tackling child poverty

Introduction

This chapter of the report looks at different viewpoints on how best to tackle child poverty on Peabody estates and across London. The chapter begins with an overview of the child poverty strategy of the current government, before moving on to look at the research evidence and the views of parents, frontline workers and experts. This chapter concludes with a discussion of the findings.

Viewpoints on the range of services needed

The Government view

The Government's strategy A New Approach to Child Poverty is described as placing a greater emphasis on improving the life chances of children, teenagers and parents in poverty, and directing poor families away from what is interpreted as a 'dependence' on benefits. The strategy is described as 'strengthening families', 'encouraging responsibility' and 'promoting work', while also providing support to most vulnerable families.

We plan to tackle head-on the causes of poverty which underpin low achievement, aspiration and opportunity across generations. Our radical programme of reform to deliver social justice will focus on combating worklessness and educational failure and preventing family and relationship breakdown with the aim of supporting the most disadvantaged groups struggling at the bottom of society³⁷.

The reforms include:

- Retention of provision of free early education for 3-4 year-olds and disadvantaged two year olds (allowing parents to work).
- Continued support for the 'care to learn' scheme for teenage parents, facilitating access to training and further education and eventually to paid work.
- Promotion of flexible working practices among employers that can fit around childcare responsibilities.
- Supporting the Money Advice Service to give free financial and debt management advice to low-income families and maintaining debt advice services provided by the Citizen's Advice Bureaux.
- Promoting credit unions to reduce the risks associated with loan sharks and unscrupulous lenders who charge very high interest rates to families in poverty.
- Promotion of support services for vulnerable families, with a particular emphasis on families facing multiple difficulties such as poverty, truancy, anti-social behaviour and crime being committed by children in the household.
- Specifically targeted funding on poor schoolchildren, including the Fairness Premium, that is intended to improve educational outcomes.

The strategy is a document that covers the entire response of Government to child poverty. Much of what it talks about is centred on a wider process of welfare reform designed to maximise take-up of paid work. The proposed modification of the benefits system is intended to ensure that paid work will generate sufficient income to mean that there is no financial penalty from entering employment and at least some financial gain. This will be partially achieved through welfare reform and partially through other measures such as raising the personal allowance threshold on income tax.

36. Harris, J. (2009) 'Social evils' and 'social problems' in Britain, 1904–2008: Summary Report York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation, p. 18.

37. HM Government (2011) A New Approach to Child Poverty: Tackling the Causes of Disadvantage and Transforming Families Lives London: The Stationery Office, p.8.

The existence of child poverty in households in which one or both parents are in work is acknowledged and there is an emphasis on using benefits and tax credits in such a way as to always leave families in paid work financially better off. In addition, services that can facilitate access to work, help parents sustain paid work where they need support and the provision of training in basic skills will be increased.

One way of summarising the ethos behind the strategy is to look briefly at one scheme, 'Working Families Everywhere' which is a group of three pilot projects in Westminster, Hull and Blackpool³⁸. The project gives workless families a 'champion' who is intended to act as an employment access support worker, helping a parent or parents address their support needs, boosting self-confidence and facilitating access to paid work. Such approaches, facilitating access to paid work for parents in poor families, are the core of the current government's strategic response to child poverty.

Research evidence

Policy interventions to address child poverty have taken two broad forms over the last 150 years. The first form of intervention was a direct attempt to meet material need by raising incomes and improving housing. Massive public sector and charitable investment, of which Peabody was a part, began to replace the slums of the Nineteenth Century, provide decent living conditions and adequate sanitation to the poor in London and elsewhere. Alongside this, free access to public sector funded education was introduced for poor children. Coupled with this was the introduction of a fully developed welfare benefits system that provided for the basic financial needs of families in poverty and ensured – for the first time – that children were adequately clothed and fed. Eventually this was followed by free universal healthcare. Cumulatively these housing, education, health and social policy interventions led to the near eradication of extremes of child poverty in the sense of the worst forms of material deprivation.

Economic, political and social change began to undermine what had been achieved in addressing material deprivation among children during the 1980s. The loss of many relatively well-paid jobs in industry, coupled with the election of a succession of governments that regarded the welfare state as overblown and which were determined to cut welfare spending, started to lead to increases in child poverty. Rates of income deprivation among households containing children have doubled since 1979 and although interventions by the 1997-2010 Labour governments did start to bring that level down, rates remain much higher than they were in the 1970s.

Extremes of child poverty, in terms of the material deprivation a Victorian would have seen walking around some parts of London, no longer exist. Nevertheless, relative deprivation at a level that has measurable negative effects on the health, development and well-being of children remains a reality³⁹.

The political consensus in the UK over the last 20 years has been that it is not a realistic option to return levels of expenditure on social housing to the levels last seen in the early 1970s, or to significantly increase the levels of benefits and tax credits available to low income families. This led to the second series of interventions which are centred on improving life chances for poor children and teenagers and for their parents. In essence, these interventions have been focused on promoting the employability of poor parents and the future employability of their children. A great many interventions have been attempted prior to those being introduced by the current government, some focused on specific areas, some focused on specific groups.

A central part of the social policy of the 1997-2010 Labour governments was to enhance the life chances of children and young people through promoting better educational outcomes in poorer areas. Key policy initiatives included the Sure Start Local Programmes which were part of the Every Child Matters strategy which aimed to provide free part-time education for 3-4 year olds and increase provision of childcare⁴⁰ and the Connexions service which was intended to promote good educational, training and employment outcomes for young people through providing advice and information⁴¹. It is important to note that these initiatives were preceded by similar attempts by the 1979-1997 Conservative governments to overcome educational disadvantage among poorer young people, such as the development of Foyer services⁴².

These interventions were designed to promote self-esteem, giving poor children a sense that they were a part of a society that valued them. The language adopted by the 1997-2010 Labour governments, of promoting the 'social inclusion' of poor parents and children has fallen out of fashion with the 2010 change in government. However, there remains a belief at national policy level that securing paid work promotes self-respect, addressing the concern that poverty undermines the self-image of children.

38. <http://www.workingfamilieseverywhere.com>

39. Hirsch, D. (2006) *What will it take to end child poverty? Firing on all cylinders* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation. Hills, J. et al (2010) *An anatomy of economic inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equality Panel* London: Government Equalities Office.

40. Ellison, S., Hicks, L., and Latham, P. (2006) *Cost Effectiveness. A Synthesis of Local Evaluation Findings: National Evaluation of Sure Start* London: Institute for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues.

41. See Nicoletti, C. and Berthoud, R. (2010) *The Role of Information, Advice and Guidance in Young People's Education and Employment Choices* London: Department for Education.

42. See Anderson, I. and Quilgars, D. (1995) *Foyers for Young People: Evaluation of a Pilot Initiative* York: Centre for Housing Policy.

The mixed success of these interventions to promote employability has sometimes been ascribed to the delivery of the wrong types of service⁴³ and sometimes to a failure to allow for the wider context in which poverty occurs. The arguments around context can be summed up in a criticism of policy that sees access to employment as centred on the work readiness of labour supply, i.e. what some research identifies as a mistaken 'belief' that if people are made 'work ready' jobs will become accessible. The criticism of this approach made by research has been the obvious one, i.e. the local and national economy needs to be creating sufficient jobs and, if it is not, then it really does not matter how 'work ready' the population is, they will not all get into employment.

There is also a more nuanced criticism of interventions designed to maximise access to paid work that is centred on the quality of work available in the British economy. Some academics argue that the UK labour market has become characterised by 'hypercasualization', which in summary means that relatively well-paid, full time work, accessible to people without higher education has become much less common. Many of the factories, mines and other industries that, in particular, provided relatively well-paid work to semi-skilled and skilled manual labour (mainly men) in the 1960s and 1970s have gone. What has replaced these industries are 'service sector' jobs that tend to be comparatively poorly paid, part-time and less secure, jobs that were more traditionally taken up by women⁴⁴. In essence, work that generates only low incomes, both because it is not well paid and because it is only part-time, is much more common now than relatively well-paid, full time jobs. This means that securing work has less of an effect on child poverty than was once the case, getting a job does not mean there is not the relative increase in income that there once would have been.

Striking a balance between interventions designed to improve the life chances of parents and the life chances of children and teenagers and addressing immediate material need has arguably been something of a difficulty for UK public policy. It is arguable – and the current government's child poverty strategy is grounded in this idea – that an overemphasis on attempting to meet the material need of poor children and families has led to a neglect of the social mobility of poor children. There is clear evidence that the 1997–2010 Labour governments reduced material child poverty, but that the social mobility, the life chances, of poor children actually worsened⁴⁵. Conversely, an overemphasis on promoting paid work among individuals, essentially trying to enhance access to the labour market to address child poverty, arguably has limited effects on child poverty if there is not enough work and, equally crucially, if there is not enough adequately paid work⁴⁶. Table 3.1 provides a broad summary of existing research.

Clearly, there are arguments in favour of both kinds of policy intervention. The research suggests that there is no simple 'quick fix' to child poverty in the UK because child poverty is linked to many different factors. The level and nature of this social problem is also closely linked to strategic level policy ranging from UK wide housing and urban policy through to health and social policy. Yet the research also suggests that, despite the complex interrelationships, there are policy interventions under both of the two broad approaches to child poverty that have delivered at least some successes. Finding the correct balance of services and looking at the interrelationships between those services remains a challenge and the report now considers the opinions of parents, frontline workers and experts about what is needed on Peabody estates and across London.

Table 3.1: Summary of existing research on child poverty policy interventions

Intervention	Strengths	Limitations
Reduce material need through spending on social housing, education and welfare system	Addresses extremes of child poverty. Ameliorates impact of poverty on child health, development and well-being	Viewed as expensive. May not address all effects of relative deprivation. May not address differences in life chances for poorer children.
Maximise access to paid work for parents. Enhance life chances of children and young people through maximising their chances of employability as adults.	Attempts to address poor social mobility/ life chances of families and children. Avoids reliance on welfare benefits. May promote self-esteem and well-being	Dependent on extent and nature of work available.

43. See Nicoletti, C. and Berthoud, R. (2010) *The Role of Information, Advice and Guidance in Young People's Education and Employment Choices* London: Department for Education.

44. Jordan, B. (1996) *A Theory of Poverty and Social Exclusion* Cambridge: Policy Press.

45. Dorling, D. (2010). Mind the gap: New Labour's legacy on child poverty, Poverty, *Journal of the Child Poverty Action Group*, 136, pp.11-13.

46. Dorling, D. (2010) 'Indenture': labour for miserable reward, a fifth of all households, *Renewal*, 18(1/2), 59-66.

The views of parents on Peabody estates

As was noted in Chapter 2, the parents were particularly concerned about the effects of the wider environment in which their children were growing up. Their opinions about what needed to be done to tackle child poverty centred on both modifications to existing services and the provision of new and additional services.

In relation to existing services, parents talked about four main modifications to service provision that were required. The first was a greater degree of teacher control and a higher level of discipline, with children being 'pushed' to achieve more in school than was the case at present. The second was enhancements to policing in their neighbourhoods, with more control of street crime being a particular concern. Parents also mentioned a need for more childcare to enable parents with younger children to take up paid work. Finally, the provision of information and advice services, including support being provided to families whose first language was not English, was thought to be an area where service provision could be extended.

It would be useful, because when the girls were going to school, I wanted to go back to work and I had got help through that [advice service] but a lot of people don't know what's available to them and also we people who speak different languages and I've spoken to a few, one or two go to something that Peabody offers to help with the language and learn English. Parent.

The parents tended to want more activities for older children and teenagers that would divert them away from potentially harmful influences and towards more productive and meaningful activity when they were outside school. As was noted in the previous chapter, emphasis was placed on a need for services that would engage older children and teenagers. Parents did not tend to be that specific about exactly what this might entail, but broad references were made to the following types of services:

- Apprenticeships, although the parents stressed that these should be 'proper' apprenticeships, in the traditional sense of the term, providing what was in effect 'on the job' training with a tangible qualification at the end of the process. Lower level and short-term activity, such as voluntary work and work experience, were viewed with some degree of cynicism by some parents as not 'leading anywhere'.
- Arts-based projects, with emphasis being placed on music as a way to engage older children and teenagers, though it is important to note that the parents that mentioned this talked specifically about facilitating musical composition and providing studio facilities for young people to make their own music to allow self-expression.

Some parents thought there was a role for Peabody in promoting more engaging activities for children and teenagers. A few parents thought there was sometimes an issue with residents' associations on the Peabody estates being orientated towards older people. Representation of parents and of teenagers in these associations was thought by some parents to be a way in which activities arranged on estates could be more orientated towards children and teenagers. On the outer London estate, community development and activity provision were both viewed as poor.

I just think there should be more, a lot more for the kids. I mean the tenants' association is all the old people, all the old people that live here, that moan about kids, it needs changing, it does need changing. Their kids have grown up and flown the nest, so really I think, the children, their parents should be on the tenants' association I think, a lot more input, there's a lot of young families. Parent.

As noted in the previous chapter, parents' concerns really centred on their capacity to counteract what they saw as the potentially hostile environment in which their children were growing up. As was noted earlier, in central London, this was not a reference to the Peabody estates themselves, which tended to be viewed positively and as places in which serious efforts were made to prevent crime and anti-social behaviour, but the streets and the city surrounding those estates. On the outer London estate, there were thought to be more direct problems of crime and anti-social behaviour. The focus groups appeared to show a real anxiety about keeping children and teenagers away from what were perceived as the potentially harmful influence around them.

There's something missing, something gone wrong with this society as a whole, that's out there now, up to sort of twenties, there's something that's gone drastically wrong, for them to have the attitude they have and it's pretty much awful out there, awful. Parent.

The parents were not of the view that everything rested on service provision. There was a view that the level of parental commitment to children was also important in increasing life chances. With the right backing and support from parents, it was felt that outcomes for children and teenagers could be better.

My son's sixteen, so they've just done their GCSEs, you know there's about seven or eight of them that I've been speaking to...and they all know where they want to go, you know, but they're just, well I wouldn't say lucky, maybe their parents are behind them, they come from better stronger families and they've stayed on that right track and these kids probably will do well. Parent.

In summary, the parents reported the view that:

- There was a need for enhancement of discipline in schools and a greater emphasis on pushing children to learn, also for an increased police presence, more affordable childcare and expansion of advice and information services.
- Providing meaningful and productive activities for older children and teenagers for when they were outside school or after leaving school was a priority. These services needed to offer something that was tangible and that children and teenagers wanted to engage with.
- Parental responsibility was seen as important alongside a requirement for increased and enhanced services.

The views of frontline workers

Frontline workers shared some of the views of parents about what sort of services were needed for children and teenagers, particularly in relation to an increased provision of productive activity for when children were outside school or had just left school. The frontline workers also identified other service needs which centred on environmental improvement and also on advice and support services for parents.

As described in Chapter 2, the frontline workers shared the perception of parents that productive activities had to take more account of what children and teenagers wanted to do. One worker expressed this difficulty in terms of the outreach provided by some of London's major cultural institutions, all of which were, of course, arts and media-based. These activities sometimes had quite a low level of response from older children and teenagers because of what some workers interpreted as a 'middle class' focus to the activities they offered. This reflected what some of the parents said, that children were not uninterested in art, but it had to be their own art that meant something to them, the main example given by the parents being the provision of music studios that children could use.

One service had adopted a 'coaching' model that emphasised choice and control for teenagers. This enabled them to pursue their own wishes and goals, replacing what had been seen as a more directive approach. More generally, frontline staff reported a view that the way to overcome low take-up of activities was to give older children and teenagers a voice in service design.

*It's no good if you haven't worked out what is beneficial for the kids. It's no good setting up this big old singing and dancing thing which the kids don't want to do, it's a waste, so it's trying to identify what they want to do and is it feasible for us to provide it. We're not able to say yes we can definitely do that, but if we get the ideas, then we know what we need to be looking into. **Frontline worker.***

Like some parents, some frontline workers thought there could be role for Peabody in promoting greater engagement of parents, older children and teenagers in community life. Some frontline staff reported the view that things were already moving in the right direction on some Peabody estates and that this should be further encouraged.

*A lot of estates do have tenants' associations but they are in that sort of old school way of thinking where they only deal with certain client groups, a lot of them are older. A lot of what we are doing at the moment across the board is trying to encourage the diverse part of the estate as well as the younger ones to get involved and to help provide support you know for activities for our young people. **Frontline worker.***

A few frontline staff reported the view that the environment in which children and teenagers were growing up was not always beneficial to their self-confidence. This was not about the perceived risks of that environment, but about its appearance. The on-going physical improvements that Peabody made to its estates were seen as important in enhancing a sense of pride in where one lived and, by extension, promoting optimism and a sense of self-worth in individuals. The idea behind this was that people feel more unhappy and less optimistic in places that are physically unattractive.

*The environment can also cause lots of problems to you, when you come to your house if you look out the window and all you see is grey, dark, buildings boarded up blocks, this that and the other, it does not give you motivation towards doing anything, you see what I'm saying? And it's about brightening up your areas and feeling confident...confident, within yourself, that 'you know what, looks bright out there, alright things aren't going well but I've got a plan'. **Frontline worker.***

This was a minority view, but it is perhaps worth briefly noting that there is research evidence that environment does have a tangible impact on mental health and well-being. Mental health research has used the idea of what are sometimes called 'toxic neighbourhoods' to explore the effects of living in an area that is physically unattractive and which may also feel unsafe, on the recovery of patients leaving psychiatric units as well as on the general mental health of the population living in such areas⁴⁷.

47. Pleave, N. with Wallace, A. (2011) Demonstrating the Effectiveness of Housing Support Services for People with Mental Health Problems: A Review London: National Housing Federation.

Frontline workers also stressed the need for good quality information, advice and support services for families. Reference was made to the cuts in publicly funded services that were on-going which were seen as a concern (see Chapter 2), but frontline workers in central London still saw the environment in which they worked as one which was rich in services. There was a need, from the perspective of workers in central London, to support families who required help in accessing the range of supports that were available. There were thought to be issues here in relation to families whose first language was not English, but more generally the complexity and diversity of service provision was perceived as being difficult for many families to navigate.

*I think circumstances can knock you down and make it harder for you, but it's about information, giving people opportunity and for us to find out much more about where the problems lie, look at the source of the problems – is it lack of information, is it lack of education... we know we've got a low income, let's identify who those are and find out, 'Do you know about this? Do you need the support? Do you need the help? If you don't, do you feel you have the right channels, if your child needs to do this, what do you know about what the child needs to do to get there? And if you don't, would you like more information?' Yes, it is hard out there, but there are success stories. **Frontline worker.***

On the outer London estate a basic lack of amenities and activities for children and physical distance from services of all sorts as well as poor transport links were described as major concerns by frontline workers. Peabody was in the process of introducing some specific interventions to try to counteract these problems, such as the recent appointment of a community development worker.

Frontline staff also made the case for extending support for parents with dependent children and teenagers who had left school to access education, training and paid work. This included services that helped bolster parents' self-confidence, which was perceived by some frontline staff as an obstacle to job-seeking, as sometimes job applications would not be submitted on an expectation of rejection and some people would find interview situations difficult. Alongside this, frontline staff argued in favour of more provision of affordable childcare, which was also perceived as a significant barrier to work.

In summary, the frontline workers reported views that:

- There was a need to develop more productive activity for children and teenagers when they were out of school or had recently left school, this activity had to be based around what attracted children and teenagers and there was a need to build their participation into service design in order to achieve this. Experiments were being undertaken with giving more choice and control to older children and teenagers to try to improve engagement.
- Environmental improvement could facilitate gains in self-esteem and have a positive effect on children and young people.
- There was an on-going need for advice and support services. While cuts were a concern, central London remained a service-rich environment, but was also a service environment that families might need help to successfully navigate. On an outer London estate there were thought to be too few services and transport difficulties in reaching those that were available.
- Services that supported parents and teenagers who recently left school into education, training and employment and more access to affordable childcare were advocated as ways of improving access to paid work. Emphasis was placed on boosting the self-confidence of parents and children who had just left school.

The views of experts on poverty and social housing

The experts interviewed for the research focused considerable attention on the forthcoming welfare reforms, something that received little attention from parents or frontline workers. The upper limit on family income from benefits allowable under the new Universal Credit system (the Household Benefit Cap) that will replace current benefits was the main focus of the experts' attention.

From 2013 the benefit payments that are made to individual households will be 'capped' at a level that is similar to the average earned income after tax and National Insurance for a working household. At the time of writing this is approximately £26,000. If a benefit reliant household contains someone in work, who is eligible for Working Tax Credit (WTC), the cap does not apply. It is believed by central government that this will increase work incentives, because the level of benefit they receive will often increase once they are in paid work and claim WTC.

The experts raised concerns that the Household Benefit Cap (HBC) would adversely affect poor families living in London at a higher rate than elsewhere in the UK. Some of the experts argued against the imposition of the HBC on the basis that it would particularly harm larger households containing several children and on the basis that it made insufficient allowance for the high costs of living in London. Experts drew attention to what they perceived as a negative impact on children from cultural and ethnic minorities in London, as the largest families were viewed as coming from those groups.

This is a politically contentious point, so it is worth briefly reviewing the Government's own calculations. Statistical projections by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) suggest that approximately 80% of the households that will be negatively affected by the new cap will contain three or more children. Overall, DWP estimates that 90% of the households who will lose money when benefits are capped at the average earned income after tax and National Insurance will contain children. DWP estimates that some 50,000 households will lose money nationally, of which some 45,000 will contain children. DWP estimates also suggest an average loss in income to these households of some £93 per week. Table 3.2 summarises the projections made of the impact of the benefits cap by DWP. As can be seen, some 40% of households will lose up to £50 a week, 25% will lose £50-£100 and 35% will lose more than £100⁴⁸.

Table 3.2: DWP Projections of the Impact of the Household Benefit Cap

Size of loss (£ per week)	Less than £50 per week	Between £50 and £100 per week	Between £100 and £150 per week	More than £150 per week
Proportion of all households losing income under Household Benefit Cap rules	40%	25%	20%	15%

Source: DWP (2011) Household Benefit Cap Equality impact Assessment London: DWP.

A few of the experts took the view that these figures were underestimates and that not enough attention had been focused on the specific effects on poor families in London. Some homelessness charities and organisations have projected that increases in family homelessness will result from the HBC changes, particularly in London. It is also argued that poor families living in the private rented sector in central will be forced to migrate to low quality private sector accommodation in outer London⁴⁹. Some of the experts shared this view.

Again, this is a politically contentious point so it is worth reviewing all perspectives. The research evidence suggest it is as yet unclear what the overall impact of the changes to the Local Housing Allowance (LHA) system of Housing Benefit (HB) will be in either the short or the longer term. A complex set of factors could affect how the private rented market responds, both in terms of the supply of, and demand for, lettings to new HB claimants; and also how the landlords and HB claimants of existing tenancies respond following the LHA changes. For private rented sector markets to react in some of the ways which have been suggested might require a degree of choice for landlords and flexibility within the market that may not always be available, particularly in the current economic climate. The parts of the private rented sector that house people claiming HB tend to set their rents in relation to benefit levels, essentially because their market is people on HB, not those on earned incomes who live in the PRS who often opt for more expensive, higher quality housing. Private landlords who might wish to withdraw from letting to HB claimants may not easily obtain alternative types of tenant.

Conversely, the differences between the old and new levels of HB may be more significant in London. A small difference can potentially (albeit with adverse consequences to disposable household income) be covered by other benefits, but a larger difference between old and new levels might be unaffordable. This difference in levels will be greatest in London⁵⁰.

More generally, private landlords are motivated in a range of different ways, and many are not 'rational operators' in a purely economic sense. Landlords may be prepared to accept a fall in rental income from existing tenants, for example, since a common strategy employed for keeping 'good' tenants is not to raise the rent following the creation of a tenancy. Thus profit maximisation may be less important than 'turnover minimisation', although the two are of course not necessarily mutually exclusive. 'Buy-to-let' landlords, for example, often invest in residential property to let as a form of pension planning, and because they are future-oriented can be prepared to accept a 'break even' level of rental income, or perhaps make a sustainable level of loss in some instances. Other landlords, however, perhaps recent entrants into the private rented market, may be highly geared and unable to accept a drop in rental income without significant repercussions for their mortgage repayments⁵¹.

48. DWP (2011) Household Benefit Cap Equality impact assessment London: DWP.

49. Lister, S.; Reynolds, L. and Webb, K. (2011) The Impact of Welfare Reform Bill measures on affordability for low income private renting families London: Shelter.

50. In this respect the size of the difference between the 50th percentile LHA rates and the new 30th percentile rates will be important, since a relatively small difference between the two suggests that landlords and tenants may come an accommodation more easily. Based on March 2011 figures by the Valuation Office Agency, for example, the mean difference between the 50th and 30th percentile LHA Shared Accommodation Rate (SAR) was £3.29 per week in Yorkshire and Humber (the region with smallest difference), whereas it was £9.06 per week in Greater London (the region with the largest difference). The variation in these amounts, respectively equivalent to 6.2 per cent and 17.0 per cent of the IS/JSA under 25 personal allowance, suggest that the changes to the LHA could impact most significantly on the PRS market within Greater London.

51. Rugg, J. and Rhodes, D. (2008) The Private Rented Sector: its contribution and potential, York: Centre for Housing Policy

Both in terms of material deprivation and access to adequate housing in the private rented sector, the experts were arguing for at least maintaining current benefit levels paid to poor families. Some experts argued in favour of specific HBC arrangements being made for London.

Some experts also made the case for expanding the supply of affordable, adequate housing in London. There were some concerns that the new requirement that social housing rents be set at up to 80% of the rent levels found in the private rented sector would constrict the capacity of social landlords to develop new affordable homes.

Experts thought that ensuring provision of good quality welfare advice was particularly important in a context in which some families might see their overall benefits cut. It was thought important that support services were on hand to ensure poor families got everything they were entitled to, as some families might need help in understanding and dealing with the major changes to the benefits system.

...the provision of welfare advice which is crucial at the moment and likely to become even more important given the changes going on to the benefits system. A lot of families suffer not because of policy problems but because they don't know their rights and you do need more advice to make sure people are getting access to benefits. Expert.

The experts shared the views of frontline workers about the need for good-quality general support, advice and information services for poor families. A few experts also emphasised what they saw as a need for services to be participative in design, allowing families, children and teenagers to help shape the support services they required. A specific need for support in accessing education, training and employment for parents and for teenagers who had just left school was again identified, as was a need for support in managing money and debt.

Anything from help with benefits, through to showing the way with access to childcare, access to work, because sometimes you know it's the last thing on your mind, you are worried about feeding your child, keeping your child safe, keeping a roof over your head and you're having to fight just to get that done. And sometimes that support, that direction can help. So I see the value in that sort of support work to help people in that sort of position. Expert.

A few experts talked about a need for early intervention by support services which they thought should make themselves available to a family at the first suggestion that the family was not coping. If a family was contacted by the police due to anti-social behaviour by a child or went into rent arrears, a few experts thought support should be immediately offered at that point, to try to stop the difficulties facing that family from escalating.

Insufficient access to affordable childcare had been identified by several experts as one of the problems faced by poor families in London. There was thought to be a need for increased provision, particularly in those areas where families tended to be poor and in which private nurseries struggled to make a profit. In addition, providing assistance with meeting the registration costs, deposit and payment in-advance requirements of some nurseries was thought by some experts to be something that should be looked at.

Some experts talked about the cuts that were occurring to some children's services and raised the possibility of Peabody working jointly with advice services, childcare services, and education, training and support services that had lost funding. It was appreciated that Peabody had finite resources, but some experts talked about the possibility of Peabody helping 'fill in gaps' where existing service provision had been cut or removed.

A few experts talked about what they saw as innovations in the management of low-level crime and anti-social behaviour by children and teenagers by social landlords. For example, the work of the Joseph Rowntree Housing Trust on 'Community Philosophy'⁵² was mentioned. This has used what are actually philosophical techniques to encourage dialogue between children, young people and older people in situations where there is intergenerational tension within social housing. Facilitation of communication between different generations of residents in social housing was thought to potentially improve cohesion. In one example project, teenagers had been taught to use computers and the Internet and then in turn taught older people those same skills and this appeared to improve social cohesion in a neighbourhood. This might also be considered alongside other 'diversionary' activity designed to keep older children and teenagers away from potentially negative influences.

In summary, the experts identified the following issues:

- A concern that changes to the benefit system might have a disproportionately negative effect on material deprivation and housing conditions (in the private rented sector) among poor families in London, leading to arguments to make specific arrangements for London.
- A perceived need to try to increase the supply of adequate and affordable housing in London, particularly the supply of social rented housing.
- A need for welfare rights advisory services for families in the context of the planned changes to the welfare system.
- A need for general information, support and advice services for families covering issues including childcare, access to required services, securing paid work and support with debt management.
- A need to orientate support services towards early intervention to stop problems within poor families from potentially escalating.
- A need for improved access to affordable childcare.
- A possible role for Peabody in 'filling gaps' in service provision caused by on-going cuts in public expenditure.
- Some discussion of the potential role of innovative ways of managing anti-social behaviour and intergenerational tensions in social housing and the possibility of using these models to manage issues like anti-social behaviour.

Different perspectives on tackling child poverty

The suggested service interventions to tackle child poverty were not focused on addressing material deprivation through increased spending on benefits or social housing. While some arguments were made by experts to adjust the planned HBC to take better account of the circumstances of families in London, neither the respondents to their research, nor many of the other studies reviewed, advocated large-scale increases in spending.

Instead, emphasis was placed on services that helped children avoid exposure to the what were perceived as potentially harmful influences surrounding them, boosting productive after school and holiday activities for children, and on facilitating access to paid work for parents and recent school leavers. This emphasis on improving life chances for children and parents, a key part of which was enhancing the employment prospects of parents and for children as they moved towards adulthood, is an approach that is core to the current government's child poverty strategy.

Much of what was proposed by parents, frontline workers and experts was quite modest. A need for good-quality advice, information and support services was often identified, as was a need for specific support in helping parents into employment and around welfare rights. There was also a broad consensus on the need to increase provision of affordable childcare. Parents and frontline workers also talked about the need for productive activity for children and teenagers when they were outside school or had just left school as a way of avoiding what were perceived as potentially negative influences surrounding them.

This might be seen as indicative of a general consensus that the policy direction being taken by the current government is the correct course. There is something in such an argument. Clearly parents, frontline workers and experts and some of those writing the research literature, do accept the idea that tackling child poverty is about improving life chances, increasing social mobility and helping poor parents with dependent children into employment.

There are however some important points of difference that centre on the need to tackle material deprivation as well as issues around life chances. The current government takes the view that the large-scale redistribution of national income to try to address material deprivation of children attempted under the 1997-2010 Labour governments was an expensive 'failure', because the 'real' issue is one of limited social mobility. However, some existing research and the experts who were interviewed viewed child poverty in a different way, placing a more equal emphasis on both improving life chances and addressing immediate material deprivation.

From the perspective of some of the experts and some academic research, inequality and material deprivation were not addressed because not enough income was being transferred to poor families via the benefits system. This a position which international research evidence does support to some degree. Economically comparable countries with more generous welfare systems have less child poverty in the sense of material deprivation and also less income inequality. Moreover, when the UK began to spend more benefits for low income families, despite targets being missed, levels of material deprivation among children did fall⁵³. It has been argued elsewhere that the strategic responses to child poverty, whether under the 1997-2010 Labour governments or the current government, are influenced at least as much by political ideology as they are by economic circumstances⁵⁴. There are still voices that say more should be spent on addressing material needs among poor children, alongside improving their life chances and those of their parents.

53. Hills, J. et al (2010) An anatomy of economic inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equality Panel London: Government Equalities Office, p. 386.

54. Dorling, D. (2010) All in the mind? Why social inequalities persist, Public Policy Research, 16, 4, 226-231.

4 Recommendations

Introduction

This final chapter makes some recommendations for Peabody based on the research results. The first section draws together the main findings on the needs that exist for poor children, teenagers and parents with dependent children. The second section discusses the new roles that Peabody might explore in tackling child poverty.

Understanding and tackling child poverty in London

Material needs

There is evidence that some poor families are living in poor quality private rented sector accommodation in London at a relatively high financial cost. Peabody offers good quality housing at a more manageable rent level to such families. The role of Peabody as a social landlord significantly reduces the material deprivation of children in London.

Other material needs centre on ensuring the welfare rights of families are fully realised, making sure they get all the benefits, allowances and tax credits to which they are entitled and help in managing family debt where it exists. Much centres on raising household income and facilitating access to paid work for parents has a key role in addressing material need. Child poverty is family poverty and the material deprivation of a child cannot be addressed without improving the income and material situation of the family in which a child lives.

Negative influences

Parents and frontline workers both saw negative influences on children as forming barriers to progress at school and as reducing the options children thought they had in life. Parents tended to ascribe some influence to mass media as a source of negative influences, showing children that status was found in displays of extreme materialism and also glamorising crime. These images reinforced what parents thought their children saw around them, which was a few local people apparently prospering from crime, while others were unemployed or working hard for low wages. A lack of counteracting influence – showing children the possibility of access to a rewarding career and providing them with alternative ways of looking at the world around them – was seen as resulting from a lack of engaging after-school and holiday activities and also as related to inadequate discipline in schools.

The frontline workers ascribed more negative influence to the environment in which children grew up and the negative examples of some of the people living around them, which could include their parents, than they did to mass media. These workers were also concerned about a lack of diversionary activity that would steer children away from anti-social behaviour and crime and instil them with new ideas about the directions their lives might take.

The experts interviewed and the research literature both tended to place less emphasis on negative influences and spend more time discussing the material deprivation and restricted life chances of poor children. The parents and the workers did not however regard negative influences in themselves as sufficient to 'cause' issues like child anti-social behaviour and crime, the negative influences were only perceived as important because children were not being shown an alternative.

Unequal life chances

The research evidence and the policies of both the current government and 1997-2010 Labour governments all accept that the UK is an unequal society. A child born to poor parents in a deprived postcode has worse life chances in the UK than a child born to affluent parents in an affluent postcode. The factors that might impair life chances include educational disadvantage, area disadvantage in the sense of living within an environment with few activities or services, health inequality and a local economy that offers limited employment prospects⁵⁵.

Seeking a balanced understanding of child poverty

Broadly speaking, the political right emphasises attention on life chances in relation to child poverty while the left focuses rather more attention on material deprivation. Neither position is absolute, the right generally still acknowledges material deprivation as an issue, and the left generally places equal or near equal emphasis on poor social mobility alongside the material deprivation of poor children. However, both left and right can draw selectively on research evidence, emphasising those aspects of child poverty that are in line with their underlying ideology. This means an interpretation of child poverty promoted by people with a particular political ethos always needs to be treated with caution.

55. Hills, J. et al (2010) An anatomy of economic inequality in the UK: Report of the National Equality Panel London: Government Equalities Office.

In this context, it becomes very important to try to take a balanced view of what child poverty is. The research and opinion reviewed in this report suggest a complex picture that clearly reflects elements of both the right wing and left wing interpretations of the causation and nature of child poverty. It is not simply a matter of material deprivation, nor is it just an issue of addressing inequity in life chances, child poverty has many dimensions, all of which need to both be recognised and tackled.

One final point is worth discussing before moving on to consider the different approaches to tackling child poverty that Peabody might consider. This centres on the ways in which debate about child and family poverty is sometime framed in the UK. Some academics are highly critical of the language and ideas that have appeared within discussions of child and other forms of poverty in the last couple of decades. Some discussions have hinted at UK poverty being linked to differences in ability, between richer and poorer people. Prominent academics such as Dorling point to a scientific evidence base that shows that significant differences in innate intelligence do not exist between children from different socioeconomic groups. According to these arguments, if the poorest children from an inner London borough were educated with exactly the same level of resources and care devoted to the children of the very rich at an elite private school, the poor children would fare just as well as the rich children when they took their exams⁵⁶. It must also be noted that international comparative research supports these arguments, more equal societies which devote more resources show less intergenerational poverty than the UK⁵⁷.

If the arguments of commentators like Dorling are accepted, this has an important implication for service design in relation to child poverty. The implication is that there should be no limit to ambition and goals artificially imposed on children because of they were born into relative poverty. It should not be presumed that the child of a unemployed lone parent cannot eventually become a doctor or solicitor or indeed an elected politician. Service provision that was designed with the presumption that only certain paths through life would be viable options for poor children would do nothing but further reinforce the inequality in British society.

Practical ways forward

Further service development by Peabody in context

Peabody already undertakes an extensive range of community development work and is actively involved in enhancing the life chances and meeting the material and support needs of the residents on its estates. Services provided by Peabody on its estates and in the neighbourhoods in which it works include:

- The Tenant and Family Services Team which is a floating support service that offers advice and support to residents on Peabody's estates whose tenancies are at risk. Issues like rent arrears and anti-social behaviour that can threaten a tenancy are quite frequently linked to unmet support needs and the team can facilitate access to necessary advice, information and referral to care and support services when needed. The service includes welfare advice to ensure access to the benefits for which a household is eligible. A telephone advice and information service, the tenant advice line is also provided.
- The Neighbourhood Manager for each estate fulfils a housing management role but also has responsibilities covering community development and the well-being of the estate and the people living on it.
- Specific provision of community development workers and community safety officers to promote community development and tackle issues around anti-social behaviour on Peabody estates and joint working with the Metropolitan Police.
- Provision of Employment Brokers who facilitate and support access to paid work for people in Peabody estates or the surrounding neighbourhood.
- Assistance to local charities, for example by providing office space or making community centres on Peabody estates available for their use.
- The promotion and support of residents' associations that can opt to take a role in providing activities and services for their communities.

Peabody is building upon a long-developed role in providing decent, affordable housing in good-quality environments, it is an organisation that promotes community on its estates and also seeks to improve the material conditions and life chances of the people it houses. Continuation of this role and pursuit of the existing 2011-2014 Business Plan⁵⁸ makes an important contribution to counteracting child poverty and maintaining the current focus and direction of the organisation is a logical and practical step in and of itself. The question then arises as to what additional roles Peabody might consider taking on.

56. Dorling, D. (2010). The Fabian Essay: The myth of inherited inequality, Fabian Review, 122(1), pp. 19-21; Dorling, D. (2010). All in the mind? Why social inequalities persist, Public Policy Research, 16(4), 226-231.

57. OECD (2009), Doing Better for Children.

58. See: <http://www.peabody.org.uk/media/7115972/businessplan2011-14.pdf>

Potential new roles

There are several areas of service provision in which Peabody might choose to become more active. Some of these services might be provided directly, others by partnership working and others through Peabody opting to partially or fully fund the activities of some charities and voluntary sector organisations.

- The expansion and extension of the existing Tenant and Families Services team. This might include the provision of specialist workers for children and specific support for parenting. There are also arguments for considering active outreach and early intervention, i.e. expanding resources so that services can actively check with families whether they need assistance and prevent problems families are facing from escalating. Good quality welfare advice seems likely to become increasingly important to poor families, as does advice and help with managing money and debt.
- The expansion and extension of existing Employment Broker services, perhaps including specific services for parents with young children and lone parents young children.
- Direct support of good quality employment opportunities for parents, this might include loans and supports for those seeking to set up small businesses, the direct or indirect support of development of social enterprises that provide flexible but relatively well-paid work for parents living on Peabody estates. This might include models such as Time Banking which are already being actively explored by Peabody.
- Direct or indirect support of credit unions that offer an affordable alternative to poor families when they need to borrow money.
- Direct or indirect support for childcare service provision for Peabody residents. Indirect support might include the conversion of empty or underused buildings which might be provided at a very low or nominal rent to childcare services.
- Supporting provision of positive, productive and engaging activities for children and teenagers, including after-school activities, activities during school holidays and for teenagers who leave school at 16. This might include joint working and cooperation with local schools, children's centres and with the children and youth services provided by boroughs and charities. Promoting self esteem and a sense that life potentially offers much wider horizons than children have grown up with was important from the perspective of parents and frontline workers. Active consideration might also be given to services that directly support education, following examples such as the Harlem Children's Zone⁵⁹.
- Consideration of the use of innovative methods of promoting community cohesion and minimising intergenerational tensions through techniques such as community philosophy.
- Consulting with residents and frontline workers on Peabody estates about cuts to local services and reviewing whether or not Peabody might directly or indirectly support valued services that are under threat of constriction or closure.

Enhancing services through participation

This research was a relatively short and small exercise that was not able to include detailed consultation with children and young people. One further recommendation of this research is that Peabody consider undertaking an internal exercise that takes a series of its estates and looks in greater detail at their needs around child poverty from the perspective of the parents, children, teenagers and frontline workers who live and work on those estates.

Following consultation, support might be considered for what might be termed cooperative design and running of services and activities, involving residents and frontline workers and facilitated by strategic support from Peabody. There is already support from Peabody to residents associations that provide community events and activities and this might be extended and made more formalised in relation to specific types of service provision.

One model that has been used successfully with some groups of people with support needs are those approaches based around peer support. For example, a service model that used parents who had experienced or were still experiencing poverty as peer support in a form of 'buddy' system could be looked at. There may be a wider potential for such cooperative services. For example, a peer support or 'buddy' system in which low income parents used their own expertise and experience to support others like themselves might form the basis of a social enterprise that could, under contract, support poor families in areas surrounding Peabody estates and provide paid employment to some parents as peer support workers.

59. <http://www.hcz.org/>

Another option might simply be to facilitate communication between residents with shared needs so that they can support one another. This is something that might, as access costs continue to fall, eventually be organised online, using Web 2.0 social networking technologies, but it is also something that could be facilitated through frontline worker activity. New parents might for example benefit from a 'New Parents Support Group', just as parents who were facing difficulties with anti-social behaviour from their children might benefit from being in a group with other parents who had or were facing the same difficulties and could share their experience, knowledge and skills. Peabody could provide meeting space and perhaps low-level administrative support to such groups.

Challenging stereotypes and giving a voice to families experiencing child poverty

Much has been made of the idea of a culture of poverty. In North Western Europe and the US, this has centred on the concern that 'workless places' exist in which cultural and social norms militate against pursuing achievement at school and later seeking paid work. Urban policy in North Western Europe, including the UK, and also the United States use various techniques to counteract the spatial concentration of poor people into specific neighbourhoods and estates. This is because it is believed that negative cultural effects of 'workless places' will result if too many poor people live alongside one another.

Some academic research has suggested that this idea may be problematic, because it looks at workless places in isolation and takes too little account of the wider society and economy that surrounds them and which may in some senses both create and sustain workless places⁶⁰. It is also an easy stereotype, a way of simplifying a complex social problem and denying responsibility for that problem, to effectively blame child poverty as being 'caused' by the nature and characteristics of people experiencing it. When the international evidence and the UK research referred to in this report suggests that when significant effort is put into addressing material deprivation and improving social mobility for children, their living situations and life chances do improve. Other societies with equivalent levels of economic development to the UK use different policies with different underpinning assumptions and perform better on many measures.

It is arguable that a key part of the experience of family poverty is the lack of any meaningful political voice. Poor families containing materially deprived children with limited life chances are rarely if ever allowed to represent themselves in mass media and lack the time, educational and financial resources that the middle class possesses to represent its views⁶¹. The same is arguably the case for at least some of the people who work in frontline roles to support families living in poverty.

This research has shown that the stereotype of what child poverty is and how it can be addressed can be tackled directly by those with direct experience of it. The absence of a voice for children is a limitation which was noted in the first chapter and it is recommended that some work is undertaken to address this gap in the evidence. Parents and frontline workers had a complex, nuanced understanding of what was happening to their children and definite and clear ideas about how the problem should be addressed. One way to take advantage of their experience may be to look at the development of participative service models as suggested above, but there is also the question of how their opinions and views might shape wider debates. If Peabody were to take an active role in conveying the views of its tenants who were experiencing child poverty, it could help shape those debates, but this would need to be balanced against bringing Peabody into the political arena.

60. Bretherton, J. and Pleace, N. (2011) 'A Difficult Mix: Issues in achieving socioeconomic diversity in deprived UK neighbourhoods' *Urban Studies*, Published online before print March 8, 2011, doi: 10.1177/0042098010396233.

61. Robinson, F. et al (2009) *Poverty in the media Being seen and getting heard* York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.

Appendix 1

The data used in this report

Peabody anonymised administrative data

Anonymised Peabody administrative data was made available to the research team. The data contained basic demographic data on 29,713 individuals who were living in Peabody housing in 2011. These individuals comprised 15,022 households. It was possible to use several indicators contained within these data including the age, gender, the relationship of individuals to the householder, ethnic group, and the number of bedrooms in the accommodation⁶². The data contained locational indicators, including the name of the Peabody estate, and the postcodes in which the estates were situated.

The postcodes of Peabody households were used to identify the Lower Level Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within Greater London containing Peabody housing. LSOAs are a “small area” geographical unit of analysis widely used in statistical analysis. LSOAs are the key geographical unit of analysis in the IMD and CWI and are the basis for the maps, although summary figures for local authorities for these indicators were also included in the analysis. LSOAs have a minimum size of 1,000 residents, and on average contain 1,500 residents. They fit within the boundaries of local authority areas. There are a total number of 34,378 LSOAs within England and Wales, of which 4,765 within Greater London.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a collection of indices, grouped into seven domains, which measure different aspects of deprivation at the LSOA level, with summary measures at the local authority level. These are income, employment, health, education, crime, access to services, and living environment. Each domain has its own score, which allows areas to be compared to identify the level of deprivation relative to other areas. This means that IMD does not measure deprivation in an absolute sense because it uses a comparison with the least and most deprived areas according to the measures it employs. The IMD also includes an overall index, which is a composite, overall measure of relative deprivation based on the seven domains.

Areas with higher scores on the individual and overall indices contain a higher proportion of people classified as deprived than areas with lower scores. It is important to note that the IMD is an overview measure, i.e. not everyone living in a deprived area is deprived, and not all deprived people live in deprived areas.

Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index

The supplementary Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index (IDACI) is a subset of the Income Deprivation Domain of the IMD. This shows the proportion of children in each LSOA who live in families that are income-deprived (that is, in receipt of Income Support, income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance, Pension Credit (Guarantee) or Child Tax Credit below a given threshold). The Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index is not combined with the other domains into the overall Index of Multiple Deprivation as the children are already captured in the Income Deprivation Domain.

The Child Well-being Index

The CWI is a measure of child well-being at the LSOA level. Summary measures at the local authority level are also available. The CWI is based on the seven domains of material well-being, health, education, crime, housing, environment, and children in need. The index is primarily constructed from data on dependent children (aged 0 to 16, or up to 18 if in full-time education).

As with the IMD, there is an overall child well-being index, which is a composite based on the seven domains. Likewise, the individual and overall CWI scores are relative measures that show whether child well-being in one area is higher or lower than in other areas. Areas with highest scores have the lowest level of child wellbeing, and areas with lower scores a higher level of child well-being.

62. The data also contained a work status indicator. These data were found to contain a large number of missing cases and some errors. The work status indicator has not been included in the analysis for this reason.

Appendix 2: Detailed tables

IMD, IDACI and CWI for the LSOAs in which Peabody estates are situated

The anonymised data contained the name of the Peabody estate, or 'patch name', numbering 96 in total. These have been married to the corresponding LSOA to show the average IMD, IDACI, and CWI scores (Table A2.1). As many of the estates were located in a number of LSOAs, the scores in the table are averages of the relevant LSOAs. In terms of the IMD score, only 16 of the estates had scores that were lower than the average for Greater London as a whole (25.24). The estates scoring most highly on the IMD, and therefore being in the most deprived LSOAs were Pellipar Gardens (51.60), Tottenham estate (51.78), Homer Road estate (51.88), and Beccles Street (54.56).

A similar number of estates (15) had a lower IDACI score on than the average for Greater London as a whole (0.30). The estates with the highest IDACI scores were Nags Head, Mansford Street, Pembury Place, Homer Road (all 0.65), Queens Park (0.66), Carlton Square (0.73), and Beccles Street (0.76).

Only ten of the estates had CWI scores that were lower than the Greater London average of 190.52. The estates with the highest scores, and which therefore had the lowest levels of child well-being, were Boylen Road, Dalston Lane (both 380.34), Beccles Street (398.08), Clyde Road (399.04), Bonnington House (417.45), and Pembury Place (424.02).

Table A2.1 : IMD, IDACI, and CWI scores for the LSOAs in which Peabody estates are situated

Peabody estate	Borough	IMD score	IDACI score	CWI score
Abbey Orchard Estate	Westminster	39.69	0.52	241.51
Albion Wharf	Wandsworth	27.01	0.42	202.92
Barnwell House	Southwark	30.34	0.44	299.82
Barons Place	Southwark	27.37	0.30	240.55
Battersea Parktown	Wandsworth	22.71	0.39	233.95
Beaufort House	Hammersmith & Fulham	31.46	0.38	292.91
Beccles Street	Tower Hamlets	54.56	0.76	398.08
Bedfordbury	Westminster	30.52	0.22	212.27
Bell Street	Westminster	39.55	0.45	316.39
Bethnal Green	Tower Hamlets	48.26	0.57	358.69
Birchfield Street	Tower Hamlets	43.31	0.63	330.13
Blackfriars Estate	Southwark	27.20	0.31	233.19
Boleyn Road	Hackney	49.39	0.45	380.84
Bonnington House	Islington	31.51	0.54	417.45
Bowmans Buildings	Westminster	39.55	0.45	316.39
Bricklayers Arms	Southwark	40.32	0.44	373.92
Buckingham Chambers	Westminster	25.74	0.21	143.35
Caledonian Road	Islington	37.88	0.61	356.69
Camberwell Estate	Southwark	41.26	0.42	350.22
Carlton Square	Tower Hamlets	39.25	0.73	347.06
Chelsea Gardens Estate	Kensington & Chelsea	28.97	0.38	217.93
Chelsea Manor Street	Kensington & Chelsea	22.90	0.17	128.49
Clapham	Wandsworth	30.87	0.44	276.42
Clerkenwell	Islington	15.21	0.25	204.92

Table A2.1 : IMD, IDACI, and CWI scores for the LSOAs in which Peabody estates are situated

Peabody estate	Borough	IMD score	IDACI score	CWI score
Clyde Road Estate	Haringey	47.73	0.64	399.04
Coopers Road	Southwark	44.76	0.42	344.28
Cranworth Gardens	Lambeth	31.60	0.43	277.37
Crosslet Vale	Greenwich	31.35	0.41	277.63
Dagenham Estate	Barking & Dagenham	33.83	0.39	243.60
Dalgarno Gardens	Kensington & Chelsea	39.13	0.44	247.92
Dalston Lane	Hackney	49.39	0.45	380.84
Eagle Wharf Estate	Hackney	32.52	0.52	253.72
Ebury Estate	Westminster	24.61	0.34	203.92
Edmonton Estate	Enfield	35.84	0.55	238.48
Elmwood Court	Wandsworth	16.17	0.11	80.02
Fort Street Estate	Newham	34.17	0.53	342.87
Fulham	Hammersmith & Fulham	31.46	0.38	292.91
Gateway Estate	Southwark	39.41	0.36	300.97
Gopsall Street	Hackney	32.52	0.52	253.72
Greenwich Estate	Greenwich	34.67	0.38	249.78
Grosvenor Estate	Westminster	20.23	0.10	190.47
Hackney Estate	Hackney	38.17	0.39	285.48
Hammersmith	Hammersmith & Fulham	30.03	0.46	267.32
Hanson Street Estate	Westminster	18.78	0.19	221.11
Haringey Estate	Haringey	42.12	0.52	299.18
Harrow Estate	Harrow	12.98	0.20	120.44
Hillingdon Estate	Hillingdon	27.97	0.37	215.05
Homer Road Estate	Hackney	51.88	0.65	350.48
Hugh Astor Court	Southwark	26.99	0.35	237.76
Islington	Islington	38.96	0.53	317.77
Junction Road Estate	Islington	33.79	0.48	312.61
Kent House	Southwark	45.50	0.42	339.34
Lawrence Street Estate	Kensington & Chelsea	13.04	0.06	82.94
Lee Green Estate	Lewisham	31.72	0.41	243.48
Lupino Court	Lambeth	37.43	0.55	281.12
Mansford Street	Tower Hamlets	47.72	0.65	314.60
Marshalsea Estate	Southwark	25.38	0.27	229.55
Maybank	Brent	34.32	0.62	335.20
Millbank Estate	Westminster	20.06	0.30	212.11
Murrey Grove Estate	Hackney	44.75	0.63	349.07

Table A2.1 : IMD, IDACI, and CWI scores for the LSOAs in which Peabody estates are situated

Peabody estate	Borough	IMD score	IDACI score	CWI score
Nags Head	Tower Hamlets	47.72	0.65	314.60
Nelson Gardens	Tower Hamlets	41.19	0.56	341.43
Nile Street Gen Nds	Hackney	32.52	0.52	253.72
North Row Estate	Westminster	13.99	0.09	180.71
O M Richards Estate	Islington	35.40	0.56	329.61
Osram Court	Hammersmith & Fulham	36.54	0.36	236.46
Paddington Basin Gn	Westminster	18.78	0.19	221.11
Palmer Estate	Islington	34.66	0.41	280.60
Parkview	Wandsworth	35.41	0.61	281.21
Peabody Hill	Lambeth	32.38	0.47	290.56
Pellipar Gardens	Greenwich	51.60	0.55	336.43
Pembury East	Hackney	44.79	0.57	306.58
Pembury New	Hackney	47.09	0.52	360.99
Pembury Place	Hackney	49.66	0.65	424.02
Pembury West	Hackney	47.45	0.58	362.23
Pimlico Estate	Westminster	28.81	0.37	215.10
Priors Estate	Islington	35.20	0.56	329.11
Priory Green Estate	Islington	37.20	0.60	349.31
Queens Park Estate	Camden	44.40	0.66	367.23
Rosendale	Lambeth	31.44	0.44	273.49
Shadwell	Tower Hamlets	41.72	0.52	259.16
Shaftesbury Park	Wandsworth	27.69	0.38	286.21
Southwark Street	Southwark	20.46	0.31	251.14
Strawberry Vale	Barnet	43.70	0.62	227.78
Tachbrook Estate	Westminster	19.42	0.23	180.28
Tottenham Estate	Haringey	51.78	0.59	292.66
Vauxhall	Westminster	25.74	0.21	143.35
Vicarage Lane Estate	Redbridge	32.04	0.47	200.86
Victoria Park Estate	Hackney	30.35	0.31	226.17
Walworth Estate	Southwark	37.59	0.27	315.52
Wandsworth	Wandsworth	22.85	0.33	183.16
Whitechapel	Tower Hamlets	39.32	0.44	253.74
Whitecross Estate	Islington	30.40	0.51	285.09
Wild Street	Westminster	24.32	0.34	300.15
Willow Tree Lane Estate	Hillingdon	41.91	0.56	270.61
Wynford Estate	Islington	34.16	0.54	316.07

London in comparison with the rest of England

Tables A2.2 and A2.3 show the average scores for the IMD and CWI for the Government Office Regions, thereby indicating the relative position of Greater London as a whole. In terms of the overall IMD, Table 10 shows that the Greater London region as a whole was the third worst region, after the North East and the North West. However, the average regional scores for Greater London were highest on the individual domains of barriers to housing and services, crime and disorder, living environment, and also the IDACI score, indicating that the region as a whole was the most deprived in these respects.

The overall CWI indicates that Greater London as a whole has the lowest level of child well-being of any region. Greater London also scored the most highly on the individual domains of children in need, material well-being, crime, and housing, making it the region with the lowest level of child well-being in these specific areas also.

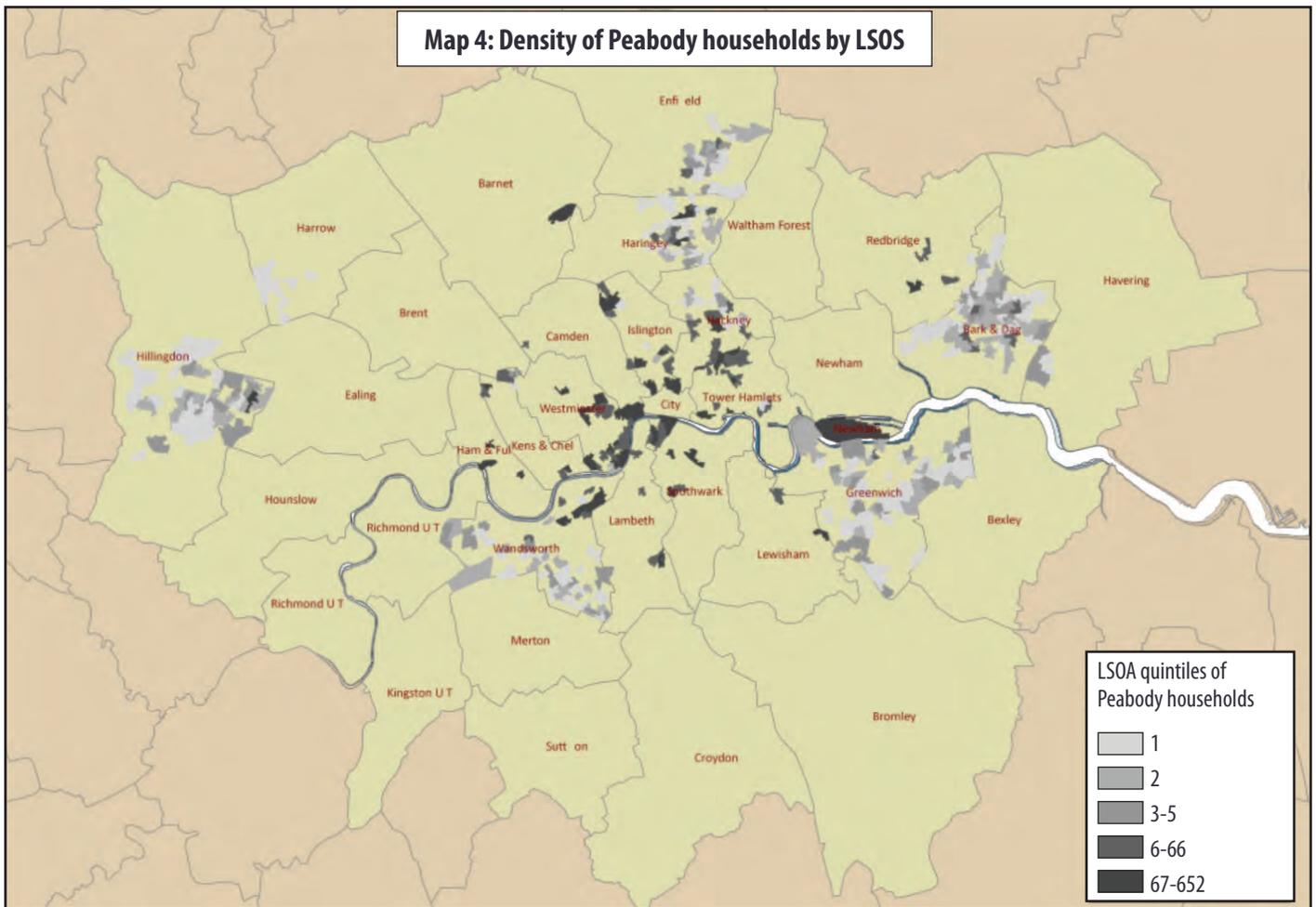
Table A2.2 : 2010 Average IMD and IMD domain scores and IDACI index for the Government Office Regions

GOR	Overall average IMD score	Income score	Employment score	Health deprivation and disability score	Education, skills and training score	Barriers to housing and services score	Barriers to housing and services score	Living environment score	IDACI index
North East	27.45	0.19	0.15	0.73	28.50	15.31	-0.13	10.69	0.24
North West	27.23	0.17	0.14	0.65	24.64	15.27	0.28	24.10	0.22
Yorkshire & Humber	25.13	0.16	0.11	0.25	29.09	19.25	0.23	25.72	0.20
East Midlands	20.11	0.13	0.10	-0.00	24.85	17.16	0.09	15.84	0.18
West Midlands	25.04	0.17	0.12	0.20	26.60	22.16	-0.00	25.01	0.22
East of England	15.80	0.12	0.08	-0.48	20.52	21.79	-0.31	14.15	0.16
South East	14.80	0.10	0.07	-0.48	16.99	22.11	-0.17	16.12	0.15
South West	17.67	0.12	0.09	-0.27	18.89	22.91	-0.28	21.92	0.16
Greater London	25.24	0.19	0.10	-0.10	14.07	32.49	0.42	33.08	0.30
England	21.67	0.15	0.10	0.00	21.69	21.69	0.00	21.69	0.20

Table A2.3 : 2010 Average CWI and CWI domain scores for the Government Office Regions

GOR	Overall average CWI score	Children in need score	Material well-being score	Health and disability score	Education score	Crime score	Housing score	Environment score
North East	177.02	0.03	0.24	0.62	28.37	-0.02	10.26	23.64
North West	177.13	0.03	0.23	0.22	24.84	0.20	23.72	23.37
Yorkshire & Humber	176.97	0.03	0.21	0.09	28.80	0.23	25.09	24.29
East Midlands	140.47	0.03	0.19	-0.06	23.45	0.02	14.55	22.01
West Midlands	164.83	0.03	0.22	0.02	23.25	0.05	25.11	24.39
East of England	114.08	0.02	0.16	-0.24	19.51	-0.23	13.73	19.21
South East	111.38	0.02	0.15	-0.16	17.50	-0.24	16.68	17.82
South West	125.01	0.02	0.16	-0.08	18.94	-0.39	22.28	19.25
Greater London	190.52	0.04	0.32	-0.06	17.53	0.31	34.14	22.86
England	151.84	0.03	0.21	0.00	21.69	0.00	21.69	21.69

Appendix 3: Density of Peabody Households by LSOA





Peabody
45 Westminster Bridge Road
London SE1 7JB

www.peabody.org.uk