

Role of local authorities in countering child poverty

**EPHA Seminar: Brussels
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Newcastle



Child poverty is everybody's business

Newcastle
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Newcastle City – some facts

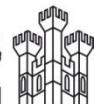
- **Regional Capital – North East England**
- **Population 280,200**
- **Formerly an area of heavy industry; mining & shipbuilding**
- **Ethnic minorities 12%**
- **North east: Unemployed 9.8%**
- **North East: Average disposable weekly household income after housing costs is £327 (lowest in England)**

Child Poverty Act (March 2010)

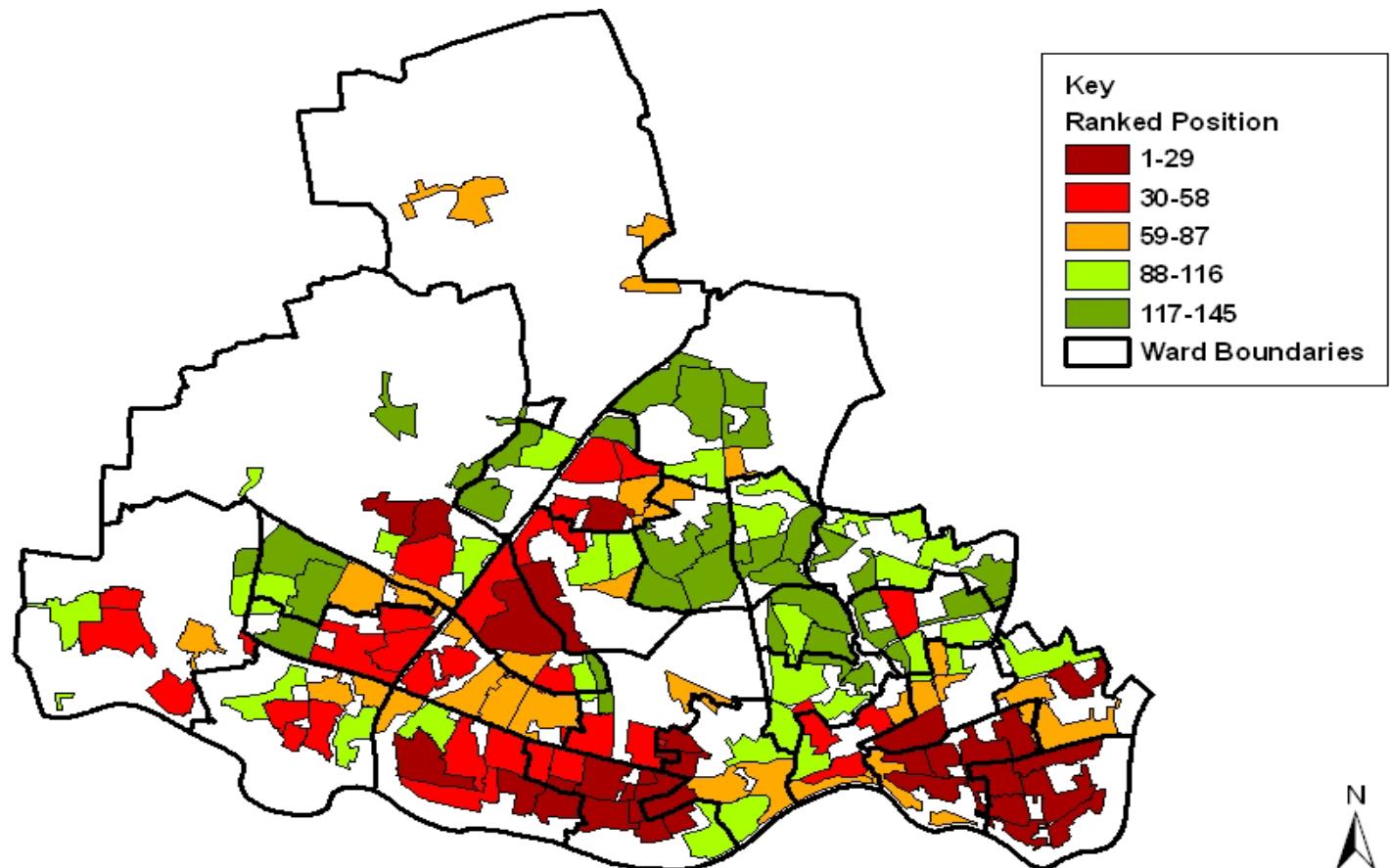
- Requires responsible local authorities and their partner authorities to cooperate to reduce and mitigate the effects of child poverty in their local areas.

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Child Poverty: Definitely not a thing of the past

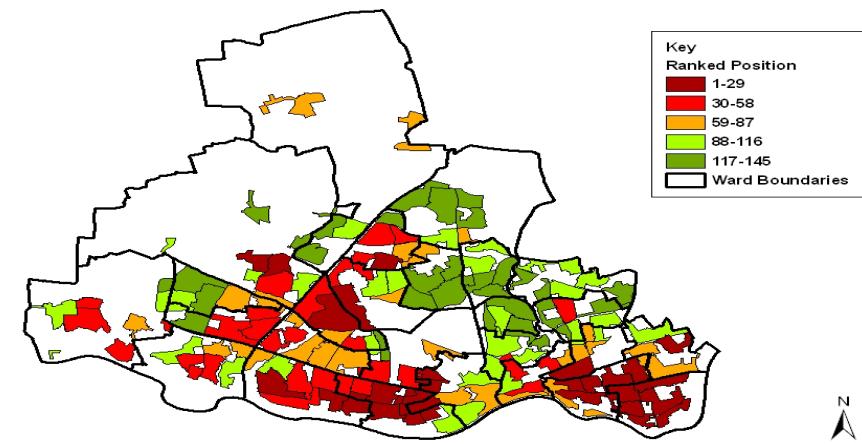


Neighbourhood Vitality Index



What this means

- **Parents:** Walker, Byker, Elswick and Westgate (most disadvantaged wards) have the highest unemployment rates
- **Children:** - 18% of pupils eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieved 5 good GCSE's (compared to non-FSM pupils 48%)
- **Children:** - 12% of FSM pupils are persistently absent from school (compared to 5% for non-FSM pupils)
- 30.5% children in poverty
- City council has an on-going strategy to tackle child poverty



Child Poverty – Recurring Issues

- It is multi-dimensional and not a thing of the past
- It is present in all EU countries despite prosperity
- It is a relative concept in different countries and defined differently
- It is linked to unemployment and low wage incomes
- More prevalent in certain ethnic minority communities, families with substance misuse, disabilities, histories of crime or abuse and refugees.

What is increasing?



- **Unemployment and short time working**
- **Demand for services and advice**
- **Looked after and children in care**
- **Terminations in the over 30 age group**
- **Demand for social housing and people defaulting on their mortgages**
- **Childhood obesity and poor nutrition**
- **In work poverty**



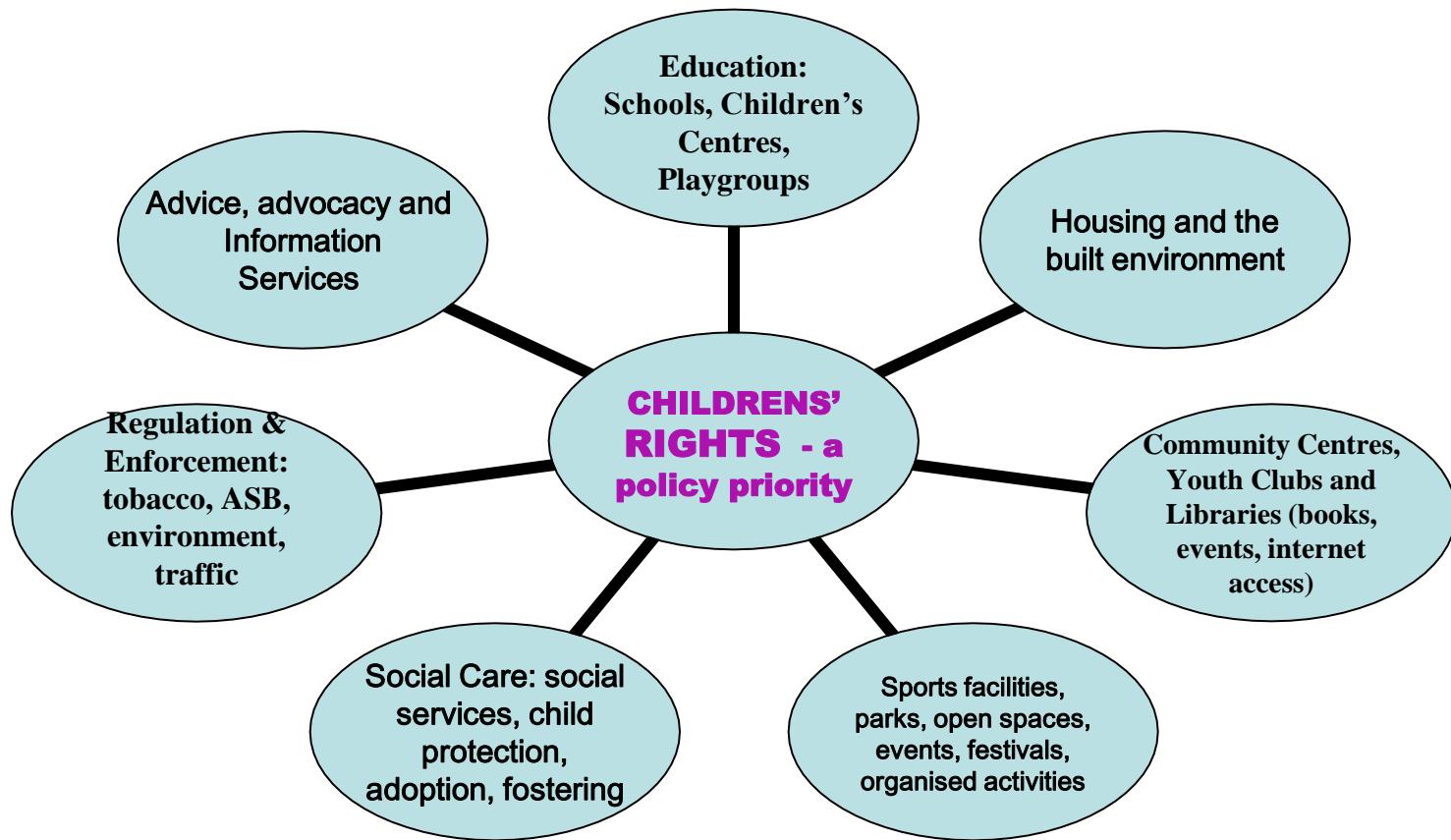
What is decreasing?

- **Incomes, wages and availability of social housing**
- **Resources available for service provision**
- **Funding for infrastructure projects**
- **Finances available for social benefits and protection**
- **Number of under-18's wanting terminations**
- **Number of under-18's not in employment or training**
- **Spending on social participation (eg clubs, holidays)**
- **2.3 million children in UK below 60% median income**

The role of local authorities

- Local authorities are not able to provide increases to income, but can work with others to identify problems and lobby for change.
- They are at the forefront of work to tackle child poverty and disadvantage. Their role is crucial in offering services and activities to promote the wellbeing of families and children.

Local Authority Services



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Joint working and network links with:

- **Health services**
- **Legal, police and community safety**
- **Voluntary sector and social enterprises**
- **Housing providers**
- **Child care and disability agencies**
- **Universities and research provision**
- **Leisure and recreation providers**
- **Credit unions and financial advice**
- **Local businesses, industry and training**

Actions to promote wellbeing

- **Clear strategies which recognise the nature of the problem and evidence based solutions**
- **Practical priorities to prevent, mitigate and measure poverty and promote community cohesion**
- **Advice and information: benefits, training, jobs**
- **Partnership working with services and facilities as well as other local authorities and agencies**
- **Promote consultation, empower communities and reduce anti-social behaviour**
- **Policies to make the local authority 'child friendly' and inclusive of 'child proofing'.**
- **Improved housing and neighbourhood provision**

How are we reducing child poverty?

Focus upon 14 – 19:
(Apprenticeships and leisure access)

Physical regeneration, including housing improvements

Addressing health inequalities and fuel poverty

Preventing and Tackling Child Poverty

Innovation to Increase Employment and raise aspirations

Improving support to families eg. Children's Centres and policy focus

Welfare Rights, financial advice and increasing benefits take-up

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On-going Challenges

- The need to maintain standards alongside financial and resource reductions
- How to meet competing demands for all priority groups (e.g. elderly, disabled)
- Reaching out to the most needy and vulnerable
- Managing the stigma of poverty

Local Authorities should...

Share learning and good practice with other authorities and partner agencies

- Be prepared to be accountable and be open to research and scrutiny**



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Child Poverty Indicators

- UK Government consultation (Nov'12-Feb'13)
- Proposed indicators include:
- Worklessness, unmanageable debt
- Access to healthcare and quality education
- Family stability, parenting skills
- Nutrition, sanitation
- Poor Housing

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Thank you. Any questions?



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