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A Scoping Review of the Literature on Poverty in Northern Ireland

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NICS
ECONOMIST PROFESSION

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1. Executive Summary

1. Executive Summary

This literature review was carried out to provide an overview of the available evidence and set out what is known about poverty in Northern Ireland from existing literature, identify gaps and make recommendations on further research needed to strengthen the evidence base. It should be noted that by virtue of being a literature review, the views presented in this report are of various researchers/organisations and do not necessarily represent those of the Department for Communities.

Due to the limited poverty literature pertaining to NI, the scope of the review was widened to incorporate evidence from the UK and Republic of Ireland (RoI). It is also important to note that most literatures incorporate NI into the UK as a whole or just focus on Great Britain, often resulting in evidence being heavily influenced by findings from the rest of the UK rather than NI. In addition, there seems to be lack of frequently updated evidence with most literatures using data from the early 2010s.

What are the risk factors for falling into poverty?

Overall, the research has shown that there are many factors identified across literature that increase the risk of falling into poverty. The main risks identified being:

- Childhood factors such as poor educational attainment, parental qualifications, and childhood poverty itself

- Family factors such as family breakdown, family size, and lone parenting
- Disability including parental disability, mental health conditions, and special education needs
- Labour market factors such as worklessness, low-paid work, and insecure jobs
- Personal and parental drugs and alcohol addiction
- Living in rural areas
- Debt
- Ethnicity

Interestingly, many of the risk factors for falling into poverty have been found to stem from early years, with many childhood factors heavily affecting the risk of poverty in the future. An evidence review carried out by HM Government (2014) identified that the main driver for future poverty is poor child educational attainment due to its influence on future employment outcomes and earnings, and that all the other childhood factors to some extent act through their effect on educational attainment.

Overall, there appears to be a gap in evidence pertaining to NI in terms of risk factors for falling into poverty. Furthermore, due to the complexity of poverty, much of the evidence is non-conclusive and unable to determine a causal relationship or whether a factor is a cause or consequence of poverty and if both, which is more

prevalent. Some risk factors have also been found to result in people being stuck in a vicious cycle where, for example, some may fall into poverty due to debt and then once in poverty, accumulate more debt to finance their existing debt repayments and daily living essentials, which leads to more debt and deeper poverty simultaneously.

What factors enable people to exit/leave poverty?

While it is individuals in the end who get themselves out of poverty, they need the state, markets and society to act together to enable them to achieve a decent standard of living (Joseph Roundtree Foundation, 2016b). As Hick and Lanau (2018) state, within the wider poverty literature, studies typically focus on ‘trigger’ events that co-occur with transitions in and out of poverty, often drawing on a framework proposed by Jenkins (2011). They explain that these trigger events are typically divided into three broad categories:

- Labour market events (e.g. increase in hours, pay or occupation)
- Demographic events (e.g. changes in household composition, health or tenure)
- Non-labour market income events (e.g. changes in benefits, pensions and assets)

They note that these triggers reflect the proximate events that co-occur with a poverty transition, and that this does not mean that they should be interpreted as causal effects. Hick and Lanau (2018)

elaborate that existing research using this framework typically identifies labour market triggers as explaining a majority share of poverty transitions, with research by the Office for National Statistics (2015, cited in Hick and Lanau, 2018) finding that positive employment events, such as securing a pay increase by moving jobs, or the household gaining a worker, are associated with an 80% probability of exiting in-work poverty from one year to the next.

Regarding policies and practices, there appears to be a lack of concrete research that determines which policies and practices work best in helping people exit poverty. Identified papers tend to concentrate on trigger events related to moving out of poverty analysed via longitudinal surveys, such as gaining employment or increasing pay rather than in-depth case studies exploring what factors enabled people to escape poverty. Some literatures did identify Universal Credit Work Search Support, advice services, voluntary sector and National Living Wage as potential factors that enable people to escape poverty. However, these findings have often not been conclusive, especially, regarding National Living Wage due to it being a macro policy resulting in difficulties in assessing its effects separately from other policies and economic factors.

What are the major impacts of poverty on people’s lives?

The review found that for those in poverty, the consequences of it are far-reaching and can have long-term impacts.

The main impacts identified being:

- Mental health such as emotional well-being, self-esteem and anxiety
- Physical health including obesity, child health, chronic or long-term illness
- Experience in education and educational attainment
- Relationships with family and peers
- Crime, both increasing the likelihood of being a perpetrator and a victim of crime
- Housing and neighbourhood
- Debt
- Drug and alcohol addiction

Similarly to the risk factors of poverty, many of the impacts have been found to be both a cause and consequence of poverty, leading to a vicious cycle that traps people in hardship. It has been identified that the impacts of poverty can start from an early age, from the point before a child is even born. Willis, Sime and Lerpiniere (2015) declare that children from low income families are more likely to die at birth or in infancy than children born into better off families. The impacts of poverty have also been found to be most severe when experienced at an early age, having a significant impact on children's cognitive development, education, mental and physical health as

well as their relationships with family and peers which can have a major impact on children's educational attainment, future life prospects, and poverty as adults.

Overall, the impacts of poverty have been shown to be multi-dimensional and possess a domino effect, whereby one impact activates a chain reaction. For example, poverty has been found to cause debt which in turn has been evidenced to cause stress which Barnard (2018) links to relationship breakdown and Ayre (2016) reports to impact on people's physical health through higher cholesterol levels, blood pressure and heart disease. Furthermore, although the impacts of poverty have been noted to be most severe when experienced at an early age, poverty has been shown to have a significant negative impact at all stages of life, therefore, it presents a major problem to anyone who has the misfortune to experience it.

The impacts of poverty were found to be most literature rich, with many papers choosing to focus on one or two impacts in detail rather than broad impacts of poverty in general. It is therefore an area of poverty that perhaps has the least evidence gaps, although, literatures exclusive to Northern Ireland still appear to be lacking in volume and richness in comparison to the rest of UK and RoI.

Recommendations for Future Research

Through the review of existing literature on poverty, gaps in evidence have been identified and may be used to inform future research. Potential research may include:

- An examination of how the rates and distribution of poverty in Northern Ireland compare to the other UK countries/ regions and the Republic of Ireland, and how this has changed over time. This would provide an indication of the extent to which the UK research is relevant to NI and an insight into any key differences in poverty in NI.
- A study of the key sources of poverty data currently available in Northern Ireland. This would consider, with reference to best practice, options to maximise the insight that can be drawn from the available data. The research would also benchmark NI data sources to other UK countries and the Republic of Ireland, identify key limitations on the

analysis which can be undertaken, and consider how these might be addressed.

- Qualitative research examining the factors that have enabled people to exit poverty in Northern Ireland.
- A study on what works in reducing poverty. This research would examine evidence on the impact and effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions introduced elsewhere with the aim of identifying lessons for NI.

Disclaimer

The research referred to and the citations included in this document, present the views and information/ statistics provided by various researchers and organisations, and does not necessarily represent the views or policy of the Department for Communities.

The background of the slide features a photograph of an open book with its pages fanned out. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text '2. Introduction' is centered in the middle of the page in a white, bold, sans-serif font.

2. Introduction

2. Introduction

2.1 Background

There is a statutory obligation in the Northern Ireland Act 1998 for the Executive to “adopt a strategy setting out how it proposes to tackle poverty, social exclusion and patterns of deprivation based on objective need”.

In line with New Decade New Approach, the Department for Communities (DfC) is developing an Anti-Poverty Strategy that aims to address inequalities and obstacles that directly affect the everyday lives of the most vulnerable people in society and will bring focus to identifying and addressing the issues, barriers and disadvantages that undermine equality of opportunity.

Horgan et al. (2020) state that the political and economic contexts for the Anti-Poverty Strategy are very unpredictable, globally and locally. They also explain that the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK’s exit from the European Union, the climate emergency and a decade of austerity and antipathy to income redistribution, currently present profound economic pressures. Therefore, DfC acknowledged that it was timely for a review of existing poverty literature in NI, and its neighbouring areas.

2.2 Poverty in Northern Ireland

The Households below Average Income for Northern Ireland report, published annually by DfC, is the primary source of poverty data in NI. The main poverty measures are relative and absolute poverty. They are produced Before Housing Costs (BHC) and After Housing Costs (AHC).

An individual is considered to be in relative poverty if they are living in a household with an equivalised income below 60% of UK median income in the year in question. This is a measure of whether those in the lowest income households are keeping pace with the growth of incomes in the population as a whole. In 2019/20, the relative poverty threshold (BHC) for a couple with no children was an income of £328 per week. An individual is considered to be in absolute poverty if they are living in a household with an equivalised income below 60% of the (inflation adjusted) UK median income in 2010/11. This is a measure of whether those in the lowest income households are seeing their incomes rise in real terms. In 2019/20, the absolute poverty threshold (BHC) for a couple with no children was an income of £300 per week (Department for Communities [DfC], 2021).

DfC (2021) states that in 2019/20, 17% of individuals in NI (approximately 313,000) were considered to be in relative poverty BHC, whilst 13% were in absolute poverty

BHC equating to 241,000 individuals. Since 2014/15, there has been a statistically significant fall in the proportion of individuals in relative poverty and absolute poverty, from 22% and 20% respectively.

DfC (2021) found the proportion of children in relative poverty BHC is estimated to be 22% (approximately 100,000) in 2019/20 whilst 17% (approximately 75,000) were in absolute poverty BHC. The long-term trend shows that children are at a higher risk of living in poverty than the overall NI population in both relative and absolute measures.

In 2019/20, 14% (approximately 162,000) of working-age adults were in relative poverty BHC and 11% (approximately 126,000) of this group were in absolute poverty BHC. The proportion of working-age adults in relative and absolute poverty is at a time series low. The percentage of working-age adults in both relative and absolute poverty has consistently been lower than that of the whole population, but has followed a similar trend. Although employment reduces the likelihood of working-age adults being in poverty, the majority of those in relative poverty belong to households where someone works. Of those working-age adults in relative poverty BHC, 63% were in working families and 37% in workless families.

The estimated proportion of pensioners in relative poverty AHC was 13% (approximately 38,000) in 2019/20, compared to 10%

(approximately 29,000) in absolute poverty AHC. Since 2008/09, pensioners have been at a lower risk of being in poverty AHC than the population as a whole. When looking at pensioner poverty the AHC analysis is the Government's preferred measure, because 77% of pensioners live in homes that are owned outright (compared to approximately 31% of the working age population).

2.3 Aims of the Review

The research focused on conducting a scoping review of the literature on poverty in Northern Ireland. It aimed to provide an overview of the available evidence and set out what is known about poverty in NI from existing literature, identify gaps and make recommendations on further research needed to strengthen the evidence base. However, during the initial stages of research, it quickly became apparent that there was limited literature on poverty pertaining to NI. Therefore, the scope of the review was widened to incorporate evidence from the UK and the Republic of Ireland papers.

The project may further assist DfC to understand the experiences of, and issues faced by, people for whom the Anti-Poverty Strategy will deliver. It will also be used not only to inform the development of the initial Anti-Poverty Strategy, but also to help identify future actions.

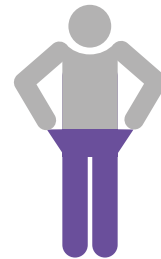
In particular, three areas of poverty were explored and the research paper aimed to answer the following questions:



What are the risk factors for falling into poverty?



What factors enable people to exit/leave poverty?



What are the major impacts of poverty on people's lives?



3. Methodology

3. Methodology

3.1 Rapid Evidence Assessment

A Rapid Evidence Assessment (REA) is based on the principles of a systematic review. The functions of a REA are to:

- Search the electronic and print literature as comprehensively as possible within the constraints of a policy or practice timetable
- Collate descriptive outlines of the available evidence on a topic
- Critically appraise the evidence
- Sift out studies of poor quality
- Provide an overview of what the evidence is saying

(Davies, 2003)

All REAs carry the caveat that their conclusions may be subject to revision once more systematic and comprehensive reviews of the evidence base have been completed. This is consistent with the important principle that systematic reviews are only as good as their most recent updating and revision allows (Davies, 2003).

There are a number of aspects of the systematic review process that can be limited to shorten the timescale. In this study, the REA was restricted in a number of ways.

- The REA questions were limited to focus on narrower aspects of poverty

- The search was limited to 3 research databases
- The review was limited to approximately 15 papers per question

The REA was completed using the Rapid Evidence Assessment Toolkit index developed by the Government Social Research Service (2009).

3.2 Steering Group

A small steering group was convened within DfC to oversee the research consisting of:

- Poverty policy officials
- NISRA statisticians
- Economists

3.3 Research Questions

The REA was undertaken to address the following questions:

- What are the risk factors for falling into poverty?
- What factors enable people to exit/leave poverty?
- What are the major impacts of poverty on people's lives?

3.4 Research Databases

The REA search was limited to the papers included in:

- IDOX Knowledge Exchange – providing a source of information on UK public and social policy and practice

- EBSCO – providing articles licensed from publishers recognised by library professionals, chosen to meet the specific needs of researchers worldwide
- ESRI - providing economic and social research in Ireland

3.5 Search Criteria

The initial search criteria were restricted to papers:

- Published in the 10-year period between 2011 and 2021
- Focused geographically on Northern Ireland, United Kingdom or Republic of Ireland
- Electronic copies of academic journals, peer-reviewed materials, working papers, books and book chapters that are available online in PDF format
- Sourced from the agreed databases or the reference list of relevant papers

Relevant search terms were developed for each question. For example, when considering “What factors enable people to exit/leave poverty?” search terms such as ‘paths out of poverty’, ‘routes out of poverty’, ‘escape poverty’, ‘move out of poverty’, ‘poverty dynamics’ etc. were used.

The research databases were explored using the agreed criteria and search terms. Papers were reviewed initially on the basis of

their abstracts and, if deemed pertinent, the content was examined for relevant chapter headings and search terms. The searches were undertaken as a one-off exercise and confined to a pre-agreed deadline, after which no further papers were considered.

3.6 Selection of Papers

In total, 70 papers were selected as addressing one or more of the research questions. The vast majority of these were sourced from the IDOX Knowledge Exchange with only a few papers identified via EBSCO or ESRI. Some additional papers were obtained through the reference lists of the initial 70 papers.

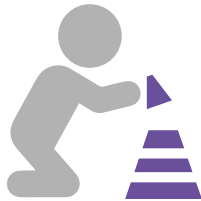
Each of the papers were then accessed and scored based on their quality, strength of evidence and relevance to the review. More recent papers and those focusing on Northern Ireland were also prioritised. For quality assurance, the scoring of papers was completed independently by two researchers and the scores averaged. The highest scoring papers were then appraised for inclusion in the REA and 51 papers were selected.

The 51 papers were read and summarised under a number of key headings related to the relevant research questions. A synthesis was then completed to combine and evaluate the emerging findings from the individual papers.

A close-up photograph of a person's hands holding a dark, textured bag, possibly a wallet or a small pouch. The bag is held in a way that shows its texture and the way it is being held. The background is blurred, suggesting an indoor setting. The overall image has a purple tint.

4. What are the risk factors for falling into poverty?

What are the risk factors for falling into poverty?



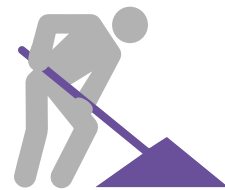
Childhood Factors



Family Structure



Disability



Labour Market Factors



Addictions – Drugs and Alcohol



Living in Rural Areas



Debt



Ethnicity

4.1 Childhood Factors

An evidence review carried out by HM Government (2014) which examines the key factors that make some poor children more likely to become poor adults and thus propagate child poverty across generations, identified that the main driver for future poverty is poor child educational attainment, primarily through the influence on future employment outcomes and earnings. Other key factors they identified, all of which act to some extent through educational attainment, were low parental qualifications, parental ill health, child ill health, the home environment, children’s non-cognitive skills and childhood poverty itself.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation [JRF] (2016a) states that moving into adulthood, young people can be particularly vulnerable to poverty with 30% of those aged 16-24 living in relative poverty in the UK in 2012/13, which was higher than any other age group. They proclaim that, it is in this age group too, that the poverty rate has grown the most over the last decade as well as the age group with a higher risk of tipping into more extreme forms of poverty.

Childhood Poverty

Watson, Maître and Whelan (2012) found that in 2010 the at-risk-of-poverty rate for children in Ireland was 20% compared to



16% for the total population, with a higher rate of at-risk-of-poverty for older children (aged 12 to 17) at 23% and the lowest rate for pre-school age children (aged 0 to 4) at 12%. HM Government (2014) found that childhood poverty itself seems to have a causal effect on children's future poverty status with parental income having one of the strongest associations with children's future income and children's intermediate outcomes. They state research shows that the experience of childhood poverty, and the length of time spent in poverty, is associated with an increased risk of poverty in the future. By comparing teenagers in poverty to those not in poverty, HM Government (2014) found that the odds ratio of being in poverty

as an adult is just under 4, which means that being in poverty as a teenager nearly quadruples the likelihood of being in poverty as an adult. In addition, JRF (2016a) cites that children born to teenage mothers have a 63% higher risk of living in poverty than children born to mothers aged 20 or over, as becoming a teenage parent makes it harder for mothers and fathers to complete their education and find well paid work.

Furthermore, HM Government (2014) states that low income mobility at the bottom of the distribution increases the inheritance of poverty across generations as parents provide their children with genetic endowments and other resources

by investing in their ‘human capital’ through time and purchased goods and services. They explain that transmission to future poverty mainly acts through educational attainment with poor parents being less able to invest in their children’s home environment (home learning activities, health and nutrition) and provide financial capital for schooling. In addition, HM Government (2014) claims that the source of any income is also correlated to children’s outcomes and earnings, with welfare income negatively correlated to children’s outcomes. However, they also state that even though there seems to be a good and consistent understanding of the intergenerational correlation, there is less agreement around the size of the effect and whether the relationships are causal.

Poor Educational Attainment

HM Government (2014) states that education is consistently identified as the key mechanism explaining intergenerational income mobility as a child’s educational achievement will affect their later labour market prospects and so the risk of future poverty. Barnard (2018) who considers poverty in Northern Ireland, expresses that the biggest driver of future poverty is the educational attainment of children when they leave full-time education as it has a major impact on their chances of being employed and of earning enough to avoid poverty as adults. Similarly, Serafino and Tonkin (2014) found that educational

attainment is the most important predictor of the likelihood that someone will be in poverty or severe material deprivation in adulthood. Their analysis suggests that, in the UK, those with a low personal education level are almost five times more likely to be poor in adulthood than those with high personal education levels. Serafino and Tonkin (2014) also found, holding all else equal, that when compared to those with high educational attainment, those with low attainment are 11 times as likely to be severely deprived. Likewise, the odds of being severely deprived are three times higher for those with a medium level of education.

Similarly, Antonopoulos et al. (2020) explain that evidence suggests that educational attainment is the most influential factor, surpassing child poverty, for poverty in future life stages. JRF (2016a) asserts that improving educational results for young people growing up in poverty would contribute to reducing their risk of being in poverty as adults as well as reduce the risk of poverty for their children and future generations.

Poor Parental Qualifications

HM Government (2014) express that a number of studies found that the educational level achieved by a child’s parents is one of the most important factors influencing children’s educational achievement, even after controlling for

a wide range of other background factors and environmental influences. Furthermore, they profess that research links the effect of low parental educational attainment more strongly to persistent rather than to temporary poverty. Adelman et al. (2003, cited in HM Government, 2014) found that only 7% of children whose parents had no qualifications had not experienced poverty, whilst 32% had experienced persistent poverty. By contrast, only 4% of children who experienced persistent poverty had parents with qualifications above A-level standard.

Serafino and Tonkin (2014) found that, before considering the individual's own educational attainment, those with low parental educational levels are twice as likely to be in poverty in adulthood as those children who had at least one highly educated parent. Controlling for the individual's own education reduces the importance of parental education level as a predictor, though it remains significant. Holding all else equal, those with low parental qualifications are 1.3 times more likely to be in poverty than those where at least one parent had high educational attainment.

HM Government (2014) articulate that both maternal and paternal qualifications are important influences on children's educational outcomes but overall maternal qualifications appear to be broadly more important as it emerges that maternal qualifications have particular importance

for younger children at the lower end of the income distribution. With Watson, Maître and Whelan (2012) stating that in Ireland there is a significantly higher risk of child-specific deprivation where the mother has no educational qualifications (about 25%). Although, paternal qualifications are more important at the higher end of the distribution and increase in importance as the age of the child increases (HM Government, 2014).

Poor Home Learning Environment

JRF (2016a) found that parenting matters to children's development and educational attainment, which helps to prevent poverty in their future. HM Government (2014) states that child and parental aspirations, home learning environment and parenting styles show a gradient by income and persist inter-generationally, so could be seen as an effect as well as a cause of poverty. Evidence shows that low income can contribute to lower quality home learning environment, lower aspirations and sub-optimal parenting styles which can have an effect on a child's educational attainment and therefore on their future employment and earnings levels.

HM Government (2014) also states that the home learning environment in particular has large and long lasting impacts in the early years and for older children there are specific aspects of the home learning environment that are important such as access to the internet. Parental expectations and aspirations for their children have

also been found to explain a significant proportion of the income-related gap in children's outcomes and this link is likely to work through parenting styles and the intergenerational transmission of non-cognitive abilities to children. According to Goodman and Gregg (2010, cited in HM Government, 2014), 81% of the richest mothers say they hope their 9 year old will go to university, compared with only 37% of the poorest mothers.

Child Abuse and Neglect

JRF (2016a) found that neglect or abuse as a child can increase a child's risk of experiencing poverty in adulthood. They specify that impact on mental health can lead to unemployment, low earnings, homelessness and exposure to substance misuse. Boys and young men raised in trying circumstances may respond to disadvantage and trauma by behaving in ways that get them excluded from school, involved in criminality or at risk of serious exclusion and homelessness (JRF, 2016a). Girls and young women with similar early-life experiences are at risk of mental health problems, or entering into early sexual relationships, often characterised by further violence and abuse, and early parenthood (JRF, 2016a).

An evidence review carried out by Bywaters et al. (2016) that looks at the impact of child abuse or neglect (CAN) on adult poverty, highlights reduced educational attainment, mental and physical health problems and difficulties in adult relationships as key factors of child maltreatment in producing negative

financial outcomes. However, they note that there are no good-quality UK studies that directly chart the association between CAN and adult poverty as research on the link between being looked after in state care and economic outcomes is derived from one key source, the 1970 British Cohort Study. They explain that being a looked-after child is strongly associated with a history of CAN and studies provide evidence that being looked after as a child has a sustained impact on a number of socio-economic outcomes including: reduced income, lower socio-economic status, reduced educational attainment, increased homelessness and unemployment. However, it is not possible from these studies to disentangle the effects of maltreatment from the effects of being looked after (Bywaters et al., 2016).

4.2 Family Structure

HM Government (2014) found that family instability, family size and lone parent families are closely associated with a higher risk of poverty. However, Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) declare that while there is a correlation between some family structures and the incidence of poverty, the extent to which this association is causal is unclear for two reasons:

1. Groups such as lone parents or teenage mothers may have a greater risk of being in poverty not because of their family status per se but because they are more likely to have other characteristics, such as low educational attainment, which raise the risk of poverty.



2. Family structures may not only be a cause but also a consequence of poverty.

Family Breakdown

The Centre for Social Justice [CSJ] (2019) reports that the break-up of family relationships is one of the quickest routes into poverty and children in families that break apart are more than twice as likely to experience poverty as those whose families stay together. JRF (2016a) states that family breakdown increases the risk of poverty and that the link is stronger for persistent poverty (23% of lone parents experience persistent poverty, compared with 9% of couples with children).

Likewise, Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) identified relationship breakdowns as a route into destitution stating that in 2017, relationship issues were reported by a quarter of all destitute households over the past year, including issues with people's relationship with family (16%), divorce/separation (9%) and domestic violence (8%).

In the UK, approximately two thirds of all children are in intact families by the age of 15 compared to an OECD average of 84%, meaning it is fast becoming a world leader in family breakdown (CSJ, 2019). CSJ (2019) also found that those who experience family breakdown when aged 18 or younger,

are 2.3, 1.6 and 1.4 times more likely to experience homelessness, debt and being on benefits respectively. HM Government (2014) states that whilst direct causality of family instability as a risk of poverty is hard to establish, the primary driver would seem to act via labour market activity, with family breakdown associated with a loss of income for women and children and significantly higher rates of worklessness for lone parent families. Heriot-Watt modelling suggests that a 10% reduction in the rate of relationship breakdown could reduce poverty on some measures, including children living in workless households, by around 3–4% (JRF, 2016a).

However, Watson, Maître and Whelan (2012) who consider child deprivation in Ireland, claim that there may be something about the process of marital breakdown itself, which makes it difficult for lone parents to provide for their children. In their paper, they observed a higher risk of child-specific deprivation for cohabiting couples compared to married couples, although when controlling for other characteristics, they found that only children of formerly married lone parents show a significantly higher risk of child-specific deprivation.

Family Size

HM Government (2014) cites that having a larger family is a driver of poverty. In particular, poverty rates increase more substantially when a third (or more) child is

present in the family, especially in Ireland and the UK compared to other OECD countries. Grotti et al. (2017) similarly found that there is higher risk of deprivation for those in larger families with three or more children (30%) than for children in small families (22%). HM Government (2014) claims that there is evidence of higher rates of worklessness in larger families, citing a combination of higher childcare costs and issues of co-ordination between different agencies (for example school, nursery and childminder) as factors likely to deter mothers of large families from entering the labour market. In addition, household needs are increased when there are more children, requiring higher levels of income to avoid poverty (HM Government, 2014). Jenkins (1998-2004 and 2011, cited in HM Government, 2014) suggests that around 10% of non-poor couple-with-children households entered into poverty when they experienced an increase in the number of children. He estimates that each additional dependent child decreases the chance of a poor household leaving poverty by around 20%, and increases the chance of re-entering poverty by 35%.

Lone Parents

Joseph Rowntree Foundation [JRF] (2021) states that lone parents continue to have the highest in-work poverty level of all family types as they are disproportionately affected by barriers that prevent them escaping in-work poverty. They proclaim

that lone parents working in retail and accommodation had the highest in-work poverty rates in the UK, 25% and almost 35% in 2018/19 respectively. In the UK, lone parents are on average younger and hold fewer qualifications than their married counterparts (Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan, 2012). They are also more likely to be women, working in a low wage sector, working fewer hours, and restricted by childcare and transport (JRF, 2021).

HM Government (2014) states that apart from the obvious impact of losing a potential wage-earner from the household, moving from a couple to a lone parent household is also associated with high rates of leaving employment perhaps due to caring responsibilities. Jenkins (1991–98 and 2011, cited in HM Government, 2014) suggests that an extra adult in the household raises the chance of leaving poverty by around 25%. In addition, Grotti et al. (2017) using the Irish SILC data from 2004–2015, found a significantly higher rate of any deprivation (68% vs. 47%) and persistent deprivation (41% vs. 28%) for children of never-married lone parents than for those of formerly married lone parents. This is in keeping with expectations and findings from other research that formerly married lone parents tend to be a more advantaged group in terms of personal resources such as education.

4.3 Disability

JRF (2021) reports that half of all people in poverty either have a disability themselves or live with someone who does, compared with just a third of people in non-poor households. Similarly, Barnard (2018) found strong links between disability and poverty in Northern Ireland, with 27% of disabled people and 28% of families that include someone who is disabled being in poverty in 2016/17, compared to 19% of non-disabled people and 16% of people in families which do not include a disabled person. However, she expresses that the poverty rate among disabled people was lower in NI than the rest of the UK, where between 30% and 39% of disabled people were in poverty. Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) also found disability to be associated with experiencing destitution and Department for Work and Pensions (2014, cited in Tinson et al., 2016) observed that disabled people are more likely to be in persistent poverty.

Tinson et al. (2016) state that disabled people are at a higher risk of poverty for two main reasons:

1. Impairments, health conditions and social responses to these conditions often prevent disabled people from working and thus deprive them of income.
2. Disability often brings with it a series of higher and additional costs that further reduce income.



This means that disability can both increase the number of people who are in poverty, and increase the depth of poverty for those already experiencing it. Tinson et al. (2016) also observed that disabled people are more likely to be disadvantaged in multiple aspects of life; these are problems in of themselves and contributing factors to poverty.

Moreover, Tinson et al. (2016) found that within the disabled population, there are even higher-risk groups, with high poverty rates among renters with disability, both social and private (60% and 56%, respectively). JRF (2021) states that families

who face barriers in their ability to work due to disability or caring face additional risks in the private rented sector as they may be unable to meet their high rents through earnings. They have also expressed that when households facing barriers to work also have to deal with expensive private rents, their risk of poverty increases.

Low Employment

HM Government (2014) identified several barriers to disabled people's access to employment, such as difficulties in accessing appropriate transport, perceptions of employers' attitude towards disability and a lack of specialist equipment. Tinson

et al. (2016) state that in UK in 2015, 46% of working-age disabled people were in employment, compared with 80% of non-disabled people. As for Northern Ireland, Barnard (2018) found that in 2016/17, only 35% of working-age disabled people in NI were employed, compared to 42% in Scotland, 47% in Wales and 50% in England. Tinson et al. (2016) express that while it is unreasonable to expect disabled people to be employed at the same rate as non-disabled people, many say that they want to work and levels of unemployment are higher among those actively seeking jobs.

In addition, JRF (2016a) found that disabled people who are in work are more likely to do so part-time, be on low pay, and in less senior roles – even if they have the same level of qualification as a non-disabled person. Similarly, Tinson (2016) explains that low pay rates for disabled people are higher than those for non-disabled people, at 34% compared with 27%. This is the case at every level of qualification, for example, a disabled person with a degree is more likely to be low paid than a non-disabled person with a degree.

Inadequate Disability Benefits

Tinson et al. (2016) explain that disabled people face higher costs than non-disabled people, such as the cost of equipment to manage a condition. This means that the same level of income secures a lower standard of living than it would for a non-disabled person. Furthermore, Tinson et al.

(2016) state there is evidence that benefits such as Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) do not cover these extra costs sufficiently: in the bottom fifth of the income distribution, disabled people are more likely to be materially deprived, whether they receive extra costs benefits or not. JRF (2021) explains that families with a disabled adult in the household were one of the hardest-hit groups from recent changes to the benefit system with their risk of poverty having increased since 2015/16.

Barker et al. (2018) found that many disabled people have problems in accessing disability benefits, often related to the assessment process not being fit for purpose, with significant demand for disability benefits advice illustrating a widespread difficulty that people face in claiming disability benefits. They also state that needs-based disability benefits are provided in recognition of the higher living costs associated with having a disability, however, the higher rates of deprivation among disabled people and estimates of the average cost of having a disability, provide evidence that these benefits are not sufficient to cover the additional costs of disability. It is therefore likely that disabled people who are unable to access disability benefits will face an even bigger shortfall between their income and their living costs, placing them at a high risk of destitution (Barker et al., 2018).

Mental Health Conditions

HM Government (2014) observed that the association between mental health issues and low-income poverty are reasonably well established. Evidence reviewed by HM Government (2014) shows that a significant determining factor in why people with mental health problems are at greater risk of poverty is due to their inability to work or to engage with the labour market successfully. They also discussed findings that those with mental health problems were the most excluded from society. Reasons for this comprised stigma and discrimination from employers, low expectations about what people with mental health problems can do, a lack of support to enable people into work, and barriers to engaging with the community. They suggest these issues severely limit the ability of adults with mental health problems to engage with the labour market.

Special Educational Needs and Disability

JRF (2016a) states that children with special educational needs and disability (SEND) are more likely to be in poverty as adults and achieve much lower results at school in all of the UK nations. They report that they are also six times more likely to be excluded from school, and 74% of all permanently excluded pupils have some form of SEND. Young people with SEND are more than twice as likely to become not in education, employment or training (NEET) and to go to prison (JRF, 2016a). Shaw et al. (2016) found that whilst

children with SEND are more likely to be born into poverty, they are also more likely to experience poverty as they grow up.

Shaw et al. (2016) express that families of children with SEND are more likely to move into poverty as a result of the costs and/or family stress associated with their child's SEND status. They explain that this pushes them into poverty as parents of children with SEND need more time away from work to provide care as well as care often coming at a high cost. In addition, Shaw et al. (2016) state that children with SEND from low-income families have poorer educational outcomes and these outcomes have a direct effect on their earning potential later in life. They report that in Northern Ireland in 2013/14, 35.6% of children with lower categories of SEND and 19.9% of those with higher categories of SEND left school with at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths, compared to 70.9% of those without SEND. As a result, the risk of children with SEND becoming poor adults through a lack of well-paid employment is greatly increased (Shaw et al., 2016).

Child and Young Adult Disability

JRF (2016a) states that around 7% of UK children are disabled and 10% of UK children live in a family with at least one disabled child. They profess that disabled children are more likely to live in a lone parent family (32% compared with 22% non-disabled) and have an increased risk of parental separation during the first two years of life. Families

with disabled children and more severe health conditions face higher risks of poverty as parents can be less able to work (difficulty finding childcare and often need or choose to have at least one parent providing full-time care) and have additional costs which affect their ability to manage their finances.

JRF (2016a) explains that disabled young people moving into adulthood also face additional barriers that have a significant impact on their future life chances and risk of poverty. They are half as likely to be in paid work as non-disabled peers, and disabled children growing up in poverty generally achieve adult goals of employment, economic independence, personal autonomy and independent housing to a lesser degree and later than non-disabled adults. Tinson et al. (2016) using data from Households below Average Income 2013/14 found that disabled young adults (16- to 24-year-olds) have a particularly high poverty rate of 44%.

Parental Disability

HM Government (2014) explains that there is limited evidence on how parents' ill health affects their children's future outcomes, however, some research outlines how children who play the role of carer for their disabled parents are likely to have worse educational attainment and worse employment outcomes in the future. Watson, Maître and Whelan (2012) demonstrate using the 2009 Irish SILC dataset, that disability of the mother in

married couple households is associated with a very small increased risk of child-specific deprivation (8% vs. 7%), and disability of the father is associated with a larger increase in risk (13% vs. 7%). They suggest that the larger impact of father's disability in married couple households is likely to be due to its impact on total household income, since men's earnings tend to be higher than women's are.

4.4 Labour Market Factors

JRF (2016a) states that work is the best protection against poverty for adults of working age as for those who can work, being in a job that offers good pay, enough hours, security, and prospects, reduces the risk of poverty. HM Government (2014) explains that results from numerous studies show that worklessness and low earnings have a direct causal association with low-income poverty. HM Government (2014) cites that OECD evidence (2008) supports findings that the most important poverty risk factor is whether household members are in employment. Across the 30 OECD countries considered (in the mid-2000s), those living in households where no-one works had a poverty rate of 36% on average, almost three times higher than in households with one worker, and 12 times higher than households with two or more workers.

Barker et al. (2018) found that labour market factors are usually a chronic cause of destitution; such factors include low pay, variation in local employment

opportunities in the context of high overall employment across the UK and various kinds of insecurity such as ‘bogus self-employment’, zero-hours contracts and temporary contracts. They state that the available work for low skilled workers may be low-paid, which leaves them struggling to meet their essential needs on an ongoing basis as well as making it extremely unlikely that they will be able to save to provide a cushion against future income shocks.

Worklessness

Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) observed that worklessness and poverty have a strong association; in 2009/10 in the UK, two-thirds of working-age adults living in workless households were in poverty

compared with 15% of families where someone worked. MacInnes et al. (2012) state that given the low level of out-of-work benefits, a workless, working-age household is very likely to be in poverty. Barnard (2018) found that Northern Ireland had higher worklessness and lower employment than elsewhere in the UK and that the proportion of people in poverty in workless households, in contrast with the UK as a whole, has increased slightly over time. Barnard (2018) suggests that the employment rate continues to be a major factor affecting poverty rates in NI; in 2016/17, overall 57% of people in workless households were in poverty, compared to 13% of people in households with at least one person in paid work.



HM Government (2014) states that the direct impact of worklessness and low earnings on household income makes it a key area of poverty risk. Jenkins (1998–2004 and 2011, cited in HM Government, 2014) shows that around 60% of household entries into poverty are associated with a change in income or employment. Looking longitudinally at causality, falls in earnings or numbers of working adults are associated with the highest poverty entry rates and account for the majority of all entries to poverty. In addition, HM Government (2014) states that evidence suggests that those out of work for long spells may face increasing barriers in returning to work including loss of skills, employer bias, and changes in individual attitudes to work.

Low Paid Work

JRF (2021) states that in-work poverty has largely continued on an upward trend and stood at almost 13% in 2018/19. They explain that the rise in the rate of in-work poverty in recent years has happened despite a rising employment rate and minimum wage. JRF (2016a) claims that low pay is the strongest factor in working poverty in the UK, especially where the main earner in the household is low-paid, however, low-paid work is often the only option, particularly where other considerations are pressing; for instance, caring responsibilities, disability and ill-health can all result in people being able to work only part-time.

JRF (2016a) found that one in five employees in Britain is low paid and once in low-paid work, the majority get stuck; four in five low-paid workers fail to fully escape low pay over a decade, and employers are less likely to train low-skilled workers. Similarly Sissons, Green and Lee (2017) cite that a sizeable group of workers remain in low-paid work for extended periods, experiencing little wage progression.

Regarding Northern Ireland, MacInnes et al. (2012) state that there is an issue with low pay in private sector jobs, whereas jobs in the public sector paid, on average, the same as Great Britain, private sector pay was 16% lower. Moreover, regarding destitution, Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) explain that destitution seems to stem most often from a gradual weakening in people's ability to make ends meet on a very low income. Whilst 'shock' factors could also be highly relevant, they claim it is the long-term erosion of capacity to withstand even minor financial shocks that pushes people into absolute destitution.

However, Sissons, Green and Lee (2017) cite that low pay does not necessarily translate to poverty at the household level. Cross-national studies provide evidence that low pay at the individual level does not tend to be very strongly associated with poverty because of the mediating factors of household composition and other household income, yet being in

low-paid employment has been found to raise the risk of household poverty.

Part-time Work

JRF (2016a) states that households with only part-time workers had a significantly higher risk of low pay (42% compared with 13% of those working full-time) and after housing costs had a 32% risk of relative income poverty. MacInnes et al. (2012) identified that in 2009/10, half of children in poverty in Northern Ireland lived with a working parent with part-time earnings, which was often not enough to lift a family with two adults out of poverty. Within the labour market, many households' ability to earn more was held back by an inability to find enough hours of work and a lack of opportunities to progress out of low pay (JRF, 2021). In addition, caring responsibilities are also associated with a greater likelihood of choosing part-time work, particularly for mothers as a method to 'ease work-family conflict' while providing a household income (Sissons, Green and Lee, 2017).

Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) explain that while in-work poverty is a substantial problem, it has been established that low pay is not the main cause of poverty for this group. Instead, they profess that underemployment is a major issue among households in working poverty, with most of them employed too few hours to escape poverty.

Single-earning Households

Sissons, Green and Lee (2017) cite that the increasing prevalence of in-work poverty is notable in the UK and whilst poverty risk remains higher for those out of work, households with at least one person in employment account for the majority of working-age poverty. Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) articulate that the families most at risk of in-work poverty are those families with a single earner in low-wage or part-time jobs as well as families headed by one female earner (whether single or partnered). MacInnes et al. (2012) state that Northern Ireland has a higher proportion of single-earner households (31%) than any country or region in Great Britain and if that single earner is on a low wage, their earnings are unlikely to be sufficient to lift their family out of poverty. In addition, as well as needing full-time work, a household will often need all the adults to be in paid work to move out of poverty (MacInnes et al., 2012). Sissons, Green and Lee (2017) found that second household earners significantly reduce the risk of poverty, with the in-work poverty rate for dual adult households with a single earner being much higher than those for dual adult households with two earners (at 26.4% and 4.2% respectively). They express that this highlights the importance of household labour supply in insulating households from poverty, although around one in every twenty-seven dual-earning households remain in poverty.

Employment Sector

Sissons, Green and Lee (2017) using 2009-2012 UK data, explain that the highest working poverty rate, by some margin, is found in accommodation and food services, where almost one-quarter of employees are in poverty. High rates have also been observed in administrative and support services (15.6%), residential care (14.0%) and in the retail sector (13.9%) with part of the explanation for these differences relating to differences in patterns of working hours across sectors. When considering only workers on full-time hours, Sissons, Green and Lee (2017) found that 14.9% of those in accommodation and food services sectors were in household poverty, in residential care the proportion was 10.7% and in retail it was 10.1%. Comparatively, they found high rates of poverty among full-time workers were also observed in agriculture (12.2%), and administrative and support services (10.9%). Additionally, the poverty rate remained over 10% for dual-earning households with a main earner in accommodation and food service, 9.4% in administrative and support services, 9.2% in residential care and 8% in retail.

Similarly, JRF (2021) states that workers in the hospitality and retail sectors face some of the highest risks of in-work poverty, reflecting that these sectors have a high incidence of low pay and lower average working hours than other sectors. They found that in 2018/19, 23% of workers in accommodation and food services were in poverty, the highest among

all of the sectors. They also highlight that people working in these sectors, who were already in a vulnerable position pre-COVID, have also endured the brunt of the economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Sissons, Green and Lee (2017) explain that individuals choose to, or find themselves, working in certain sectors that have a higher likelihood of being in poverty partly due to skills and qualifications limiting access to particular types of jobs. While the geography of labour demand shapes opportunities locally.

Insecure Jobs

Sissons, Green and Lee (2017) present research that demonstrates there is a significant proportion of the workforce who are employed in insecure and poor quality jobs. They cite that recent estimates suggest that while the proportion in insecure employment has not grown significantly in the last 20 years (from 30% in 1994 to 32% in 2014), the nature of insecurity for those in poor quality jobs may have deepened. Likewise, Barker et al. (2018) raise concerns about the quality of employment available to people, especially those with low educational attainment and/or those who had been out or never in the labour market. They identify common forms of insecure employment in the UK including low-paid jobs, self-employment, temporary contracts and zero-hours contracts, which JRF (2016a) states leave people without a stable income.

- **Temporary Contracts**

Barker et al. (2018) found that in 2017, 1.6 million workers in the UK were on a temporary contract, of these workers 440,000 (28%) could not find a permanent job, suggesting that they would have preferred a permanent position. Barker et al. (2018) state that in addition to the inherent insecurity of a temporary contract, workers on these contracts tend to be lower-paid than workers on a permanent contract.

- **Zero-hours Contracts**

Barker et al. (2018) cite that according to ONS, 880,000 people were on a zero-hours contract in the UK in 2017, equating to 2.8% of all those in employment. They express that even though these types of employment make up a relatively small proportion of all jobs, the frequency with which frontline professionals they interviewed mentioned them in relation to their destitute clients indicates that insecure work may be concentrated among people at risk of destitution. A key reason why this type of insecure work is a cause of destitution is that it could make income highly variable, making budgeting and/or saving against future income shocks impossible (Barker et al., 2018).

- **Self-employment**

Barker et al. (2018) cite that in the UK between 2000 and 2015, self-employment increased from 12% to

15% of the workforce, although 2000 did represent a low point. They state this growth was in two very different sectors: high-skilled, high-pay sectors such as advertising and banking, and lower-paying, lower-skilled sectors such as cleaning and construction. They state that self-employment in low-skill sectors is often low-paid, and sometimes may be 'bogus self-employment' whereby employers enforce the self-employment of workers to avoid paying higher National Insurance, holiday pay and other statutory worker pay, with this type of self-employment also involving fluctuating hours, leading to fluctuating income. Barker et al. (2018) specify that in 2016, 45% of self-employed workers over the age of 25 were paid below the Living Wage and 23% of full-time self-employed workers were living in a household in poverty.

4.5 Addictions – Drugs and Alcohol

Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) state that in 2006 the Centre for Social Justice highlighted alcohol and drug addiction as one of their five 'pathways to poverty' and both a cause and consequence of poverty. However, they specified that whilst poverty affects around one in five of the population, best estimates for problematic drug users in the UK are 0.89% of population, whilst 3.8% are estimated to be dependent on alcohol. While there are no direct estimates of drug and alcohol misuse among people in poverty, of those that are in receipt of out-

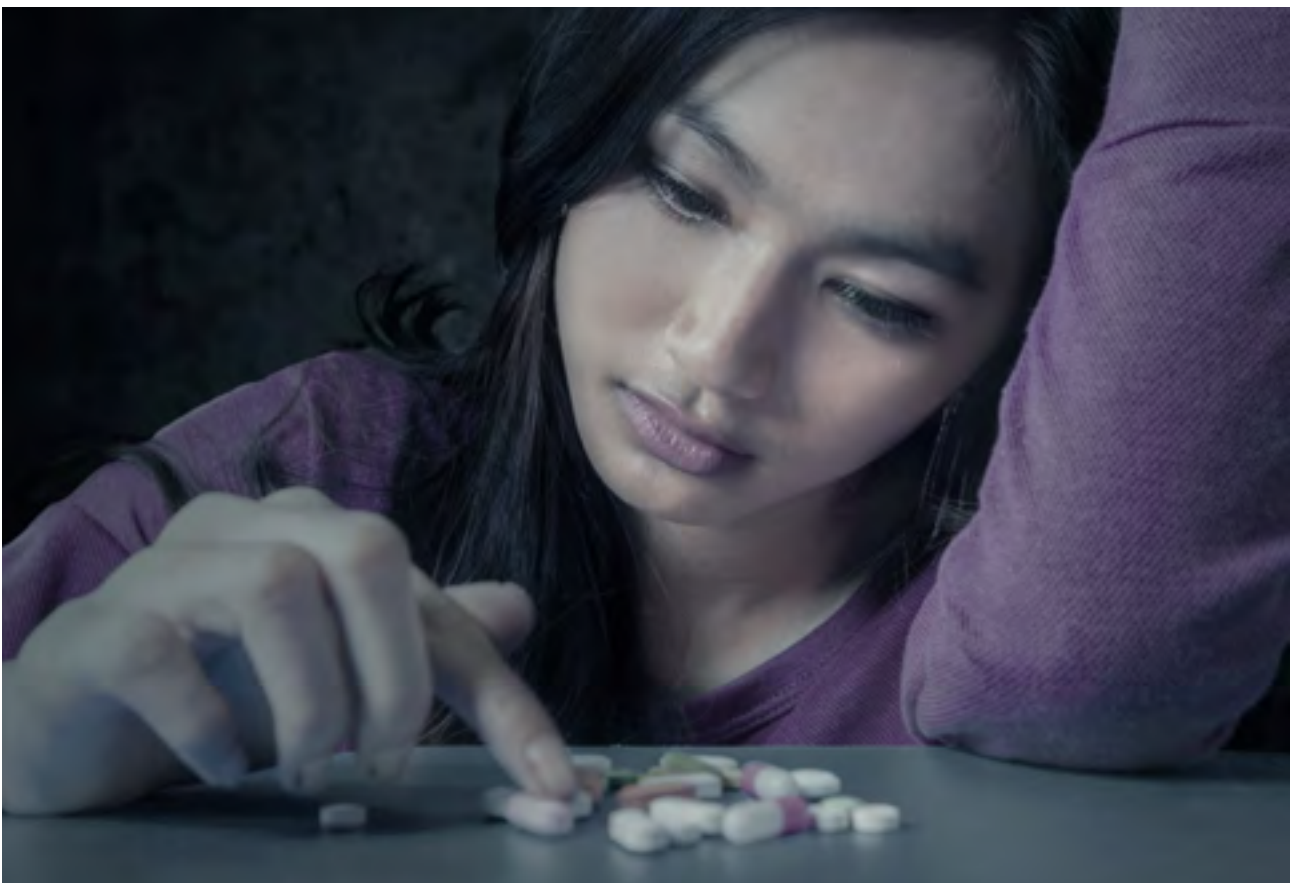
of-work benefits, it is estimated that around 7% are problem drug users and around 4% are dependent drinkers (Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan, 2012; JRF, 2016a).

HM Government (2014) states it is unclear how much of a cause or effect of poverty problematic drug use is but proclaims that there is a clear link between dependency and incomes via employability with users of hard drugs significantly less likely to be in employment compared with other working age adults. JRF (2016a) states that over 80% of employers say that they would not employ a current or former crack or heroin user. Similarly, for alcohol dependence, a

number of studies cited by HM Government (2014) identify a negative relationship between alcohol dependence and employment, however, the evidence here is more varied and can be contradictory.

Parental Drug and Alcohol Dependency

HM Government (2014) explains that although parental drug and alcohol problem use amongst parents is clearly linked with a range of much worse child outcomes and wider well-being issues, due to lack of research it is difficult to find evidence that directly associates parental drug and alcohol dependency with longer-term economic outcomes and poverty in the



future. However, children whose parents have a drug and/or alcohol problem often report facing physical abuse, family relationship problems and neglect, which all present real risks to their life opportunities (HM Government, 2014). Studies also show that children facing parental alcoholism risk having difficulties at school, are more likely to develop alcoholism themselves and suffer poor outcomes spanning cognitive, behavioural, psychological, emotional and social domains, which indirectly increases their risk of poverty in the future (HM Government, 2014).

4.6 Living in Rural Areas

The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (2016) states that at least 80% of the Northern Ireland land mass and more than 1 in 3 of its population are rural with the rural share of the population growing. They report that from 2001 to 2011 the number of people living in rural areas of NI increased by 15% in comparison to a rise of only 4% in urban areas.

McGuire (2021) found that deprivation remains a prominent problem in rural areas even in developed countries, reflected by both rural poverty and social isolation. Barker et al. (2018) highlighted how the cost of essentials can vary by location, with people living in rural areas often facing higher transport and energy costs relative to urban dwellers. Similarly, JRF (2016a) states that those in rural areas often face higher costs such as transport bills and fuel prices,

as rural properties are more likely to be off-gas. McGuire (2021) proclaims that 31% of all NI rural households live in fuel poverty and that one of the most prominent and dogmatic obstacles facing residents of rural NI is poor transportation services, a problem which can simultaneously stimulate conditions of poverty and exclusion. McGuire (2021) further states that the inequalities between rural and urban life are accelerated when considering educational, employment and professional opportunities. Williams and Doyle (2016) also note a 'rural premium' on some key goods and services in rural areas due to a lack of competitive markets for food, fuel, energy and transport. Smith et al. (2010, cited in Williams and Doyle, 2016) concluded that people in rural areas typically need to spend 10–20% more on everyday requirements than those in urban areas which means to achieve the same minimum living standard a two children family will need nearly £60 more a week than those in urban areas. In addition, Williams and Doyle (2016) found that rural poverty could be masked by the relative affluence of rural areas and by a culture of self-reliance in rural communities. They found key contributory factors of rural poverty to include the fragility of some rural economies, poor access to employment opportunities and public services, low pay, limited access to the internet, a lack of affordable housing and higher costs. Williams and Doyle (2016) also state that employment in rural areas is often associated with casual, low paid work and that a lack of large-scale



employers, dependence on small local businesses for employment, informal working arrangements and the seasonal nature of much of the work all contribute to the prevalence of low pay. Those suffering from low pay and in-work poverty in rural areas therefore have to rely on benefits to supplement their wages. However, the Commission for Rural Communities (2006, cited in Williams and Doyle, 2016) found that in England there is a lower benefit take up in rural areas, which may further contribute to in-work poverty.

4.7 Debt

Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) state that personal debt was one of the five pathways to poverty identified by the Centre for Social Justice in 2006. HM Government

(2014) highlights that evidence clearly shows that debt associates strongly with income poverty, however, it also states that it is hard to clearly establish a causal relationship between past debt and current poverty. They state that despite a large body of both Government and academic research examining the relationship between debt and income, it is difficult to separate aspects of debt and low income as they are frequently treated as two sides of the same ‘financial constraint’ issue. Similarly, the Hartfree and Collard (2014) review did not find any evidence to show that problem debt causes poverty, which they explain was largely because the studies included in their review did not take account of income being spent on servicing debts. However, they proclaim that the

evidence does show that the consequences of problem debt can adversely impact on standards of living and well-being as servicing debts reduces disposable income and that problem debt can deepen people's poverty, even if it is not the direct cause. For many, serious debt problems arise from accumulation of debt over time due to persistent low income and the need to meet day-to-day expenses that in turn reduces their ability to meet existing debt repayments and increases their reliance on credit whilst putting them further into debt (Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan, 2012). For others, debt could result from high levels of consumer temptation leading to credit card expenditure, important life shocks such as having children or relationship breakdown, the onset of

disability or ill health or large unexpected expenditure shocks (Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan, 2012). HM Government (2014) infers a broad causal relationship between problem debt and low-income poverty, which is that once in debt, low-income families have to spend a higher proportion of their income to service this debt.

As for falling into destitution, Barker et al. (2018) identify high debt repayments as one of the triggers of destitution, with research finding high-cost and public debts as the most common types of debt among destitute people. They explain that this is driven by limited availability of low interest or no interest loans. Fitzpatrick et al. (2016, cited in, Barker et al. 2018) identified three ways in



which debt either triggers destitution or contributes to people becoming destitute:

1. Debt was accrued 'in the good times' when it was serviceable, but becomes unsustainable when income drops.
2. Debt is acquired as a coping strategy to stave off a lack of necessities, but is often unsustainable, with debt repayments either not being made at all or only being made via new loans.
3. Debt is manageable without additional borrowing, but repayments are so high in relation to total income that basic essentials are unaffordable feature.

4.8 Ethnicity

Wallace, McAreavey and Atkin (2013) suggest that the lack of recognition of overseas skills and qualifications, immigration status, language difficulties and problems in negotiating support services all serve to heighten the risk of poverty for ethnic minority groups. A large proportion of recent arrivals are highly educated and skilled, but have found it difficult to gain recognition for their qualifications and experience among Northern Ireland employers (NICEM, 2012, cited in Wallace, McAreavey and Atkin, 2013). Moreover, career progression opportunities in some sectors are limited, because of language difficulties, racism or lack of training with immigration rules further inhibiting some people's choices in the labour market and their access to social security benefits, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation (Wallace, McAreavey and Atkin, 2013).

Lucas and Jarmon (2016) state inequality and segregation in the employment market are key drivers of poverty for ethnic minorities in NI with people from the Black community and the post-2004 EU accession countries facing disproportionate concentration in low-level elementary and production-line occupations. From analysis of the 2011 census, a significant ethnic minority 'penalty' was identified in the labour market, which was apparent in three forms: higher unemployment rates, over-representation of ethnic minorities in low-paid occupations, and a notable clustering into certain occupations for some groups (Lucas and Jarmon, 2016).

Lucas and Jarmon (2016) proclaim that poverty and marginalisation experienced by people in NI from ethnic minority background applies perhaps even more so to indigenous minorities such as Travellers, and to other nomadic communities such as the Roma due to widespread prejudice and strategic inertia. A key barrier for employment for Travellers is the perceived discriminatory attitudes of employers and rapid disappearance of many of their traditional sources of employment such as seasonal work in agriculture (Lucas and Jarmon, 2016). Abdalla et al. (2010, cited in Wallace, McAreavey and Atkin, 2013) suggest that 89% of travellers were unemployed and research into Travellers' educational needs reveals very serious levels of educational disadvantage with 58% of Traveller children leaving school with no qualifications.



Furthermore, JRF (2021) states that in-work poverty is higher for Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) workers than White workers and is the highest for Pakistani and Bangladeshi workers, which is at about 34% and much higher than the 12% of in-work poverty rate for White households. In an ONS publication, Antonopoulos et al. (2020) found that during the three-year average ending in 2018, children from Pakistani and Bangladeshi households were most likely to live in low-income households, 47% and 41% respectively, meaning that they were

2.8 and 2.4 times as likely, respectively, to live in low-income households compared with children living in White British households. In addition, the likelihood of experiencing poverty for children in Black households was also notable; 30% were considered to live in low-income households, and 22% lived in low income and material deprivation (Antonopoulos et al., 2020). JRF (2021) claims this may be due to higher prevalence of self-employment and part-time work in these communities. In addition, they claim BAME groups have

been disproportionately affected by the coronavirus crisis, claiming that at the beginning of the crisis, BAME workers were 14% more likely to be made unemployed.

JRF (2016a) believes people from ethnic minorities become trapped by limited training opportunities, discrimination and racism with informal cultures and networks within workplaces making it harder for them to progress. However, it is important

to note Lucas and Jarmon (2016) state that Northern Ireland remains the least ethnically diverse region of the UK, in part due to its unique political history. In addition, they note that the lack of data prevents meaningful analysis on the comparative distribution of poverty between ethnic minority groups and there is a significant need for further research to properly understand the lived realities of ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland.

A young girl with long, light-colored hair is shown in profile, looking downwards. She is holding a long, thin wooden stick or pole. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent purple filter. The text is centered on the left side of the image.

5. What factors enable people to exit/leave poverty?

What factors enable people to exit/leave poverty?



Labour Market Events



Non-Labour Market Events



Demographic Events



Policies and Practices

Joseph Rowntree Foundation [JRF] (2016b) explains that while it is individuals in the end who get themselves out of poverty, they need the state, markets and society to act together to enable them to achieve a decent standard of living. They state that too often, people’s experiences of trying to get out of poverty tell a story of barriers and traps, rather than routes out. Hick and Lanau (2018) found that within the wider poverty literature, studies typically focus on ‘trigger’ events that co-occur with transitions in and out of poverty, often drawing on a framework proposed by Jenkins (2011). They explain that these trigger events are typically divided into three broad categories such as labour market events (e.g. changing number of workers, hours of work, or pay), demographic

events (e.g. changes in household size and composition) and non-labour market income events (e.g. changes in social security receipt). Hick and Lanau (2018) state that whilst these triggers reflect the proximate events that co-occur with a poverty transition, this does not mean, of course, that they should be interpreted as causal effects. They elaborate that existing research using this framework typically identifies labour market triggers as explaining a majority share of poverty transitions. Research by the Office for National Statistics (2015, cited in Hick and Lanau, 2018) partially applied this framework to the study of in-work poverty, and found that positive employment events, such as securing a pay increase by moving jobs, or the household gaining a worker, are associated with an 80% probability of exiting

in-work poverty from one year to the next. Lowe (2014) identifies 10 events associated with moves out of poverty: a decrease in the number of children in the household; a lone parent family becoming a couple family; a single adult without children becoming a couple; an increase in household benefit income; an increase in the household pension; an increase in the earned income of the household; a change from a workless to a working household; a change from a household where some adults work to one where all adults work; an improvement in the health status of the respondent; and a decrease in the number of people with a disability in the household. She cautions that these events are not exclusive and most individuals exiting poverty experience more than one event.

5.1 Labour Market Events

JRF (2016b) claims that for those who can, work represents the best route out of poverty. Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) explain that to escape poverty families need to have a considerable increase in their income, and this is likely to come through employment. Using Understanding Society longitudinal survey data (2009-2012), they state that work-related events are particularly important to exiting poverty, with 64% of poverty exits being associated with either gaining or increasing employment, or families increasing their earnings. Crisp, Gore and Pearson (2014) note that almost all of the strategies they reviewed, took the view that work is the best route out of poverty and in doing so assumed that an increase in the number of



people in work would lead to a decrease in poverty. An assumption that Crisp, Gore and Pearson (2014) state is valid and a necessary condition, as they were not able to find any country that had reduced poverty without increasing the number of people in work.

Hick and Lanau (2018) using data from the Understanding Society Survey collected between 2010 and 2014, found that of those experiencing in-work poverty, 55% will exit and become non-poor in the following year. Furthermore, increasing the number of workers, the number of hours worked, or experiencing an increase in labour earnings or social security income is associated with a rise in the exit rate of between 15-25 percentage points. However, Hick and Lanau (2018) state that although there is a high likelihood of working poverty exit with a predominance of positive transitions out of poverty over those into worklessness, for too many workless families, finding work does not lift them out of poverty. Judge and Slaughter (2020) who considered those living in working poverty in 2014-15, found that although three years later 52% managed to exit in-work poverty, an equivalent number of people moved into in-work poverty. They proclaim that this results in an essentially constant in-work poverty rate and a tremendous amount of churn. Hick and Lanau (2018) express that policy needs to support those with a weak labour market attachment and only when this becomes a reality can work truly be said to guarantee a route out of poverty.

Gaining Employment

Office for National Statistics [ONS] (2015) found that participation in the labour market has a direct impact on household income and is therefore recognised as the most effective individual driver of movement in and out of poverty. They explain that the possible reasons are numerous and often complex, however, they proclaim that academic research has consistently shown that entering employment is the most common reason for leaving poverty. Likewise, Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) state that gaining employment is an important route out of poverty. Their regression analysis using longitudinal data from the UK between 2009 and 2012, proclaimed that children in families who moved into full employment had nine to ten times the odds of exiting poverty and that children living in a family that went from being workless to part employment had around four times the odds of exiting poverty. They also noted that 74% of poor workless families who found work managed to escape it, however, they disclose that these families were more likely to be couples, with fewer children, and have no disabled adults in the family – all factors that may make finding work easier.

Furthermore, Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021), drawing on the Growing up in Ireland Survey, found that a father's and mother's entry into full time employment is significantly related to the odds of children

exiting economic vulnerability, with an odds ratio of 4.1 and 3.7 respectively. In addition, ONS (2015) analysis based on longitudinal data from the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions, found that over the period 2007 to 2012, of people aged 18 to 59 who were not working and living in a household in poverty, 70% of those who entered employment left poverty. They state that the percentage of people who moved out of poverty when entering employment in the UK was relatively stable and well above the EU average throughout the period 2007 to 2012, with an exit rate of 68% in 2007 to 2009 and 73% in 2010 to 2012.

ONS (2015) explains that there are a number of employment-related factors which affect how likely it is people will move out of poverty after getting a job, which includes the level of pay, as well as whether the job is full-time or part-time (and if part-time the number of hours), and whether someone is employed on a temporary or permanent contract. They report that those taking up full-time jobs (30 or more hours per week) are more likely to move out of poverty when entering employment (76%) than those who move into part-time employment (62%), which they explain is due to the average number of hours worked per week. They report that, on average, those leaving poverty worked 32 hours a week, compared with 25 hours for those remaining in poverty and when just looking at people working part-time, those exiting

poverty were also more likely to work longer hours (18 hours) than those who remained in poverty (15 hours). ONS (2015) also found that people taking up temporary roles are no less likely to leave poverty than those taking up permanent contracts, however, temporary workers are more likely to re-enter poverty the following year. As for self-employed they disclose that, mainly due to the relatively small number of self-employed people in the sample, the small observed difference between exit rates for self-employed people and employees was not statistically significant.

Moreover, Judge and Slaughter (2020) using the Understanding Society Survey, found that despite rising rates of in-work poverty, entering work still has a strong poverty reduction pay-off. They report that looking at those who entered work in 2014-15 (having been unemployed or economically inactive the year before), their poverty rates almost halved with job entry, falling from 35% to 18%. Judge and Slaughter (2020) found that some types of work clearly have a stronger poverty-reduction effect than others. They state that unsurprisingly, those who entered low-paid jobs in 2014-15 experienced a smaller drop in their poverty rate (40% to 25%) than those entering above the low-pay threshold (32% to just 10%). Likewise, they found that the poverty-reducing effect of part-time work is weaker than that of full-time work, such that individuals who entered a job at fewer than 30 hours per week in

2014-15 witnessed a fall in their poverty rate from 34% to 22%, compared to a fall from 36% to 11% for full-time workers.

- **Increase in Workers**

Lowe (2014) while using the British Household Panel Survey (2005-2008) to examine the events associated with moves out of poverty, found that paid work clearly makes a difference. She reports that two-thirds of cases where the number of people working in the household rose, individuals moved out of poverty. Hick and Lanau (2018) report that in the UK between 2010 and 2014, about 45% of exits to working non-poor households were associated with changes in the number of workers. Likewise, Judge and Slaughter (2020) found that increasing the number of earners was key for 37% of households exiting in-work poverty in 2014/15. Department for Work and Pensions [DWP] (2021) found that from 2017 to 2018, an increase in the number of workers where the household size stayed the same was associated with a low-income exit rate of 53% and an increase in the number of full-time workers, with no change in household size, had a slightly higher exit rate of 57% (both events compromised around a fifth of all income exits each).

In addition, Lowe (2014) found that households which began 'workless' and became 'working', as well as households that changed from having

'some working adults' to 'all working adults', resulted in around half of people moving out of poverty and overall accounted for 13% and 12% of all moves out of poverty respectively. Likewise, Judge and Slaughter (2020) using the Understanding Society Survey of those who were in working poverty in 2014/15, express that it matters whether or not the person entering work is the first or second earner in a household with first earners experiencing a decrease in their household poverty rate of 41% three years later (from 56% to 33%), compared to a 58% fall for second or subsequent earners (from 25% to 11%). Therefore, they conclude that a second or subsequent earner entering work has a greater relative impact on a household's poverty risk than a first earner, but the biggest difference is the starting points of both groups.

Escaping Low Pay

D'Arcy and Finch (2017) using the ONS's New Earnings Survey Panel Dataset, found that out of all those low paid in 2006, by 2016 just one in six (17%) had escaped low pay. However, the share of low-paid employees escaping low pay has risen slightly over the past quarter of century (from 11%, for the 1981-91 cohort). They state that encouragingly, data also shows that people who have already been stuck in low pay for a decade can also go on to progress, comprising 19% of those who escaped in 2016. D'Arcy and Finch (2017)

found that the number of years spent in employment over the following decade is positively and significantly linked to escaping low pay. They report that on average, escapers in 2016 had been in employment for 8.3 years compared to 5.9 years for cyclers and 4.5 years for the stuck and that the higher the number of years a person spends in part-time work, the less likely they are to progress. However, they do note that analysis suggests that staying in employment, whether part-time or full-time, is beneficial to escaping poverty. Furthermore, their analysis finds that women are significantly less likely to escape low pay than men, with the effect particularly large for women in their early 20s and that a crucial factor in pay progression is age, with generally pay rising more quickly while people are in their twenties with the upward progress tapering off sooner for non-graduates than for graduates.

- **Increase in Hours**

Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) suggest that enabling working families to increase the hours they work can play an important part in helping them escape poverty. Using 2009-2012 UK data, they observed that families who changed the hours they worked had particularly high poverty transition rates. They report that children living in a family who went from part employment to full employment had the highest poverty exit rate (75%).

Similarly, Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) using data from Growing up in Ireland Survey found that an increase from part-time employment to full-time employment by either a mother or a father had a positive effect on the odds ratio of exiting economic vulnerability. Furthermore, ONS (2015) found that between 2007 and 2012, an increase in average hours was associated with 38% of exits from in-work poverty.

- **Increase in Pay**

Hick and Lanau (2018) note that income events were more prevalent than other labour market events such as gaining a worker or additional hours of work, which they state is significant because the more prevalent events have a greater potential to lift greater number of people out of poverty, all else being equal. Likewise, Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) using 2009-2012 UK data, found that children in families who experience a rise in earnings while in full employment had a poverty exit rate of 73%. In addition, a regression analysis conducted by them found that children in families who were in full employment and had a rise in earnings had seven times the odds of exiting poverty and children living in a family that was in part employment and had an increase in earnings had around three times the odds of exiting poverty.

Similarly, ONS (2015) found that 70% of those leaving in-work poverty between 2007 and 2012, did so following an increase in their hourly pay. They state that as might be expected, there is a relatively high poverty exit rate for those experiencing an increase in hourly pay of 5% or more. However, ONS (2015) express that this exit rate is higher for those whose hourly pay increases as a result of moving to a new job (83%) compared with those whose pay increases whilst staying in the same role (69%). They explain this may be because those whose pay increases when they change role are more likely to be experiencing a substantial increase in earnings. However, this kind of transition is relatively uncommon, with only 11% of people experiencing it on average.

- **Type of Occupation**

In addition, analysis by D'Arcy and Finch (2017) highlights the importance of the type of employer in escaping low pay, with employment in central government being positively linked with escaping low pay as such jobs tend to be generally higher paying and can often offer more structured progression routes than the private sector. They note that those who move their occupation from 'routine or manual' to a 'professional-managerial' have been found to be more likely to have escaped low pay, however, some of the largest effect sizes were visible

when analysed by industry with those working in health and social work or education most likely to escape. D'Arcy and Finch (2017) explain that this may reflect the fact that, with major exceptions like care work, low pay is less prevalent in these sectors than retail or hospitality, with more higher-paying positions to progress into.

Similarly, Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) found that poverty exit rates vary by industry, occupation and contract type (of the main earner). For example, they found that children living in families where the main earner works in public administration or the health industry, or has a professional occupation, had particularly high poverty exit rates, even when controlling for other factors. They express that this mirrors previous research that has shown that those in a professional occupation are less likely to have unstable work and that low-paid professionals are particularly likely to move out of low pay due to more progression opportunities.

5.2 Demographic Events

Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) state that events and characteristics that are non-economic can also be linked to an exit from poverty. They explain that some of these are related to the ability to gain employment such as level of qualifications, health status, number of children, and age of youngest

child in the family. ONS (2015) explains that whether moving into employment is likely to be enough to leave poverty may also depend on household composition. They elaborate that overall in UK between 2007 and 2012, single adult households without children were least likely to leave poverty when entering employment, with a poverty exit rate of 57% compared to 73% of people living in two adult households. In contrast to household composition, there is relatively little variation in the extent to which getting a job is associated with leaving poverty across other individual characteristics, with very little difference in exit rates across age groups or between men and women (ONS, 2015).

Contrarily, Hick and Lanau (2018) found that household events had little impact in terms of varying the average poverty exit

rate, with changes in total household size or in the number of adults in the household not dramatically altering the exit rate in most cases. They explain this is because changes in household composition are ‘ambiguous’, that is, households that gain an additional adult may either gain a worker or a dependent which are quite different scenarios and likely to have opposite effects on the poverty exit risk and will, on aggregate, partially cancel out.

Education

ONS (2015) found that the level of qualifications that an individual holds is related to their likelihood of exiting poverty when entering employment, probably through its effect on the types of roles that they are able to enter. They state that in UK between 2007 and 2012, only 59% of people whose highest level of



qualifications was at 'GCSE or equivalent level or below' left relative income poverty when taking up a job, compared with exit rates of 73% and 69% for those with the upper-secondary and post-secondary level qualifications respectively.

Crisp, Gore and Pearson (2014) state that in general terms, improved qualifications lead to better wages, and this can lift people out of poverty. However, they express that there are clear differences in the ways in which qualifications of different kinds and levels are likely to have an effect on employment prospects in particular places. They explain that the desire to get poor young people and adults in by 'pure' earnings to some sort of education/training has led to a focus on low-level, narrowly conceptualised programmes, which do not produce tradable qualifications or lead directly to further education or high-quality employment.

However, Hick and Lanau (2018) proclaim that research suggests that educational attainment is more important as a factor that protects people from poverty rather than an event that triggers poverty exit. They express that having lower educational qualifications than a primary degree increases the probability of entering but does not change the probability of exiting working poverty.

Change of Household Composition

Lowe (2014) found that between 2005 and 2008, around one-third of those families where the number of dependent children decreased from one year to the next, moved out of poverty, which accounted for 6% of all poverty exits. Furthermore, for those in lone parent families that then became couple families with children, half moved out of poverty, however, due to being a relatively rare event, this only accounted for 2% of all moves out of poverty. As for working age singles without children becoming couples, almost two-thirds of them moved out of poverty, but once again was rare and only accounted for 1% of all moves out of poverty (Lowe, 2014).

Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) explain that having an additional adult in the family to contribute to household income, and share childcare duties can be an important protector against poverty. They express that having a child leave the family home, or remain in the home but turn working age, was linked with a higher poverty exit rate; as the former would lead to an increase in income as there are fewer people in the household, and the latter could result in an increase in household income if the young adult finds work. Furthermore, Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) state that needing to care

for fewer children increases employment opportunities, with households consisting of primary school children having high exit rates, which they express may be linked to children starting full-time schooling, hence increasing the possibilities for parents to return to, seek or increase employment.

Childcare

Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) state that the use of childcare can enable parents to work and to work more hours, which can enable movement out of poverty. They found that a large proportion of working lone parents who exited poverty used childcare (particularly formal childcare), in comparison to working lone parents who remained poor (43% compared with 22%). They explain that this is a reflection of the longer hours that lone parents were able to work to escape poverty and hence the greater need for childcare. In addition, Crisp, Gore and Pearson (2014) express that grandparents play a vital role in providing free and flexible childcare, frequently enabling low-income mothers to re-enter employment and help escape poverty. However, they note that caring responsibilities can increase poverty risks for grandmothers who disrupt their own employment.

Health

Lowe (2014) observed that between 2005 and 2008 in Great Britain, 37% of families where the number of disabled family members fell, moved out of poverty, which accounted for 8% of all moves out of poverty. As for people who saw their own

health status improve, Lowe (2014) found that approximately 30% moved out of poverty, accounting for 23% of all moves out. They explain that there are likely to be issues of inverse cause and effect at play here, since, for example, moving out of poverty may make someone feel healthier.

Tenure

Judge and Slaughter (2020) looking at those who entered work in 2014-15, found that social renters experienced a larger drop in poverty rates than all individuals upon entering work, from 68% to 31%, a fall greater than one-half. They explain that social renters' larger relative poverty reduction pay-off when entering work stems from the fact that they are more likely to be the first person in the household to do so, meaning they start out with a particularly high poverty risk which entering work reduces substantially in absolute terms.

5.3 Non-Labour Market Income Events

Benefits

DWP (2021) found that an increase in benefit income was the most prevalent event experienced by those in low income in 2017 to 2018 (28%) and was also the most common event experienced by those who exited low income (45%). Lowe (2014) also observed that around half of those whose benefits increased between 2005 and 2008, moved out of poverty, accounting for over one-tenth of all poverty exits. Furthermore, Barnes, Lord and Chanfreau (2015) found

that changes to non-earnings income were associated with poverty transitions between 2009 and 2012, with a rise in benefit income being associated with a 48% poverty exit rate, even after controlling for other factors. In addition, Hick and Lanau (2018) state that the share of in-work poverty exits, between 2010 and 2014, accounted for by employment and social security increases is about three-quarters and four-tenths, respectively. They highlight these figures as substantial and point to the importance of focussing on changes in both the labour market and the welfare state in seeking to understand working poverty exits.

Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) who interviewed 41 people affected by destitution, found

that resolving benefit issues was often the key determining factor in escaping destitution. This could mean the ending of a benefit delay or sanction, or a change in benefit eligibility status, including securing sickness or disability benefits.

In addition, Crisp, Gore and Pearson (2014) state that child maintenance has the potential to lift lone parents (and some stepfamilies) out of poverty, yet receipt of child maintenance in the UK is low by international standards, limiting any potential anti-poverty effects.

Pensions

DWP (2021) found that while just 6% of those in low income in 2017 to 2018



experienced an increase in income from an occupational pension, it was associated with the highest exit rate (71%), and accounted for 14% of all low income exits. Likewise, Lowe (2014) noted that around three-quarters of those whose pensions increased moved out of poverty between 2005 and 2008, with a sixth of all poverty exits associated with an increase in pensions.

Assets

Crisp, Gore and Pearson (2014) explain that access to assets which can provide financial income, as well as income in kind, can give people greater control and provide the infrastructure from which other financial resources will flow. They note that ownership of assets, is also argued, to change individuals' behaviour, making them more responsible and forward-looking in their financial planning. They refer to this as the asset effect and explain that there is a lack of evidence that initiatives encourage asset or wealth accumulation beyond that which may otherwise occur, or that this is sustained at a level that actually helps lift people out of poverty.

5.4 Policies and Practices

Universal Credit Work Search Support

Department for Work and Pensions [DWP] (2018) conducted qualitative and quantitative research undertaken as part of DWP's In-Work Progression Randomised Controlled Trial to assess

the effectiveness of offering differing levels of support and conditionality to claimants. DWP operated the trial between 2015 and 2018 and within it there were three treatment groups: frequent support participants who had fortnightly Work Search Review (WSR) meetings, moderate support participants who had WSRs every eight weeks, and minimal support participants who received a telephone call eight weeks after starting the trial.

Following the quantitative research, DWP (2018) did not find evidence of a statistically significant impact on self-reported earnings among participants 15 months after they started the trial. However, they did find that there is some evidence of a positive impact on behaviours for 'frequent support' participants, who received the most intensive support. They state that this group undertook more actions to improve their chances of progression than participants in the other groups and reported fewer barriers to progression at wave two. DWP (2018) suggests that the support received by 'frequent support' participants may have contributed to their behaviour and supported positive intermediate outcomes. For example, in addition to undertaking more actions to aid progression, 'frequent support' participants were more likely than other participants to have been on a training course to improve their qualifications or skills. 'Frequent support' participants were also more likely than other participants



to report that their actions had resulted in a new job (22% compared to 16% for the other two groups) or increased hours (45% compared to 37% in the moderate support group and 33% the in minimal support group). More broadly, DWP (2018) reports that the research found a positive link between taking part in job-related training and improved outcomes. In line with this, the qualitative research found that the extent to which the intervention

was tailored to the needs of the participant was more important than the frequency of meetings. Participants who received an intervention which addressed their personal barriers were more likely to report having increased their hours or earnings while on the trial or having opened up opportunities to do so in the long term. It was noted that it is important that practical and personal barriers to progression were addressed, as well as skills barriers.

Advice Services

Crisp, Gore and Pearson (2014) claim that good quality advice services can help provide people with a route out of poverty, as advice services contribute to a broad range of impacts, which support improvements in the overall quality of life of households. They proclaim that advice services are capable of either preventing poverty from occurring, mitigating the impacts of poverty, or providing people with the opportunity to progress out of poverty. They state that the most common advice needs relate to issues of welfare benefits, debt, housing, childcare, and employment. In addition, they found that careers advice has also been particularly helpful in providing people with a route out of poverty by helping them access quality employment with opportunities for advancement within the labour market. However, Crisp, Gore and Pearson (2014) explain that regardless of the particular advice issue, the soft outcomes, which include increased motivation, skills and self-confidence, can be just as important as hard outcomes such as formal qualifications or the amount of benefits gained, especially in the longer term.

Hartfree and Collard (2014) report that while there is no clear evidence that debt advice helps lift people out of poverty (or prevents them falling into poverty), a number of UK research studies report positive impacts of debt advice that help to ameliorate the impacts of poverty with cost-benefit analyses suggesting that the benefits of debt advice outweigh the costs. They state

that the positive financial outcomes of debt advice include increased income through income maximisation and a reduction in the amount owed to creditors. Pleasence and Balmer (2007, cited in Hartfree and Collard, 2014) using a randomized control trial in which they offered debt advice, found that debt advice users reported improvements in their financial circumstances that were over and above those experienced by a control group of people with problem debt who did not receive advice.

Furthermore, Hartfree and Collard (2014) report that financial education and training programs designed to improve the financial capability of a range of groups, including people on low incomes, social housing tenants, the unemployed and the financially excluded have been shown to make a positive difference. They explain that financial capability covers people's knowledge, understanding, skills and confidence to deal with financial matters. They cite that evaluations conducted as part of the Citizens Advice Financial Skills for Life partnership, all suggest positive impacts on participants in relation to improved financial confidence and knowledge, better money management, payment of debts, increased saving, opening of bank accounts and reduced stress, however, they disclose that these evaluations lacked quantifiable impact measures. Another more robust evaluation by Collard et al. (2012, cited in Hartfree and Collard, 2014) of a financial skills training program delivered to social

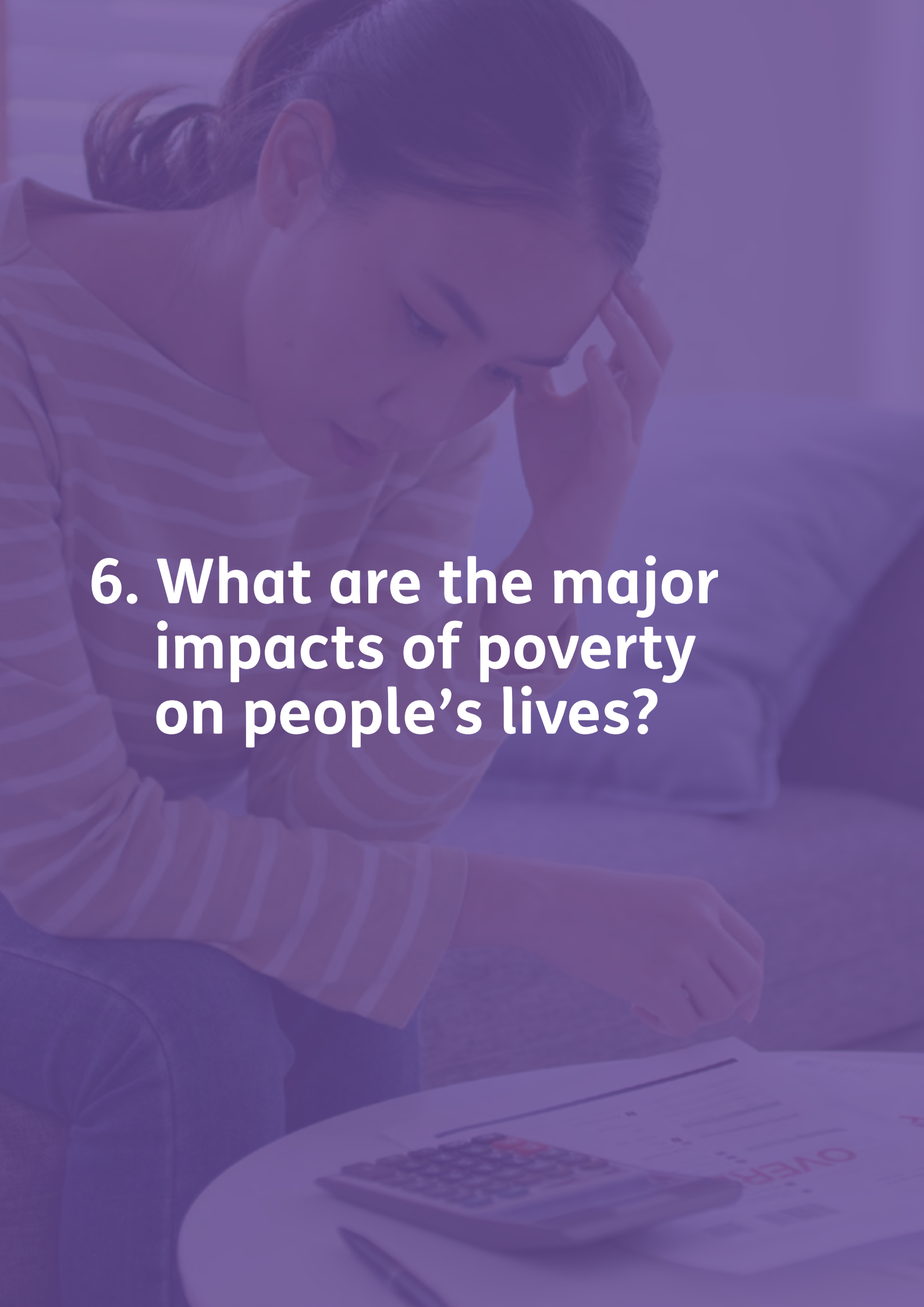
housing, showed positive impacts that could be attributed to the training. The evaluation found that participants were seven times more likely to take some kind of action than the comparison group. Actions taken included changes to money management and spending, saving or saving more, changing bank accounts or opening a credit union account, and improvements in financial confidence.

Voluntary Sector

JRF (2016b) states that voluntary sector, community and faith groups offer lifelines, enabling people to escape poverty, and have a vital role in facilitating and enabling communities and citizens to reduce poverty locally. They explain that frontline providers of services and voluntary sector organisations are usually the first point of contact for people in poverty. However, they note that the way the services are delivered makes a big difference to whether individuals are able to engage with them and get the support they need to move out of poverty. As well as that, due to loss of funding and voluntary or community sector infrastructure, they express that it has been challenging to sustain these activities, which makes joined-up action even more essential.

National Living Wage

D'Arcy and Finch (2017) explain the National Living Wage has begun to reshape the lower end of the labour market, with minimum wage earners receiving pay rises well ahead of average pay growth. They express that to achieve meaningful progress, a more comprehensive approach will be needed with employers having a role to play, particularly in sectors like hospitality and retail in which low pay is more prevalent and progression appears limited. They state that the need for higher-quality part-time work is especially vital for women as lack of decently paid jobs offered on a part-time or flexible basis acts as an insurmountable barrier for some women. However, they express that employers are unlikely to solve these problems alone and that the government needs to work with employers in low-paying sectors to design jobs that offers progression opportunities to a wider pool of employees as well as move away from a business model that relies above all on very cheap labour.

A woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a striped shirt, is sitting at a table. She has a distressed expression, with her hand pressed against her forehead. On the table in front of her is a calculator, a pen, and some papers. The word 'OVER' is visible on one of the papers. The entire image has a purple tint.

6. What are the major impacts of poverty on people's lives?

What are the major impacts of poverty on people's lives?



Mental Health



Physical Health



Education



Relationships



Crime



Poor Housing



Debt



Addictions – Drugs and Alcohol

6.1 Mental Health

Elliott (2016) states that poverty increases the risk of mental health problems, and can be both a causal factor and a consequence of mental ill health. She expresses that although mental health problems can affect anyone at any time, they are not equally distributed and prevalence varies across social groups with higher rates of mental health problems being associated with poverty and socio-economic disadvantage. In addition, Elliott (2016) reports that the income-related gradient in prevalence appears to have become steeper and is much steeper among children than adults. She proclaims that in 2004 the prevalence of severe mental health problems in children aged 11–16 was three times as high in the

bottom fifth of family income as among those in the top fifth. As for adolescents, chronic exposure to poverty was shown to increase adolescents' risks for developing conditions such as depression, and behavioural risks such as substance use, early sexual activity and criminal activity. She explains that the awareness of financial problems in their families also negatively impacts adolescents' mental health and is associated with depression among girls and drinking to intoxication in boys, as well as a sense of helplessness and feelings of shame and inferiority. In terms of the working age population, Elliott (2016) found that unemployment, 'bad' employment and in-work poverty are harmful to health and are associated with poorer mental



health, psychological distress and minor psychological/psychiatric morbidity.

Likewise, Ayre (2016) found that there is much evidence supporting the view that living in poverty is likely to be a risk factor for the future development of mental health problems. He states that ‘Children and Young People’s Mental Health Coalition’ highlighted that being born into poverty puts children at greater risk of mental health problems and, for many, this will lead to negative consequences throughout their lives, affecting their educational attainment and social relationships. British Medical Association [BMA] (2017) cites that three in four people living in the lowest household

income bracket report having experienced a mental health problem, compared to six in ten of the highest household income bracket. Similarly, Elliott (2016) found that across the UK, both men and women in the least well-off fifth of the population are twice as likely to develop mental health conditions as those on average incomes. BMA (2017) also states that poverty, unemployment and social isolation are associated with higher prevalence of schizophrenia, and rates of admission to specialist psychiatric care. Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) found that the impact of destitution on people’s mental health was clearly very significant with people, whose mental health has been affected by

destitution, being implicated in a vicious cycle, whereby their poor mental health inhibited job-seeking and other actions that might help them escape destitution. Fitzpatrick et al. (2018) noted factors triggering destitution such as debt, job loss, or benefit delays and sanctions, were often highly stressful in themselves, while the resulting lack of essentials and inability to maintain a sense of personal dignity further undermined mental health and well-being.

In addition, Pople, Rodrigues and Royston (2013) cite that to be poor in an essentially wealthy society is a very particular and stigmatising experience, with children's accounts often highlighting their inner worries and fears of social difference and stigma. Ayre (2016) states that stigma may contribute to the higher likelihood of feeling like a failure and a lack of optimism for the future. Furthermore, Ayre (2016) professes that research has shown that perceived stigma leads to loneliness, depression and loss of confidence, and that the fear of this type of discrimination can be as damaging as actual discrimination, which can have a distinctly negative effect on young people's view of the world, and their place in it.

Emotional Well-being

Elliott (2016) states that people living in poor socio-economic circumstances are at increased risk of poor mental health, depression and lower subjective well-being. Rees (2019) explains that children living

in poorer families have higher emotional and behavioural difficulties and lower life satisfaction. She reports that data from the Millennium Cohort Study of a 14 year old cohort who were born in Wales in 2000-01, found that when considered on its own (only controlling for the child's age and gender), household income was significantly associated with child subjective well-being, and emotional and behavioural difficulties, although not with depressive symptoms. However, when parental mental health is taken into account, these relationships weaken and in relation to subjective well-being, the differences between children in different income groups were no longer statistically significant. Rees (2019) explains that the reason for this pattern is that parents in lower income households had higher levels of mental distress, with almost one in five parents in the lowest income group having signs of severe mental distress compared to only 3% in the highest income group. Furthermore, Rees (2019) found that experiencing even only one episode of poverty was associated with higher emotional and behavioural difficulties and experiencing two or more instances of poverty was associated with significantly lower current subjective well-being.

Ayre (2016), through analysis of Understanding Society Survey data from 2015, observed that there is a negative association between children aged 16 to 19 living in poverty and their emotional

well-being. Stating that for instance, the way that children and young people view themselves and the way that they feel about their future prospects both have significant correlations with living in poverty.

Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) analysed data from the Growing up in Ireland Survey of '98 and '08 cohorts and found a very strong association between duration of economic vulnerability (EV) and socio-emotional well-being for both cohorts. They state that among both the younger and older cohorts, the average Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) total difficulties score (where a higher score indicates greater difficulties with socio-emotional and behavioural development) rose for each additional level of exposure to EV and this pattern persisted for all of the difficulties sub-scales covering both internalising and externalising difficulties. At 9 years of age, the proportion with problematic scores rose from 5% among children with no experience of EV to 15% among those who have always experienced EV. At age 17, the gap was even larger, with only 3% of those who have never experienced EV having SDQ scores in the problematic range compared to 17% of those who had always experienced EV. Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) conclude that the progressive increases in social and emotional difficulties with duration of exposure to EV suggests the presence of an accumulation effect. Similarly, Willis, Sime and Lerpiniere (2015) report that using SDQ

scores, the 2012 Scottish Health Survey found that 31% of boys in the lowest income households had a higher than average proportion of difficulties compared to 9% in the highest income households, and for girls, it was 16% and 2% respectively.

Self-concept / Self-esteem

Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) state that people with lower socio-economic status have a significantly lower sense of self-worth, which can dampen their motivation to improve their condition. They report this finding was consistent across a range of life stages and age groups and it is likely driven by the fact that those low in income and education, perceive themselves as being low in their surrounding social hierarchy. Elliott (2016) expresses that stigma from living in poverty can be internalised, which has corrosive effects; silencing people and preventing them from seeking and receiving support, undermining their sense of self, such as their self-esteem and confidence, and limiting the horizons of their expectations for health, education, employment and relationships. Smith and Barron (2020) highlighted that frontline workers frequently see that children's self-worth is massively impacted when they are growing up, believing that they are not worth access to basic items. Smith and Barron (2020) report that children can be teased or bullied by their peers for poor hygiene or not having the latest clothes and toys. They express that this can result in feelings of social exclusion, or feeling actively disliked

and penalised by peers for not having the basic things that many children take for granted, which has a massive impact on children's sense of self-worth and feeling rejected by peers can lead to low self-esteem, low mood and depression.

Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) considered self-concept based on six domains: behavioural adjustment, intellectual and school status, physical appearance and attributes, freedom from anxiety, popularity, and happiness and satisfaction. Using '98 and '08 cohorts from the Growing up in Ireland Survey, they found that longer exposure to economic vulnerability (EV) is associated with poorer self-concept on all six sub-scales and overall self-concept, with those who were EV across the whole of early childhood having the most negative self-concept of all the groups on all six sub-scales. However, they also found that even just one-off, transient EV is associated with significantly lower self-concept scores, which is of concern as low self-esteem is associated with a range of negative outcomes, including later mental health problems.

Stress / Anxiety

BMA (2017) states that the strong association between poverty and poor emotional well-being may partly be explained by the stresses associated with poverty. JRF (2016a) states that poverty is stressful and that there is emerging evidence that dealing with poverty

overloads cognitive capacity. They explain that researchers found that thinking about financial problems had an impact similar to losing a night's sleep, leading to a reduction in measured IQ of 13 points. The Prince's Trust (2011) found that young people living in poverty are more likely to grow up feeling stressed and depressed. They report being six times more likely to feel that "everyone puts them down", three times as likely to feel depressed "all" or "most" of the time and twice as likely to feel they "don't have anything to get up for in the morning". Furthermore, Elliott (2016) cites that a systematic literature review found that young people aged 10 to 15, with low socio-economic status had a 2.5 higher prevalence of anxiety or depressed mood than their peers with high socio-economic status.

Smith and Barron (2020) explain that children in poverty have anxiety around when their next hot meal will be, and also notice when their parents are stressed about money. They express that children in poverty often take on this burden and become anxious themselves, sometimes taking on the caring responsibilities in the home which increases pressure and can affect their mental health, particularly stress, anxiety and feelings of isolation.

Willis, Sime and Lerpiniere (2015) state that family stress and adverse living conditions impacts on parents' health and ability to parent, with direct consequences for children's levels of stress. They note that research with children growing up in

impoverished environments has highlighted increased levels of the stress hormone cortisol in children's brains which can inhibit the development of skills such as planning, emotional control, and attention, with direct consequences for children's ability to engage in learning and to react appropriately to stressors in the environment.

Decision Making

Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) present evidence that people living in or near poverty experience a shift in psychological, social and cultural processes that may hinder their ability to make decisions that are beneficial in the long term. They express that many of the suboptimal decisions and behaviours associated with low-income groups focus on the present

(rather than the future), the actual (rather than the hypothetical), those socially close (rather than those socially distant), and the 'here' (rather than places far away). Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) concludes that such shifts lead to choices that are not always bad ones, but rather are adaptive to the constrained circumstances of low socio-economic status.

6.2 Physical Health

BMA (2017) observed that poverty can have a negative impact on the health of people at all stages of life, in numerous ways, and impacts on overall life expectancy. They report that in Northern Ireland, between 2011 and 2013, the life expectancy for those in the least deprived areas compared to the most deprived areas was 7.5 years



higher for men and 4.3 years higher for women. Similarly, JRF (2016a) states that if you have experienced poverty or live in a more deprived area, you are more likely to die sooner and have fewer years where you are free of ill health or disability. Ayre (2016) cites research that deprivation causes physical health problems, particularly the stress of coping with daily hardship affects the way the body reacts, impacting on people's physical health through higher cholesterol levels, blood pressure and heart disease.

In addition, BMA (2017) explains that many individuals on low incomes face 'fuel poverty' which results in them living in a cold, damp home, leading to a higher risk of poor health outcomes, as well as increased morbidity and mortality. They state that this includes, among all age groups, cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and mental health problems, as well as increased minor illnesses and exacerbation of existing conditions such as arthritis and rheumatism.

Obesity and Undernutrition

NHS Digital (2016, cited in BMA, 2017) found that children in reception year at school, living in the most deprived areas in England, were more than twice as likely to be obese than children living in the least deprived areas (12.5% compared to 5.5%), and in year six, 26% of children living in the most deprived areas were obese compared with 11.7% in the least deprived areas. Likewise,

Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021), using data from the Growing up in Ireland longitudinal survey, found that being overweight or obese at age 9 is significantly associated with exposure to economic vulnerability (EV) over early childhood. They report that children in Ireland who were experiencing EV, were three times more likely to be obese than children who have never experienced EV. As for the UK, Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) cite that children in persistent poverty were twice as likely as those never in poverty to be obese at age 14.

Willis, Sime and Lerpiniere (2015) explain that poverty can result in higher obesity rates as it has an impact on families' ability to give children a healthy diet, through increased cost of healthy foods, other costs associated with preparing meals, lack of knowledge on healthy diets, and cultural values. They also state that families in poverty encounter a range of barriers in accessing leisure facilities, including cost, transport, safety and poor quality provision in deprived areas which restricts opportunity for healthy levels of exercise. The Prince's Trust (2011) conducted a survey of over 2,000 young people and found that those from the UK's poorest families were significantly less likely to exercise regularly or eat enough fruit and vegetables. BMA (2017) states that income can influence the ability of individuals and households to obtain a healthy diet, with those on low incomes at risk of suffering from 'food poverty'. They express that data from the

National Diet and Nutrition Survey (between 2008/09 and 2011/12) show that the lowest income group generally consume less protein, iron, fruit and vegetables, vitamin C, calcium, fish and folate. They explain that this could be because nutrient-dense foods such as lean meat, fish, fruit and vegetables are more expensive than low-nutrient foods. In addition, BMA (2017) proclaims that people on low incomes eat more processed foods, which are high in saturated fats and salt, and consume more added sugars. They elaborate that this results in undernutrition which can have a range of adverse health effects, including on the muscular system, the immune system and psycho-social function. They report food poverty has been estimated to contribute to 50% of all coronary heart disease deaths and has been associated with increased falls and fractures in older people, low birth weight, increased childhood mortality, and increased dental caries in children.

Chronic or Long-term Illness

BMA (2017) reports that children born into poverty are more likely to suffer from chronic diseases, such as asthma, and are at increased risk of severe, long-term and life-limiting illnesses. Willis, Sime and Lerpiniere (2015) cite that three year olds in households with incomes below £10,000 are 2.5 times more likely to suffer chronic illness than those in households with incomes about £52,000. They also cite that children who have experienced poverty in early childhood have also been shown to

be at greater risk of developing diabetes, heart disease, strokes and lower life expectancy as adults. Research in Ireland by Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) found that the prevalence of chronic illness or disability in children also diverges strongly between children with different cumulative exposure to poverty. They explain this is consistent with research in the UK, which found that exposure to poverty, especially persistent poverty, is linked to higher rates of long-standing illness among children.

Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) cite that the mechanisms linking poverty and ill health in childhood include family stress, poor housing, diet, food costs, exposure to environmental toxins, and parental health behaviours. In addition, Willis, Sime and Lerpiniere (2015) express that longstanding illness is much more prevalent in low-income households, but in children, gender differences were also notable. They present findings from the Scottish Health Survey 2012, reporting that 31% of boys in the lowest income quintile had a longstanding illness, compared to 15% in highest income households, whereas for girls it was 11% and 10% respectively.

BMA (2017) also found that most long-term conditions are more common in adults from lower socio-economic groups, including the working poor, such as diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, arthritis and hypertension. For example, they report that two-fifths of adults in England aged 45 to 64

with below-average incomes have a limiting long-term illness, more than twice the rate of adults of the same age with above-average incomes. In addition, they cite that older people from lower socio-economic groups are at a greater risk of reporting ill health and long-term illness and that multi-morbidity is also more common among deprived populations.

Child Health

Willis, Sime and Lerpiniere (2015) state that poverty can have a significant impact on child health, from the point before a child is even born. They declare that children from low income families are more likely to die at birth or in infancy than children born into better off families. They explain that lack of adequate income during pregnancy is an obvious risk to the health and safety of both the mother and the child, with deprivation being associated with greater exposure to risks for poor outcomes such as smoking in pregnancy (43% of mothers in most deprived areas smoked compared to 9% in the least deprived), unplanned pregnancy (39% compared to 8%) and planned bottle-feeding (46% compared to 15%). Willis, Sime and Lerpiniere (2015) also report that a woman in a low income household is more likely to be poorly nourished during pregnancy and deliver a baby prematurely or with low birth weight and low birth weight has been associated with increased risks of poor health later in life. Likewise, BMA (2017) found that poverty in childhood can have a significant impact on child health. They cite that in a 2017 survey by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child

Health and Child Poverty Action Group, more than two-thirds of doctors said poverty and low income contribute 'very much' to the ill health of children they work with. BMA (2017) reports that babies born in the poorest areas in the UK weigh on average 200 grams less than those born in the richest areas, which may impact on subsequent cognitive development, as well as that babies living in poverty are more likely to die within their first year of life.

Mohan (2021) states that children exposed to cold, damp, poorly ventilated home environments have been found to be more than twice as likely to suffer from respiratory problems such as asthma and bronchitis. Mohan (2021), using data from the Growing Up in Ireland Survey for 98' and 08' cohorts, found that for those households which experience difficulties in coping with the cost of domestic energy requirements, there were negative consequences for infant and young children's respiratory health and overall health. However, for older children, they found that the household energy circumstances did not affect respiratory health such that it demonstrated a statistically significant relationship, though there was some evidence of an injurious effect on perceived overall health with lower odds of children being rated as 'very healthy'. Similarly, BMA (2017) reports that children living in cold homes are more than twice as likely to suffer from a range of respiratory problems compared to those living in warm homes.

BMA (2017) also proclaims that poor children have a higher rate of accidents

and accidental death, for example, they are 13 times more likely to die from unintentional injury. In addition, BMA (2017) state that longitudinal studies have shown that children growing up in poverty have a higher risk of death as adults, this has been studied across almost all conditions including stomach cancer, lung cancer, haemorrhagic stroke, coronary heart disease, respiratory diseases and alcohol-related death. As well as higher risk for genetic conditions that have no bias in incidence with respect to socio-economic status, such as cystic fibrosis, with poorer children experiencing worse growth, poorer lung function, higher risk of infection and ultimately poorer survival.

Shaw et al. (2016) found that there is a strong link between poverty and special educational

needs and disability (SEND). They observed that children from low-income families are more likely than their peers to be born with inherited SEND or develop some forms of SEND in childhood, and are less likely to move out of SEND categories while at school. Shaw et al. (2016) cite figures from the Department of Education Northern Ireland which show that almost half of all pupils who are eligible for free school meals in NI have special education needs and that certain forms of SEND, such as physical difficulties and behavioural difficulties, are particularly strongly associated with low socio-economic status.

6.3 Education

Buttle UK (2019) states it is clear that a range of factors can negatively impact experiences of education for children and



young people growing up in poverty. These include not having access to nutritious food or a bed to sleep in affecting their ability to concentrate; being unable to attend certain schools or doing certain subjects because their parents cannot afford the correct uniform and equipment; higher chances of falling ill and missing school due to poor hygiene caused by not being able to afford hot water and the costs of cleaning; higher likelihood and more frequent bullying due to not being able to afford certain items; and a lack of suitable housing resulting in a poor home environment that is needed to foster good educational performance. In addition, poverty means that children are unable to access after school activities that can promote their personal and social development (Buttle UK, 2019).

Likewise, Martin and Hart (2011) through consulting with children and young people in areas of high deprivation across England, identified that poverty restricts the choice of school poor children can attend, which is important as the type of school children end up going to has consequences for their experience of education and educational attainment. Buttle UK (2019) noted that where social housing is available, schools tend to have lower Ofsted ratings.

Educational Outcomes

HM Government (2014) cites that a pupil's family background plays an important influence on their educational attainment and this link is stronger in England than

in most developed countries, with around 14% of the variation in reading scores in PISA international tests being attributed to socio-economic variables, a similarly sized effect to school influence. Whilst in Northern Ireland, Barnard (2018) declares that in 2016, only 47% of children eligible for free school meals (FSM) achieved at least five GCSEs at grades A*-C including English and Maths, compared with 68% of all children. She expresses that the gap has narrowed slightly since 2013 (when 34% of children on FSM achieved that standard, compared to 61% of all children), but still remains large.

Joseph Rowntree Foundation [JRF] (2016c) similarly states that there are big differences in outcomes among NI's GCSE-age pupils based on their background and the type of school they go to. They report that in 2013/14, around one in five pupils eligible for FSM attended grammar schools compared to half of pupils who were not eligible. In addition, children in grammar schools did much better than those in non-grammar schools, yet in each type of school, pupils eligible for FSM still performed worse than non-eligible pupils. Although, JRF (2016c) notes that in non-grammar schools the gap was bigger – 65% of pupils eligible for FSM failed to get five good GCSEs, compared with 47% for non-eligible pupils, and for grammar schools, 10% of pupils eligible for FSM failed to get five good GCSEs, compared with 4% for non-eligible pupils. Overall, JRF (2016c) states that in NI in 2013/14, around 60% of boys eligible for FSM did

not get five good GCSEs, compared with 30% of those not eligible and for girls, the figures were 51% and 22% respectively.

In Ireland, Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) explored childhood exposure to poverty and its impact on selected child outcomes, drawing on data from '98 and '08 cohorts of the Growing up in Ireland Survey for children aged 9 and 17. They state that the results of cognitive tests for cohorts at age 9 show a strong gradient in both reading and selective attention based on duration of economic vulnerability (EV). The highest scores were found among those never exposed to EV and the lowest among those who were persistently or always EV, with progressively longer exposure to EV being linked to accumulative reductions in reading scores at age 9. In addition, three cognitive tests were administered to 17 year olds, including vocabulary and financial literacy and in all three tests, those who had any exposure to EV scored significantly lower than those who did not.

Furthermore, Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) explain that exposure to poverty or low socio-economic status while young is associated with poorer performance on tasks measuring basic thinking processes. In particular, the lower a person's socio-economic background, the more likely they are to perform worse on tests of complex thinking processes such as reasoning and learning which is reflected in income-based performance gaps in intelligence tests

and academic achievement. In addition, they state that some experimental studies have shown that temporarily experiencing low subjective socio-economic status lowers people's thinking performance and subsequent decision-making, which leads them to suggest that at least some of the link between poverty and thinking results from the situation of low socio-economic status, rather than reflecting genetic characteristics.

School Engagement

Smith and Barron (2020) found that on average, 56% of children receiving frontline support have poor school attendance and difficulty engaging in education. Buttle UK (2019) found that the lack of resources for children in poverty was commonly highlighted as a factor in bullying within schools and can mean that children do not go to school to avoid being bullied. Similarly, Martin and Hart (2011) suggest that poverty-related bullying might affect attendance, which in turn affects achievement, meaning young people leave schools without the qualifications necessary to enter employment.

In Ireland, Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) found that, at age 9, the number of days absent from school increases significantly with each level of economic vulnerability (EV). They state that more than a quarter of the children in the 'always vulnerable' group missed more than 10 days of school in the previous 12 months compared to 19% of

those in persistent EV, 18% of those who experienced transient EV and 10% of those who were never EV. Furthermore, Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) using self-reported dislike of school, which is associated with poorer educational outcomes as a measure of school engagement among 17 year olds, found that dislike of school increased with each level of exposure to EV. A third of those who were always EV reported that they disliked school compared to one fifth of those who were never EV.

Affording the Basics

Buttle UK (2019) found that out of 1,200 frontline workers, 79% reported regularly seeing parents who are struggling to afford the costs associated with school which at its most extreme is being unable to afford school uniform or the correct equipment resulting in children not being able to take certain subjects, or even attend certain schools. In addition, two thirds reported regularly seeing children being unable to access after school clubs due to the cost which means that poor children have limited opportunity to learn beyond core academic subjects, or develop their social skills. Pople, Rodrigues and Royston (2013) through consulting with young people, found that children and families in poverty struggle to afford the necessary additional expenses for school or college, with the cost of school uniform and school trips, including educational day trips and longer visits abroad being particularly raised as a challenge. Pople, Rodrigues and Royston

(2013) express that children who cannot afford to go on these trips miss out on the educational benefits and can feel excluded if they are left behind. Martin and Hart (2011) drew particular attention to the additional costs associated with learning, specifically in secondary education. They assert that in addition to stationery and books, the increasing reliance on technology to deliver the curriculum created difficulties for poor families. Moreover, it was suggested, that the inability to take part in extra-curricular activities means that the education to which young people in poverty have access to is narrower and more curriculum-limited (Martin and Hart, 2011).

The Prince's Trust (2011) research revealed that one in ten young people from the UK's poorest families did not have their own bed when they were growing up, more than a quarter (29%) had few or no books in their home and almost one in three (30%) did not have access to the internet. Buttle UK (2019) states that not having regular nutritious meals at home or not having an appropriate bed to sleep in means that children do not have the basic foundations for healthy growth or the energy to concentrate at school and learn. In particular, food poverty was viewed as having the biggest impact on education with children too tired and hungry to focus on schoolwork (Smith and Barron, 2020). Furthermore, not being able to provide a clean, warm living environment means that children are more likely to become ill and miss school, or not attend

school due to not having appropriate clothing or not feeling comfortable changing into school uniform in the mornings (Buttle UK, 2019; Smith and Barron, 2020).

In addition, Smith and Barron (2020) found that the digital divide was a key barrier to poor children's education with no access to electronic equipment and internet meaning many poor children are unable to learn, especially during the COVID-19 lockdown and for younger children, not having toys and items to play with means that they fall behind at the early stages of educational development.

Aspirations

Ayre (2016) states that children and young people growing up in poverty feel distinctly less optimistic about the future than their more affluent peers. This in turn has a knock on detrimental effect on their aspirations and the potential that they believe the future holds for them. The Prince's Trust (2011) suggests there is an aspiration chasm between the UK's richest and poorest young people, with those from deprived homes feeling that it will be impossible for them to achieve their goals. Their study suggests that all young people tend to start life with similarly high aspirations, however, while young people growing up in poverty start dreaming of finding a good job at a young age, these childhood dreams start to slip away as they get older, resulting in young people from poor homes being almost twice as likely as those from affluent backgrounds to have scaled down

their ambitions as they approach adulthood. Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) found that people from low socio-economic status see themselves as less able to learn new skills and succeed at tasks, which in turn has important negative consequences for their academic performance. Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) observed that people growing up in poverty are more likely to choose careers that fulfil the goals of having a job and financial security rather than enjoyment of the work. They are also more likely to choose smaller rewards now over bigger rewards later which leads to decisions that are damaging to them in the long term in relation to further education versus employment.

6.4 Relationships

Smith and Barron (2020) found that children growing up in poverty are less likely to have the social skills and confidence to build positive relationships. JRF (2016a) states that poverty can affect children's relationships with their peers, parents and siblings, with negative effects mainly arising from increased likelihood of other risk factors rather than poverty alone. Pople, Rodrigues and Royston (2013) also found links between poverty and different aspects of children's well-being, finding that poor children are much more likely than other children to report bullying, problems in their friendships and unhappiness with their home. As for adults, JRF (2016a) states that financial strain can have strong negative effects



on intimate relationships, while economic dependency can trap people in abusive relationships as those who seek to escape can face a significant financial penalty.

Family Relationships

Rees (2019) found that research suggests poverty may have an impact on children's well-being through family strain, the quality of family relationships and parental mental health. Smith and Barron (2020) observed that living in poverty prevents families from having experiences that can help families bond and improve relationships. They noted that cramped living conditions, hunger and tiredness can all contribute to more negative

family relationships between children, parents and siblings. Furthermore, Rees (2019) found that children living in poverty often live with parents who have mental health problems themselves and are not coping well, which they claim results in poorer parent-child relationships and an increased sense of caring responsibility from the children. Smith and Barron (2020) state that COVID-19 has significantly exacerbated children experiencing a variety of adverse childhood experiences and families that were already under stress before the lockdown; with parents struggling to afford basics and not having any down time away from their children leading to increased tensions in many families.

Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) cite that the family stress model suggests that poverty can undermine family relationships because of the stress it places on parents, leading to poorer parenting behaviour. Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) state that mothers living with poor economic conditions often have harsher parenting styles, a pattern connected to greater levels of child aggression, which endures later in life. In Ireland, Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) found that closeness with parents among 9 year olds is not significantly related to economic vulnerability (EV). However, they found that conflict with mothers is significantly higher among those with experience of EV compared to those who have never experienced it. In the case of conflict with fathers, they found that only those who are persistently or always EV are significantly different from those who have never experienced it. A similar pattern is noted among the 17 year old cohort, from which Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) conclude that closeness to parents does not vary by exposure to EV, but both transient and persistent EV are associated with greater conflict with mothers.

However, Martin and Hart (2011) through consultation with children and young people in areas of high deprivation across England, found that poverty can sometimes bring families closer together in contrast to ‘cash rich, time poor’ parents. Although, they note that some stated it was possible for parents to be both cash

poor and time poor, with parents having to work long hours to make ends meet and many of the young people perceived poverty as taking a toll on their parents who wanted to give them as much as any other child but simply could not. Martin and Hart (2011) express that older young people experience difficulties in making the transition to independent living, with some feeling trapped in their family home due to a lack of financial resources which can create tensions as they feel suffocated.

Family Breakdown

CSJ (2019) found family breakdown is most prevalent, and the effects most damaging, among the poorest and most vulnerable communities. They report that a teenager growing up in the poorest 20% of households is two thirds more likely to experience family breakdown than a teenager in the top 20% of households. Martin and Hart (2011) state that poverty can be portrayed as potentially both a cause and consequence of family breakdown, with young people telling them the strain of poverty could cause irrevocable damage to relationships between parents and children, however, a change in family structure such as the departure of one parent could leave the remaining parent and children in very difficult financial circumstances. JRF (2016a) expresses that high stress is a major outcome of poverty for individuals and can contribute to family breakdown. In addition, Barnard (2018) observed that the stress of living on a

low income can be linked to relationship breakdown among couples, and to the relationships between parents and children.

Peers

Martin and Hart (2011) found that there was an overwhelming agreement among young people about the pressure from their peers, and society more widely, to own certain material items such as branded clothing, mobile phones and personal computers. They express that young people associate poverty with appearance and not having fashionable clothes, shoes and accessories means a child will stand out as being different from the wider peer group.

Smith and Barron (2020) explain that children and young people who are living in poverty find it difficult to fit in with their peers and are often stigmatised for not having what their friends have. Frontline workers that Smith and Barron (2020) consulted with stated that 45% of the children they work with have difficulties in peer relationships. They explain that not having the basics means that children are excluded from activities and social interactions with peers that would otherwise be the norm. Furthermore, where families cannot afford digital equipment or internet access, Smith and Barron (2020) articulate that children are also excluded from online social interactions, further distancing themselves from their peers.

Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) cite that peer supports are particularly crucial during adolescence and due to lack of resources, stigma and exclusion, poverty may restrict young people's ability to participate in social life and build those peer support networks.

Friendships

Smith and Barron (2020) found that issues with affordable housing means that children are often moving frequently and are unable to settle into one school, which impacts on their education and prevents them from developing meaningful relationships with peers. Pople, Rodrigues and Royston (2013) explain that poverty makes it harder for children to make and sustain social connections as transport and participation costs often conspire to leave children in poverty feeling excluded from many of the social and leisure experiences that their more affluent peers take for granted. Similarly, Martin and Hart (2011) explained that developing and maintaining friendships is said to be difficult for those who are poor, with a key concern being that children living in poverty often miss out on experiences because of the cost of activities and the negative impact being poor could have on a young person's social life. They described, for example, how those who were poor were excluded from social networks and discussions because they were unable to experience the same opportunities.

Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) state that evidence from the Growing up in Ireland Survey shows that 9 year old children exposed to longer durations of economic vulnerability (EV) felt less popular among their peers and 17 year olds exposed to longer durations of EV were more likely to have less than 2 friends. Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) found growing up in poverty is also linked to lower general trust of others, perhaps because of a lower sense of belonging in society at large. In addition, JRF (2016a) explains that when poverty restricts meaningful relationships and opportunities to mix with other people, it can also contribute to loneliness and isolation in older age, as indeed at any age.

Bullying

Sheehy-Skeffington and Rea (2017) state that children from lower socio-economic backgrounds have reported a poorer sense of belonging at school and greater exposure to negative incidents such as bullying or sexual harassment. Buttle UK (2019) who consulted with 1,200 frontline workers, notes that lack of resources for children in poverty was commonly highlighted as a factor in bullying within schools, with several respondents noting that children are often being bullied by their peers for not having the same things such as clothes and electronic gadgets, as well as their living conditions. Martin and Hart (2011) found that bullying is often associated with the way someone looks, particularly their manner of dress.

Pople, Rodrigues and Royston (2013) state that clothing expectations and taking part in shared leisure activities affect children's relationships in ways that adults do not always recognise. They explain that children often express a high degree of anxiety about maintaining their social status against the perils of being seen as different or poor. Many low-income children report having been bullied at some point and this can have a negative effect on how they feel about school and in some cases, about themselves (Pople, Rodrigues and Royston, 2013). Buttle UK (2019) notes that the pressures that come alongside poverty are negatively impacting children's mental health and can mean that children do not go to school to avoid being bullied. Furthermore, Martin and Hart (2011) state that children in poverty experience social aggression, including isolation from friendship groups and cruel gossiping, which affect their own well-being and that of their peers.

6.5 Crime

JRF (2016a) explains that the great majority of people living in poverty have no involvement in criminal activities, but living in poverty or in a deprived neighbourhood makes both offending and being the victim of a crime involving property or violence much more likely. Likewise, Webster and Kingston (2014) acknowledge that assessments of the strength of the relationship between poverty and crime has in the past led to considerable disagreement as most people



who are poor have no involvement in crime and there is not necessarily a direct causal relationship between crime and poverty. Rather, intervening experiences and events need to occur as well as poverty. However, Webster and Kingston (2014) do state that poverty generates conditions that make delinquent and criminal ‘solutions’ more likely and a resurgence of relatively recent studies have found the relationship between social inequality, poverty, offending and victimisation to be strong compared to older findings of a weak or non-existent relationship.

Perpetrators of Crime

Buttle UK (2019) states that children in poverty are much more vulnerable to criminal exploitation and becoming

involved in gangs; explaining that some of the reasons for this include high levels of exclusion from school, criminal activity within the schools themselves, a lack of after school activities and a lack of opportunity for children in poverty to access further education. Similarly, Webster and Kingston (2014) cite studies that found a strong and direct relationship between socio-economic status and offending, particularly in respect of childhood poverty and the effects of growing up poor on persistent youth offending, with higher rates of crime found amongst young people from socio-economically disadvantaged families establishing a clear link between poverty and crime. Martin and Hart (2011) noted that in some cases, the pressure to fit in and own similar material possessions to

those of their friends as well as exposure to a range of dangers and negative influences whilst out on the street, particularly for those living in more deprived communities, channels young people into risky behaviours, including drinking alcohol, drugs, and crime. Furthermore, Borysik (2020) identifies a pattern in childhood experiences, including being blighted by poverty, that lead to an adult becoming stuck in the revolving door of crisis and crime. She cites that the Ministry of Justice research in 2019 found that even though only 15% of all pupils were eligible for free school meals, they made up over two-fifths (43%) of prolific offenders and a third (32%) of non-prolific offenders.

McAra and McVie (2015) using data from the Edinburgh Study of Youth Transitions and Crime, found that poverty is a strong driver of violent offending amongst young people. They found that poverty had a significant and direct effect on young people's likelihood to engage in violence at age 15, even after controlling for the effects of a range of other factors known to influence violent behaviour. In addition, compared to all others, those who were identified as having a 'low risk' background but were from low socio-economic status backgrounds had a greater likelihood of engaging in violence. Therefore, McAra and McVie (2015) suggest that for certain types of young people, living in a poor household increases their risk of engaging in violence beyond what would be expected, all other things being equal. McAra and

McVie (2015) also state that compared to all other young people, girls from low socio-economic status backgrounds were at significantly greater risk of engaging in violence. They explained that for young people from the most impoverished backgrounds, violence provides a touchstone against which identities are honed; more particularly, violence empowers and is a means of attaining and sustaining status amongst peers.

In addition, Webster and Kingston (2014) found one of the most striking and consistent links between poverty and crime is that between poverty and homicide, with most evidence showing a strong impact of poverty on violent crimes such as murder, assault and domestic violence across many different settings and countries. They also found that adverse early childhood experiences caused by childhood poverty can predict later offending behaviour in teenage years, which can persist into young adulthood and beyond.

Victims of Crime

Webster and Kingston (2014) note that some studies emphasise the greater likelihood of being a victim of crime rather than offending and that this is the most significant aspect of the impact of poverty on crime, with international evidence showing that those living in poor neighbourhoods are much more likely to be the victim of a crime. They cite that neighbourhoods that suffer high levels

of poverty can concentrate victimisation through property and violent crime and lessen the ability of people to protect themselves. For example, 42% of all burglaries happen to 1% of all homes, principally those belonging to the poor and/or single parents. As such, they conclude that socio-economic conditions predict area-level crime rates and exacerbate social dislocation within neighbourhoods resulting from concentrated poverty.

6.6 Poor Housing

Tunstall et al. (2013) state that the evidence that poverty affects housing circumstances is generally stronger than evidence that housing circumstances affect poverty.

They affirm that low incomes prevent access to many potential housing options, or make them hard to sustain, with those living in poverty having lower rates of home-ownership. However, they express that social housing, housing benefits and support for homeless people, acts as a buffer against the effects of poverty, so that although people living in poverty have a higher risk of bad housing conditions, they generally avoid them. Tunstall et al. (2013) found that available data suggests people living in poverty are more likely to experience poor housing conditions such as leaking roof, dark homes, and coldness in winter resulting in overall dissatisfaction with their home. They also report that the



Department for Work and Pensions' data shows that children in households in the lowest income fifth are at greater risk of poor housing conditions on every measure, and many of the gaps between them and those not in poverty are quite substantial. This includes inability to replace worn-out furniture or electrical goods, not having home contents insurance or a bedroom for every child age 10+ of different gender.

Similarly, Pople, Rodrigues and Royston (2013) state that growing up in poverty often means living in poor quality housing which can have a detrimental impact on children's health, well-being and education. For example, by having no space at home to do homework, or suffering from respiratory illnesses due to dampness in the house. Pople, Rodrigues and Royston (2013) surveyed children who said their family was 'not well off at all', and when asked about their housing, 53% of children said that they do not have enough space, 54% said that their homes were much or a bit colder than they would have liked in winter, while damp or mould was an issue for 26% of them. In addition, many of the children were facing overcrowding and their homes were not in a good state of repair. BMA (2017) also states that families on low incomes are more likely to live in overcrowded homes, with overcrowding being four times as prevalent in social-rented housing compared to owner occupation. They explain that overcrowding is harmful as rates of respiratory disease, tuberculosis, meningitis and gastric conditions are higher in overcrowded homes, and it can also have a negative effect on mental health.

Poor Neighbourhood

Maître, Russell and Smyth (2021) cite that while poor families are geographically dispersed and many do not live in disadvantaged areas, they are more likely than high-income families to live in neighbourhoods with problems of crime, poor services and environmental pollution. Likewise, Tunstall et al. (2013) state that neighbourhood problems faced by those living in poverty include crime, noise, pollution and access to services. Pople, Rodrigues and Royston (2013) express that low-income children in urban areas may experience run-down, degraded and degrading environments, poorly served by services, shops and public transport. On the other hand, low-income children in rural areas may find themselves isolated and marginalised within their small villages and towns, and experience a severe lack of social opportunities and activities compounded by expensive and inadequate public transport. Pople, Rodrigues and Royston (2013) found that in respect of their local area, children's greatest concerns related to cleanliness, with 57% saying that dog or cat mess and 45% saying that rubbish is a problem. Safety was another key issue with 42% of children reporting seeing people using or dealing drugs and 39% reporting seeing people being drunk or rowdy in their local area.

Homelessness

Tunstall et al. (2013) explain that homelessness is the most extreme form of housing deprivation, with homeless people having no secure place to live. They state

that although it seems likely that people in poverty are very much over-represented in homelessness, that due to complexity of establishing links between income and specific housing outcomes, poverty is rarely cited as a sufficient, or even the main, cause of homelessness as most people who are poor do not become homeless. However, Fitzpatrick et al., (2011, cited in Tunstall et al., 2013) argue that there would be a clear link between low income and homelessness if it were not for Housing Benefit: ‘... social security systems, and especially housing allowances ... are what usually breaks the link between losing a job or persistent low income and homelessness’.

6.7 Debt

HM Government (2014) proclaims that evidence clearly shows that debt associates strongly with income poverty. They state that the Households below Average

Income statistics for 2011/12 suggest that, of children in households in low-income poverty, 24% are behind on one or more bills compared to an average of 14% for all UK children. Furthermore, HM Government (2014) report that evidence from StepChange debt charity shows that they were contacted by over 400,000 people seeking debt advice in 2012, of whom 70% had household income less than £20,000. Looking specifically at issues of persistent poverty, Barnes et al. (2008, cited in HM Government, 2014) using longitudinal data from the Families and Children Study, found a higher incidence of being in arrears on household bills in low-income ‘temporarily poor’ families (44%) and families in persistent poverty (66%) compared to those ‘not poor’ (15%). HM Government (2014) conclude that once in debt, low-income families have to spend a



higher proportion of their income to service this debt, which can in turn lead to a vicious cycle of debt, increasing the likelihood that these families will remain in poverty.

Likewise, Hartfree and Collard (2014) profess that there is clear evidence that low-income households are more likely to experience problem debt than higher income households. They cite Dearden et al.'s (2010) longitudinal qualitative study of credit and debt in 60 low-income households that showed the complexity and interaction of factors that can lead low-income households into problem debt. Hartfree and Collard (2014) explain that whilst for some households in the study, problem debt started as a result of a single specific event, such as losing a job or starting a family, for others it resulted from a sequence of events or accumulation of adverse circumstances over a period of time, with no single trigger or cause. They state that low income was an underlying cause whereby household finances were precarious and easily susceptible to disruption by a fall in income or an increase in demands on expenditure that, in the absence of savings or other resources to draw on, led households to using credit and defaulting on payments.

Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) express that whilst those with low income are at the greatest risk of debt, what sets them apart from the rest of the population is not the fact that they use credit but rather that their indebtedness often arose because their income levels made

borrowing a necessity to cover day-to-day living expenses. For those on low incomes the cost of being indebted is often much higher than it is to those on higher incomes, borrowing from mainstream lenders is not an option, often having to turn to sub-prime credit market with annual percentage rates typically between 100 and 400 per cent and with defaults that incur high charges (Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan, 2012).

Research from various bodies highlights difficulties low-income families have in accessing credit and the associated higher cost of borrowing for these families, together with greater use of payday or illegal lending (HM Government, 2014). Barker et al. (2018) explain that the factors driving people towards high-cost credit included the limited availability of low-interest or no interest loans, as well as a belief that high-cost credit, such as payday loans or rent-to-own purchases, is the only option open to people in poverty. Barker et al. (2018) elaborate that high-cost debt, is therefore often incurred by people at risk of or currently experiencing destitution, as a coping strategy to meet essential needs. They explain this type of credit can lead to high debt repayments and escalating debt, which further reduces people's income, which can cause them to become destitute and extend the period of time that people experience destitution for. Similarly, JRF (2016a) reports that low-income households are over-represented among high-cost credit users and that

overall, while better-off households have higher absolute levels of debt, lower-income households have higher unsecured debt repayments relative to their income, putting them at greater risk of problem debt, which can deepen or prolong poverty.

In addition, Barker et al. (2018) disclose that public debt is another common type of debt held by people experiencing destitution. They explain this type of debt is typically repaid by people living on a low-income through Third Party Deductions (TPD), which affect significant proportions of working-age benefit claimants, with 37% of all working-age people receiving Income Support or Job Seekers Allowance having at least one TPD taken from their income in February 2017. They state that some interviewees

felt that the practice relating to TPDs was reducing people's incomes to the point where they were being pushed closer to the edge of, or in some cases into, destitution.

6.8 Addictions – Drugs and Alcohol

Even though good quality data on drugs and alcohol misuse is sparse, the evidence that exists notes a relationship between addiction and poverty. Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) report that evidence suggests that the poorest communities and those with high levels of unemployment are most affected with problematic drug use and that Alcohol Focus Scotland found that the heaviest drinkers are concentrated in the lowest income quartile. Furthermore, Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan (2012) point out that alcohol misuse and the



incidence of problematic drug users are much higher among marginal groups such as homeless, prison population or young offenders, which are often excluded from household survey data. They specify that policies aimed at reducing social deprivation, lead to most success in reducing the prevalence of the most damaging drugs. However, most studies report that on the

contrary average alcohol consumption rises with income and available data on general drug use shows little variation by socio-economic circumstances or correlation with poverty, despite that, dependency and regular use are more likely to develop among young people from lower social classes (Harkness, Gregg and MacMillan, 2012; HM Government, 2014).

A hand-drawn lightbulb on a chalkboard. The lightbulb is drawn with a circular outline and several curved lines radiating from it to represent light. Inside the circle, there is a crumpled piece of yellow paper. A hand is visible at the bottom, holding a white chalk stick, as if it has just finished drawing the lightbulb. The background is a dark purple chalkboard with some faint, illegible chalk markings.

7. Conclusion

7. Conclusion

The evidence from the review has helped set out what is known about poverty in Northern Ireland and the wider surrounding areas from a range of existing literature. In particular, it shows that certain groups of people face a much higher risk of living in poverty than others, including children, those living with a disability and those in low-paid work. Some of the causes of poverty can also be consequences such as poor education, health and crime; creating a cycle that traps people. However, it was also found that due to the complexity of poverty, much of the evidence is non-conclusive and unable to determine a causal relationship or whether something is a cause or consequence of poverty and if both, which is more prevalent. This is especially true for addiction and debt.

Through research review it has been identified that poverty is intricate and results from an interaction of labour markets, social security systems and an individual's circumstances, capacities and choices. This interaction plays a part both in people falling into and escaping poverty. Existing research typically focus on 'trigger' events that are typically divided into three broad categories of labour market events, demographic events and non-labour market income events, with labour market triggers found to explain a majority of transitions out of poverty. These triggers reflect the proximate events that co-occur with a poverty transition, however, that does not mean that

they should be interpreted as causal effects. In addition, there seems to be limited literature that review the effectiveness of policies and practices in enabling people to exit poverty or literatures that are able to prove a positive causal effect of policies and practises at tackling poverty.

As for those in poverty, the consequences of it are far-reaching and can have long-term impacts, including poor mental and physical health, all of which can be caused by poverty and in turn can perpetuate it. It has been identified that the impacts of poverty can start from an early age, from the point before a child is even born. The impacts of poverty have also been noted to be most severe when experienced at an early age, having a significant impact on children's cognitive development, education, mental and physical health as well as their relationships with family and peers which can have a major impact on children's educational attainment, future life prospects, and poverty as adults. Overall, the impacts of poverty have been found to be multi-dimensional and possess a domino effect, whereby one impact activates a chain reaction of other negative impacts. Furthermore, although the impacts of poverty have been shown to be most severe when experienced at an early age, poverty has been found to have a significant negative impact at all stages of life, therefore, it presents a major problem to anyone who has the misfortune to experience it.

7.1 Evidence Gaps

The limited volume, range and quality of poverty literature pertaining to Northern Ireland meant that evidence had to be drawn predominantly from UK focused papers, however some of these included NI within their UK coverage. Whilst there is robust poverty data available for NI in a range of statistical publications, this appears not to have been fully utilised within poverty literature and as such there is an apparent lack of academic papers specifically related to NI.

Research in poverty tends to focus on longitudinal data from surveys such as Understanding Society and Growing up in Ireland Survey. However, there is also a wealth of UK data available on an annual basis that can provide useful trend analysis. This appears to be largely untapped in many of the papers.

Whilst there is an abundance of literature addressing the risks or causes of poverty and the ensuing impacts of it on people's lives, there is a lack of good quality literature discussing what factors enable people to escape poverty. Identified papers tend to focus on trigger events related to moving out of poverty analysed via longitudinal surveys, such as gaining employment or increasing pay rather than in-depth case studies exploring what factors enabled people to move out of poverty.

There also appeared to be a lack of papers directly accessing the impacts of particular policies and practices on enabling people to escape poverty.

7.2 Recommendations for Future Research

The conclusions and evidence gaps highlighted, may be used to inform future research. Potential research may include:

- An examination of how the rates and distribution of poverty in Northern Ireland compare to the other UK countries/ regions and the Republic of Ireland, and how this has changed over time. This would provide an indication of the extent to which the UK research is relevant to NI and an insight into any key differences in poverty in NI.
- A study of the key sources of poverty data currently available in Northern Ireland. This would consider, with reference to best practice, options to maximise the insight that can be drawn from the available data. The research would also benchmark NI data sources to other UK countries and the Republic of Ireland, identify key limitations on the analysis which can be undertaken, and consider how these might be addressed.
- Qualitative research examining the factors that have enabled people to exit poverty in Northern Ireland.
- A study on what works in reducing poverty. This research would examine evidence on the impact and effectiveness of anti-poverty interventions introduced elsewhere with the aim of identifying lessons for NI.

7.3 Limitations of the Review

There are a number of limitations of the review.

- The REA used literature from 3 research databases and is therefore restricted to the limitations of these databases.
- To provide a ‘rapid’ review, concessions were made in the breadth and depth of the search process. As a consequence, some relevant studies may have been missed.
- The number of reviewers who critically appraised the studies’ trustworthiness was limited to two.
- The review excludes unpublished research
- A full systematic review may result in different conclusions.

Given these limitations, care must be taken not to present the findings presented in this REA as conclusive.

Disclaimer

The research referred to and the citations included in this document, present the views and information/ statistics provided by various researchers and organisations, and does not necessarily represent the views or policy of the Department for Communities.



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