

What do we know?

The [Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016](#) brings up to date [The Child Poverty Act 2010](#) which define child poverty as follows:

“A child is taken to be living in poverty if that child experiences socio-economic disadvantage.”

By ‘[socio-economic disadvantage](#)’ the government means ‘lacking parental resources and/or opportunities to participate in meaningful activities, services and relationships’. In reality this means for example missing out on school trips, socialising with friends, days out and family holidays.

From the Child Poverty Action Group (<https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/effects-poverty>); Individuals, families and groups in the population can be said to be in poverty when they lack resources to obtain the type of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions and amenities which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong. *Peter Townsend - sociologist and anti-poverty campaigner*

Also from the CPAG; “My niece didn’t go on hers [school trip] and she was one of only two children in the whole class of 32 that didn’t go and she cried when I picked her up from school because all her friends had been but she hadn’t been.” *Parent of primary school child*

And “The place where she was happy and thrived was in dance classes and I now can’t pay for them and that was the thing she looked forward to every week, she made friends there; she doesn’t have friends at school as such but at dance she had friends, yeah, and we’ve had, we’ve had to stop all that. *Jessica - single parent, York*

And “I skip meals to share with my mum...for example, I skip my meal to wait for her to come back and at least we can have the same amount of food...[We] starve together through the whole day, so at least we will have had something to eat”. *Amara - aged 15, London*

Translating this into terms that can be measured, child poverty can be summarised as a child living in a household that has less than 60% of the national median income. In money terms in Bracknell Forest 60% of the median income equates to an income of just over £18,540. (<https://brilliantmaps.com/median-gross-household-income-gb/> 2024)

From the UK.gov website <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/income-dynamics-2010-to-2022/income-dynamics-income-movements-and-the-persistence-of-low-income-2010-to-2022#children-in-persistent-low-income>

BHC = before housing costs and AFC = after housing costs

Children in lone parent families were more likely to be in persistent low income than children in families headed by a couple

Children living in lone parent families were more likely to be in persistent low income than those living in families headed by a couple, and the difference between these two groups was greater AHC than BHC.

Figure 9. Persistent low income among children, by family status (BHC and AHC)

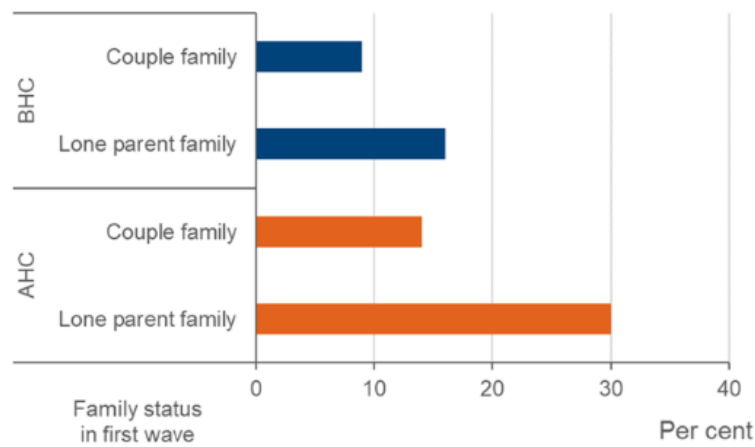
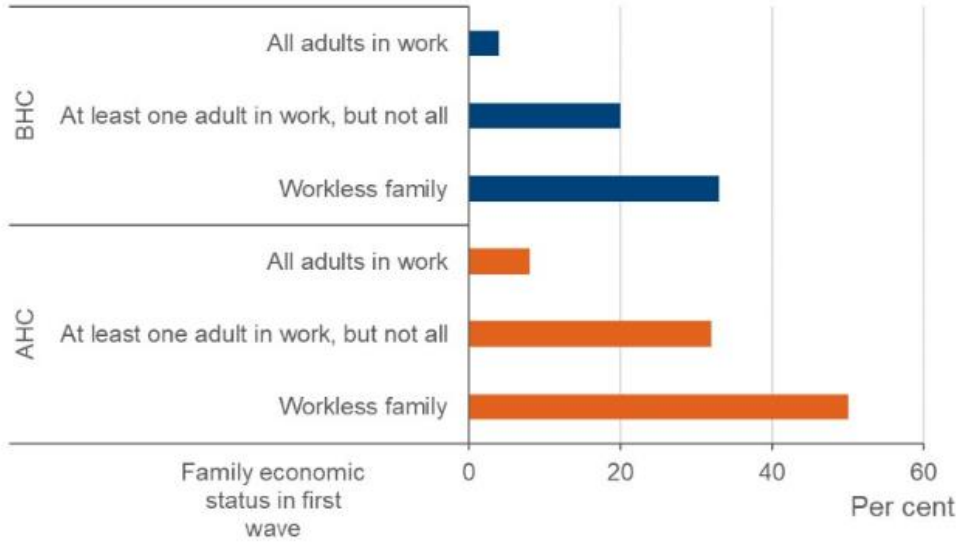


Figure 7. Persistent low income among children, by family work status (BHC and AHC)



Percentage of children under 16 living in families with low income (2022/23)

https://bracknell-forest.berkshireobservatory.co.uk/deprivation/#/view-report/8b97d75c317745b3a6016fc0788469d1/_iaFirstFeature/G3

In Bracknell Forest 2,341 0-16 year olds (9.5%) are living in relative poverty compared to a national average of 20.0% and a South East average of 13.3%. Six wards in the Borough have child poverty rates above the South East average.

The cost of child poverty (CFAG <https://cpag.org.uk/child-poverty/effects-poverty>)

Child poverty is costing the country money, directly and indirectly.

Having so many families and their children in poverty draws huge costs from other government budgets: poorer physical and mental health impacts the NHS, poorer educational attainment reduces workforce skills, and additional public services are needed to cushion the effects of living in poverty.

A report published by the national Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in July 2013 (so a bit old now) calculated local estimates of the cost of child poverty for every local authority. These costs were based on the increased amounts spent on dealing with the consequences of child poverty (social services, housing services, healthcare and benefits) as well as lost tax revenue from people earning less as a result of growing up in poverty. **The cost for each child living below the poverty line was estimated to be just over £10,800 annually.**

On this basis CPAG estimated there were 3,528 children in poverty in Bracknell Forest resulting in a total annual cost of child poverty of £38 million.

National & local Strategies (current best practices)

Under the requirements of the Child Poverty Act 2010, Bracknell Forest Local Authority and its partner agencies are required to cooperate to mitigate the effects of child poverty in the local area. This is to be done within the context of a national strategy to meet targets set out in the Act by 2020.

The National Strategy was published in April 2011 based on the following principles, which aim to:

- Promote work as the best route out of poverty
- Support family relationships and family life
- Facilitate early intervention and prevention
- Promote excellence in delivery, working with partners to ensure that ending child poverty is everyone's business
- Ensure the sustainability, cost effectiveness and affordability of the strategy.

Locally in Bracknell Forest a number of initiatives are underway to address poverty and the impact this has on outcomes for children and young people.

The Family Focus Initiative (known nationally as Troubled Families) works with specific vulnerable families with worklessness as one of the key priorities.

Working with Job Centre Plus, Children's Centres are increasingly active in supporting adults back into work with job clubs and training.

In schools the Pupil Premium is used to provide extra resource and financial support for disadvantaged pupils.

From September 2013 the government is providing funding for disadvantaged two year olds to enable them to attend pre-school provision and the parent to seek work. This funding will be extended to a wider group of families in 2014.

A Credit Union is being rolled out by the Council in partnership with Bracknell Forest Homes.

[Creating opportunities: breaking the cycle- a strategy for reducing child poverty in Bracknell Forest 2011-2014.](#)

What is this telling us?

Whilst there has been a lot of progress, the general economic climate and government tax and benefit changes continue to have an impact on children in low-income families.

What are the key inequalities?

In and around Bracknell town services are more accessible whereas families living in outlying areas could be at a disadvantage due to lack of public transport and the cost of it.

What are the unmet needs/ service gaps?

Although contact has been made with 92% of eligible families in Bracknell Forest, there may be a proportion of families of whom we are unaware. Also a small proportion of parents choose not to engage with the support offered.

The capacity of Local Authorities to help low-income families is coming under increasing pressure in the current climate of limited resources and funding cuts.

Thinking about inequality

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The United Kingdom (UK) is a shockingly unequal society.

Government statistics show that in 2019 the numbers of children living in absolute poverty had risen by 200,000 in a year to a total of 3.7 million.

In England, the experience of education for children depends on where you live

The strong link between social disadvantage and poor educational outcomes is well documented in the research literature as have been the effects of poverty on young people's mental and physical health and wellbeing.

Evidence from empirical research studies and statistical analyses has repeatedly shown that the most economically disadvantaged students and or with a special educational need (SEN) have the poorest educational outcomes in England in terms of educational achievement and emotional wellbeing.

Children's experience of schooling is heavily influenced by the level of disadvantage that they face in their lives and their social class positions still heavily influence the opportunities open to them.

Cooper and Stewart (2013), in a systematic review of the literature, found that money makes a significant difference to the material outcomes of children's lives.

School absence rates in England are higher for pupils claiming free school meals (FSM): 7.6%, compared to 4.3% for non FSM pupils. The persistent absence rate for pupils who were eligible for FSM of 23.6% was more than twice the rate for those pupils not eligible.

Research has also shown that in England educational inequalities surface in the preschool years, but that they continue to widen in both primary and secondary school years.

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The overwhelming evidence in England is that the potential of many young people from disadvantaged backgrounds is not currently met by school systems.

Then there is a new scheme called the National Databank, to get people who are digitally excluded because they can't afford to be connected to the internet.

Run by Bracknell Forest Council and Funded by the Department of Education and Skills Funding Agency.

Someone receiving data through the National Databank must be:

- 18+ years old
- From a low-income household

And qualify in at least one of the following statements:

- Has no access or insufficient access to the internet at home.
- Has no or insufficient access to the internet when away from the home.
- Cannot afford their existing monthly contract or top up.

The “Pop-up” food bank

In September 2023 some parishioners opened a pop-up food bank at St Margaret Clitherow School in Crown Wood in partnership with Share Wokingham . There weren't many takers so it was moved to the Community Hall in Great Hollands. The table below shows the uptake on a day drawn at random, 1st June 2024.

43 people came to the food bank, representing 117 family members.

The “pop-up” foodbank volunteers collect unwanted food from a list of donating shops on the Friday evening. The food is just about to time-expire so it is fresh fruit, fresh veg, bread. And sometimes sandwiches. Then it is given away on the following Saturday morning at the Great Hollands Shopping Centre.

Caution; The food is about to time expire and so it is about to be discarded so it isn't necessarily the case that people are in hardship. It could also be that they don't want to see perfectly good food go to waste.

The families are ranked by the number of children in the family (the 0-16 column).

There are 43 families represented with 126 people in them. 43 of which are children so about a third.

16%, so about 1 in 8 of the families are 60+

Great Hollands Share pop-up food bank - 1st June 2024						
Family number	no. in household	0-16	17-25	26-60	60+	Disability?
1	5	4		1		
2	8	4	2		2	
3	5	3	2			
4	5	3		2		
5	4	3		1		
6	5	3		2		
7	4	2		2		
8	4	2		2		
9	4	2		2		
10	4	2		2		
11	4	2	1	1		
12	3	2		1		
13	4	2		2		
14	5	2		3		
15	4	2		2		
16	2	1		1		
17	4	1	1	2		
18	2	1		1		Y
19	5	1		3	1	
20	3	1		2		
21	1			1		Y
22	3			2	1	
23	2		1	1		Y
24	4		2		2	Y
25	2				2	Y
26	3		2	1		
27	3			1	2	
28	2				2	
29	4		2	2		
30	3		1	1	1	
31	1				1	Y
32	1		1			
33	1			1		
34	1		1			
35	2				2	Y
36	1			1		
37	1				1	

38	1				1	
39	1			1		
40	1			1		
41	2			2		
42	1				1	
43	1			1		
43	126	43	16	48	19	7
%age of no. in household		34	13	38	15	6
