

Closing the ‘disadvantage gap’

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Defining our terms...

By 'disadvantage gap' we mean 'poverty gap' or 'or socio-economic gap'

In this session

Ruth will talk about **poverty** and its **impact on education**

Carl will talk about **work UoM is doing with schools to help them respond**

We're interested in how these issues are playing out in your schools

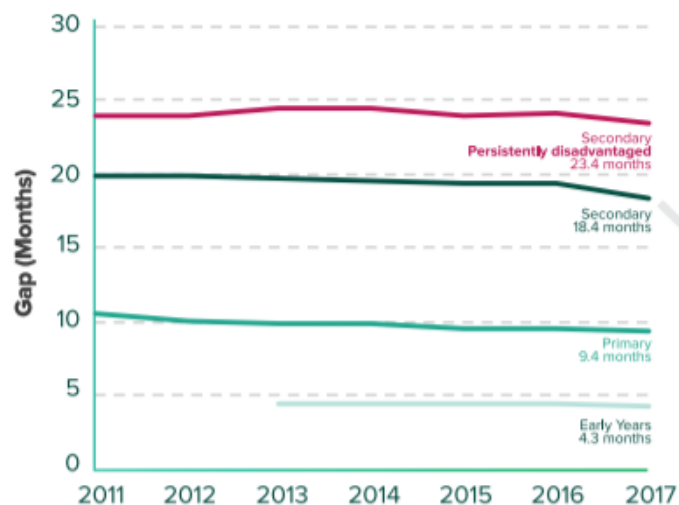
‘Closing the disadvantage gap’ : dominant discourses

- ‘disadvantage’ is an individual/household problem
- solutions lie in fixing things for individuals
- schools can fix disadvantage gaps
- they need to know ‘what works’ – short term interventions
- And buy the relevant packages from ‘providers’
- ‘what works’ is universal, not contextualised – the universal ‘good teacher’

Privatisation of disadvantage?

But look at the evidence!

What has happened to the **disadvantage gap** in recent years?



18.4 months

Size of gap for disadvantaged pupils in 2017 across all GCSEs

23.4 months

Size of gap for persistently disadvantaged pupils in 2017 across all GCSEs

1.6 months

Reduction in disadvantage gap 2011-2017 across all GCSEs

0.5 months

Reduction in persistently disadvantaged gap 2011-2017 across all GCSEs

On current trends, it will take over **100 years** to close the gap in English and maths

Source: Education Policy Institute

Our research suggests:

- ‘disadvantage gaps’ are caused by:
 - disadvantage
 - the multiple ways the school system privileges those who are advantaged
- solutions lie in:
 - fixing disadvantage (broader policies on poverty/inequality)
 - changing fundamental things in schools to equalise opportunity:
 - Relationships
 - Costs
 - Curriculum
 - Classroom messages and power relations

The harsh realities: child poverty in the UK

Big

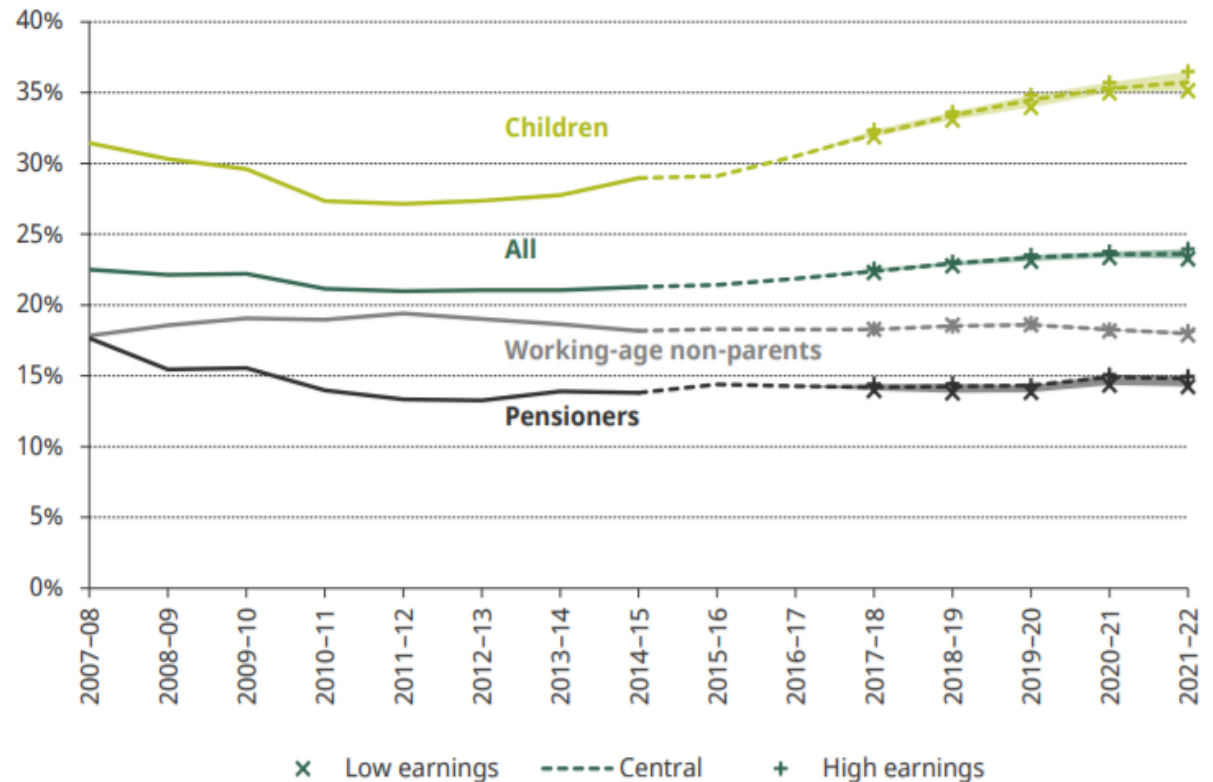


Changing

Two-thirds (67 per cent) of children growing up in poverty live in a family where at least one person works

Rising

Figure 3.5. Relative poverty rates, AHC incomes



Money matters

Cooper and Stewart (2013, updated 2017) based on studies looking at causal relationships between income and educational attainment

Calculate that if the average income of households with FSM were raised to the average for non-FSM pupils, the achievement gap would close by a half.

Why money matters

- Partly ‘investment’:
 - Housing, diet
 - Educational resources, trips, experiences, chances to be good at something
- Partly ‘family stress’
 - Parental depression, anxiety, conflict
 - Leading to ‘parenting behaviours’
 - And impacts on children’s confidence, resilience, attitudes to risk etc

Social class also matters

- Changing labour markets
 - Loss of youth opportunity
 - Hollowing out
- 'Left behind places'
 - Narratives of loss and decline
- A shift in values
 - 'anywhere' v 'somewhere'
 - Private consumption v community well-being
 - Having v doing

Schools: last man standing?

Since 2010, huge cuts to:

- Community facilities and resources eg libraries, children centres
..... and increases in costs
- Support services for families: housing advice, legal advice, welfare rights
- Support services for children/youth: youth workers, mental health services

Schools report greater demands: “it all ends up in the school”

Conclusion

- To address disadvantage gaps, we need to start with disadvantage
- Schools are in the front-line of enormous challenges and changes
- Schools can make a difference, but they can't make all the difference
- We need to start where we are, and consider what schools can do, working with other partnersnot imagine some fantasy transformation

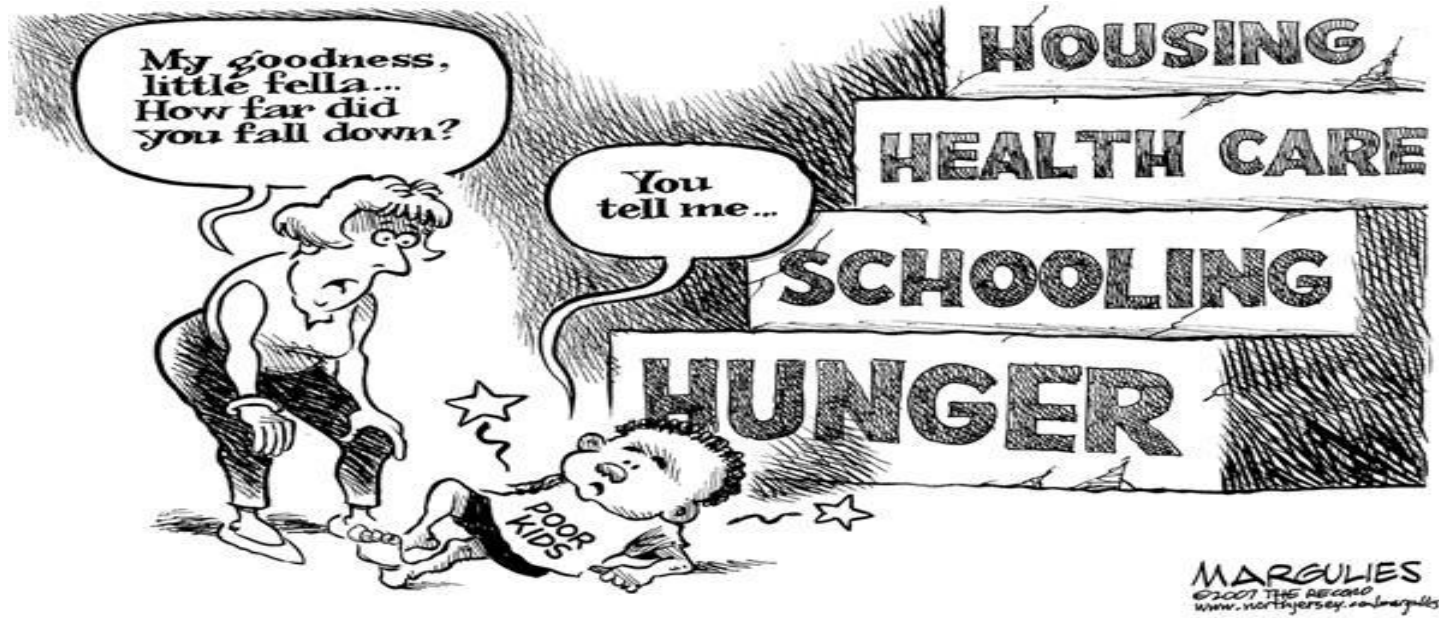
For discussion

What is the trend in child poverty in your schools?

What issues does it raise?

How do schools respond to the disadvantage gap?

Dr Carl Emery



MIE Disadvantage & Poverty Research Fellow

Our response – North West Disadvantage and Poverty Research Network

This is a place-based project grounded in the knowledge that **teaching in a high poverty/disadvantaged area requires different skills from a teacher and a different perspective across the whole school** community. The project takes vital disadvantage and poverty research from Manchester University and similar national/international organisations and supports teachers and schools in both learning from this research and applying the research findings to reduce stigma and remove barriers to learning and to assist schools in exploring the most effective way to support and fully engage children and families experiencing poverty and disadvantage.

This project addresses the questions i) what can research tell us about the ways that young people across the locality experience poverty and its impact on their learning and well-being ii) How can a practitioner/academic collaborative partnership support the school in minimising this impact and building an evidence based, context driven, response.

All activity is based on: Rebuilding confidence in the value of learning, giving credibility to working class culture, values, aspirations, equip and support staff to be researchers and deal with very challenging circumstances

Our response – North West Disadvantage and Poverty Research Network

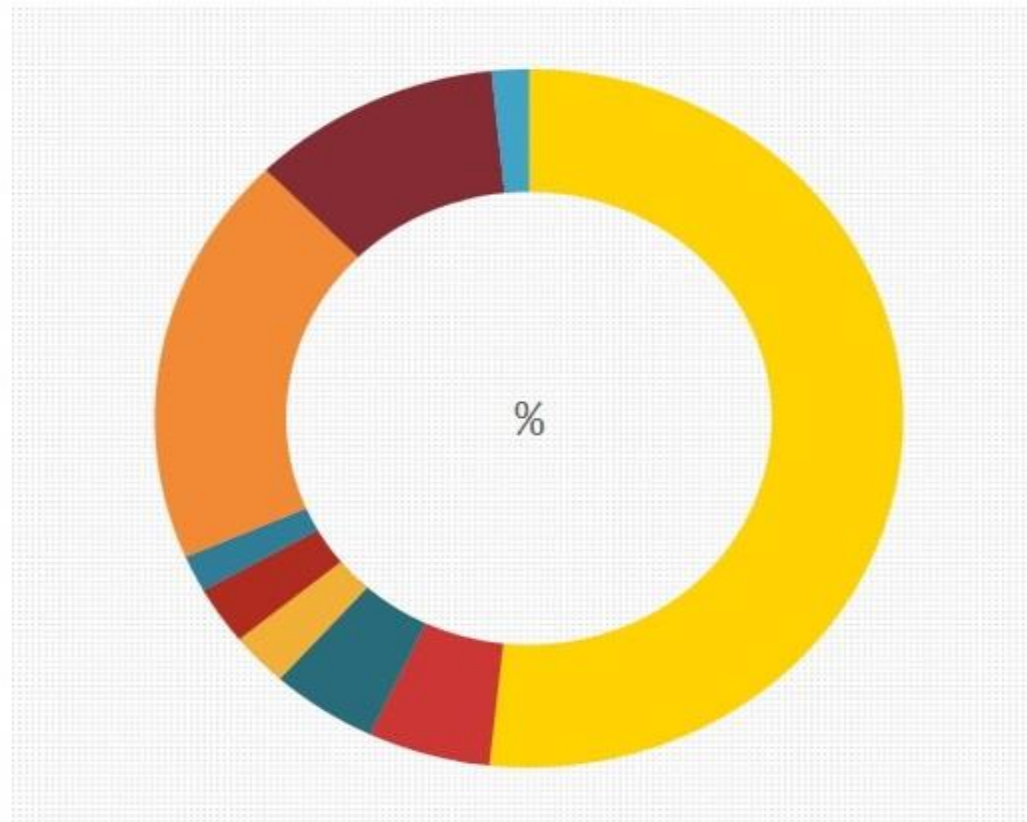
Stockport/Blackburn/Chester – over 40 schools

At the close of the programme we will

- Have articulated the poverty/education problem, in a clear and well evidenced way – local data
- We will be clearer in articulating what works, beyond the short-term classroom interventions.
- We will be clearer about knowledge gaps (including where there is insufficient knowledge to support existing policies), and about the dilemmas and difficulties in translating research into policy/practice.
- We will have developed a locally based D&P community of practice/researchers able to sustain and develop
- We will have a series of in school resources and projects to be used across the locality

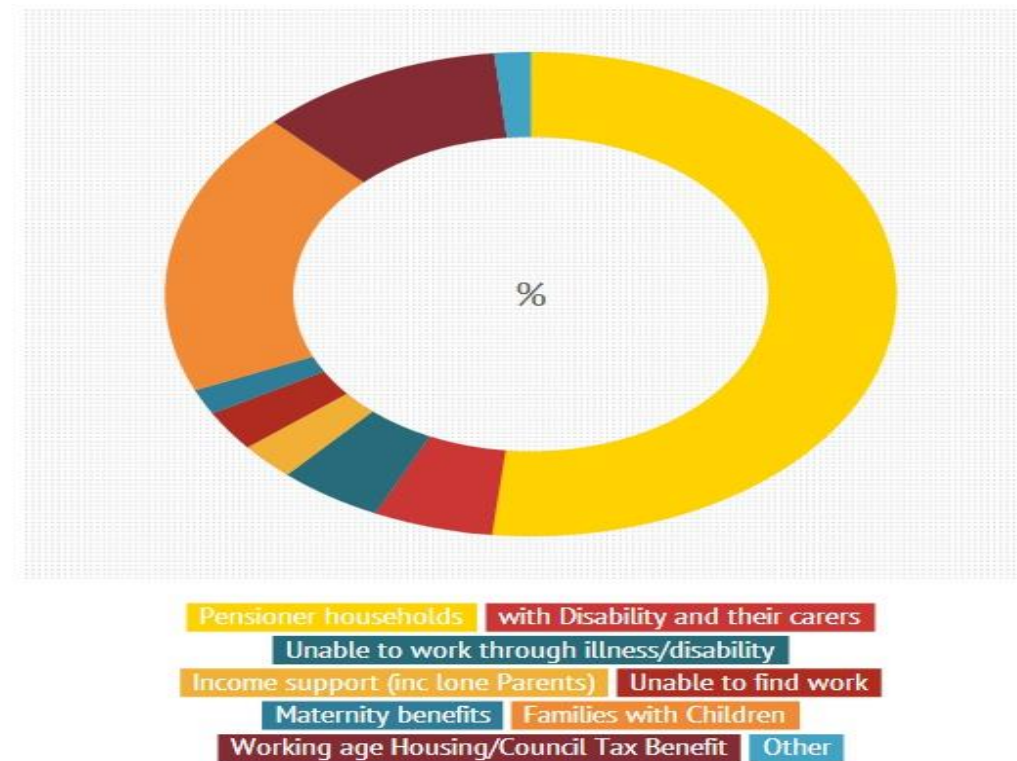
What kind of resources?

Who receives benefits money?



What kind of resources?

Who receives benefits money?



The biggest slice of the benefits budget goes to pensioners.

Poverty



Questionnaire

Poverty

The purpose of this questionnaire is to explore your understanding of poverty. We will be discussing the responses as a class afterwards.

Please circle true or false for each question.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------|-------|
| 1. There is no real poverty in the UK | True | False |
| 2. People on benefits aren't really poor | True | False |
| 3. Welfare benefits are too high | True | False |
| 4. People are in poverty because of their own failings and behaviour | True | False |
| 5. The poor are always with us - there is nothing that can be done | True | False |
| 6. Employment is the best route out of poverty | True | False |
| 7. Poverty causes crime | True | False |
| 8. Most of the benefits budget is spent on the unemployed | True | False |
| 9. People have children to get more money from the government | True | False |
| 10. The rich are growing richer, and the poor are growing poorer | True | False |

Co Produced Teachers Attitude to Poverty Survey

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
People living in poverty only have themselves to blame					
People living in poverty have a different set of values than other people					
People living in poverty live better than I do, considering all their benefits					
There is a lot of fraud among people who get benefits					
People living in poverty are lazy					
People living in poverty believe they have a right to be supported					
Children living in poverty will never amount to anything					
People living in poverty generally have lower intelligence than those who aren't					
People living in poverty get too much support from the government in the form of benefits					
Children who live in poverty behave less well than those who don't					
People living in poverty tend to abuse drugs and alcohol					
People living in poverty have no ambition and low aspirations					

• Outcomes

- Extra support and training for parents to become school governors
- New rules on payment for pre and after school clubs – long run in/reduced contributions
- Changed World Book Day – from buying a fancy dress costume to making them
- Parents voice project – our local history – children interviewing parents
- Tell me project for new staff – this is the story of our area DVD by parents and pupils
- Curriculum materials – quiz/English project

Teachers have 'lost their voice'. This is the project to give them their voice back, and their professional self-respect too. When university departments of education and experienced, passionate teachers work together, there is hope, and we certainly need that now.

Just wanted to say thank you for such an informative, thought-provoking and inspiring day last Thursday. In such a short space of time, you have gained colleagues' trust, and have managed to create a learning environment where they feel comfortable sharing some sensitive professional and personal experiences. It has been wonderful to see how each member of the group has grown and developed during their time on the programme.

How do these changes make a difference to disadvantage gaps?

We are at the start of this journey but its becoming clear that this work indictes

- Inclusion (pupils and parents) underpins attainment
- Schools can dismantle practices that unwittingly marginalise and exclude low income families (eg World book day)
- Thinking into the shoes of families experiencing poverty is the starting point for 'turnaround' pedagogies and practices which can really transform children's experiences in school
- Attainment and achievement become richer and thicker and a part of the whole school community not something spoken of by others
- Pupils and the community can envision and enact routes out of poverty that make local sense
- Professionalisation of teachers – teachers feel involved in and at the centre of learning

Do leaders and teachers in my school understand poverty?

What might they do differently if they did?

If you would like to get involved contact me;

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