

# Challenging perceptions. Overcoming poverty.

A Report by

East Lothian  
**POVERTY**  
**COMMISSION**

**Overcoming poverty is  
not a gesture of charity.**

**It is an act of justice.**

**It is the protection of  
a fundamental human  
right, the right to dignity  
and a decent life.** Nelson Mandela

**East Lothian Poverty Commission** (ELPC) recognise that poverty is about more than a simple lack of money. It is forced upon people through a complexity of circumstances. Poverty has a significant, negative impact on people's wellbeing, confidence and sense of worth. Poverty is never a choice. Poverty is a human rights issue. People have a right to an adequate standard of living, to feel included and able to participate in their community.

We want to thank all those who told us their story and shared their experiences with us. This report presents our findings from our recent work in East Lothian and our recommendations for the future.

**Kids can't learn  
if they're hungry**

Teacher, Haddington

**I go around the supermarket  
looking for food that will fill my  
bairns up. Instant noodles cost  
9p and little to cook. I can feed  
my family for a week on the  
price of one packet of grapes.**

Dad, Prestonpans

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# 1 About us

## Why ELPC was established

East Lothian Council and its partners have a core objective to reduce inequality within and between our ward areas in East Lothian. This is a key focus of the Council's Plan and also of its work with partners through the East Lothian Partnership. When we look at data from across the county, we can see that there are significant differences between different parts of the county and even within some ward areas. With recognition that there was already a significant amount of work underway to tackle poverty and inequality, it was agreed that now is an important time to consider what more could be done to tackle poverty and address inequality locally.

In this context the Poverty Commission was established and we were asked to examine poverty in East Lothian. We focused on identifying key actions that local organisations working in partnership can undertake to help people to move out of poverty or lessen its impact.

## What we did

We met from February to June 2016 and worked to gather as much information, evidence and opinion about poverty in East Lothian as possible. We spoke to local people experiencing poverty, held themed sessions and invited practitioners, local projects and national experts to come to talk to us about poverty. Our key questions were:

- a) How extensive is poverty across East Lothian?
- b) What are the causes of poverty in East Lothian?
- c) What is it like to live in poverty in East Lothian; in particular, what is the impact on children?
- d) How are different organisations working locally to tackle poverty/multiple deprivation?
- e) What is the impact of existing measures in tackling poverty?
- f) What more can we do to tackle poverty and lessen its impact?
- g) How can we empower people to take action in their own communities?

## Who we are

The Commission has six members who bring a range of knowledge and expertise and give up their time on a voluntary basis to support this work. We all have strong connections with East Lothian's communities and are deeply passionate about inequality. We were supported by officers from East Lothian Council.

- **Annette Bruton:** Chair. Principal, Edinburgh College; Education & Learning
- **Anne Hastie.** Former manager, Haddington CAB; Rights & Advice Services
- **Morag Alexander.** Chair of ELCAP and former Equality and Human Rights Commissioner; Human Rights, Equality & Participation
- **Chris Knights.** Church and Community Development Worker for the Musselburgh Area & Chair of Musselburgh Area Partnership
- **Clare MacGillivray.** Community Development, Tenant Participation, Equalities & Human Rights
- **Zoe Van Zwanenberg.** Community Justice, Leadership.

## Local involvement

As Commissioners we felt it was essential to have the voices of those with real experience of living in poverty at the heart of our discussions. We invited people to share their experiences with us through face to face meetings, an online questionnaire and through inviting Commissioners to meet with local groups in our communities. We also sought to hear about real life experiences of people through the evidence we heard from practitioners and this focus on real lived experience was at the heart of the questions we asked. The Commissioners also held an event for local practitioners to come together to share their experiences and observations from their work in the community. We want to thank all those who told us their story and helped to shape this report.

## What we agreed and what happens next

This report sets out our findings and recommendations for tackling poverty in East Lothian. The report is structured around the evidence sessions we held and highlights key things local people talked to us about. Chapter 4 focuses mainly on recommendations for East Lothian Council and its partner organisations, while Chapter 5 is focused on issues that are the responsibility of the Scottish Government and the UK Government. Our recommendations contain both long and short term ambitions that will:

- a) Actively support organisations, agencies and individuals who are working now to mitigate the impact of poverty
- b) Encourage and actively support the development of policies, processes and practices within and between organisations, agencies and individuals that will prevent or reduce poverty and
- c) Actively encourage the spread of knowledge and understanding about the causes and impacts of poverty and support work that will change attitudes to the current culture of inequality.

We call on East Lothian Council and its partners through the East Lothian Partnership to:

- Continue their focus on tackling inequality and maintain this commitment at the heart of the Council Plan and Single Outcome Agreement
- Work to develop an action plan to take forward the recommendations contained in the report by Spring of 2017
- Publish an annual progress report against the action plan so that we can demonstrate a commitment to tackling poverty across the community planning partners and demonstrate value in acting collectively
- Use their influence in local spheres including local geographical communities, business communities and networks with regional and national organisations to champion all work to tackle poverty and reduce inequality.

East Lothian  
**POVERTY  
COMMISSION**

# 2 What is poverty?

## Defining poverty

As a Commission, we believe that poverty is about more than a lack of money. Poverty is a human rights issue. People have a right to an adequate standard of living that enables them to take part in family and community life.

Poverty is not a lifestyle choice but forced on to people through a complexity of circumstances. Poverty is rarely the result of a single factor. Issues such as low pay, insecure jobs, high cost of living and of housing, life events such as bereavement or illness are some of the factors that often combine into circumstances that become difficult to overcome. The traditional view of poverty is now outdated and the modern experience of poverty is complex. For many, work no longer provides a route out of poverty.

Poverty is not a static condition. Resources rise and fall as do needs and people's ability to meet them. Individuals can move in and out of poverty over time – so it may be temporary, recurrent or persistent over longer periods. Many of those who gave information to the Poverty Commission described themselves as 'close to poverty' and described a fear of falling back into poverty. This aspect of living with or close to poverty seemed to the Commissioners to be one of the most important things to recognise if we are to have a sustainable plan to support people and communities to have long term solutions.

Though the risk of experiencing poverty exists for many more than are in poverty at any one point in time, some people and groups are far more vulnerable to poverty than others. Thinking about poverty in a dynamic way gives us a focus on preventing poverty as well as seeking routes out of it.

There is no agreed or standard definition of poverty and so considering different definitions is useful in building a comprehensive understanding of the factors and influences of poverty on people's lives.

As a Commission we used the following definitions of poverty and equality to inform and guide our work.

European Commission, Joint Report on Social Inclusion 2004

*'People are said to be living in poverty if their income and resources are so inadequate as to preclude them from having a standard of living acceptable in the society in which they live. Because of their poverty they may experience multiple disadvantage through unemployment, low income, poor housing, inadequate health care and barriers to lifelong learning, culture, sport and recreation. They are often excluded and marginalised from participating in activities (economic, social and cultural) that are the norm for other people and their access to fundamental rights may be restricted'.*

Definition of Equality, The Final Report of the Equalities Review, 2007

*'An equal society protects and promotes equal, real freedom and substantive opportunity to live in the ways people value and would choose, so that everyone can flourish. An equal society recognises people's different needs, situations and goals and removes the barriers that limit what people can do and be.'*

(Equalities Review 2007) This definition captures three aspects of equality:

**Opportunity** - whether everyone really has the same chance to reach their potential

**Agency** - what degree of choice and control an individual has in achieving the valued activity

**Process** – whether discrimination (or the way we do things) causes or contributes to a particular inequality.

## The UK Poverty Line

Most official definitions of poverty use relative income to measure who is in poverty; an income threshold is set and those who fall below it are seen to be 'in poverty'.

The key UK government measures take 60 per cent of median income as the poverty line. Each year the UK government undertakes a Households Below Average Income survey to identify the number of low income households.



## Before and after housing costs

Measuring income before housing costs means that we treat spending on things such as rent and mortgage interest in the same way as we do spending on food or heating. Increased income means that you're better off, and if you choose to spend the increase on housing then that is reflected in your living standards.

Measuring income after housing costs is a bit different. This measures well-being by the amount that you have left to spend after paying for housing (assuming that housing cost is a necessary unavoidable cost).

## Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2016 identifies small area concentrations of multiple deprivation across Scotland in a consistent manner. This is done by combining data from seven distinct domains or topic areas all of which are considered to be important contributors to deprivation levels. You can find out more about SIMD in Section 7 of this report on via <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD>

## Poverty, Gender and Child Poverty

National research tells us that women are at greater risk of poverty than men. Factors including the gender pay gap and greater responsibilities for care within the home are deep rooted causes of poverty for women. Women are also more financially dependent on social security than men and also women have fewer financial assets and less access to occupational pensions than men. Across the UK 92 per cent of lone parents are women and women make up 95 per cent of lone parents dependent on Income Support. With the impact of current welfare reform measures coming to light we can see that women are at greater risk of deeper and more sustained poverty. This circumstance children experience while they are growing up largely reflect the resources available to their parents or carers. The links between women's poverty and child poverty are widely known. The Commission are concerned that the payment of Universal Credit as a single 'household payment' further reduces women's economic autonomy/independence and places significant pressure on household budgets.

Children who grow up in a low income home have poorer mental health and physical health than those who grow up in more affluent homes. From an early age, children in poverty are more likely to score worse in tests of cognitive, social and behavioural development and living in a low income family greatly increases the likelihood of children leaving school with lower educational attainment.

## Poverty and Disability

In March 2015, the Scottish Government produced a report on 'Severe Poverty' which reported that households that include a disabled adult have a much higher risk of relative poverty than households that do not. Factors including employment levels for disabled people, higher care costs and the impact of welfare reforms are all underlying factors in this. We know from speaking to local people that having a disabled child can also result in parents leaving employment to care for their child, with long term implications for their family income.

## Pensioner Poverty

In recent years the number of pensioners living in poverty has decreased significantly yet we know that many older people have a low standard of living, especially those with ill health or disability and those living alone. Isolation and a decline in traditional social networks can mean many older people experience loneliness, compounded by a lack of accessible transport in more rural settings. In addition, some older people are unwilling to claim the state benefits they are entitled to.

Looking to the future there will continue to be a need to reduce pensioner poverty, particularly as the population ages and people live longer. In this context it is important to understand the future impact/implications of low levels of pension savings among the current working age population.

# 3 Key findings

## What did we learn?

Poverty exists in East Lothian. We heard directly from people about how poverty is causing them to worry constantly. We know that poverty is limiting people's opportunities. We know that poverty is not always recognised and fully understood by those who design services. We also recognise that people living in or close to poverty are rightly proud and often slow to disclose or talk about their circumstances. While poverty is real, it is not inevitable and should not be passed down through generations. We need to work together as individuals, communities, public services and businesses to do all we can to tackle it.

In the following section of the report we will share our recommendations and tell you why we have made these recommendations. We will highlight good practice and key levers for change. We have also included quotes from some local people reinforcing the key messages of this report.

**Five key findings to remember when considering poverty IN OUR COUNTY:**

**1,400**

HOUSEHOLDS  
ACCESS COUNCIL  
HOMELESSNESS  
SERVICES EVERY YEAR

UP TO **30%**

OF EAST LOTHIAN  
CHILDREN  
LIVE IN  
POVERTY

**15,000**

HOUSEHOLDS ARE IN  
FUEL POVERTY

**1,145**

HOUSEHOLDS  
IN 2016 CLAIMED  
CRISIS GRANTS

**1,354**

FOOD PARCELS  
DISTRIBUTED IN 2016  
BY EAST LOTHIAN  
**FOODBANK**  
FEEDING 2806 PEOPLE

# 4 Recommendations

As Commissioners we have made a number of recommendations that we feel are important ways in which poverty and inequality can be tackled. Most of our recommendations are aimed at the Council and its Community Planning Partners through the East Lothian Partnership. We believe local actions and the empowerment of local communities are really important in tackling poverty. We have also included recommendations for specific agencies and some with a community focus.

We know that Scottish and UK Governments hold key drivers of change and we call on them through a series of 'national asks' to use their powers to promote public wellbeing and focus on reducing inequality and fostering opportunities for everyone in society.

**Pages 12-21 cover our recommendations made on:**

- Having a home
- Financial inclusion
- Secure and protected
- Educated
- Working your way out of poverty
- Identity: Understood and valued
- Healthy and well
- Connected to the community
- Empowered and responsible

When I was very ill, subsisting on benefits and unable to afford more than a very basic diet, I actually couldn't have afforded the travel from North Berwick to the nearest food bank.

Individual, North Berwick

## 4.1 Having a home

### ELPC recommend:

- 1.1 Increase supply and range of affordable housing options, increasing the supply of socially rented stock in particular.
- 1.2 Increase supply of appropriate temporary accommodation to reduce the reliance on B&Bs and provide improved long term outcomes for those who find themselves homeless.
- 1.3 Increase awareness and uptake of housing benefit and other related benefits to those living in the private rented sector i.e. warm home discounts, council tax reduction and empty homes advice.
- 1.4 Improve the quality of private rented housing and campaign to introduce a minimum standard of energy efficiency in private tenancies.
- 1.5 Exploit the potential of community bulk buying energy and heat exchange initiatives in local communities.
- 1.6 Challenge utility companies on the high cost of prepayment tariffs.
- 1.7 Increase 'life skills' as part of basic education in school including cookery and understanding fuel systems e.g. how to take meter readings.
- 1.8 Continue the Tenancy Support Service and the Pre-tenancy Support offered by Housing services as part of their preventative approach which are increasingly important during a time of significant changes to benefits.
- 1.9 East Lothian Council should consider the impact of current welfare reforms on their housing allocations policy and communicate the policy widely as part of their work with tenants.
- 1.10 Ensure that all areas of East Lothian continue to be supported in tenant participation activity, giving residents a range of opportunities for local involvement that suit them.
- 1.11 Consider services for tenants that will reduce bills (e.g., cheaper preferred energy supplier such as Our Power).

### Why this is important

- East Lothian has 12% of residents living in the private rented sector which has become a long term option for many people. Those living in this sector typically face higher rents than those in social housing and are much less likely to claim housing benefit.
- The House Condition Survey suggests that those living in the private rented sector often face poorer house conditions, higher inflation of rental prices and insecurity of tenure, all contributing to a higher vulnerability to poverty.
- In April 2016, 3,900 households were on the waiting list for housing with an average of 400 properties becoming available each year.
- Demand for homelessness services remains at around 1,600 clients per year. Since legislative change in 2012, homelessness services have been under pressure to provide temporary accommodation and still rely on B&B to meet demand. There are significant health and other negative outcomes arising from being homeless, especially in relation to long term homelessness.
- East Lothian Council rent levels are the second lowest in Scotland. Despite this, the Council faces a high level of rent arrears and changes to the benefit system are already affecting the ability of tenants to pay their rent.
- Local people expressed concern about the high cost of utilities. Many cited the choice between eating or heating their homes. For many people on low incomes, shopping locally is the only option available because of the cost, availability and practicality of public transport, particularly in more outlying areas of the county. In reality this means higher food prices and a lack of variety and choice of fresh produce. For many, while they could see the benefit of services such as home delivery from supermarkets, these were not available to them due to a lack of digital access or access to a credit/debit card.
- In East Lothian, 15,000 households suffer from fuel poverty. Some rural areas have particularly high instances of fuel poverty (due to the lack of gas network, lower incomes and harder to treat properties) but the major issues of fuel poverty are in towns where there is a high correlation with instances of multiple deprivation. Prepayment meters are popular for those on low incomes as they can help people avoid getting into debt, although tariffs are often higher.

## 4.2 Financial inclusion

### ELPC recommend:

- 2.1. East Lothian Partnership to consider a range of ways to increase access to affordable credit in the area and work to establish pan-Lothian partnerships if appropriate (considering both credit union models and community development finance institutions). Any model developed should be designed to meet the needs and preferences of those it is aimed at.
- 2.2. Financial education should be included in the curriculum from an early age to ensure that young people have the financial capability they need for the future.
- 2.3. Work with local employers to increase their partnerships with credit unions to make savings and repaying loans via payroll deduction a standard workplace benefit.
- 2.4. Review current practice of income maximisation checks through statutory services including health, education and social work services and raise awareness of advice services available in the community.
- 2.5. Enhance the impact of existing advice services by improved targeting of those who are most vulnerable. Develop an improved referral system between all services working in East Lothian to encourage closer working and early intervention. This should include consideration of how local advice agencies can provide advice on sources of suitable and most appropriate sources of credit alongside other financial inclusion issues (where possible to do so).

### Why this is important

- There is high demand for credit services and they have a diverse user profile. However, young people, people on low incomes, those living in more deprived areas, women, social housing tenants and single parents are disproportionately represented among users of non mainstream lenders such as payday lenders (both online and retail), home credit lending and pawn broking. Nationally, 37 per cent of users of online payday loan customers were defined as vulnerable compared to 77 per cent of home credit customers.
- Figures from the local Citizens Advice Bureau show that 34.7 per cent of all enquiries relate to debt and 28.6 per cent relate to benefits. In 2015/16 average debts per client were £18,744 for Haddington CAB and £13,069 for Musselburgh with credit card debt totalling just under £1,000,000.
- In East Lothian the awareness of and membership of the Credit Union remains low. Capital Credit Union has no physical presence in the community.
- Research from the Money Advice Service shows that many people form their views on money by the age of seven and also that support at times of significant change are crucially important, e.g. birth of a baby, family breakdown, etc.

**There are some jobs in East Lothian but not many that you would want to do for a long time.**

Young Person, Whitecraig

## 4.3 Secure and protected

### ELPC recommend:

- 3.1 The DWP consider the development of a rural model of service delivery which meets the needs of individuals in rural or remote areas.
- 3.2 The DWP, UK and Scottish Governments should consider the implications of the current administration of universal credit and other benefit changes on vulnerable people and make adjustments to ensure a fairer and more just approach. East Lothian is in a position to advise on the impact of full roll-out based on recent experiences.
- 3.3 The DWP should implement a clear policy for benefits sanctions ensuring people have the information and support needed to avoid sanctions, challenge sanction decisions and apply for DWP Hardship Payments if they are sanctioned.
- 3.4 Explore the potential for doctors to undertake assessments for disabled people for the purposes of their benefit claim. The information needed for appeals should be provided free of charge to those who need it; the current practice of GPs charging for assessments needs to change.

### Why this is important

- East Lothian Council was one of the first local authority areas to roll out Universal Credit Full Service. While the full implications of universal credit are still emerging, the Commission heard extensively from local practitioners and local residents about the impact of universal credit and the administrative processes that support it.
- We believe that sanctions are contributing to poverty in East Lothian.

The following are the main concerns raised:

- Digital application process is long and complicated requiring a high level of digital skill and confidence to complete applications.
- Lengthy queues for DWP telephone based advice and support and lengthy time for form completion – often meaning people are unable to hold the phone for the length of time required.
- Long delays in payments being made - up to eight weeks for some of those we spoke to as part of our work. This results in individuals falling into arrears for rent, council tax, utilities and other services which has further negative implications. In some cases, bank charges have also been incurred further increasing distress for individuals and families.
- Universal credit is paid monthly in a single payment. This requires families to plan on a monthly basis which is a significant change and can be challenging for some. Practitioners have also raised concerns about payments being made to one member of the family and the potential for financial abuse or control.
- The cost of travelling to the job centre is a significant burden for those living in more outlying parts of the county e.g. Dunbar and North Berwick.
- Local support services are struggling to provide appropriate support to people to make their claims successfully, often requiring over one and a half hours to complete an initial application for universal credit.
- Personal Independence Payments now require mandatory reassessment which is completed by third parties. These are the cause of stress and anxiety for many vulnerable people and their carers. The cost of travelling to assessment appointments can also be prohibitive.

**There's no compassion - just numbers. You just want people to be cared for, listened to and have the basics. It's all about regulations and forms which adds to the stress.**

Young Person, Whitecraig



## One young mum's experience of Universal Credit

*"My baby was born 7 weeks prematurely. I hadn't got anything ready for him really – I was waiting til the last minute and trying to save my money. I think the reason he was early was because I was given anti-biotics. My baby was in the neo natal ward in Edinburgh for a few weeks. I found it really difficult to visit him as I was on benefits and didn't have the money for the bus trips every day to the hospital as they are expensive. The food at the hospital is very expensive too. My mum had to help me out.*

*I rang the DWP about my tax credits but got bad advice from the advice line. They told me I need to fill out some forms and it took two weeks for them to get to me. It was another two weeks before the DWP got back to me and then I was told that I actually needed to move onto Universal Credit. By that time it was four weeks since my last benefit payment.*

*I was told I needed to fill out my Universal Credit online. I'm not great with computers and so my friend tried to help me with my application. She couldn't help me so I asked my mum. My mum is really good with computers but she struggled too. She had to get help to download the app you need. You needed to send ID over email and this was tricky trying to scan it and now you need to keep track of the journals.*

*While the DWP were processing this I got nothing for 5 weeks. Because I had no tax credits I got no milk tokens. I went to the CAB for advice and they told me to apply for a welfare fund payment. I was given £110 for the week and then couldn't apply again for 28 days. I got a Foodbank parcel but it was full of tinned peaches and not much else. They don't do baby milk or nappies. I got a benefit advance but you need to pack this back.*

*When I eventually got my money it was about 5/6 weeks later. I had missed direct debit payments and so had to pay bank charges and also to pay back my benefit advance so I had very little left for the coming month.*

*It's hard to even think about what the next few weeks will be like. I keep getting letters about rent and council tax arrears but I just put them in the drawer. I need to feed my baby before I pay my rent. I live in a one bed flat and would like to apply for an exchange. People with rent arrears are not allowed to apply for an exchange.*

*The whole situation has made me really depressed and low. I feel like I can't enjoy my baby because of it."*

## 4.4 Educated

### ELPC recommend:

- 4.1. East Lothian Education Authority should develop a whole school approach to raising awareness of the impact of poverty on education and what education can do to mitigate the cycle of poverty.
- 4.2. East Lothian Education Authority should develop clear policies to reduce inequality in schools. The City of Edinburgh Council guide to poverty provides a good example of key steps to take.
- 4.3. Learn from Pinkie St Peter's and Prestonpans Infants current provision of activities and food during the summer holidays and expand efforts to address holiday hunger and morning hunger for children and young people to improve their educational attainment and overall wellbeing.
- 4.4. Schools should consider how they can use their existing digital resources to support wider engagement and development of digital skills for families.

### Top ten for schools:

- 1 Talk about poverty regularly in school – make it part of the school ethos to reduce inequality in every way possible. Talk about it with all parents and encourage them to support this way of working – show them how it benefits everybody and that they have a role to play too.
- 2 Don't have a deficit view of the community. Find out what the local issues are for the children in your school. Use this information to tackle particular issues for the children and build on community strengths e.g. is there a local business that would sponsor/provide extra PE kit for your school?
- 3 Keep the same uniform between infant school and primary school. Don't change the colour of the jumper! Let parents buy non branded uniform and develop other innovative ways to build school identity e.g. button on badges.
- 4 Make a school rule about Christmas and end of term gifts for teachers: only accept thank you notes – no gifts. Talk to parents about why you are doing this highlighting the peer pressure parents find themselves under to fund gifts, parties, birthday and Christmas gifts.
- 5 Hunger: think of innovative ways to offer children nutritious snacks in the morning or late afternoon to tackle hunger and improve concentration and learning.
- 6 Be clear with parents about the resources that all children are entitled to for free e.g. pens/ paper/ jotters etc.
- 7 Hold regular school uniform swaps/ exchange days as part of school open days, eco days etc, making it a normal part of school business. Link with local dance or sports clubs to see if you can include sports equipment/ clothes as part of these.
- 8 School trips: think local first! Make it about building friendships and learning from the outdoors rather than expensive entrance fees. Give parents as much notice as possible.
- 9 Think digital: can everyone access the technology they need to complete homework etc. How can you use resources to encourage families to build their skills too?
- 10 Have a box of communal stationery in the classroom that all children can access if they need it.



## 4.5 Employment and economy

### ELPC recommend:

- 5.1. East Lothian should work to attract good quality jobs into the area, providing opportunities for career progression and in-work training to ensure longer term benefit for both employees and the local economy.
- 5.2. East Lothian should become a 'Living Wage' local authority area and East Lothian public sector partners should lead this process by achieving Scottish Living Wage Accreditation.
- 5.3. Develop a range of options for childcare for working parents and carers including parent-led childcare opportunities, social enterprises and other models which support parents to return to or sustain employment/education and which are flexible to meet the needs of families in urban and rural communities.
- 5.4. Consider the current processes used to administer free childcare hour entitlement to ensure it works for parents who want to return to work or education.
- 5.5. East Lothian Works should develop a focused project to improve skills, confidence and opportunities for parents in receipt of Priority 2 funding to allow them to return to work or education and lead to better long term outcomes for their young families.
- 5.6. The Commission recognises the importance of 'Developing the Young Workforce' recommendations. East Lothian Works should work more closely with East Lothian Education Authority and facilitate closer engagement between schools and the local business community, building on examples from the relationship between Knox Academy and Canon.
- 5.7. East Lothian Works should work with the business community and other partners to provide more support for skills development, focusing on those further from the labour market, e.g., those with mental health issues.
- 5.8. East Lothian Council should consider the range of adult learning opportunities available in the area to ensure that they incorporate the right provision to help people develop and expand their skills.
- 5.9. Continue to support volunteering opportunities as a key way in which to build skills and networks for mutual benefit between communities and individuals.

### Why this is important

- The old premise that a job was the best way out of poverty is no longer entirely true. Many people who are in work are still struggling to make ends meet. They may be earning slightly higher wages than minimum standards for benefits and therefore receive no additional help.
- Job insecurity, zero hour contracts, unsocial hours, poor working conditions and seasonality are all factors contributing to in-work poverty or a cycle in and out of poverty for local people, sometimes described as a 'revolving door'. Employers often invest little in training and staff development, trapping people at low level jobs.
- There is a need to upgrade the skills of those already in employment to ensure that employment continues to provide for a better standard of living. Literacy and numeracy and personal development opportunities are needed alongside other provision – particularly for those with multiple barriers to employment.
- Childcare remains a barrier to many people seeking to return to employment or education. Lack of access to registered childcare, high cost and administrative procedures pose barriers that result in people not accepting jobs or not returning to training or education.
- Transport is also a barrier for local people accessing employment, training and educational opportunities in neighbouring authorities. High fares and infrequent services make it difficult or impossible to travel to these.
- There is a strong tradition of volunteering in East Lothian with a wide range of opportunities available in the community. This is being further developed through the recently launched Volunteering Strategy.

## 4.6 Identity: Valued and understood

### ELPC recommend:

- 6.1 Sign up to the Poverty Alliance 'Stick your Labels' Campaign and commit to a stigma-free culture and organisational practice. The East Lothian Partnership should send a clear message that stigmatising poverty is unacceptable in every aspect of the work delivered by public sector services and employees.
- 6.2 Develop relevant poverty awareness and sensitivity training for all those working in service design and delivery and those involved in making funding decisions at local community level.
- 6.3 Include 'poverty attitude' questions within Citizen's Panel and other social attitude surveys to measure any changes in the perceptions of local people.
- 6.4 Work with local media to promote the work of the Poverty Commission as a catalyst for change towards a more positive and empathetic reflection of poverty in local media.
- 6.5 East Lothian Partnership and its partners should continue to use the Integrated Impact Assessment processes as a tool to understand the impact of decisions in relation to poverty.

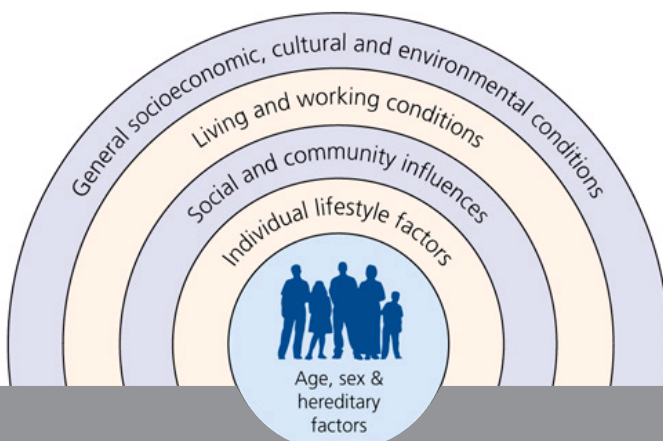
### Why this is important

- The highest number of comments made to the Commission was about the stigma of poverty. The impact of poverty on the self-esteem and mental health of people cannot be over estimated.
- The commissioners heard from and about local practitioners and volunteers who are doing incredible work to tackle poverty and making a real, positive difference in peoples lives. Taking time with people and approaching their work with humanity is making an impact to decrease the stigma of poverty.
- The media portray those living in poverty in a very negative light, often placing the blame for poverty on the individual rather than on wider structural, economic or socially constructed circumstances.
- Recent changes to the benefit system and the administration of the new systems have left many people feeling very vulnerable and stigmatised.
- Certain life events can often be the point at which people fall into poverty. These life events can also be traumatic (e.g., ending of a relationship, or death of a family member) in other ways and therefore people experience multiple areas of stress which compound each other and make it more difficult to seek advice and help. Helping people at an early stage is most likely to reduce the risk of poverty and to prevent it having a long term effect.
- People spoke about services and communities being 'blind to poverty'. If services cannot recognise poverty and understand its impact, then common policies or ways of working can continue to perpetuate poverty and reinforce the barriers that people living in poverty face.
- Many people are faced with difficult choices every day. Talking about your circumstances is difficult and becomes even harder when you are surrounded by people who seem to have access to money and resources more easily. In some cases people are getting into further difficulty trying to 'keep up' with others and/or not wanting their children to miss out.

## 4.7 Healthy and well

### ELPC recommend:

- 7.1 The Commission recognise and value the role played by food banks in tackling crisis food poverty. However, the Commission strongly feel that we need to address the causes of this increased demand and avoid normalising emergency food parcels as a safety net. The Scottish and UK Governments should work towards food justice considering the need for sustainable food production, income levels and education.
- 7.2 Many of the recommendations across this report should contribute to positive health for local communities. Ensuring that we create safe environments, have good quality and accessible services and good working environments (with good pay, conditions and prospects) are all key in reducing health inequalities.
- 7.3 Support those with additional health needs or disabilities through person-centred approaches and investment in modern technology which enable people to maintain their independence, self esteem and established social networks.
- 7.4 Support, develop and co-ordinate current local movements to develop food networks/clubs/projects that increase access to food, cooking skills and facilitate social interactions that are sustainable and reduce reliance on emergency food.
- 7.5 The Council should consider roll out of the *Musselburgh Total Place* approach in other areas, including the concept of the '21st century public servant' which focuses on flexible job roles which can better meet the needs of people and communities.



### Why this is important

- Poverty can be seen as both a cause and effect of health inequality. For many families living in chaotic homes, poverty is nearly always a compounding factor in people's negative life experiences, particularly leading to poor mental health.
- Poverty is causing people to worry about their immediate and longer term future. This stress has an overall negative impact on their mental health and overall wellbeing.
- Health problems accumulate with age and this happens more quickly for those who are experiencing deprivation. East Lothian has an ageing population which places significant pressure on existing services.
- Health is determined by a wide range of elements as shown in this diagram. Although life expectancy in East Lothian is relatively high, there are significant differences between the East and West areas of the county (reflecting areas of most and least deprivation) e.g., men in the least deprived area live up to 4 years longer than those in the most deprived areas.
- Well planned spaces and access to good incomes have a significant impact on health and health inequality.
- Hunger is a reality for many people in East Lothian. The number of people accessing food banks has risen steadily over the past two years. The impact of welfare reform and the rising cost of food are contributing to this demand.
- Communities and individuals who are at risk of food poverty are well-placed to lead their own responses to it and are experts in their own experience. Could community-led responses be a key part of increasing food security: initiatives such as local food hubs, community shops, food co-operatives and community gardens & allotments?
- Two different models of food bank operate in East Lothian. The Basics Bank is a smaller scale food bank based in Musselburgh and Dunbar which supports people to access food and toiletries and also offers support through a cafe environment. The East Lothian Foodbank operates through the Trussell Trust model providing delivered food parcels across East Lothian.

## 4.8 Connected to the community

### ELPC recommend:

- 8.1. The Commission recommends the development of more integrated travel solutions that better meet local need, particularly in more rural areas, e.g., the use of 8-seater taxis.
- 8.2. Consider developing a bus pass scheme, allocating free travel passes to individuals who are returning to work or education or those who require it to support them to improve their life chances, e.g., to access free childcare provision.
- 8.3. Consider the development of local/regional employer supported transport initiatives, e.g. Standard Life operated a bus route for their employees.
- 8.4. Increase access to Wi-Fi in public spaces including maximising the use of existing IT resources across the county.
- 8.5. Develop plans for non-commercial tariff for digital broadband to be available to all social housing tenants and develop access to WiFi and broadband.

### Why this is important

- The Commissioners recognise the high cost of travel across the county – particularly in the east of the county where a return fare to Edinburgh costs over £7. This is almost twice the national minimum wage per hour for someone under 18 or an apprentice and two-thirds of the national minimum wage for those aged 18-20.
- The high cost of transport is compounded by restricted timetables and routes, creating barriers for those wishing to travel to the other parts of the county to access work, education or other essential services, including the job centre.
- People on lower incomes also tend to pay more for transport as they pay a daily rate for travel rather than being able to access discounts for paying monthly or annually via direct debit.
- Internet Access is now seen as essential to enable people to participate in modern life and is a key means of communication. While this issue was raised in relation to access to the benefits system in particular, others raised the issue in terms of increasing social isolation, lack of access to online discounts and inability to apply for jobs as being key factors in digital exclusion. A lack of IT skills was also raised as an issue of concern by practitioners and young people where it is often assumed that people have the IT skills required to access online services.

**People don't understand what circumstances some people are in. A lot of people are poor or very close to it. We need to pay more attention to poverty.**

Young Person, Musselburgh

## 4.9 Empowered and responsible

### ELPC recommend:

- 9.1 The East Lothian Partnership should continue its strong commitment to tackling poverty and inequality as its core ambition within the next Single Outcome Agreement and related organisational plans, e.g., the Council Plan. Organisational leaders need to share and speak about their vision for a fairer and more equal East Lothian gaining full organisational buy-in to achieving real change.
- 9.2 The Partnership needs to consider its response to the Community Empowerment Act to enable further involvement of local communities including the development of Participatory Budgeting and Human Rights based budgeting at the highest level and also at Local Area Partnership level.
- 9.3 Develop a pilot project to monitor poverty using the international human rights standards and track progress against the progressive realisation of rights relating to the adequate standard of living. Aspects of this would include the identification of appropriate tools and training and supporting local people to use human rights based approaches to hold public bodies to account.
- 9.4 East Lothian's Area Partnerships are a significant move towards increasing access to decisions over local services by local people. Further work and support is required to ensure that the voices of those experiencing disadvantage are included and projects at local level are informed by a sound understanding of poverty and inequality.
- 9.5 Consider the development of a 'Poverty Champion' role within each Area Partnership to ensure that enough attention is paid to poverty locally.
- 9.6 The Council and its partners should continue to work toward building community capacity, leadership and resilience and responsibility to enable and empower local communities to take forward initiatives which mobilise community spirit to tackle poverty and inequality and make a positive difference in people's lives.

### Why this is important

- The council and its community planning partners have placed poverty at the heart of its Council Plan and Single Outcome Agreement in recent years. This high level commitment is important to lead and sustain change.
- We consider poverty to be a human rights issue. Living in poverty is more than suffering material deprivation – it is being marginalised, being without power or influence over decisions that affect your life. Being able to realise your rights is important and valuable.
- People spoke to us about the benefit of feeling empowered and the power that this gives people to make positive changes in their lives. This included the importance of strong and supportive communities which allow friendships and circles of support to develop. These factors played a significant role in people feeling supported and able to make positive changes in their lives or work through difficult times.
- We need to encourage our young people to become responsible citizens recognising their moral and social responsibilities to the communities in which they live.





# 5 National comments and asks

As Commissioners our main focus was on local solutions to the experience of poverty in East Lothian. We have made a significant number of recommendations for local change and local action. However, we also need to recognise that, without change at national and UK wide level, poverty and inequality will continue to impact on the lives of local people. In this part of our report we want to include some key comments and recommendations to challenge those with power to consider taking further action to tackle poverty and inequality.

## Our comments and asks:

- We support the Scottish Government's development of a fresh approach to tackling child poverty and will contribute to the consultation on any new proposals arising from the 'Shifting the Curve' report, including the introduction of the socio-economic duty.
- We strongly encourage the Scottish Government to build a social security system that is based on achieving social justice and provide a decent standard of living for all.
- The DWP consider the development of a rural model of service delivery which meets the needs of individuals in rural or remote areas
- THE DWP, UK and Scottish Governments should consider the implications of the current administration of universal credit and other benefit changes on vulnerable people and make adjustments to ensure a fairer and more just approach. East Lothian is in a position to advise on the impact of full roll-out based on recent experiences.
- The DWP should implement a clear policy for benefits sanctions ensuring people have the information and support needed to avoid sanctions, challenge sanction decisions and apply for DWP Hardship Payments if they are sanctioned. The Commission believes that the current sanction regime is contributing to poverty in East Lothian.
- Establish a pioneer pilot to test a redesign of incentives and sanctions and their role in helping people into work.
- Proposals for the replacement for the Money Advice Service must be based on the principle of ensuring access to money advice services by those who need it most.
- Protect the Human Rights Act and work towards enabling a better understanding of human rights and the consideration of poverty as a human rights issue.
- Continue a national focus on reducing inequality and prevention.
- The Scottish Government should investigate the practicality of piloting a citizen's wage.
- The Scottish Government should set a standard minimum amount for the school clothing grant to ensure that all children have the uniform they need to encourage their time in school.

# 6 Our commissioners' reflections on poverty

## Annette Bruton - Chair



I grew up in East Lothian in a mining and farming community. People were close and helped each other out at times of financial crisis. Society has changed greatly since then and whilst we see more signs of greater affluence than I grew up with, I believe the distance between the haves and have nots has widened. East Lothian is beautiful place to live and a tough place to be poor. I've spent my entire professional life working to reduce inequality and give people chances through education. I was therefore delighted and honoured to be asked to support the work of East Lothian Council and its partners who really want to make a difference in reducing poverty, and improving human rights. I commend this report to all those who have both the opportunity and the influence to bring the change asked for by the people of East Lothian.

## Anne Hastie



Some years ago, I remember we tried to set up an Anti-Poverty Forum. However, this was discouraged as "there was no poverty in East Lothian". In my working life with Haddington CAB, I knew that this view was so very wrong and therefore I very much welcomed the establishment of the East Lothian Poverty Commission and the invitation to contribute as a Commissioner. I look forward to our recommendations being taken forward to improve lives and reduce poverty and inequality.

## Morag Alexander



Since I became a trustee of ELCAP in 2010, I've learned about some of the positive initiatives by public sector and voluntary organisations to support vulnerable and marginalised people. But the lived experiences of East Lothian people living in poverty and the stark statistics detailing the incidence of homelessness, poor mental health, rising use of food banks, households in fuel poverty and children living in poverty all emphasise that we need to do much more to eliminate poverty and create a more equal East Lothian. I very much hope the Council, the East Lothian Partnership and the Scottish and UK Governments will act urgently on our recommendations.





### **Rev. Chris Knights**

While poverty may not be as widespread in East Lothian as in other places, my experience working in Musselburgh with the Basics Bank, with people in recovery and with young homeless people showed me that poverty is a reality for too many people in our county. We have to do all that we can both to reduce poverty and the stigma that living in poverty still carries.



### **Clare MacGillivray**

Poverty is not inevitable. Nor is it just about finances. It can be about an inability to fully participate in society because of a lack of opportunity. Through the evidence the Commission has gathered, particularly from people with lived experience, poverty can be debilitating. It can strip confidence, self-worth and passion from individuals, families and communities. Living with poverty can be humiliating because of stigma and discrimination. And yet the people I have met through the Commission are strong, passionate individuals, with a drive to do the best for themselves and their families. An adequate standard of living is an international human right. Each of us has the right to live free of poverty. A collective will to change and empower those with lived experience to claim their rights could really make a shift in the way public authorities work to eradicate poverty. I hope the recommendations of the Commission go some way to making that shift possible.



### **Zoe Van Zwanenberg**

Whilst poverty in East Lothian is not as widespread as in some other areas of Scotland, it is a serious and growing sign of the inequalities in our society. Anyone who is concerned with the future well being of our communities and who values the area we live in must wish to take action to reduce this inequality and to demonstrate the importance of everyone who lives here.

# 7 Measuring poverty

## 1. Deprivation by Ward

The table below shows the distribution of deprivation within each of the Wards in East Lothian. Musselburgh East & Carberry, Fa'side and Preston Seton Gosford account for 25 out of 26 of the 20 percent most deprived datazones in East Lothian. On the other hand, 8 of North Berwick Coastal's 18 datazones are among the 20 percent least deprived.

Ward (number of datazones)	Datazones most deprived 20%	Datazones most deprived 50%	Datazones least deprived 50%	Datazones least deprived 20%
	(1-26)	(1-66)	(67-132)	(106-132)
Dunbar & East Linton (17)	0	3	14	3
Fa'side (24)	8	15	9	2
Haddington & Lammermuir (15)	1	8	7	2
Musselburgh East & Carberry (19)	9	16	3	2
Musselburgh West (15)	0	7	8	3
North Berwick Coastal (18)	0	3	15	8
Preston Seton Gosford (24)	8	14	10	7

Table 1: SIMD top and bottom deciles by multimember ward (SIMD 2016).

## Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD 2016)

More detailed information about poverty in East Lothian can be found in 'East Lothian by Numbers' and the Ward Profiles which you can view online at [www.east-lothian.gov.uk/info/200135/community\\_planning/1751/east\\_lothian\\_and\\_wards\\_by\\_numbers](http://www.east-lothian.gov.uk/info/200135/community_planning/1751/east_lothian_and_wards_by_numbers)

## 2. Population by deprivation quintile:

2012 ■ 2016 ■

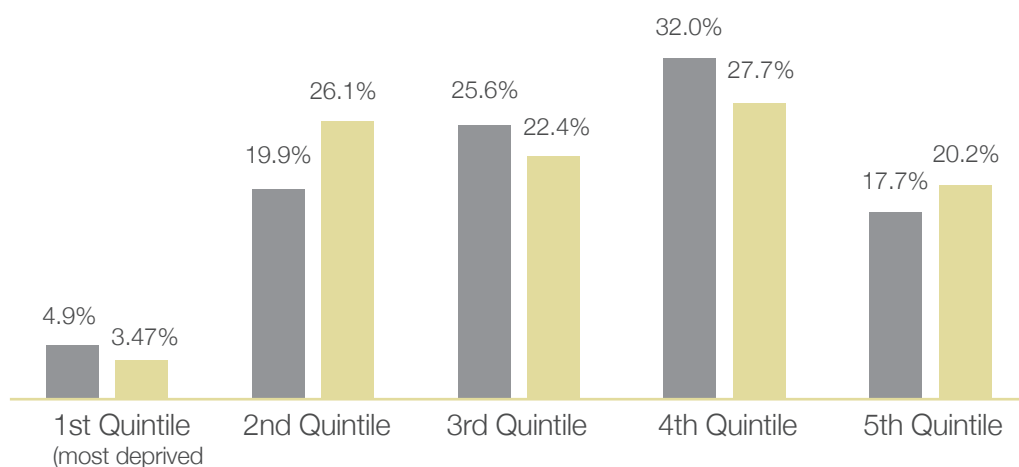


Table 2. Change in population in each quintile for East Lothian and Scotland. Fewer people now reside in the lowest quintile and more in the highest when compared to 2012.

## 3. Fuel poverty

This table shows the percentage of people that are fuel poor (required fuel costs are > than 10 per cent of income) in East Lothian and Scotland. Pensioners and people who live in social housing are more likely to experience fuel poverty.

	Overall	Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Families	Pensioners	Adult Only
East Lothian	33%	30%	40%	*	14%	49%	32%
Scotland	35%	33%	38%	32%	21%	51%	31%

Table 3. Percentage of households that are and are not in fuel poverty in East Lothian and Scotland (SHCS 2012-14).

In Scotland, 10 per cent of households were identified as being in extreme fuel poverty and East Lothian has a figure of 7 per cent. In general fewer people in East Lothian are in extreme fuel poverty than the Scottish average. Pensioners are more likely to experience extreme fuel poverty.

	Overall	Owner-occupied	Social Housing	Private Rented	Families	Pensioners	Adult Only
East Lothian	7%	7%	8%	*	0%	11%	7%
Scotland	10%	10%	7%	10%	4%	15%	9%

Table 3: Percentage of households that are in extreme fuel poverty, in East Lothian and Scotland, by type (SHCS 2012-14).

## 4. Crisis Grants

Crisis grants are part of the Scottish Welfare fund and provide a discretionary amount of money to those who need it quickly – usually because of an unforeseen event or extreme circumstances. Local authorities award grants to eligible applicants depending on circumstance, priority of the application, and the amount of funding left in the budget. These grants do not have to be repaid.

The table below shows the total number of Crisis Grant award applications made to East Lothian Council in 2014/15 and the number of applications accepted. The figures are rounded to the nearest five and so may not total.

Crisis Grant applications are lower in East Lothian than the Scottish average and also lower than most other Local Authorities for this period.

	Jan to Mar 2015	Apr to Jun 2015	Jul to Sep 2015	Oct to Dec 2015
Applications recieved	620	530	575	575
Applications accepted	<b>295</b>	<b>270</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>395</b>
% Applications accepted	47%	51%	53%	67%

Table 4: Crisis Grant award applications to East Lothian Council, 2014/15 (Scottish Government 2016).

## 5. Child Poverty

A report released by campaign group End Child Poverty, produced on their behalf by Loughborough University, highlighted the extent of child poverty across Scotland and the United Kingdom. The report showed that 11.6 per cent of children in East Lothian were living in poverty in Q3 of 2013/14. This figure rose to 18.6 per cent when housing costs were included. An average of 12.9 per cent % and 20.6 percent of children were living in poverty across Scotland's 32 local authority areas before and after housing costs r espectively.

Musselburgh East & Carberry is the ward with the highest levels of child poverty in East Lothian, although Preston Seton Gosford and Fa'Side both have higher levels of child poverty than the East Lothian figure. Figure 2.10 shows the percentage of children living in poverty in East Lothian and in each multimember ward before and after housing costs are included.

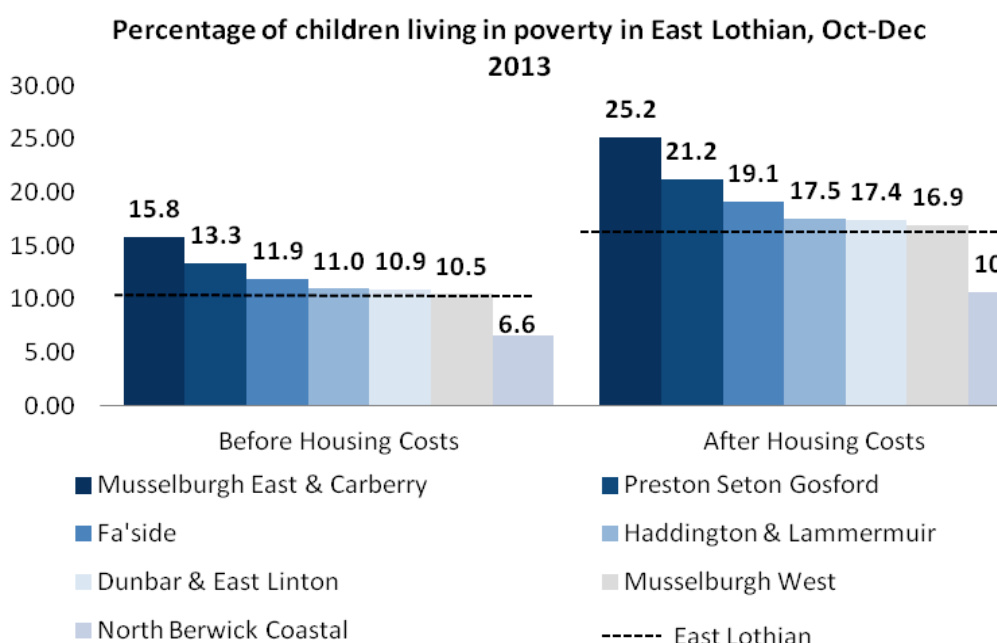


Table 5: Percentage of children living in poverty in East Lothian and multimember wards (End Child Poverty 2014)

## 6. Food banks

Different models of foodbank operate in East Lothian. Feedback from local organisations highlight the importance of emergency food provision and increasing demand for their services.

Data from East Lothian Foodbank shows that emergency food parcels are delivered in all ward areas.

Ward	No. of Vouchers	Adults	Children	Total No. of People
Dunbar & East Linton	59	73	47	120
Fa'side Ward	269	381	335	716
Haddington & Lammermuir	169	200	90	290
Musselburgh East & Carberry	339	426	280	706
Musselburgh West	217	259	71	330
North Berwick Coastal	40	60	21	81
Unknown	39	49	31	80
NFA	22	24	1	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>1354</b>	<b>1733</b>	<b>1073</b>	<b>2806</b>

Table 6: Food bank parcels issued by ward (31/03/15-31/03/2016)

People were great and gave us food but it was always stuff that they didn't want themselves so it was never very healthy but you can't complain.

Dad of three, Prestonpans

# 8 Resources

Some of the reports and papers considered whilst reaching our recommendations:

**A Scotland Without Poverty** by Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2016 <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/scotland-without-poverty>

**Gateway to Affordable Credit** by Carnegie Trust 2016 <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/project/affordable-credit/>

**Living at the Sharp End** Citizens Advice Scotland 2016 <http://www.cas.org.uk/publications/living-sharp-end>

**The Cost of the School Day** Report Child Poverty Action Group <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/cost-school-day-report-and-executive-summary>

**Dignity: Ending Hunger Together in Scotland** - The Report of the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty 2016 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/06/8020>

**Shifting the Curve** Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality: Shifting the curve - a report for the First Minister 2016 <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/01/1984>

East Lothian Partnership Tackling Inequality Framework

East Lothian Partnership Single Outcome Agreement [http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/200135/community\\_planning/1750/the\\_east\\_lothian\\_plan\\_soa\\_201323](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/info/200135/community_planning/1750/the_east_lothian_plan_soa_201323)

East Lothian Council Integrated Impact Assessment Guidance [http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/2309/integrated\\_impact\\_assessment\\_guidance](http://www.eastlothian.gov.uk/downloads/download/2309/integrated_impact_assessment_guidance)

**Creating a Fairer Scotland: A Human Rights Based Approach to Tackling Poverty** by The Scottish Human Rights Commission <http://www.scottishhumanrights.com/media/1266/fairerscotlandsep2015.pdf>

**Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education** (Joseph Rowntree Foundation May 2014) <https://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/default/files/jrf/migrated/files/education-attainment-scotland-summary.pdf>

**Gender and Welfare Reform in Scotland: A Joint Position Paper** by Engender <https://www.engender.org.uk/content/publications/engenderwelfarereport.pdf>

**Severe Poverty In Scotland** (March 2015) Scottish Government <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/03/4673>

**Parents who aren't struggling don't understand the pressure you feel to buy presents for teachers at Christmas etc. Or to feel dread when you see a birthday party invitation knowing that you can't afford a gift. We put each other under too much pressure all the time.**

Parent, Musselburgh

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