

The impact of the cost of living crisis on child health

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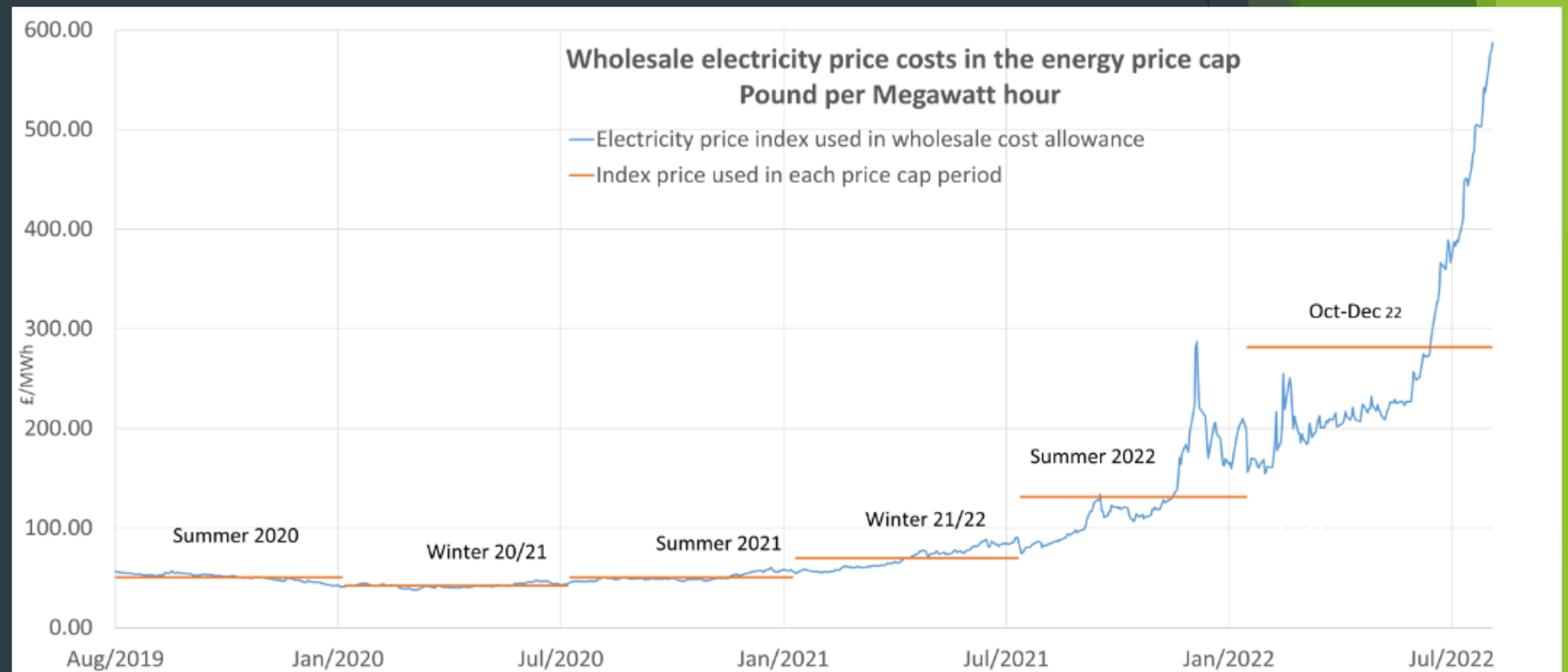
(acknowledgement to the work of Dr Jasmine Fox, GP Trainee)

The Cost of Living Crisis

- ▶ The fast rise in the costs of many essential costs, including food and fuel, most notably since 2021, disproportionate to wage increases.(1)
- ▶ CPIH inflation increased to 14.8 in September 2022 (highest rate on record)
- ▶ Inflation in June 2022 reached 9.4% - highest value in 40 years (2)
- ▶ Due to many factors, including (3):
 - ▶ Covid-19 pandemic
 - ▶ Energy crisis of 2020-21
 - ▶ Russian Invasion of Ukraine 2022
- ▶ Households struggling to afford increasing costs to meet basic needs → humanitarian crisis (4)

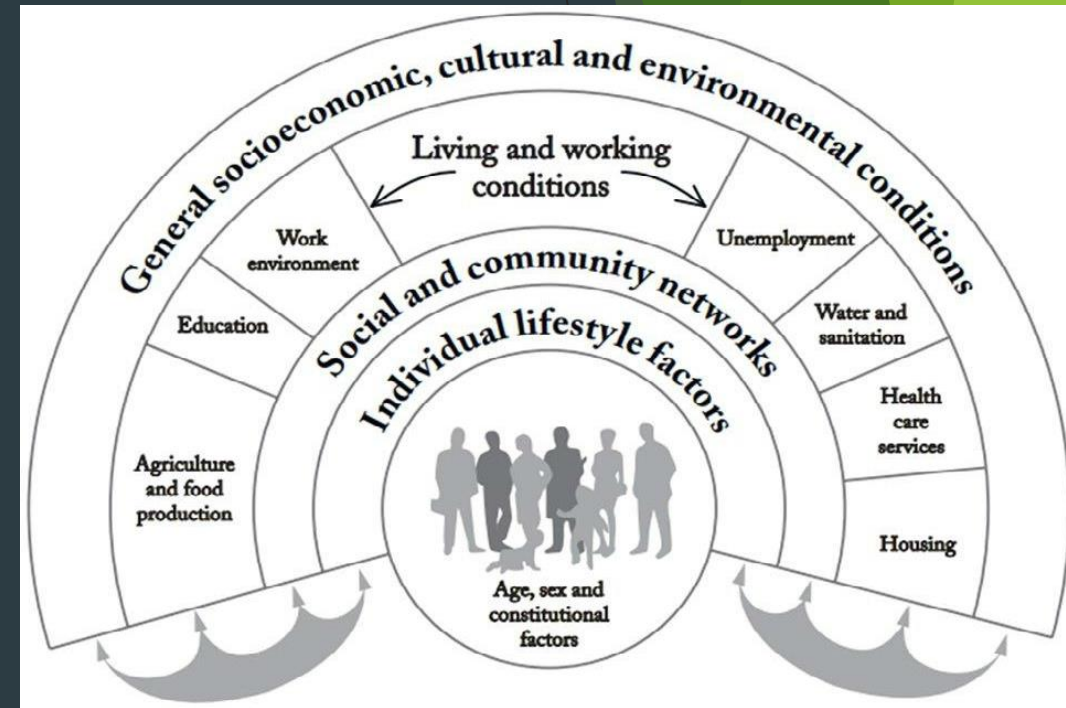
Electricity Prices

- Rises in the cost of living do not match welfare increases, thus worsening health inequalities (10)
- Citizens' Advice describe how high levels of poverty in combination with a high proportion of houses being classed as low energy efficient, makes households in city more vulnerable to rises in energy prices (12)
 - Citizens' Advice already reporting a higher demand for fuel vouchers (12)



Why is the Cost of Living Crisis important to Public Health

- ▶ This crisis is likely to have significant impacts on the wider determinants of health, impacts could include:
 - ▶ Such as living conditions and housing, with fuel poverty leading to people living in cold homes
 - ▶ Healthcare services struggling with increasing demands due to the ill effects of cold housing on peoples' health
 - ▶ Education may be affected with pupils and teachers being more likely to be coming to school hungry, or sleep deprived due to cold, overcrowded housing
- ▶ Those living in more deprived areas are likely to be most affected, further increasing pre-existing health inequalities (6)



Wider Determinants of Health (7)

Impacts at Home

Food Insecurity

- Food insecurity - households in which members 'had smaller meals, skipped meals, been hungry but not eaten, or gone a whole day without eating because they could not afford or access food' (16)
- Increased costs of food shopping bills (10)
- Childrens' Centres noting increased number of people asking for referral to food banks
- Increased number of families receiving food parcels from food banks (17)
- Voluntary Organisations report children are attending school and appointments hungry

Stage of Development	Impacts
In utero and infant	Delayed development - cognitively, behaviourally; faltering growth, reduced immunocompetence, vitamin A deficiency, anaemia
School years	Childhood asthma, iron deficiency → learning impairment, reduced productivity
Adolescence	Behavioural consequences - hyperkinesia, decreased academic performance; mental health risks - suicidal ideation, depression, substance misuse
Adulthood	Increased disease risk - COPD, CVD, cancers, asthma, autoimmune disease. Reduced intellectual performance - impacting work opportunities.

Impacts living in a cold environment

- ▶ Babies and children among those at greatest risk of health problems due to living in a cold home (31), poor respiratory health (eg bronchiolitis and asthma) shapes health & life expectancy (10)
- ▶ A child's early years (from birth to age six) are recognised as being vital for a child's growth, and their development, both physically, as well as socially, emotionally and cognitively (10)
- ▶ When infants live in colder temperatures they need to intake more calories for the same amount of growth as if they were in a warm environment (33)
- ▶ Increased energy prices → unable to meet hygiene needs as cannot afford to run sufficient hot showers and washing machine cycles (34)
- ▶ Rising fuel prices could reduce households available money (for rent and other items eg birthdays):

Initiatives

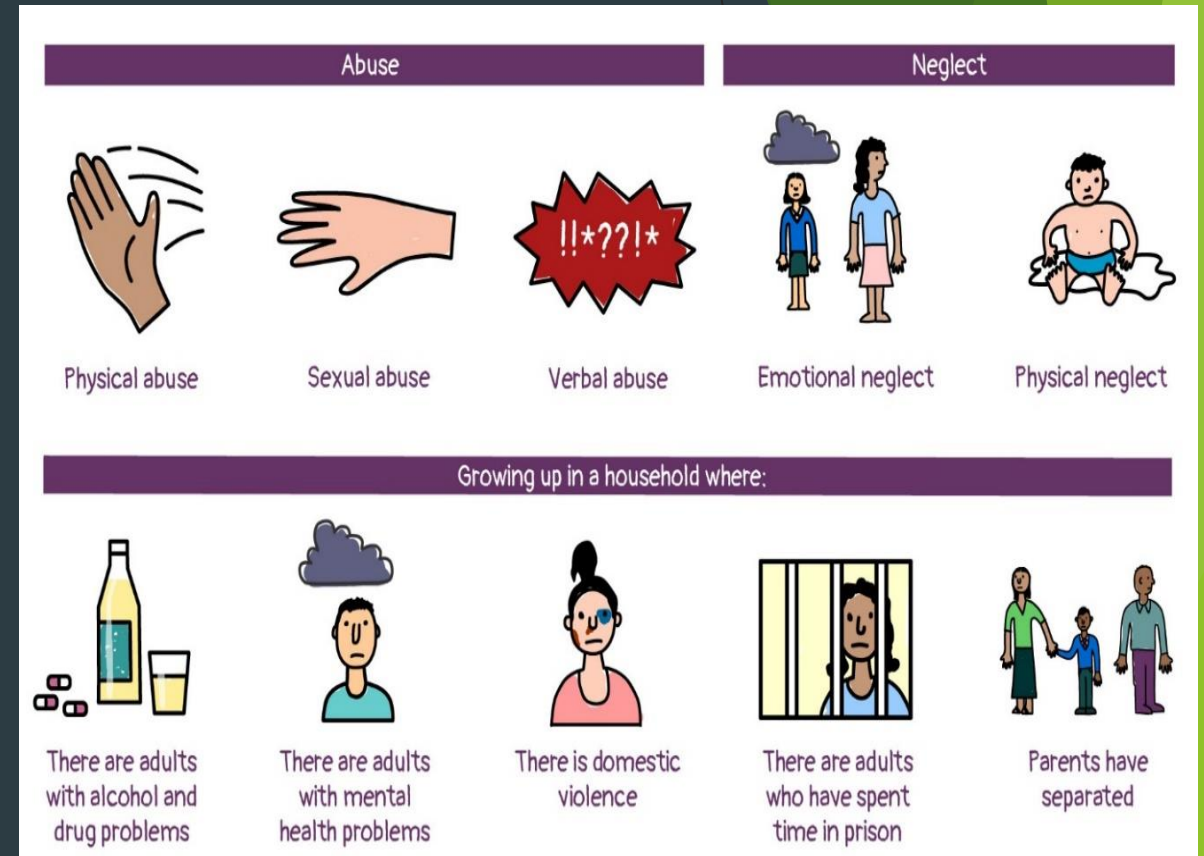
- ▶ Energy Bills Rebate (44)
- ▶ Discretionary Fund (45)
- ▶ Help to Heat Fund (46)
- ▶ Beat the Cold (47)
- ▶ Safe and Warm Home grants (47)
- ▶ Energy Company Obligation Scheme (48)

Impact on Child Mental Health

- ▶ Adolescents living in fuel poverty - 28% living in a cold environment reported to suffer with 4+ negative mental health symptoms (51)
- ▶ Overcrowding and multiple generations living together:
 - ▶ Known negative impact on a child's mental health- (42)
 - ▶ Increased risk of ACEs including child abuse (52)
- ▶ Unable to afford sufficient showers or washing machine cycles → going to school unclean/ in unclean clothing → stigma, bullying, and social isolation (35)
- ▶ Unable to afford children attending sports clubs or going to extra-curricular activities(53) → affecting child's wellbeing- unable to attain activities for five ways to wellbeing (54)
- ▶ Changes Charity noted:
 - ▶ Children are overhearing parents' / guardians' concerns regarding financial situation → increasing their anxiety
 - ▶ Parents can't afford travel to children's mental health appointments

ACEs

- ▶ A known association with child poverty (42)
- ▶ Examples (42):
 - ▶ Direct - abuse, neglect
 - ▶ Indirect - parental drug or alcohol misuse, exposure to domestic violence, parental mental health issues
- ▶ Such stress inducing environments can (57):
 - ▶ Mould a child's brain, affecting their physiological response to stress and resilience to cope with adversity throughout their life
 - ▶ Increased likelihood developing lifelong hyper-responsiveness to stress, increasing the risk of mental health conditions, such as anxiety



Increased Poverty → Increased Infant Mortality

- ▶ Food insecurity and poor maternal nutrition → poor foetal health outcomes (64)
- ▶ Increased maternal smoking (65)
- ▶ Maternal smoking and poor maternal nutrition are further correlated, alongside poverty with children being born at a low birth weight: currently at a 3.6% rate in Stoke (2.9%) nationally (66)
- ▶ Reduced breastfeeding rates reduced in areas of deprivation
- ▶ Overcrowded households and co-sleeping → increased risk of SUDI/ SIDS (40)
- ▶ Cold homes → increased susceptibility to infections, such as respiratory infections, including bronchiolitis (10)
- ▶ Unable to afford transport costs to seek healthcare support → missed appointments, delayed diagnosis and treatment (68)

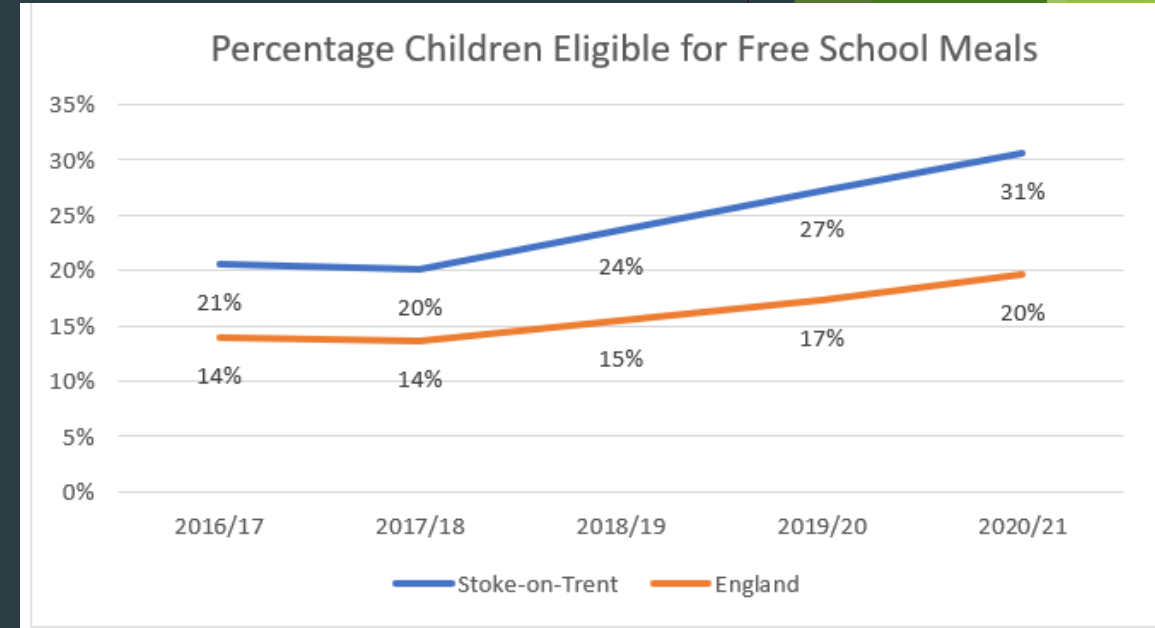
Impacts in the community and at school

Schools

- ▶ Schools also facing tightening budgets due to increased energy and food bills (70)
- ▶ Budgets already under additional strain this year due to salary increases for teachers and support staff increased by government this summer, but funds to come from within school budget (71)
- ▶ National Association of Head Teachers has described the highly likely cuts that will affect children's education, the services the school can offer, and a possible reduction in school workforce (72)
- ▶ Potential identified area at risks include breakfast clubs - families rely on these to provide essential nutrition before school each day, and to allow parents to get to work on time (71)
- ▶ Affordability of school uniforms

Nutrition - free school meals

- ▶ Upward trend for eligibility for free school meals nationally
- ▶ Many in need not receiving free school meals (74)
 - ▶ Strict eligibility criteria - food insecure but not entitled
 - ▶ Associated stigma preventing take up
- ▶ Children's Centres noting wider range of families requiring support - many who are not in receipt of welfare benefits
- ▶ Household Support Fund important to support nutrition of those eligible for free school meals in school holidays (75)
 - ▶ Increasing concern about nutrition of children in and out of school time during this crisis
 - ▶ Food banks reporting not enough for the summer holidays. After initial 2 weeks families again became reliant on food banks.
- ▶ Impacts:
 - ▶ Increased risk of malnutrition and associated poor health outcomes (16)
 - ▶ Risk of hungry children struggling to concentrate at school - negative impact on educational achievement



Educational Achievement

- ▶ It is recognised that those who live in more deprived areas are likely to achieve substantially lower levels of attainment. (76)
- ▶ Cuts at schools due to the crisis are expected to impact funding for student support. Head teachers have discussed their struggles to (71):
 - ▶ Fund Special Needs Co-ordinators
 - ▶ Purchase up to date textbooks
 - ▶ Afford to run schools for the full 5 day week
- ▶ These impacts are likely to impact school performances and affect pupils in more deprived areas more, where parents are unable to supplement for schools' shortcomings, such as purchasing textbooks, widening inequalities
- ▶ The Institute of Health Equity noted that already each year 1.7 million school days are missed across Europe due to infections related to mould and damp (10)
- ▶ Reduced attendance reduces the learning opportunities experienced by the affected pupils which is likely to negatively impact their educational achievement (79)

Travel

- ▶ To school
 - ▶ Rising fuel and public transport prices leaving those not in walking distance of school struggling to afford costs (10), as also discussed with the mental health charity Changes
 - ▶ With transport costs rising it is of concern that we will see these absentee percentages rise, (79)
- ▶ To medical Appointments
 - ▶ A concern raised by the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health - families struggling to get children to medical appointments (68)
- ▶ Extra-curricular activities
 - ▶ Can no longer afford fees of classes or memberships (82)
 - ▶ Reduced activity levels and social isolation (54)
 - ▶ Impact on social and cognitive development (83)
 - ▶ Concerning when physical activity levels among children esp in deprived areas lower than average (84)



Antisocial behaviour

- ▶ Living in poverty is further closely associated with crime, both being an offender and a victim (42)
- ▶ With a rise in poverty and food insecurity more young people may turn to crime to help increase their income, or to steal food to support their nutritional intake (87)
 - ▶ In turn likely to see an increased number of young offenders entering the justice system
- ▶ For those areas with an already higher than national number of first-time entrants to the youth justice system, problems will be compounded (88)

Conclusion

- ▶ The cost of living crisis is likely to have a significant and prolonged impact on the lives and health of children, especially those in the more deprived communities
 - ▶ This is likely to exacerbate pre-existing health inequalities, and could impact on a multigenerational level
- ▶ These impacts exist in the home:
 - ▶ Food insecurity → malnutrition and child obesity → lifelong poor health outcomes
 - ▶ Fuel poverty → cold homes → increased risk of infections; overcrowded homes; impact on mental health
 - ▶ Increased risk of adverse childhood experiences, including child abuse and neglect, exposure to poor parental mental health → lifelong poor health outcomes
 - ▶ All of these impacts are likely to further increased infant and childhood mortality

Conclusion (2)

- ▶ There will further be impacts in the community and at school:
 - ▶ Reduced money available to support pupils' nutrition at school
 - ▶ Impact on educational achievement through reduced income available in school budgets to spend on improving school facilities, support staff, school supplies
 - ▶ Inequal access to educational activities and opportunities, with poorer households having less disposable income to support school trips/ activities
 - ▶ Increased antisocial behaviour
 - ▶ Increased costs of travel impacting:
 - ▶ School attendance → reduced educational achievement and social isolation
 - ▶ Attendance at activity groups/ sports clubs → social isolation, reduced activity levels → wellbeing impact
 - ▶ Attendance at medical appointments → devastating impact on delayed diagnosis and treatment of physical and mental health conditions

Thankyou

To note that this is a condensed slide-set from a piece of work undertaken on behalf of Stoke on Trent City Council. The full slide set and supporting references is available from

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Because growing
up can be hard

Children North East: Poverty Proofing©

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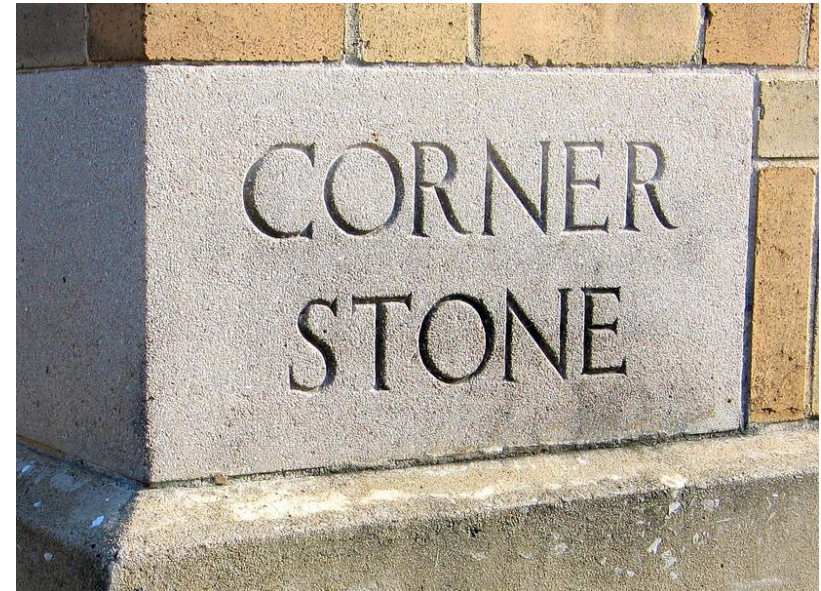
Poverty Proofing©



Poverty Proofing: Principles



Voice
Experience
Lens
Viewpoint
Expression
Agency





Poverty Proofing: Principles



Culture

Expectations

Locality

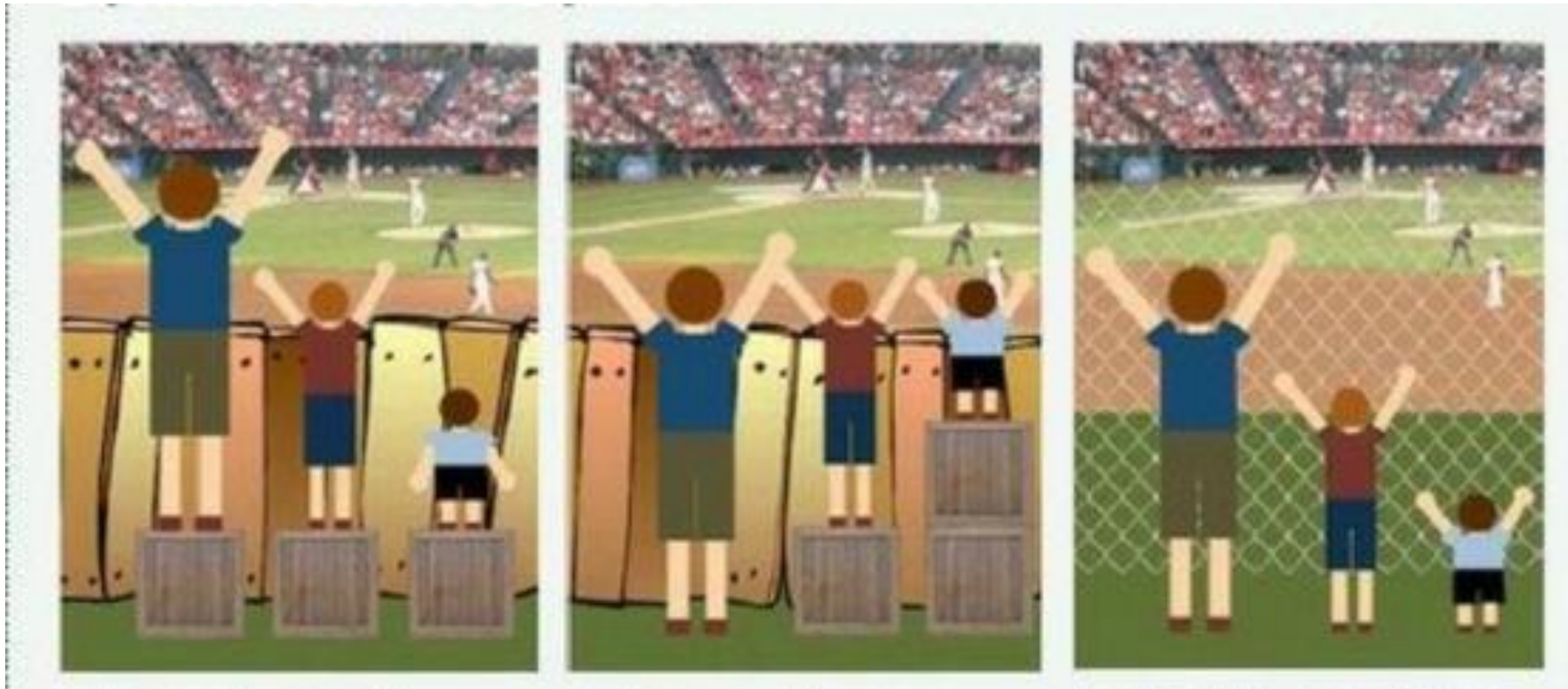
Place

Normality

Geography

History

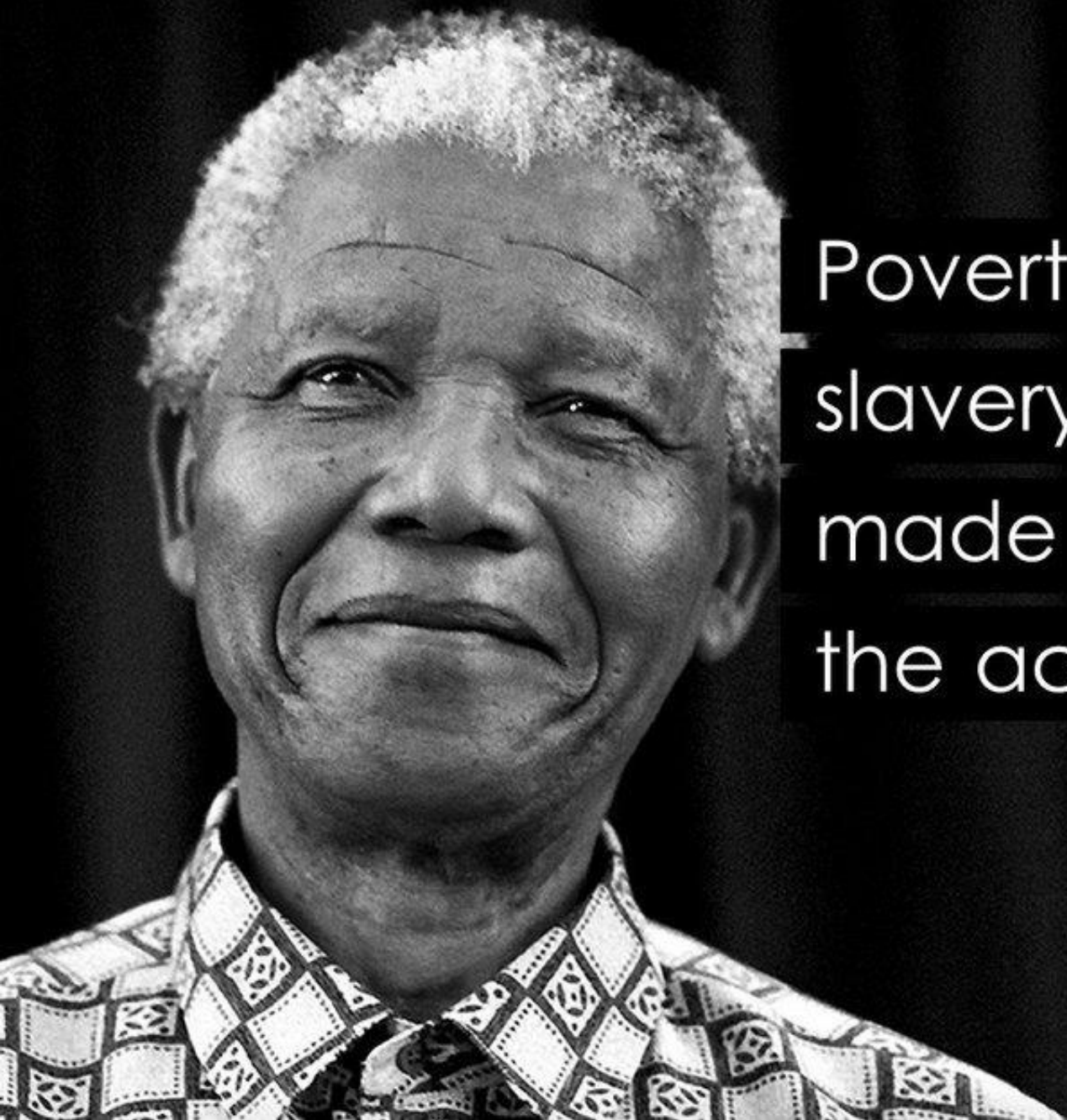
Structural Inequalities



Equality

Equity

Justice



Poverty is not an accident. Like slavery and apartheid, it is man made and can be removed by the actions of human beings.

Nelson Mandela

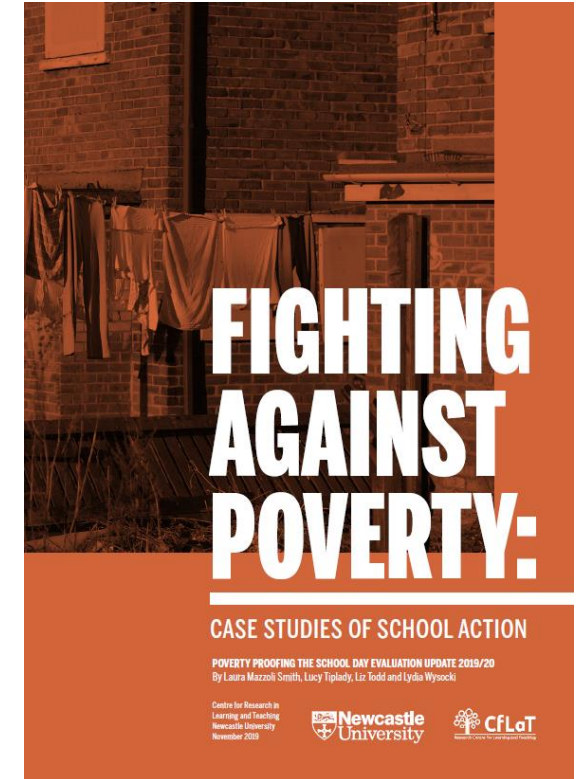
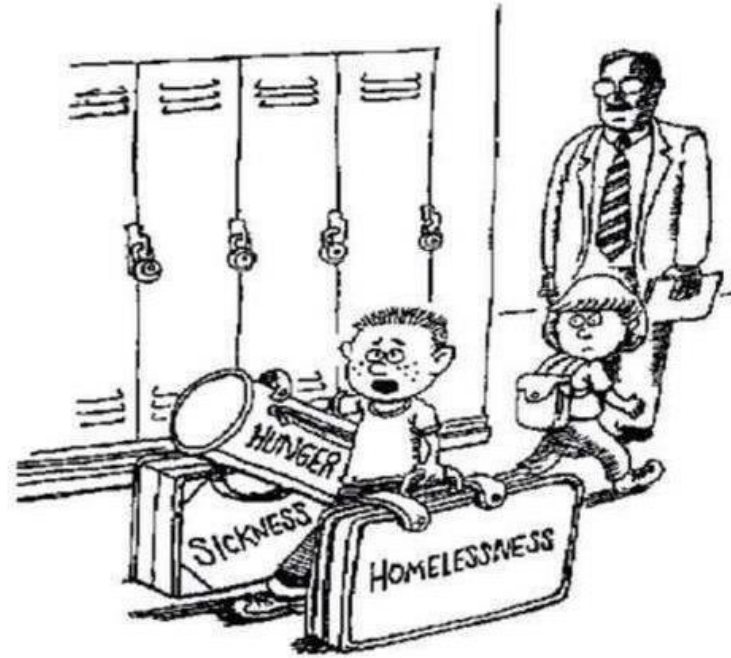
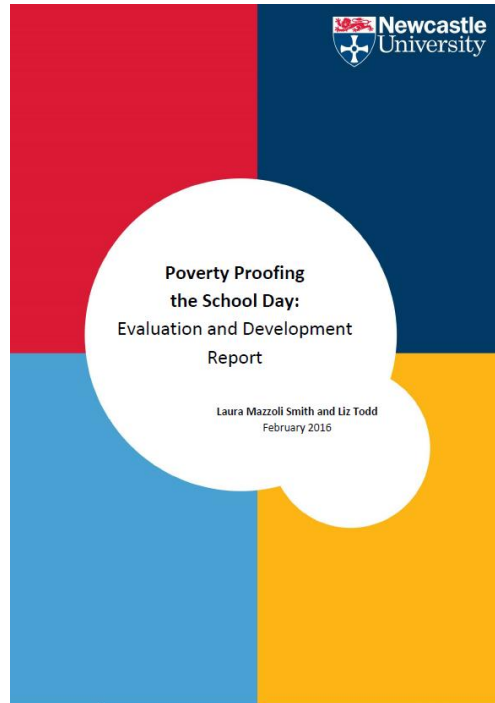


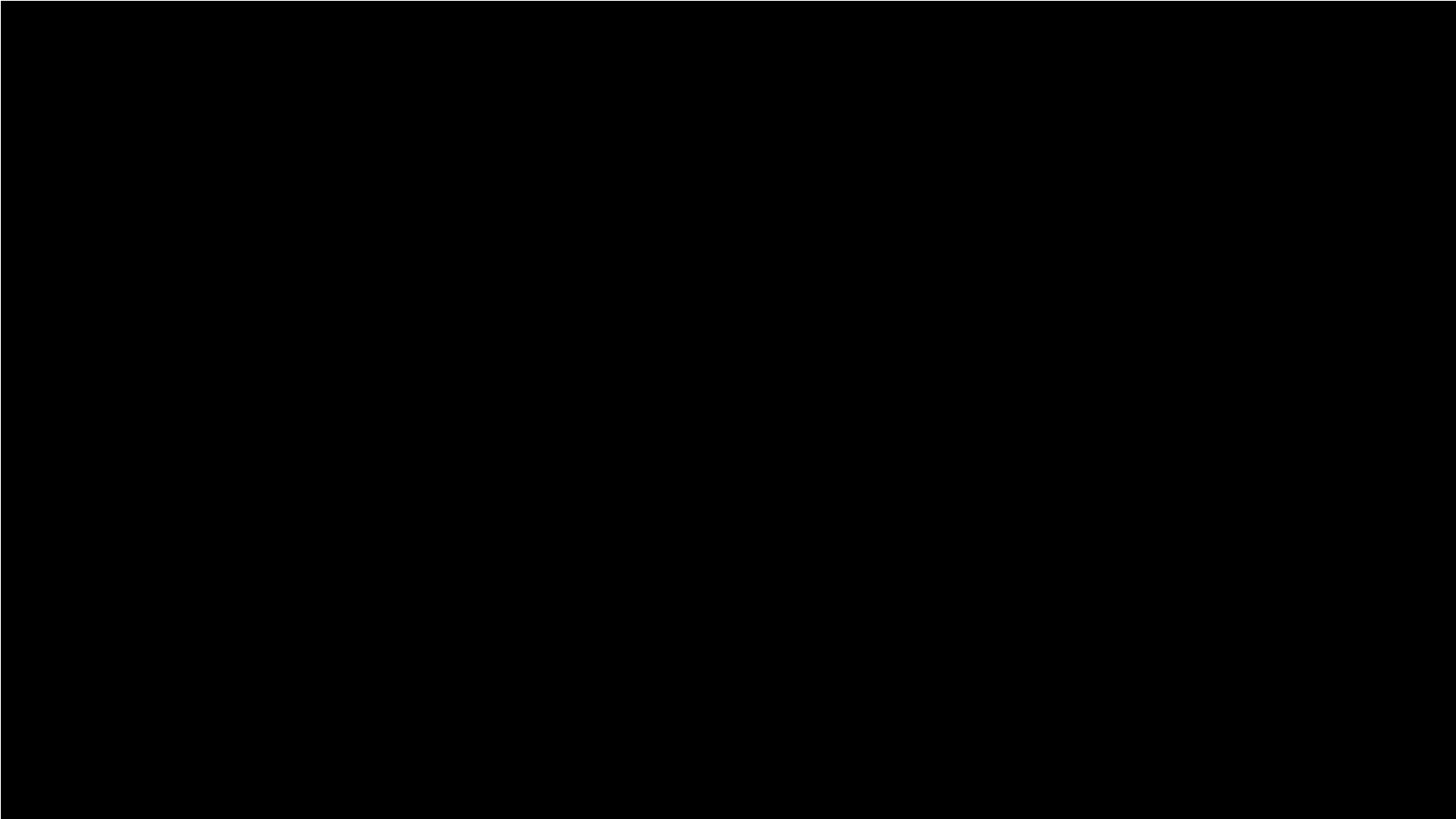


‘No activity or planned activity should identify, exclude, treat differently or make assumptions about those babies, children, young people and families whose household income or resources are lower than others.’

Case Study: Poverty Proofing the School Day

Do you know who is poor in your school?







Case Study: Poverty Proofing Health Settings

In February 2020, Children North East (CNE) was commissioned by the North East and North Cumbria Child Health and Wellbeing Network (NENCCHWN) to consult with families about the key issues that are affecting their access to health services. Work with NHS Health Inequalities Lead Sarah Bordoley.

- Specifically the consultation looked at barriers that those living on low incomes face.

Key findings:

- Transport
- Appointments
- Prescriptions
- Food
- Staff & Setting Awareness
- Long Term Conditions and Disabilities

<https://nhsjoinourjourney.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/NENC-CHWN-Poverty-Proofing-Health-Settings-Report.pdf>



Poverty Proofing Developments



- Health
- Culture and Arts
- Charities
- Early Years
- Employers
- Communities...

Poverty Proofing lens





Poverty Proofing a Community



Because growing
up can be hard

Questions??

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