# APPENDIX 1

# BCC Poverty in Belfast:  Summary

## by

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**Introduction**

In May 2008, Belfast City Council commissioned a study of poverty within the city. The following were set out as the project's key objectives:

- To identify which definition and measure of poverty were most appropriate for the work of the Council;
- To assess the level of poverty in Belfast by comparison with other places;
- To describe the kinds of individuals and households most likely to be poor and their distribution within the city;
- To assess policies and initiatives that have had most impact in alleviating poverty in the UK and Northern Ireland, including a review of best practice in other local authorities;
- To identify ways in which the Council could help eradicate poverty within the city;
- To recommend a set of anti-poverty initiatives the Council could promote in the short and medium term.

The project was commissioned on the assumption that poverty is not just a problem for those on the margins of the economy and society, but an important issue for the whole city. Just as the Council has taken the lead in prioritising economic competitiveness, it recognised that successful, competitive, European cities have addressed internal inequalities as part of their development agendas. Indeed, the evidence has been that the most economically successful cities in Europe have also been amongst the most socially inclusive. The poverty project has thus been part of a more general programme to promote an integrated, urban development model for the 21st Century.

In pursuing this theme, the Council accepts the responsibility for being the city's primary source for civic leadership. Devolution has given a new primacy to political decision making and this is true at district as well as regional level. The Council recognises, however, that it cannot be individually responsible for the elimination of poverty, but must fit within the frameworks of UK and Northern Ireland anti-poverty strategies. It must also cooperate with other key agencies, and indeed individual citizens and communities, within the city. Nevertheless, by signalling the importance

of poverty as an issue in urban development, the Council can catalyse many strands of activity into a coherent, strategic effort.

The timing of this exercise is appropriate. The UK economy is facing a period of economic turbulence combined with rising commodity prices, particularly for food and fuel. There are predictions that the level of unemployment in 2009 will be double that of 2008. While it's difficult to predict the precise implications for Northern Ireland because of the relative size of its public sector, organisations like the Consumer Council have already expressed concern about rising rates of fuel poverty, particularly amongst the elderly. Those currently on low incomes will be further squeezed by rising prices while growing numbers will face the threat of unemployment. In such difficult times, the Council can signal the importance of poverty as an issue and offer leadership on how it might be addressed.

**Measuring Poverty**

The first attempts to measure poverty scientifically focussed on the necessities for life – food, clothing, fuel and shelter. Baskets of goods were identified that would sustain the average family and these were priced to give a weekly income necessary to purchase them. When families had incomes below that level, they were said to be in poverty. The 'basket of goods' approach to measuring poverty continues to be used in some countries, for example, in the United States. When the first study was carried out at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the poverty line was just over 22 shillings per week (£1.10) for a couple with three children. Although the figure appears dramatically low, one study has argued that if fully uprated for inflation, this poverty threshold would be higher than current benefit levels.

In contrast contemporary poverty studies have stressed its relative nature – people are poor when unable to participate in the forms of consumption and activities considered normal in their social context, i.e. live a normal social life. One approach to discovering what is normal social life is to ask large numbers of people what things they regard as necessary and construct a consensus around a set of necessities. The poor are then identified as lacking (usually three or more) necessities for normal social life.

Moreover, the terminology has changed over time. The concept of poverty has been supplemented by others like multiple deprivation and, more recently, social exclusion.

The term multiple deprivation has been increasingly used to describe levels of social need amongst the populations of small areas (wards, super output areas) and as a guide to service allocation. It tends to be measured by using a combination of factors indicative of social need or poverty and generates a single multiple deprivation score. The number of factors employed depends on how the researcher theorises social need. Northern Ireland has seen a wide variety of such studies: three decades ago the Belfast Areas of Need programme utilised 27 factors; the Townsend Index was based on just four; Robson used 18 to describe deprivation at ward level, and; the most recent, the Noble studies, gathered information on more than 50 factors organised into seven domains of deprivation.

Since the 1990s, measures of multiple deprivation have been employed as allocation tools for various programmes. For example, the amounts received by each district partnership under Peace I were calculated on the basis of population share and multiple deprivation. Similarly, the Neighbourhood Renewal Programme has targeted those areas that fall within the most deprived 10 per cent of Northern Ireland's Super Output Areas.

Social Exclusion is the most recent of these terms, having leaped into the middle of the debate in the 1990s without an agreed definition. Some claim that the term was coined by the EU Commission simply because of British and French opposition to a fourth European Poverty Programme – no more than a coded term for poverty. Others focus on the ways in which the very poor are excluded from any level of decision making. Others again emphasise the ways in which the persistent experience of poverty disempowers and demoralises the poor.

At worst, social exclusion conveys no extra meaning than the term poverty. In one study, an interviewee claimed that he was once poor, then became deprived and then socially excluded - no change in actual condition but rich in a new vocabulary! At best, it emphasises the plight of the very poor and emphasises the social and economic processes which result in poverty.

A useful way of distinguishing the three terms was offered in a study of poverty and place in 1999:[1]

- *Poverty is regarded by most authors as an income-related concept – i.e. people in poverty have lower amounts of disposable income than people not in poverty;*

- *Deprivation, in contrast, is a more diffuse concept related to quality of life – deprived people have a reduced access to various features which other people regard as "normal", if not "essential", for a reasonable quality of life...there are no obvious units for quantifying the extent of deprivation;*

- *Social exclusion is defined differently by different authors...Its most basic application is as a vogue term to refer to deprivation/poverty...in its original French derivation, it refers to social participation, social integration and access to power...A third meaning of social exclusion is its emphasis on the collective and spatial dimensions of deprivation...social exclusion is related more to the concept of power (or, to be more precise, the lack of power).*

Since the Council project explicitly focussed on poverty (rather than deprivation or social exclusion), it is recommended here that it employ the poverty measure most widely used in the European Union. This refers to households rather than individuals because the former tend to pool income and plan expenditure collectively.

> **It defines households as being poor when their income is less than 60 per cent of the median (middle) household income of the member state in which they live, after housing costs have been met.**

However, it is recognised that some households consist of a single individual while others represent various combinations of adults and children. If a household, made up of a single individual, has an identical income to one of adults and dependent children, he or she will obviously be less poor. To allow for such variations, a set of 'equivalence scales' are applied to standardise all households and permit appropriate comparison. Accordingly, this definition of poverty tends to employ the phrase, 'equivalised household income'.

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[1] Pringle, D. G. and Walsh, J. (1999), 'Poor People, Poor Places: Conclusion', in Pringle, D.G. Walsh, J. and Hennessy, M. *Poor People, Poor Places,* Oak Tree Press, Dublin, pp. 314-320.

The advantage of using this definition is its widespread use across Europe. It can be understood as a direct income measure that counts the poor in states and regions. It has also been used to understand the dynamics of poverty through focussing on the social characteristics most likely to result in low incomes. It is thus a simple, direct measure that also facilitates analysis of types of poor households wherever they are located. Thus, it avoids a key criticism of multiple deprivation measures - they tend to conceal the fact that poor households can live in areas deemed to be less deprived.

One implication of using this definition is that some households will be described as poor in one EU member state even when they have higher incomes than households in another not defined as poor. Since income distributions vary between the richer and poorer members of the EU, median household incomes occur at different absolute levels – it is not 60 per cent of the same income level right across the EU. In short, the EU measure is a relative definition of poverty.

Until recently, information on the percentage of households with incomes less than 60 per cent of the median was only available at the level of Northern Ireland as a whole or, at best, sub-regions.[2] Comparison tended to be with other regions of the UK and, in 2006, only four other regions had lower rates of poverty than Northern Ireland whose rate was almost identical to the UK as a whole. In September 2008, the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency put estimates of the percentages of households with incomes less than 60 per cent of the median (for a variety of small area geographies) on its Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Information System (NINIS) website. Thus, Belfast can be compared with other district councils and small areas within Belfast can be compared with each other. Importantly, this information can be translated into the geography of City Places, the spatial units developed for the Strategic Neighbourhood Area Programme.

**Who are the Poor and Where do they Live?**
Discovering who are the poor involves looking at the types of households whose incomes are most likely fall below the 60 per cent threshold – this percentage is

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[2] www.poverty.org.uk

described as 'low-income risk' or 'poverty risk'. Three key characteristics have been identified as being primarily associated with low income risk: age; household type, and; household involvement in the labour market:

- The young and the elderly were disproportionately found in households with a high risk of poverty. It has been shown that poverty rates amongst children have increased more than for adults over the last decade. This is because pensioners have declined as a percentage of the poor while families with dependent children have increased;

- Certain types of household were found to have significantly higher poverty risks – particularly households headed by a lone parent with dependent children. Indeed, the higher the number of dependent children in lone parent households, the greater the risk – more than 90 per cent;

- Households whose adults occupy the fringes of the labour market also have a high poverty risk – more than two thirds of households with an unemployed head and dependent children have been found to be in poverty.

Arguably, the generic characteristic associated with poverty is worklessness. Children's poverty risk lies in the fact that they live in households where no adult is employed. Pensioners, whose working lives are behind them, have a high poverty risk when they are entirely dependent on state pensions and associated benefits, although the introduction of Pension Credit has had an impact.

Moreover, examining the characteristics most associated with the Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measures scores gives a similar set – unemployment, economic inactivity, lone parenthood, but also lacking qualifications. Given such findings, it is unsurprising that contemporary anti-poverty strategies have stressed access to employment.

Data on the percentage of households with low incomes suggest that Belfast has an abundance of poverty risk. Recent tables made available by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency suggest that about 30 per cent of all households in Northern are in relative poverty on the income measure. When these are standardised via equivalence scales, the percentage falls to 17 per cent. The comparative figures for

Belfast are 37.9 per cent and 18.9 per cent – both are highest amongst all 26 District Council areas (although Strabane's figure for the later was also 18.9 per cent).

A convention in the Northern Ireland Neighbourhood Renewal programme has been to focus on the most deprived tenth of Super Output Areas (SOAs) – i.e. the most deprived 89 out of a total of 890. Applying this template to relative poverty - almost half (44%) of the 89 SOAs with highest percentages of households in relative poverty are located in Belfast. Undertaking a similar exercise for the Multiple Deprivation Measures indicates that over half of the most deprived ten per cent of SOAs are located in Belfast. Given that the city has less than 20 per cent of the regional population, these figures point to significant concentrations of both poverty and deprivation.

Moreover, poverty and deprivation has been concentrated, historically, in certain parts of the city. For example, it is possible to look at the Belfast wards[3] that have been the ten most deprived in successive     studies of deprivation.

| Townsend 1991 | Robson 1991 | Noble 2001 | Noble 2005 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Ardoyne | Ballymacarett | Ardoyne | Ardoyne |
| Clonard | Clonard | Ballymacarrett | Ballymacarrett |
| Crumlin | Duncairn | Crumlin | Crumlin |
| Duncairn | Falls | Falls | Duncairn |
| Falls | Island | New Lodge | Falls |
| Glencollin | New Lodge | Shankill | New Lodge |
| New Lodge | Shaftesbury | St. Annes | Shankill |
| Shankill | Shankill | The Mount | The Mount |
| St Annes | St Anne's | Upper Springfield | Upper Springfield |
| Upper Springfield | The Mount | Whiterock | Whiterock |
| Whiterock | Woodvale | Woodvale | Woodvale |

The table lists the ten most deprived wards in Belfast in four deprivation studies over a fifteen year period. One was undertaken by a prominent academic, the others were commissioned by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency from units in Manchester and Oxford Universities. Over this period, despite one set of boundary

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[3] It should be noted that the ward boundaries shifted between the 1991 and the 2001 Censuses.

changes and four different methodologies for measuring deprivation, the same wards appear over and over again – two wards appear in all four and six wards appear in three of the studies. If the recent income data in Belfast are similarly ranked, the same wards appear as having the highest percentages of households in relative poverty.

For the current exercise, a set of characteristics most associated with poverty and deprivation were inserted into the City Places geography developed for the Strategic Neighbourhood Area Programme (SNAP). The percentages for each of these characteristics were weighted by the total number affected across the city and the top five City Places were listed: North 2 appeared in the top five seven times out of ten as did West 3; East 2 and North 1 each appeared five times; West 2 appeared three times see Appendix 1).

Thus, different measures and different geographies to plot the distribution of poverty within Belfast demonstrate its concentration in particular places that appear repeatedly in many different studies. Yet, Belfast has seen a host of urban regeneration programmes that have been well resourced, staffed by committed individuals and focused at exactly these places. It is surprising that they have not shifted their trajectories given the high level of historic investment and, indeed, the rapid growth of the regional economy over the past decade. It should be recognised that the population of such places has shifted over time owing to geographical and social mobility. Nevertheless, the reappearance again and again of certain places in poverty and deprivation studies suggests a rethink about anti-poverty strategies.

**Tackling Poverty**

Macro-economic strategy and tax/benefit interventions are carried out at the national level and these have a crucial impact on poverty levels in regions and cities. The major theme of UK anti-poverty interventions has been around the theme of employability. This was developed into a comprehensive programme by the Labour Government post 1997 through the introduction of New Deal, the Minimum Wage and Tax Credits. The goal was to tackle worklessness and guarantee incomes for those in work. The elderly were to be helped by Pension Credits. Recently, there has been considerable criticism of the failure of Labour to achieve its ambitious poverty targets. For example, the Conservative Party has criticised government efforts as

being too centralised, insufficiently flexible and inadequately focused on rebuilding relationships within families and communities. Regional strategies for Northern Ireland have been largely congruent with those in Britain drawing on the same targets and emphasising similar instruments. The challenge for an urban anti-poverty strategy is to find a niche within national and regional frameworks where civic leadership can play a positive role.

In response to the growth of relative poverty rates in the 1980s and 1990s, many local authorities in the UK sought to develop anti-poverty strategies for their areas. It should be recognised, however, that the efficacy of such strategies is dependent on policy developments at national level.

A number of studies have identified seven key areas for local authority anti-poverty effort and the Local Government Anti-Poverty Unit's check-list for local authority anti-poverty strategies highlighted similar themes:

> ***Mainstreaming:*** *Anti-poverty strategies should be the responsibility of the entire organisation and need to be incorporated within existing corporate commitments, rather than operating as an optional, ad hoc, 'bolt-on' to existing commitments and services;*
> ***Partnership working:*** *Effective anti-poverty strategies build upon the experience and expertise of a wide range of statutory and non-statutory organisations;*
> ***Monitoring and evaluation:*** *Better information and the monitoring and evaluation of the impact and effectiveness of anti-poverty strategies should be a key priority;*
> ***Community involvement:*** *The creation of sustainable structures through which local people can exercise real control over the decisions, structures and processes which affect their lives should be a key priority;*
> ***Income maximisation:*** *Ensuring that people living in or on the margins of poverty are receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled is a key feature of anti-poverty work;*
> ***Employment and pay:*** *Job creation measures need to address the quality of job creation measures in terms of, for example, sustainability, equal opportunities, pay rates) as well as the quantity of job opportunities;*
> ***Access to services:*** *Widening access to public services is a basic principle of anti-poverty work since local public services are often directed towards those on low incomes.*

**A Role for Belfast City Council**

In thinking about a Belfast City Council anti-poverty strategy, there are two important contextual considerations. The first is that the current functions and responsibilities of Belfast City Council are more limited than local authorities in the UK. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has housing powers, education lies with the Education and library Board and health and social services with the Belfast Trust. These, however, are limitations rather than obstacles to thinking about, and acting on, poverty. The fact that the primary responsibility for economic development lies with DETI and Invest NI has not prevented the Council from embarking on an important urban competitiveness programme.

Second, Belfast has had more than its share of special initiatives designed to redress some form of poverty or deprivation – the anti-poverty landscape is littered with the wreckage of past programmes and the functioning of current ones. Urban regeneration has seen Belfast Areas of Need, Belfast Action Teams, Making Belfast Work and Neighbourhood Renewal to name just a few. Outside the urban regeneration field is also a crowded terrain. Both Peace Programmes invested substantially within the city focusing on community development, social inclusion and local economic development. In addition, the Task Forces for West Belfast and the Shankill generated innovative employability initiatives for those untouched by mainstream programmes and these have been complemented by the New Deal Innovation Fund projects. Employability has also been a function of EU structural programmes of which Belfast has been a significant beneficiary. The Northern Ireland Housing Executive has been involved in fuel poverty projects and the Education and Library Board has launched a succession of initiatives for young people, of which the latest is 'Achieving Belfast'. The Eastern Health and Social Services Board has committed heavily to the Investing for Health agenda. Outside of the statutory sector, the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network has been campaigning in this field for over a decade, as have other, more specialist, agencies like the Institute for Public Health, the Healthy Living Centres and Healthy Cities. It is important that the Council recognises all such efforts, work with the agencies involved and avoid 'reinventing the wheel' when it comes to poverty.

However, recognising all these efforts, a Council approach might be underpinned by the following principles:

- Poverty and its alleviation are important goals for the city and should have appropriate priority. The Council's draft Corporate Plan already acknowledges this dimension to its work by prioritising both 'Better support for people and communities' and 'Better services';

- The Council will look at its services and responsibilities and ask how these could be delivered to maximise their anti-poverty impact. One calculation suggests that the Council provides 169 different services to citizens, businesses and other institutions in the city and this consumes a budget of around £150 million annually;

- The third is a commitment to provide leadership to other institutions and communities in the city around the poverty issue, and to develop a set of critical partnership projects with like-minded agencies. All the assessments of successful anti-poverty programmes from the US War on Poverty to the Scottish Social Exclusion Strategy suggest that clear, committed leadership is an indispensable component of success.

At the same time, The Local Government's Anti-Poverty Unit has emphasised the need for councils to recognise their limitations in the anti-poverty field and to identify a niche where they could, given structural and resource limitations, made a strategic contribution.

It further emphasised the key importance of a joined-up approach to tackling poverty. An almost universal feature of anti-poverty strategies is the effort to co-ordinate the work of many different agencies and services to tackle the multi-faceted nature of the problem. Community Planning, when it finally comes into effect, could create a statutory responsibility for service integration by local authorities. In the absence of statutory responsibility, a joint-up approach is only possible through dialogue and consensus building with specific proposals for collaboration – in short, within the context of an animated conversation about poverty and the display of civic leadership.

Community participation and community-based strategies also figure in anti-poverty strategies. This requires engagement with Belfast's diverse communities about a collective responsibility to prevent/alleviate poverty within the city. The citizens of

Belfast, and those that serve them, need to know about patterns of poverty and inequality. A new consensus could be developed that a successful, competitive city has to be judged on how it treats its weakest citizens as well as how it creates new visionary landscapes or fosters economic growth.

Finally, there is a need for monitoring and research. Being serious about tackling poverty requires knowledge about its manifestations, distribution and about what kinds of intervention have most impact. A key problem with generating such knowledge is that small area data are frequently reliant on the Census, which, being undertaken only every decade, is subject to data decay – an issue in plotting the distribution of poverty indicators across City Places. The Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure was explicitly constructed around administrative data that could be updated without relying on the Census. The construction of local income estimates for NINIS complements the multiple deprivation data and both could be monitored to track changes across the city. However, it is equally important to audit services on more than just equality impacts to identify where they are targeted and with what effect. CityStats, the database for the Strategic Neighbourhood Programme (SNAP) combines socio-economic with service data and would thus be a key resource for auditing activity.

**Anti-Poverty Actions**

In considering what Belfast City Council could actually do in this field; there are two categories of possible action:

- First, what existing services and programmes have most potential as anti-poverty mechanisms;
- Second, what new initiatives should be considered?

SNAP already embodies the principles of many anti-poverty strategies.

- First, it works for all citizens and, as such, does not create the insider-outsider dilemmas of the current Neighbourhood Renewal programme.
- Yet, it accepts that similar outcomes can only happen when different levels of intervention take place in different neighbourhoods – recognition of spatial inequalities within the city. It has been constructed around the idea of

integrated services – almost every piece of research identifies this as a key component of poverty alleviation.

- It proposes to make resources directly available to citizens within each City Place – a practical expression of citizen empowerment.
- Finally, it recognises the imperative to be evidence driven and to that end has been engaged in the construction of a city-wide dataset.

In all these respects, SNAP is both prefigurative and demonstrative – it suggests how all services should be delivered in the future and gives a practical demonstration of how this might work.

Belfast City Council has also had a long-term responsibility for working within communities - Community Services. Perhaps it's time to consider whether this approach represents a cutting-edge approach to working in communities. The key task is how to affect actual change in communities – how to contribute to independent, sustainable development. Community services should then be thought of as an investment in change. This might involve:

- auditing the social assets within communities to identify potential for sustainable development;
- investing in community capabilities – skills, cultures and aptitudes for changing communities;
- assisting communities to connect with the wider programme environment and tapping into these resources;
- helping communities to connect to private sector sources of help and resources;
- helping build the infrastructures for communities to deliver local services;
- assisting communities to produce local integrated area plans in areas where neighbourhood renewal or community empowerment partnerships don't exist.

Within this framework, Council funding should be regarded as an investment fund targeted at development rather than a form of current income. This would mean ensuring that applications for funding are oriented towards development and focused on outcomes. It might also mean embedding the concept of 'transitional funding' into

the process – resources are intended to pump prime development activity towards sustainable operation or to give a critical edge to an activity that is innovative and demonstrative.

These are but two examples of where Belfast City Council has an accumulation of experience and expertise in programmes that prefigure how services could be delivered to have maximum impact on poverty.

In addition to these, Belfast City Council is best placed to mobilise tactical coalitions (of public, private and community sectors) around a small set of key poverty issues. There are good reasons for not having a long list. In part, this is because of the plethora of anti-poverty activity already taking place. In part, it's to ensure that the Council considers a few critical initiatives that might make a difference. And, in part, it's because a focus on a few strategic actions is more likely to be translated in operational reality that a long list to change the world.

One example would be a **Belfast Initiative on Children**. Belfast has the highest concentration of children living in workless, benefit-dependent households in the region. In some parts of the city, educational performance figures are among the worst in Northern Ireland. Many communities (usually the more deprived) are fearful of anti-social activities carried out, mainly by children. In some cases children are presented as a danger to the community, including cases of rape and murder, in others they are a danger to themselves in the form of casual violence, drug taking and suicide. While much of the hysteria about such activities constitutes a form of moral panic, there are serious issues within certain communities, many of which already feel they have been left behind by the city's economic progress.

In fact, attitudes to children are ambiguous: on one hand, they are recognised as the most vulnerable social group and the debate centres on how they can be protected; yet, on the other hand, the community is fearful of their feral qualities and asks how society can be protected from children.

A **Belfast Initiative on Children** could bring together the Community Safety Partnership, the Belfast Health and Social Services Trust, the Belfast Education and

Library Board, the PSNI, the Restorative Justice groups and perhaps a sample of schools. The intention would be to look at a number of issues, children protection, literacy/numeracy, performance and behaviour at school, systems of family support etc. to plan customised services for the city's most disadvantaged children. The Health Action Zone's Integrated Development Project offers some pointers to how such an initiative might be developed and applied. However, this is limited in both scope and operation. A City Council initiative would be designed provide an integrated focus on a whole set of children's problems to ensure that the city is safe for (and from) children.

Another example might be a **Belfast Inequality Initiative** since the city is distinguished by its concentration of both most deprived and least deprived neighbourhoods. This could bring together the agencies currently responsible for neighbourhood renewal and Community Empowerment, the Health Action Zone and the Health and Social Services Trust together with the local area partnerships to:

- explore the implementation of the Strategic Regeneration Frameworks currently in preparation for the Belfast Area partnerships;
- devise a set of social targets where no citizen or household in Belfast fell below the average for Northern Ireland across a range of socio-economic indicators;
- discuss how the benefits of major city projects like Titanic Quarter or the development of the North Foreshore could be made to benefit all citizens;
- look at how the city centre could be extended into poorer inner city neighbourhoods though initiatives like the North Belfast Gateway so as to enable them to share in the benefits of tourism and other developments;
- examine connectivity within the city – what are the barriers to people moving around the city in search of jobs, leisure and places to live (infrastructural, cultural, skills deficits etc.) and how these might be overcome.

A third example could be a **Belfast Initiative on Debt.** As fixed rate mortgages run out, negative equity increases and prices for basic commodities rise faster than inflation, the numbers experiencing problem debt are likely to multiply. There is a need for a comprehensive system of advice, support and counseling for what is likely

to be a growing proportion of Belfast citizens. The City Council could give a lead by bringing all existing agencies together to develop a collaborative strategy for helping problem debtors in Belfast. In part, this might be about publicising the forms of help available, making available simple advice literature and supporting a range of advice centres. Those already engaged in such activities would welcome a city-wide lead from the City Council.

Linked to recent price increases in the energy sector, a fourth example could be a **Belfast Pensioner's Fuel Poverty Initiative.** All the estimates of the social impact of increasing energy prices highlight the probable effects on pensioner households. There is a need for a city-wide programme designed to assist pensioners to maximise benefit and grant uptake, to provide advice and help with insulation and energy management and to establish community-based early warning mechanisms for pensioners at risk of hypothermia. The intention would be to create and system and standardisation to the many activities already occurring in this field.

These four proposals are based on three criteria: what developments in the economy and social policy are likely to increase the degree of poverty within Belfast; what kinds of initiative are most likely to make a strategic impact, and; where are the opportunities to bring other agencies together in an anti-poverty coalition?

In short, tackling poverty involves no more than an act of will. How is poverty prioritised amid a host of other responsibilities? How do the services for which we are already responsible impact on poverty? How does the Council as the city's leading agency influence other agencies, act as an advocate for anti-poverty initiatives, and lead tactical coalitions? Other cities have trod this path – Belfast can also do so.

**Appendix 1**

**City Places and the Distribution of Poverty**

The City Places boundary set was created to facilitate an integrated framework for service delivery within the city. In its original format, it consisted of 21 areas of roughly equal population. However, the BCC Development Department deemed that the city centre was not relevant to a poverty study and so generated a new boundary set of 20 City Places (five in East, six in North, four in South and Five in West). The Belfast data at Super Output Area level was then reorganized to match the 20 City Places boundaries.

As indicated, the purpose was to explore how the set of factors (associated both with high poverty risk and high Northern Ireland Multiple Deprivation Measure scores) are distributed across the city. As explained in the methodology, two indicators are employed here:

- the number of people or households in the at risk category as a percentage of the total City Place population (usually working age) or total households;
- the same percentage weighted by the area's share of all the people/households in the poverty risk category within the city as a whole – thus allowing for Places with larger concentrations of the at risk group.

Both are presented in the form of distributions running from lowest to highest, where the latter denotes the greater poverty risk. The factors presented below are the same group used in the inter-city comparison with one exception – rather than Routine Occupations, it was decided to use persons classified as Social Grade E, which is similar but broader since it includes the unemployed and those on state benefits as well as lowest grade occupations.

**Individuals**

One of the variables most associated with poverty risk was working age economic inactivity.

**Figure 5.17**
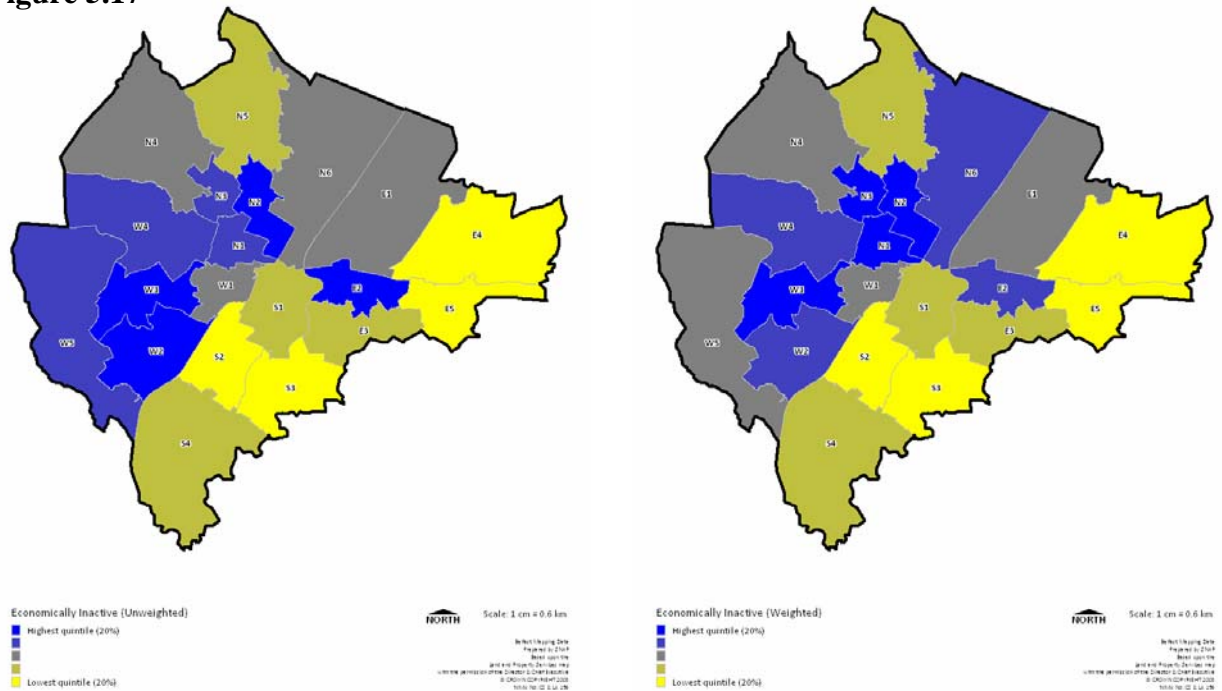
**Source:       BCC Development Department and ninis.nisra.gov.uk**

Since inequality within the city emerged as a feature of the previous analysis, here the focus will be on the lowest and top quartiles, i.e. the bottom and to five city places. The key questions are:

- Which areas of the city tend to appear in the lowest and top quartiles?
- How does weighting the simple percentages change the rank order of City Places?

The lowest quartile contains two from South, two from East and one from North. The top quartile is made up entirely of City Places in the West and North. However, when that is weighted by the concentration of economically inactive people in each area, a North Belfast City Place leaves the bottom quartile (N5). Simultaneously, the top quartile changes.  First, a new City Place (E2) moves into the quartile and then NI (because of its small population) moves down the rank order. N3 moves out of the top

quartile. If this kind of shift is reproduced with other factors, the use of the weighted distribution would change the spatial priorities of the SNAP programme.

**Figure 5.18**
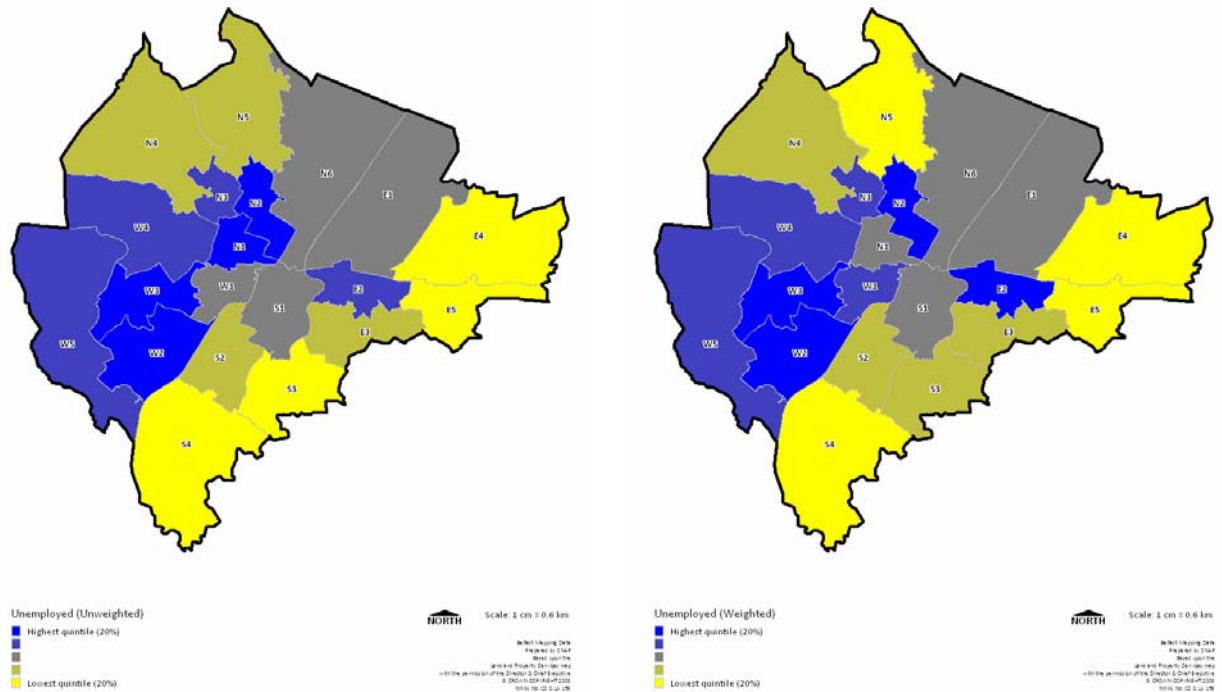


**Calculated from BCC Development Department and ninis.nisra.gov.uk**

Again, the weighting exercise changes the ranking order with W5 and E2 moving into the top quartile and two from North Belfast move down ranks (N1 and N3). It can be argued that this weighting effect is guaranteed for N1 since it has the smallest population of all the City Places. However, interventions have to take account of concentrations of poor people not just high percentages of small populations.

This pattern of rank change appeared within all the economic status variables. However, the position of NI in the top of the distribution was unaffected by weighting for the percentage of the working age population in Social Grade E variable.
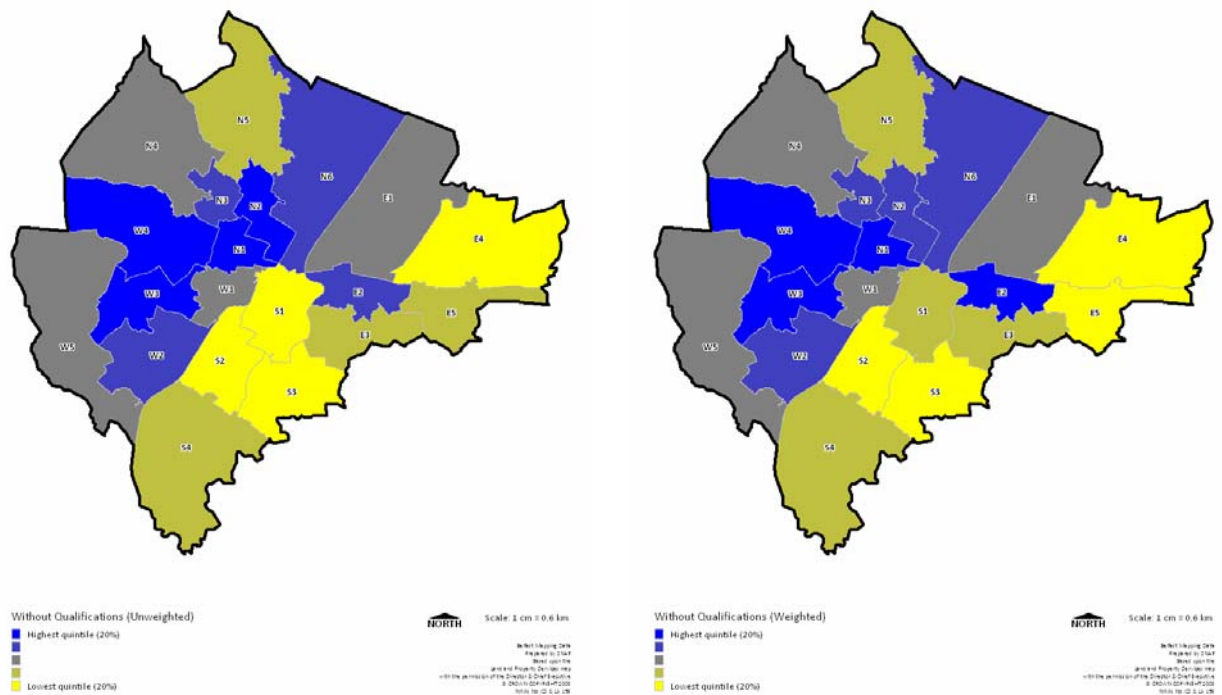
**Figure 5.19**



Social Grade E (Unweighted) / Social Grade E (Weighted)
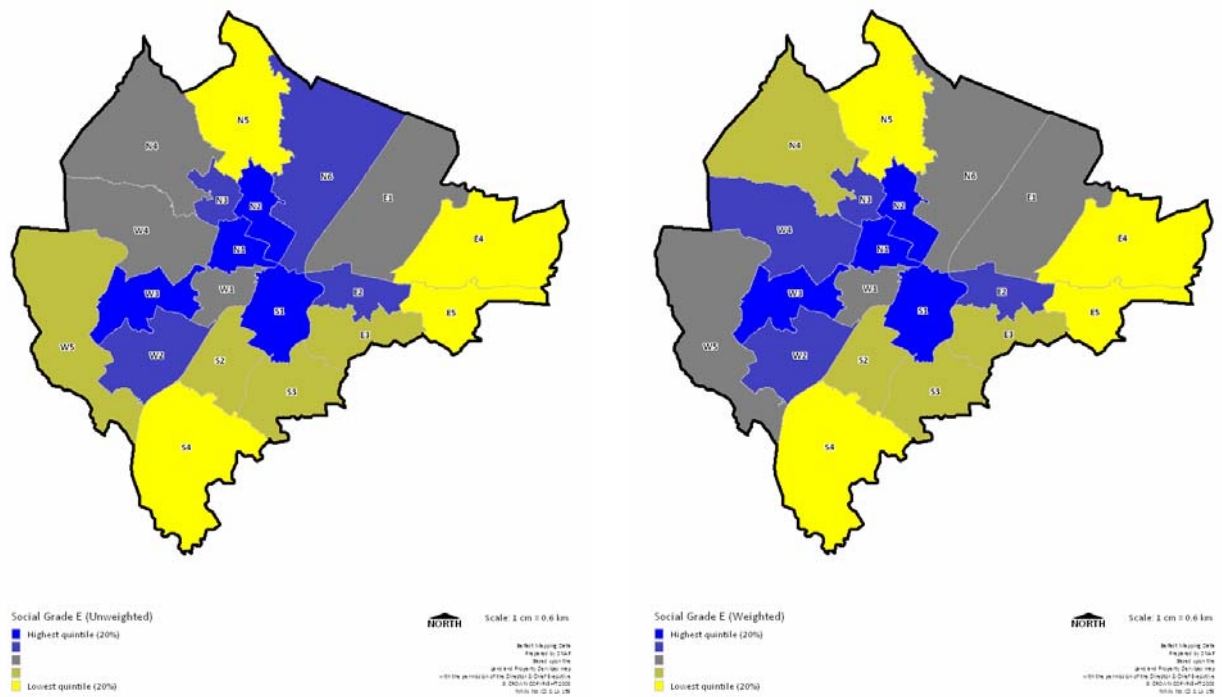
**Calculated from BCC Development Department and ninis.nisra.gov.uk**

In both distributions, NI appears at the top. In the unweighted distribution, it can be seen that more than a quarter of its working age population is in Social Grade E. In the weighted distribution, this is reduced to just over 15 per cent because of its small population. It should be noted that S1 appears in the top quartile in both (moving to second in the weighted distribution) and that E2 moves up the ranking order as happened with other poverty risk factors.
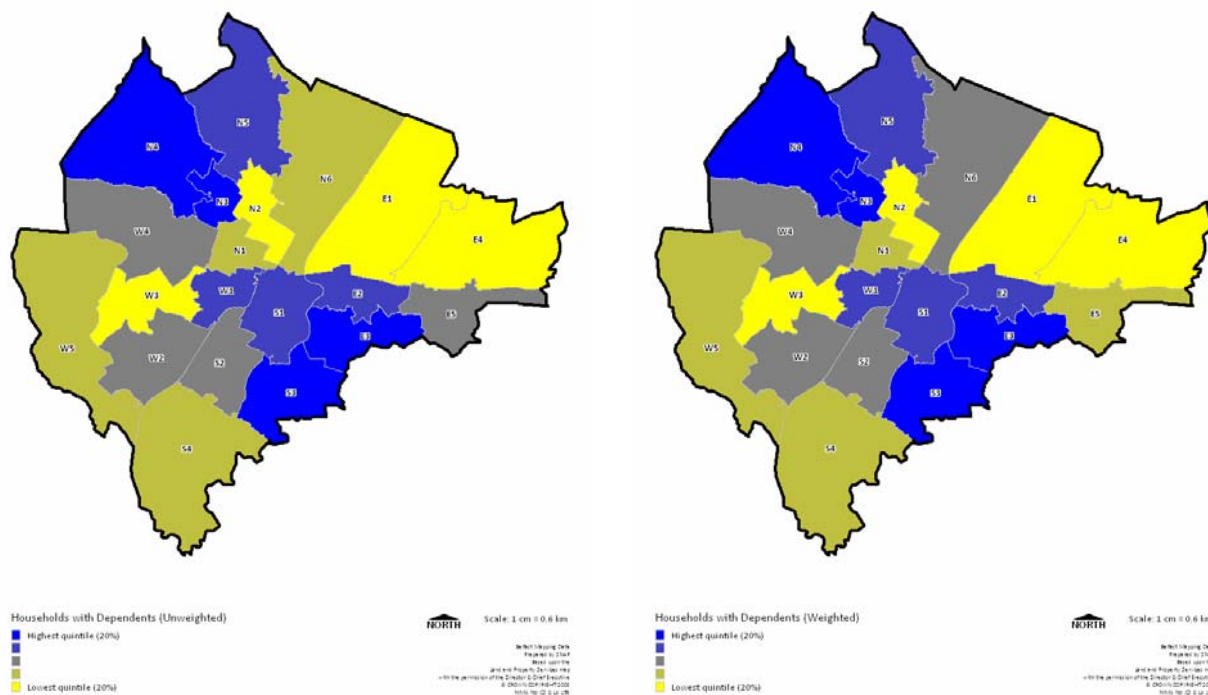
**Figure 5.20**



Without Qualifications (Unweighted)
Highest quintile (20%)
Lowest quintile (20%)

Without Qualifications (Weighted)
Highest quintile (20%)
Lowest quintile (20%)

**Calculated from BCC Development Department and ninis.nisra.gov.uk**

Here, the shifting position of E2 is most apparent. In the unweighted distribution, it is just in the top quartile, in the weighted, it is ranked first. It should be noted that almost two thirds of the population of NI are without qualifications even though it moves down the rank order because of population share. Oddly, for this factor, S1 appears in the bottom quartile of the unweighted distribution.

**Households**

The exercise used three household factors in its examination of poverty risk in Belfast – households with no adult employed and dependent children as a percentage of all households; a subset of that lone parent households with dependent children as a percentage of all households; and finally, the percentage of households without access to car or van.

**Figure 5.21 – Households with Dependents who are Work Poor**



**Households with Dependents (Unweighted)**
■ Highest quintile (20%)
■
■
■
■ Lowest quintile (20%)

NORTH    Scale: 1 cm = 0.6 km

**Households with Dependents (Weighted)**
■ Highest quintile (20%)
■
■
■
■ Lowest quintile (20%)

NORTH    Scale: 1 cm = 0.6 km

**Calculated from BCC Development Department and ninis.nisra.gov.uk**

There are a number of City Places where workless households with dependent children are remarkably high proportions of all households. In four of the top five ranks, this accounts for about one in seven households. In W3 a quarter of households were workless. The top quarter in both distributions contained the same City Places, although the ranks within it were changed by the weighting.

Lone parent households are a subset of the above. However, as indicated, the poverty risk for lone parent households is among the highest. Their distribution across the City Places is described in Figure 5.22.
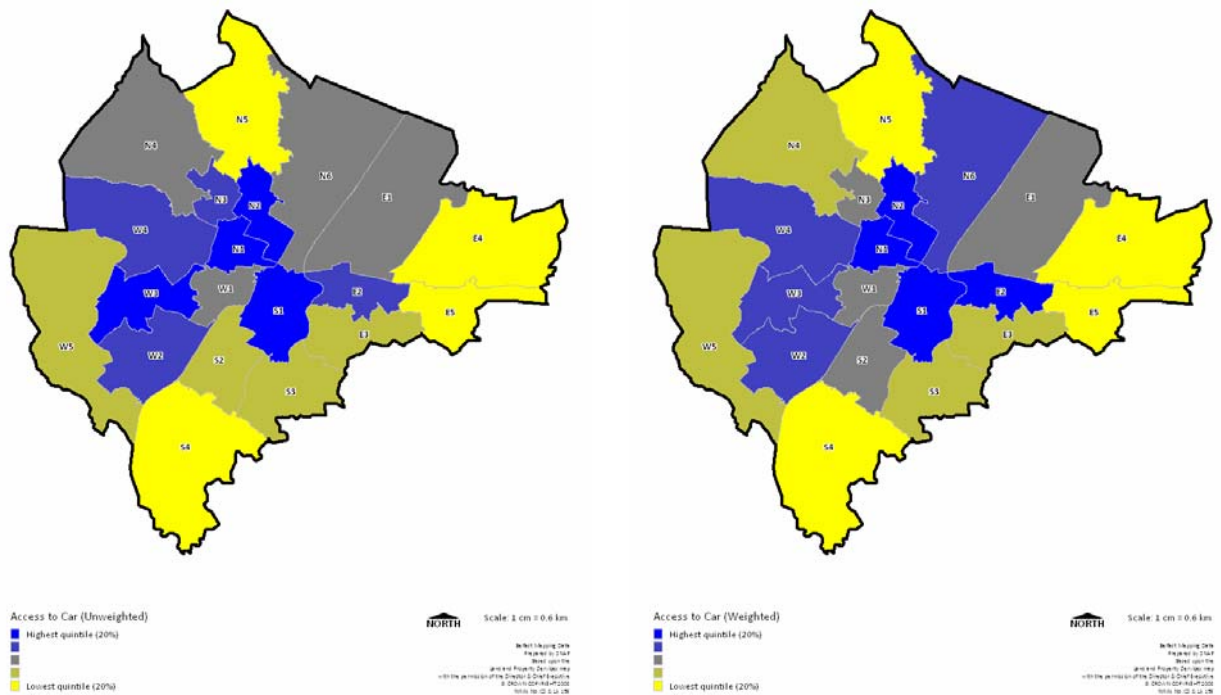
**Figure 5.22 – Lone Parent with Dependents**
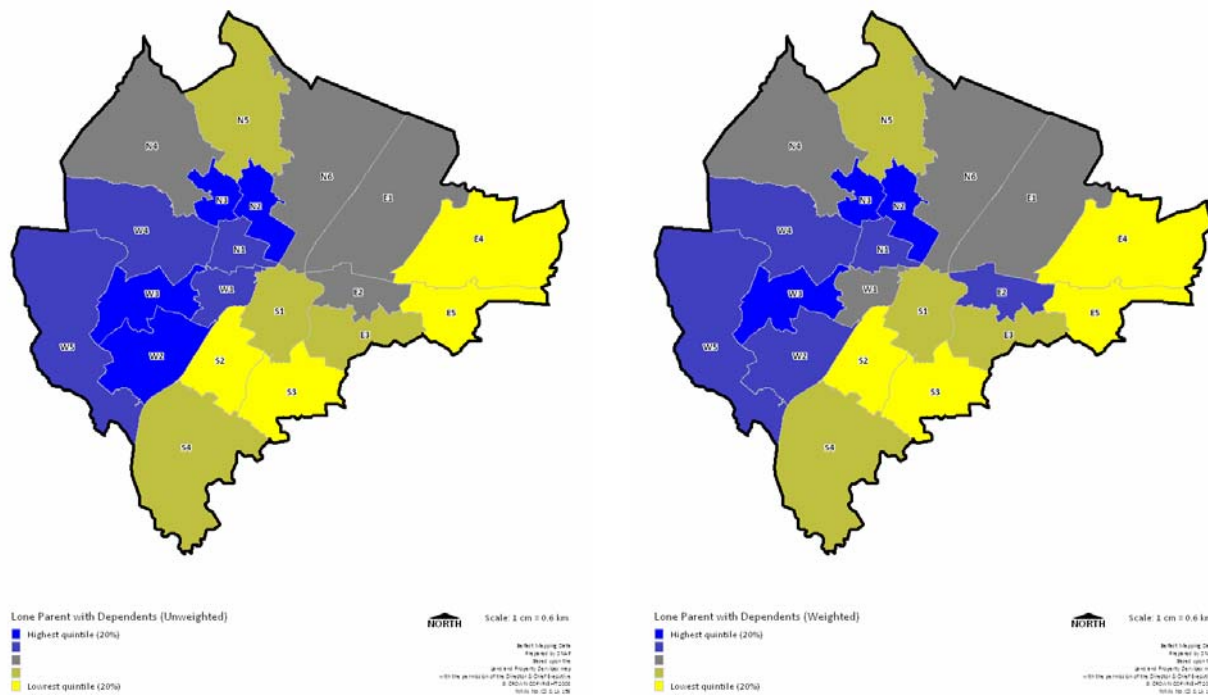
In this case, the weighting has no effect on the top quartile, although E" once more moves up the rankings below that level. As before, in some City Places lone parent households make up a substantial proportion of all – more than one in five households in N3, N2 and W3 -indeed, almost a quarter in W3. In contrast, in all of the city places in the bottom quartile, lone parent households made up one in twenty.

These data continue to point to the levels of inequality in poverty risk within Belfast.

**Figure 5.23 – Access to Car**



Access to Car (Unweighted)
- Highest quintile (20%)
- Lowest quintile (20%)

Access to Car (Weighted)
- Highest quintile (20%)
- Lowest quintile (20%)

**Calculated from BCC Development Department and ninis.nisra.gov.uk**

With this factor, it should be recognised that inner city households may have less need of car access than those living in the suburbs. In the unweighted distribution, it would appear that inner city neighbourhoods tend to have less access to cars. Indeed, in N1, this amounts to almost three quarters of all households. The weighted distribution changes the order of the top quartile. S1 and E2 move to the top ranks displacing N2 and N1. The appearance of S1 dilutes the predominant North and West character of the distribution.



- Inner areas
- Outer areas
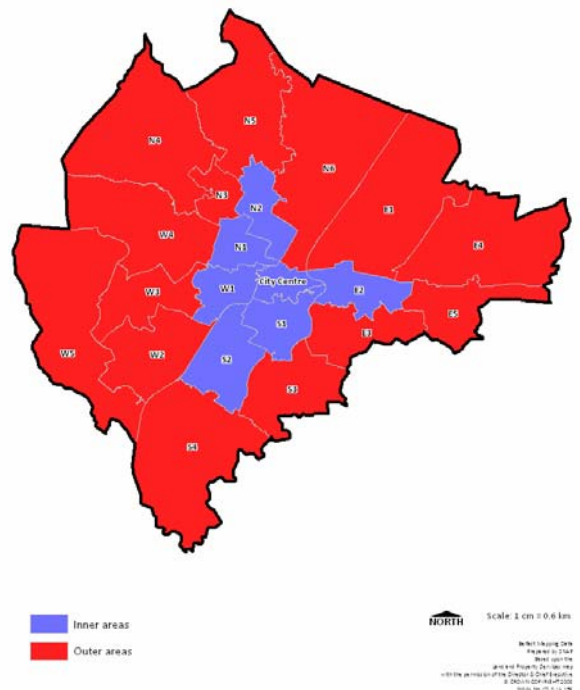
An important idea in thinking about the distribution of poverty within cities has been the 'twin-track' city – a decaying urban core characterised by high levels of poverty

contrasted with a vibrant, work-rich outer city. To explore whether Belfast is such a city, the City Places dataset was divided into inner and outer areas according to a definition supplied by BCC Development Department. In this case, the City Centre was reinserted in the data, since it is the quintessential inner-urban place.

Two of the key variables (the unemployment rate and working-age economic activity rate) were used to compare inner and outer Belfast

**Figure 5.24    Inner and Outer Belfast Compared**
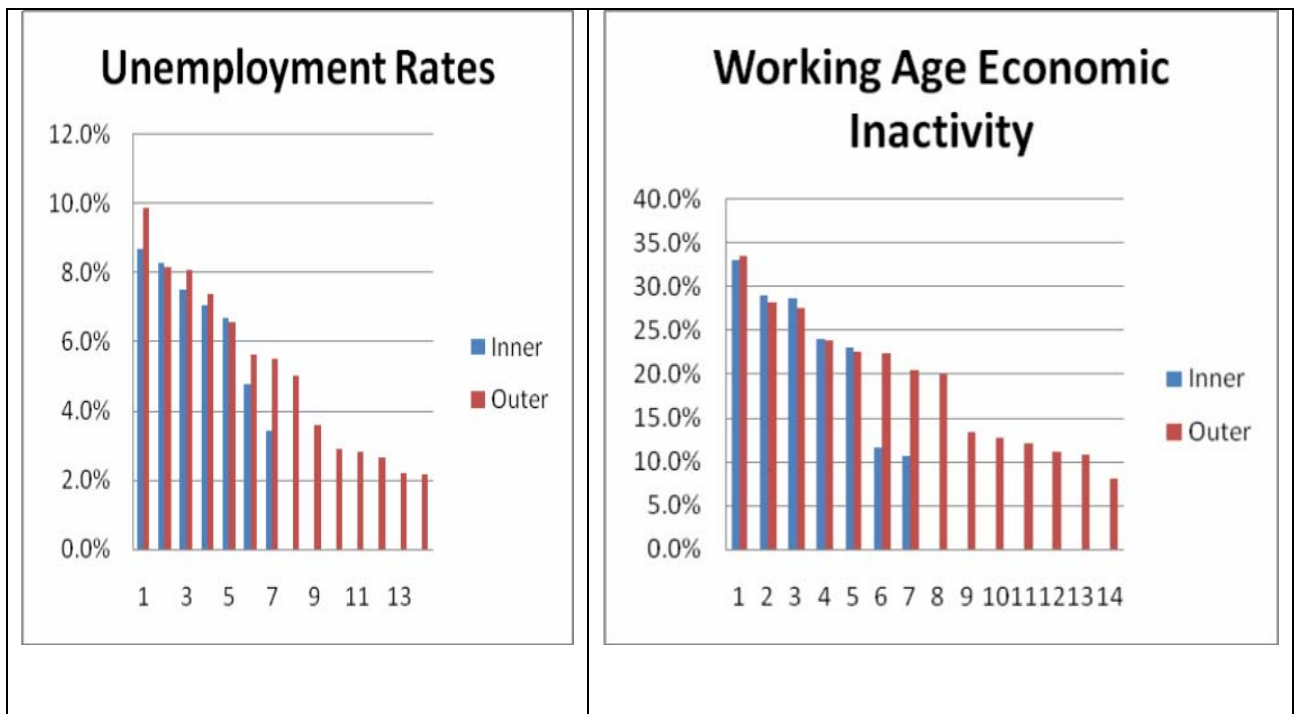


Because, there are twice as many outer places as inner, the distributions are not exactly coterminous. However, what can be seen is that the highest outer rates more than match those for inner city places. Certainly, about half of the outer rates are lower than any in the inner city – still, the outer city also has concentrations of what are regarded as key poverty variables.

**Summary of City Places Data**
The City Places analysis confirms the patterns observed in other datasets – as with the multiple distribution measure, poverty risk variables tend to be concentrated in the North and West of the City, with inner city N1 appearing most frequently in the top quartiles. However, by using a weighting mechanism, other City Places either moved sharply up the ranking order (E2) or appeared in the top quartile for the first time –

S1. There was also the suggestion that the weighting gave more priority to outer-city, as opposed to inner-city, places because of their greater population sizes and thus the larger number in the poverty risk groups.

Table 5.3 looks at the number of times particular City Places appeared in the top quartile, both in terms of simple percentages and in the weighted distribution to illustrate the changes made by the weighting process.

**Table 5.3      Appearances in the Top Quarter (Quartile) Both Distributions**

| Unweighted | | | Weighted | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| East 2 | 2 | | East 2 | 5 |
| North 1 | 7 | | North 1 | 5 |
| North 2 | 7 | | North 2 | 7 |
| North 3 | 5 | | North 3 | 2 |
| South 1 | 2 | | South 1 | 2 |
| West 1 | 1 | | West 1 | 1 |
| West 2 | 4 | | West 2 | 3 |
| West 3 | 6 | | West 3 | 7 |
| West 4 | 1 | | West 4 | 1 |
| | | | West 5 | 2 |

With simple percentages, the City Places appearing most frequently were N1 and N2, each appearing in all seven. The top quartile in each distribution contained five City Places and seven distributions were presented in the analysis, making up a total of 35 top quartile rankings. Places outside the North and West of the city accounted for only four of these ranks. In the weighted distribution, N1 had fewer appearances in the top quartile. The appearances of E2 moved up to five. Indeed, in the weighted distributions, E2 steadily moved up the ranks and, in two, moved to the highest ranks. Although, the weighted distribution had only seven appearances by City Places outside North and West, it nevertheless suggests a wider distribution of poverty risk than a consideration of simple percentages – moving out from the inner city and moving across the city. However, the purpose of the weighting is not to generate a more distributed version of city poverty. Rather, it is to recognise the importance of population size in the concentration of poverty. This idea of concentration was first introduced by an OFMDFM project researching low incomes. Here, it has been

applied to capture the greater number of people at risk of poverty in some areas compared to others, even when the percentage of their local population is smaller.

In an effort to provide a summary statistic for City Places, a number of factors were drawn together in a single table. This provides information on estimates of the number of households living in relative poverty (60% of median household income), estimates of average incomes, an indicator of the social composition of an area and data on the capital values of domestic properties. Thus, it emphasises the differences between the income rich and income poor, between the asset rich and asset poor and differences between areas whose households are Social Grade E (lowest) and Social Grades A and B (highest).

| Table 5.4 | Summary Indicators for City Places | | | | | |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | Northern Ireland = 100 | | Belfast = 100 | | | |
| City Place | % of Households in Relative Poverty unequivalised 2004/05 | % of Households in Relative Poverty, equivalised, 2003/05 | Mean Gross Household Income (before transfers & Housing Costs) | Median Gross Household Income (before transfers & Housing Costs) | Ratio: Social Grade Households E/AB | Average Capital Value of Domestic Properties |
| East 1 | 133.2 | 109.3 | 103.3 | 103.9 | 1.5 | £90,039 |
| East 2 | 156.2 | 125.2 | 95.2 | 95.2 | 2.1 | £83,495 |
| East 3 | 109.0 | 98.3 | 99.6 | 101.5 | 0.4 | £135,256 |
| East 4 | 92.9 | 86.2 | 106.8 | 108.9 | 0.2 | £175,271 |
| East 5 | 99.3 | 87.5 | 104.5 | 106.6 | 0.3 | £154,924 |
| North 1 | 189.3 | 133.5 | 65.4 | 68.7 | 13.1 | £52,221 |
| North 2 | 158.0 | 139.9 | 75.7 | 78.0 | 3.1 | £74,612 |
| North 3 | 138.2 | 136.5 | 76.3 | 80.7 | 3.3 | £82,233 |
| North 4 | 125.6 | 114.9 | 85.6 | 89.2 | 1.7 | £73,012 |
| North 5 | 92.3 | 91.1 | 114.3 | 118.7 | 0.3 | £114,298 |
| North 6 | 150.1 | 120.5 | 102.3 | 101.8 | 2.4 | £83,636 |
| South 1 | 138.8 | 107.8 | 104.8 | 105.0 | 1.1 | £131,386 |
| South 2 | 115.0 | 95.4 | 95.9 | 94.1 | 0.4 | £116,121 |
| South 3 | 100.7 | 86.3 | 112.5 | 114.8 | 0.2 | £190,165 |
| South 4 | 94.8 | 86.2 | 116.5 | 117.5 | 0.3 | £224,195 |
| West 1 | 128.9 | 124.9 | 71.7 | 75.3 | 1.4 | £85,303 |
| West 2 | 134.0 | 126.0 | 79.9 | 83.0 | 3.0 | £116,368 |
| West 3 | 126.3 | 143.6 | 70.4 | 73.7 | 6.3 | £84,951 |
| West 4 | 143.3 | 124.4 | 72.7 | 75.3 | 3.5 | £53,484 |
| West 5 | 102.8 | 114.6 | 85.8 | 87.1 | 1.3 | £103,475 |
| Source: | Constructed from data provided by NISRA and Development Department BCC | | | | | |

Table 5.4 was constructed from data that was presented at Super Output Area or Census Output Area levels by aggregating up to City Place level. The technique was to convert percentages to actual numbers, adding up the numbers for each City Place and recalculating a new percentage. There must be some caution about the robustness of this exercise for households to which equivalence scales have already been applied (equivalised relative poverty), but the information is shown anyway since it is, at least, indicative. Further, the percentages were converted to indices where either the Northern Ireland or Belfast percentages were taken as 100 and each City Place shown in relation to that. The table excludes the City Centre Place because its very high capital values distorts the picture for the rest.

The first column refers to the percentage of households in relative poverty (unequivalised). It should be noted that only three Places have scores less than that of Northern Ireland (100) while four have about one and a half times (or more) the Northern Ireland rate. With relative poverty for equivalised households, the picture is somewhat improved – about a third of City Places have lower rates than Northern Ireland. This suggests that the rate for unequivalised households is affected by single person or small households in Belfast, making the comparison with Northern Ireland more unfavourable. However, around another third of City Places have poverty rates for equivalised households more than a quarter higher than the Northern Ireland rate.

The scores for mean and median household incomes are less reliable and refer to incomes before deductions and housing costs and housing costs have been met. Nevertheless, they do point up a set of City Places where gross mean and median incomes fall far short of city's. The West of the city has a group of Places where they fluctuate around three quarters of the Belfast mean and median. North 1 also stands out with gross mean and median income at less than two thirds of the city equivalents.

The ratio between Social grade E (households with heads in routine occupations or workless) and Grades A and B (heads in managerial and professional occupations) is an indicator of the social composition of the City Place. The higher the number, the greater the concentration of Grade E households – those most at risk of being poor. The disparity in the scores for this indicator across Belfast is further evidence of the level of inequality within the city. North 1 stands out with a score of 13.1 – Grade E

households outnumber Grades A and B thirteen times. Indeed across this entire indicator set North 1 emerges as a Place with enormous poverty risk.

Finally, the average capital values give an indication of how assets are distributed across the city. It can be seen that relatively low capital values for domestic properties appear most often in Places located in the East, West and North of the city.

The first exercise demonstrated that individuals and households most likely to be poor were concentrated in about half of the City Places. This latest exercise also shows a set of Places that have, simultaneously, high concentrations of households with incomes less than 60 per cent of the Northern Ireland median, of low average incomes of households with heads unemployed or in routine occupations and of relatively low capital values for domestic properties. Combined this information answers the 'who' and 'where' questions about poverty in Belfast – what kind of people are most likely to be poor and where to they live within the city. This has implications for how services are delivered and how communities are developed. Efforts should be made to ensure that those most at risk of poverty receive all of the support and services available and that suggests that particular places have to be prioritised. Equally, community development processes should be judged by the changes made in the lives of those most likely to be poor.