

Skills and Poverty

What councils can do to make a difference for their own workforces

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Introduction

The LGA

We are a politically-led, cross-party organisation that works on behalf of councils to ensure local government has a strong, credible voice with national government. We aim to influence and set the political agenda on the issues that matter to councils so they are able to deliver local solutions to national problems.

“If you give a man a fish, you feed him for a day. **If you teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.**”

What is In-Work poverty?

‘In-work’ or working poverty described households who live in relative poverty even though someone in the household is in paid work. Single working parent households saw the most dramatic increase, with the proportion in working poverty rising from 20 per cent in 2010 to 40 per cent in 2020.

Majority of people living in poverty are in work, report finds

Single-parent households see biggest increase in working poverty during the last decade, as experts urge firms to pay fairly and implement financial wellbeing policies

by Calum Trenaman | 27 May 2021



What is the link between skills and poverty?

- **work and income.** Those with higher levels of skills are more likely to be in work and more likely to earn more
- **social inclusion and active citizenship.** There are clear links between levels of qualification, participating in learning, and participation in society (from voting to community engagement)
- **inter-generational.** Supporting parents to participate in learning and improve their skills can help children to achieve better outcomes at school and beyond

Great examples...

- Basildon Council
 - Bristol City Council
 - Exeter City Council
 - Hampshire County Council
 - LB of Waltham Forest
 - Somerset West and Taunton Council
 - Suffolk County Council
 - Tees Valley Combined Authority
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Case Study – A North East Council

- Delivered in 2020 under the Apprenticeship Accelerator Programme
 - The Council wanted to understand which staff were living in their locally most deprived deciles 1 – 4, and which job roles did they occupy
 - Investigate which possible pathways could be developed to support these job roles through skills development
 - Ultimately lifting these council employees out of in-work poverty
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Raising skill levels

Through the Levy, the council could:

1. Target those people who have not so far benefitted sufficiently from apprenticeships for new apprenticeship opportunities
 2. Offer apprenticeships as progression opportunities for low-paid staff. The additional skills a good quality apprenticeship can offer could help low-paid staff progress in work.
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Key causes

Poverty wastes people's potential, depriving society and economy of the skills and talents of those who have valuable contributions to make. The definition of poverty is when a person's resources are well below their minimum needs, including the need to take part in society

This definition was drawn from the '**We can solve poverty**' report that was delivered by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation in 2016. They found that there are five key causes in the UK that need priority action:

- Unemployment
 - Low wages and insecure jobs
 - **Lack of skills**
 - Family problems
 - An inadequate benefits system
 - And high costs
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Methodology used

- Desktop research to clarify Indices of Deprivation and find the local Deprivation Deciles
 - Located Indices within the local authority boundaries
 - Cross-checked with post codes from council employees
 - Interrogated data to analyse which staff lived within Deciles 1 to 4 with a view to support through skills development
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What did we analyse

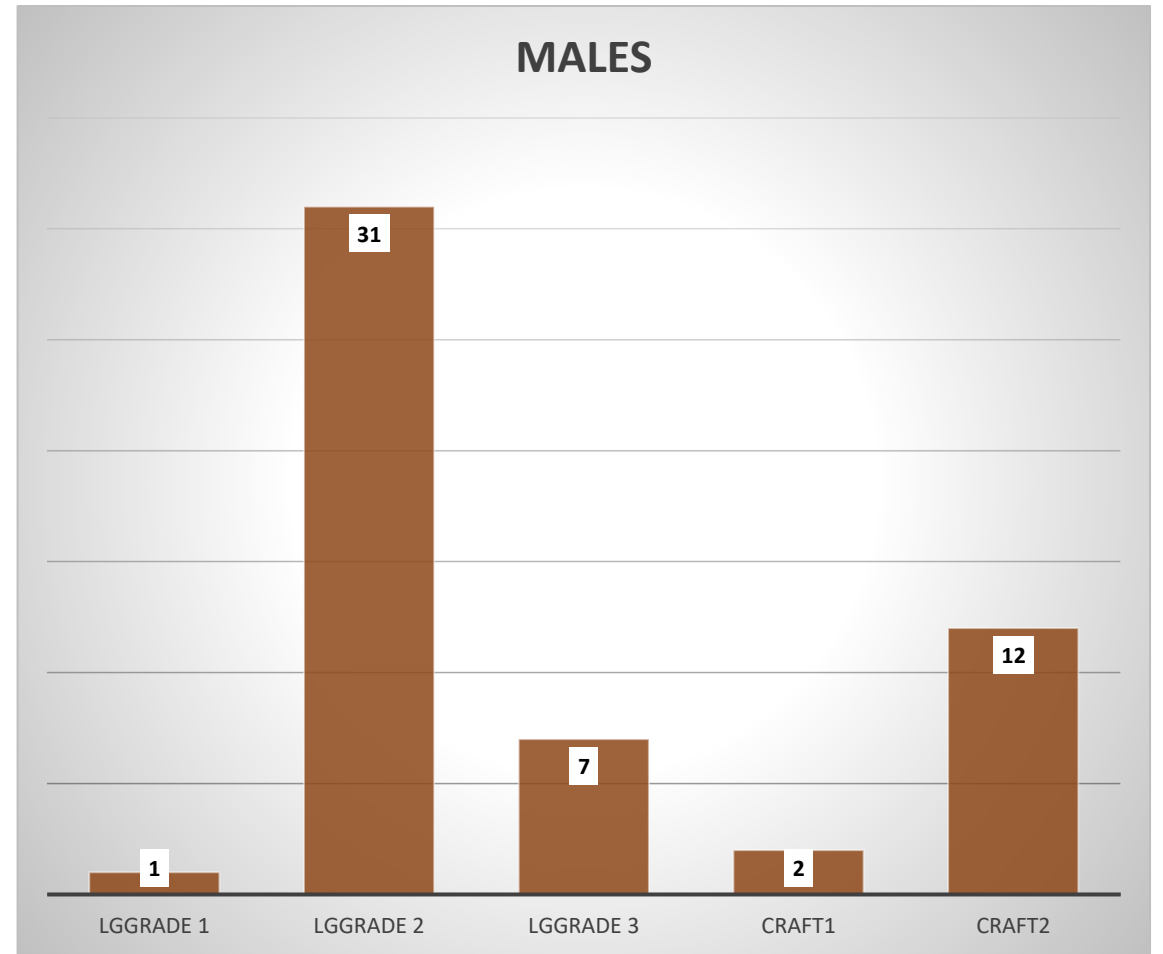
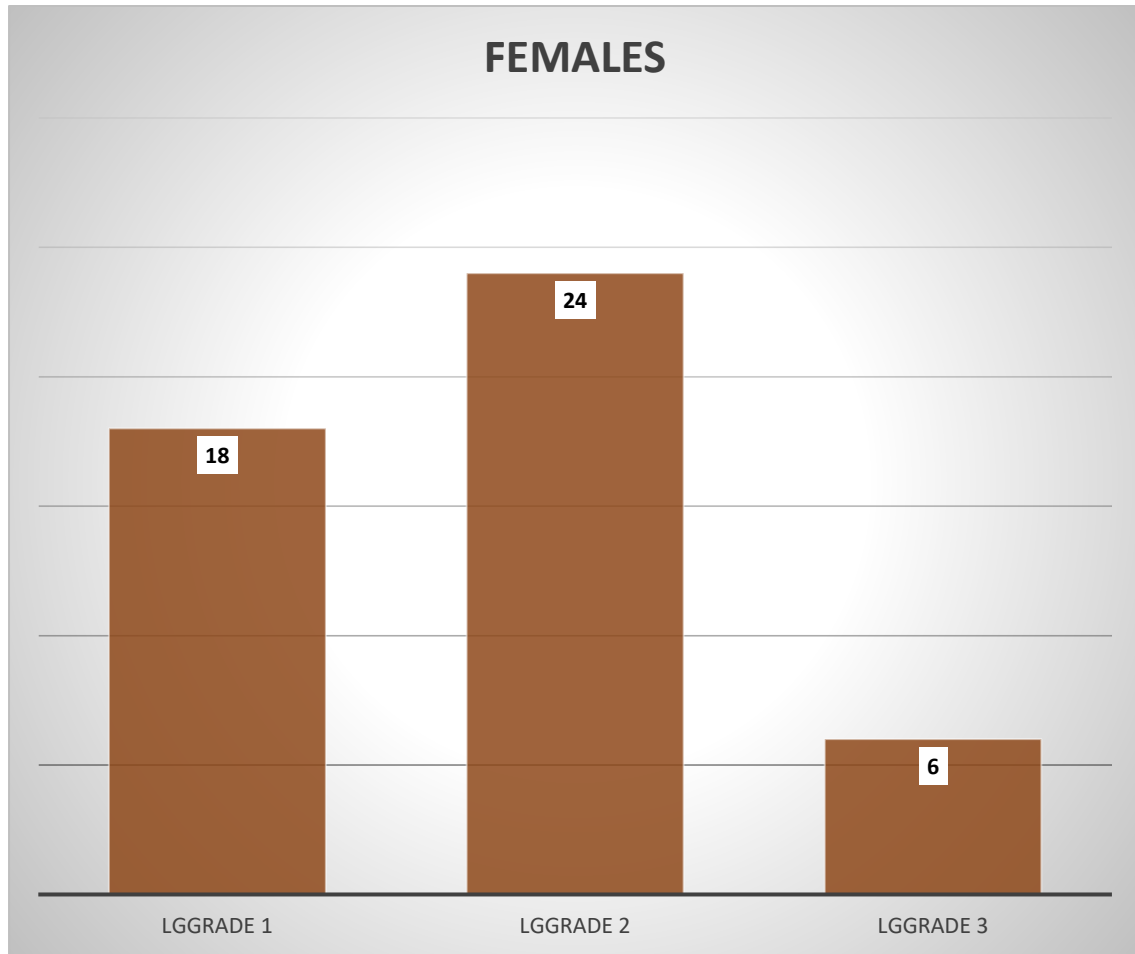
1. Council's Deprivation Deciles
 2. Staff postcodes matched with these Deciles
 3. Job Roles that these staff occupied
 4. Services where these job roles occurred in terms of % and number
 5. Data broken into
 - Gender and contract type
 - Grades 1 to 5 including craft grades
 - Services to target
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Main findings

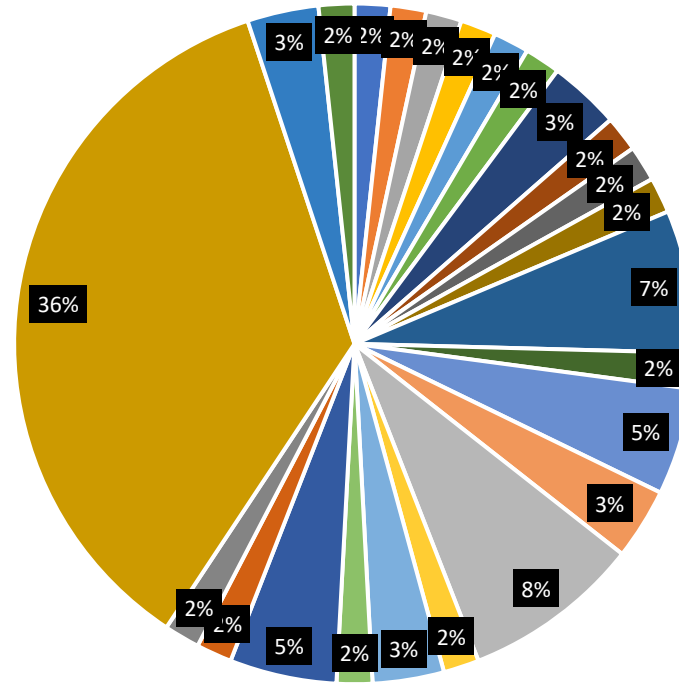
Deciles	Number of Job roles	Number of staff	Grade 1-3	Grade 4-5	Male	Female
1	49	143	77	66	66	77
2	76	231	123	108	95	136
3	70	249	129	120	101	148
4	62	186	95	91	75	111

- For all the deciles, there were more Females than Males involved
- Most staff live in Decile 3, followed by Decile 2. The lowest number of staff is living in Decile 1, which is the most deprived
- In each of these Deciles, there are more staff on grades 1 to 3 than on grades 4 to 5

Gender findings

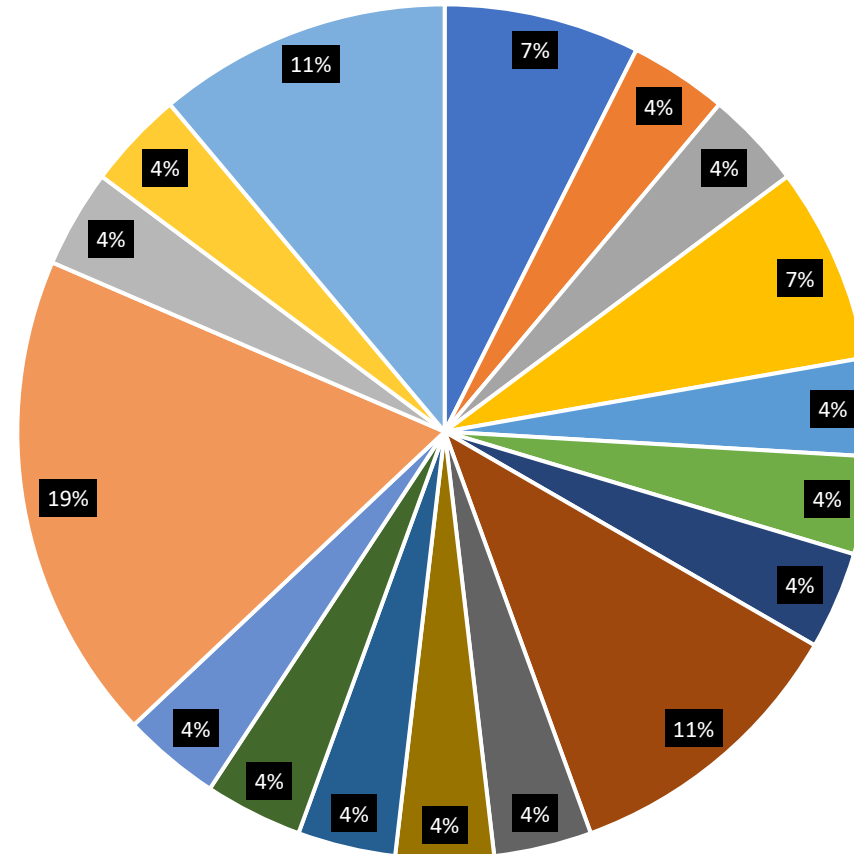


DECILE 2 - MALE - LARGEST VARIETY OF JOB ROLES IN ENVIRONMENT HOUSING AND LEISURE



- Assistant
- Assistant Park Keeper
- Casual Catering Assistant
- Casual Cleaner
- Casual Clerical Receptionist
- Casual Events Workers
- Casual Leisure Assistant
- Education Warden
- Environment Hit Squad Operative
- Garden Waste Collection Team Leader/Driver
- Grass Cutting Operative (Driver)
- Grass Cutting Operative (Pedestrian equipment)
- Grave Digger
- Leisure Assistant
- Neighbourhood Delivery Team Member
- Outdoor Leisure Assistant
- Public Convenience Cleaner
- Seafront Operative/Driver
- Security Officer
- Senior Security Officer
- Team Manager
- Team Member
- Town Centre Operative
- Unit Assistant

DECILE 2 - FEMALE - LARGEST VARIETY OF JOB ROLES IN HEALTH, EDUCATION, CARE AND SAFEGUARDING



- Admin Assistant
- Admin Assistant - Income recovery
- Administrator
- Administration Assistant
- Administration Officer
- Administrative Officer
- Appropriate Adult
- Business Support Assistant
- Casual Clerical Receptionist
- Casual Event Workers
- Early Life Administration Assistant
- Exam Invigilator
- Learning Development Admin Officer
- Sheltered Housing Officer
- Social Care Assistant
- Strategies Admin Officer
- Support Worker

Key Findings

- Females were more impacted than Males
 - Main jobs were: Catering Assistants; Cleaners; Assistants
 - Majority were on part time or casual contracts (Caring responsibilities?)
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Our conclusions and suggested recommendations

- Clear link between skills levels and in-work poverty
 - Dedicate a sufficient portion of the levy to reduce in-work poverty – build specific programmes for these groups of staff
 - Offer ‘springboard’ apprenticeships
 - Development opportunities in digital and functional skills. Functional skills, together with digital skills development, was highlighted by the Joseph Rowntree report – [We can solve poverty](#) – as a step in the right direction to end poverty
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Further recommendations

- If part time or temporary contracts are offered, for example in casual roles, provide enough hours for staff to earn higher wages
 - Review all HR Policies for their impact on lower paid workers with the particular focus on progression and reduction of institutional barriers such as constrained career structures
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Final comment

We need to understand working patterns and its influence on in-work poverty. This report did not investigate the influence of working patterns on in-work poverty through the data analysed, however it can be assumed that the lowest of earners are, by large, female, working part time or shifts and aged 45-55. They include cleaners, customer service assistants, lunchtime supervisors, teaching assistants and often have more than one job, either in the council or elsewhere

What can the Council do to tackle in-work poverty?

- Actively identify staff that might need L&D support
 - Use your Apprenticeship Levy to enable skills development for lower paid staff on temporary contracts
 - Understand that confidence or motivational barriers – exacerbated by the risk of changing jobs or careers – are more prevalent among the low paid.
 - Support in-work progression by building career pathways
 - Don't overlook older workers, those with disabilities or those working part-time for development opportunities
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