

Poverty Profile of West Lothian - Summer 2017

Introduction - Poverty in West Lothian – A changing picture

The West Lothian Anti-poverty Strategy and Action Plan was launched in 2012 and it is appropriate, therefore, to review the changes in the key indicators that help to map the nature and scale of poverty in West Lothian.

West Lothian Trend data					
Indicator	2012	2015	2016/17	Change 2012-2016	Direction of travel
Children and families					
Children in out of work families (1)	7,200	6,800	6,400	-800	↓
Children in working households receiving Working Tax Credit (1)	7,000	8,100	7,900	+900	↑
Number of secondary school pupils registered for free school meals (2)	1,616	1,810	1,627	+11	↑
% of secondary school pupil registered for free school meals (2)	14.6%	17.3%	15.5%	+0.9%	↑
Working age people					
People in Work (3)	86,500	85,900	87,900	+1,400	↑
Employment rate – aged 16-64 (3)	74.2%	73.3%	75.5%	+1.3%	↑
% aged 16-64 who are employees (3)	67.3%	67.8%	68.4%	+1.1%	↑
% aged 16-64 who are self-employed (3)	6.8%	5.0%	6.8%	0%	↔
% residents earning below The Living Wage* (4)	18%	18%	20%	+2.0%	↑
Estimated number of residents earning below The Living Wage (4)	16,000	15,600	17,580	+1,580	↑

Indicator	2012	2015	2016/17	Change 2012-2016	Direction of travel
Out of Work					
Claimant count (1)	4,925	2,230	2,305	-2,620	↓
ILO (International Labour Organisation) unemployment estimate (3)	6,100	4,700	4,000	-2,100	↓
All out of work benefits (1)	17,950	15,820	15,670	-2,280	↓
Job seekers allowance + universal credit (1)	3,990	2,060	1,980	-2,010	
ESA and incapacity benefits (1)	8,800	9,020	9,130	+330	
Lone parent (1)	1,440	1,160	1,150	-290	
Carer (1)	1,470	1,930	2,030	+560	
Disabled (1)	1,580	1,140	900	-680	
Main out-of-work benefits (1)	14,620	12,500	12,470	-2,150	↓
Pensioners					
Pensioners on top-up benefit (5)	6,950	5,300	5,200	-1,750	↓
% pensioners receiving pension credit (5)	25%	19%	18%	-7%	↓

Sources: (1) DWP benefit claimants - working age client group; (2) Scottish Government, School Meals Survey; (3) ONS annual population survey; (4) ONS Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings; (5) DWP benefit claimants data.

*the Living Wage of £8.45 as per the Living Wage Foundation.

These figures reveal a complex pattern of change. Between 2012 and 2015 there was a sustained reduction in the number of working age people claiming out-of-work benefits. The ILO estimate of unemployment has also fallen. There are signs however that the reduction in unemployment may have bottomed out – the latest (April 2017) claimant count figure is slightly higher than a year ago, though is still low by historic standards. In the autumn 2016 Poverty Profile we flagged up that despite the fall in unemployment, there also appeared to be a net reduction in the number of residents in work between 2014 and 2015. This was probably due to sampling error in the Annual Population dataset. The latest estimate for 2016 suggests that employment has increased by 1,400 since 2012.

There is clear evidence of in-work poverty shown by both the increase in working tax credit claimants and the estimated rate and number of residents earning below the living wage level. The latest figures for wage levels are for the period up to the 6 April 2016, and predate the introduction of the National Living Wage.

There is also a small (1%) but noticeable increase in the number of secondary school pupils registered for free school meals, which is reflected in other measures of poverty such as the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) and benefit claimant statistics.

The numbers and percentage of pensioners relying on top-up benefits has noticeably decreased in West Lothian over the period 2012 to 2016. The reasons for this might include:

- Lack of awareness of pension credit entitlement
- Equalisation of state pension age, which results in the Pension Credit qualifying age increasing
- Changes to the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit
- The introduction of new State Pension

Post retirement working, however, may also extend the length of time a person spends in in-work poverty or be an indication that some post retirement age workers cannot afford not to work due to any number of reasons from guarding against poverty in old age to providing a supplementary income (a 'wage top up') towards an inadequate pension provision.

Context

West Lothian is in the centre of Scotland and has a mix of urban and rural communities, a significant jobs base in its own right and is well located relative to other parts of Scotland (especially Edinburgh) for jobs and services. The area's recent economic history has been one of industrial change. In addition, the area has experienced significant population growth, which is set to continue over the next 15 years. Housing development and associated population growth has benefited all parts of West Lothian.

Despite this generally positive local context, material poverty is still a significant issue for many households and communities. West Lothian, like many other parts of Scotland, experienced the impact of the credit crunch and subsequent recession – with substantial job losses and a rise in local levels of unemployment. The headline unemployment level has fallen since 2013, but the level may have bottomed-out. There is a concern that the medium term prospects might be less positive given the uncertain business climate and likely

economic headwinds that are predicted by most commentators over the course of the next two to three years.

Headline Statistics		
Population (1)	180,130	
Area (2)	42,733 hectares	
Households (8)	75,782	
Businesses (2)	5,070	
Total Jobs (4)	77,500	
	West Lothian	Scotland
Population growth 2001-2016 (1)	13%	7%
Population not white Scottish/British (3)	6.3%	8.2%
Population qualified to SVQ4 and above (5)	45,000 39.4%	43.7%
Population qualified to SVQ2 and above(5)	84,300 73.7%	75.5%
Population with no qualifications (5)	10,300 9.0%	9.8%
Residents in work (5)	87,900 75.5%	72.9%
Unemployment level (JSA) (6)	2,205 2.0%	2.4%
Unemployment level (ILO based estimate) (5)	4,000 4.3%	4.8%
Average hourly wage levels residents (FT) (7)	£12.62 per hour	£13.54 per hour
Average hourly wage levels workplaces (FT) (7)	£12.44 per hour	£13.50 per hour

Sources: 1 National Records of Scotland mid-year estimates 2016; 2 WLC; 3 Census 2011; 4 BRES 2015 ONS; 5 Annual Population Survey ONS; 6 DWP benefit claimants data; 7 Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings 2016 ONS; 8 Scottish House Condition Survey (2013-2015)

There are still underlying issues of poverty and deprivation – with a core of individuals and households experiencing extreme hardship and wider groups experiencing financial difficulties and challenges. Low pay and underemployment as well as unemployment are key factors.

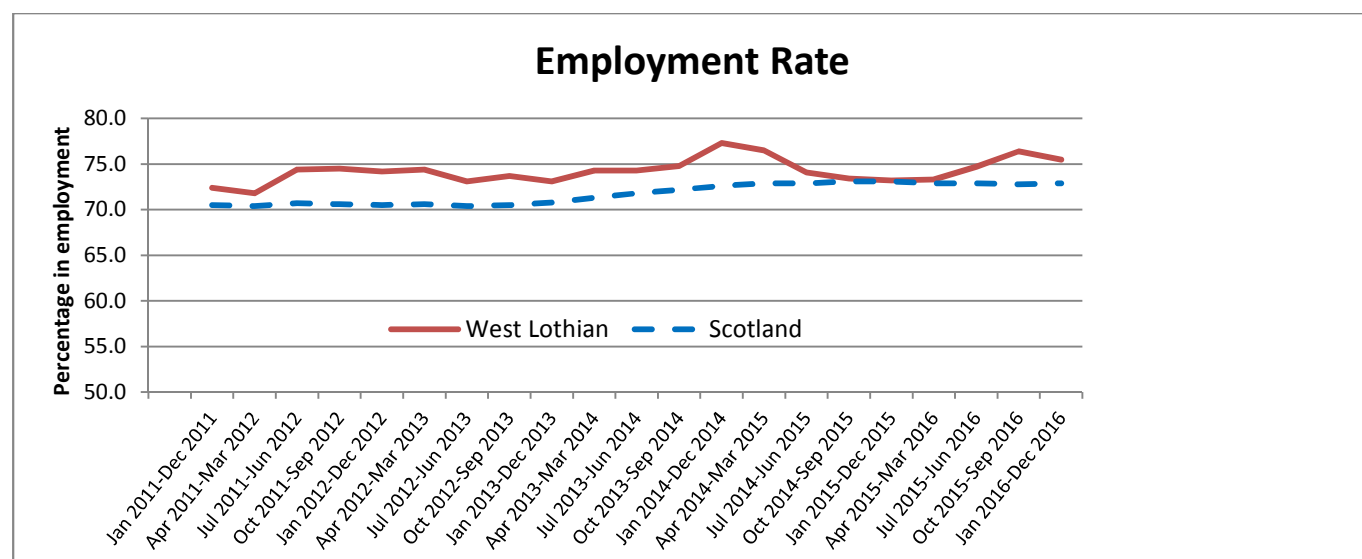
A number of indicators are presented in this report, including direct measures of poverty including, for example, levels of benefit dependency. Other indicators are proxy measures e.g. the prevalence of low skilled employment.

Analysis of a range of indicators suggests that West Lothian as a whole has levels of poverty that are generally just below the levels for Scotland as a whole. However, this general picture masks variations within West Lothian.

Economy and Employment

The population of working age in West Lothian of 116,200 has continued to increase since 2011 and its projected population change will increase by 5.9% up to 2029 (Scotland will increase by 4.4%). This does not take account of changes to the retirement age.

The employment levels (the proportion of working age residents who are economically active and in-work) is slightly higher for West Lothian than for Scotland as a whole. This is in part due to the demographic factors and lower student age population.



Source: ONS annual population survey

Latest estimates indicate that 87,900 or 75.5% of the working age population are in employment (compared to 72.9% for Scotland). Within this total there are 79,400 employees and 8,100 self-employed. As noted above the total number of residents in work (as estimated in the ONS annual population survey) had fallen between 2015 and early 2016 but subsequently increased by late 2016 to achieve a peak of 76.4%.

West Lothian is not a self-contained economy or labour market. In 2011 (the 2011 census being the latest data), 61% of in-work residents were employed in West Lothian, 39% commute out to mainly neighbouring areas – the largest proportion to the Edinburgh area. It is likely that commuting into and from West Lothian will increase over the next few years as CDA developments attract additional residents from Edinburgh.

Pattern of commuting for West Lothian residents (2011 census)		
Work at home or nearby	8,000	8%
Work in other parts of West Lothian	42,000	53%
Work in Edinburgh, Mid/East Lothian	20,000	25%
Work in other neighbouring local authority areas	5,400	9%
Work in Glasgow area	1,800	2%
Work elsewhere in Scotland/UK	2,000	2%

Source: Census 2011

Employment

Employment by occupation according to the Standard Occupational groupings shows:

- 39% in group 1-3 (Managerial, professional and technical)
- 18% in group 4-5 (Administration, skilled trades)
- 20% group 6-7 (Personal and customer services, sales)
- 22% group 8-9 (Elementary and process operators).

(Source: Annual Population Survey 2016)

West Lothian has a high percentage of employees in the occupational group 1-3 compared to other occupational groups in the area. However, in comparison to the national level, West Lothian has a lower level of employees in occupational groups 1-3 and 4-5.

The overall picture in terms of skills and qualifications suggests that:

West Lothian is slightly under the national average for basic and intermediate level qualifications – e.g. 74% of adults are qualified to SVQ level 2 (compared with 76% for Scotland). West Lothian also lags behind Scotland for higher qualifications.

The gap has been narrowing in recent years as a result of demographic change and the outcome of interventions to promote attainment and progression into higher education.

Low pay and in-work poverty

Gross wage levels for West Lothian (both residence and workplace) are below the Scottish and GB levels.

- An estimated 20% of West Lothian working residents earn below the living wage level of £8.45 per hour compared to 22% for Scotland as a whole (data based on 2016-17 living wage and 2016 ASHE data).
- Similarly, approximately 20% of jobs located within West Lothian pay hourly rates below the living wage level compared to 22% for Scotland.
- Approximately 8,400 West Lothian working households receive Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit.
- This represents 17% of all working households (slightly higher than the Scottish level of 15%)
- The latest available figures show that 17.4% of children in West Lothian live in low income working households, compared to 18.6% for Scotland.

Part time jobs in West Lothian (based on 2015 data) represent 27.6% of total jobs (compared with 28% in 2009 and 29% in 2012). The West Lothian level of part time jobs is also significantly lower than the 32.7% recorded for Scotland and 30.9% for GB.

Earnings by resident

	West Lothian	Scotland	% difference
Gross weekly pay full time workers	507.4	536.6	-5.8%
Gross weekly pay p/t workers	187.2	184.8	+1.2%
Hourly pay (f/t)	12.89	13.62	-1.0%
Hourly pay (p/t)	9.12	9.18	-0.7%

Source: Annual survey of Hours and Earnings 2016

Earnings by workplace

	West Lothian	Scotland	% difference
Gross weekly pay full time workers	505.80	535.00	-5.8%
Gross weekly pay p/t workers	200.80	184.50	+8.1%
Hourly pay (f/t)	12.45	13.60	-5.8%
Hourly pay (p/t)	9.22	9.15	+0.8%

Source: Annual survey of Hours and Earnings 2016

Employment and wage levels – low paying sectors in West Lothian

	number	%	Median wage	Lowest 10%
I : Accommodation and food service activities	3,800	4.9	7.50	5.99
G : Wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles	15,400	19.9	9.25	7.20
A : Agriculture, forestry and fishing	200	0.3	9.37	7.20
R : Arts, entertainment and recreation	1,700	2.2	9.40	6.90
N : Administrative and support service activities	5,900	7.6	9.60	7.20
S : Other service activities	1,200	1.6	10.62	7.20

Source: Annual survey of Hours and Earnings 2016 & BRES 2015

Precise local data is not available on self-employment and zero hours contracts. However, there is evidence that self-employment has increased in line with the general UK and Scottish trend, which would imply that more than 50% of recent self-employment growth has been part-time. At a UK level, zero hours contracts (i.e. contracts that do not guarantee a specific number of hours) are estimated to apply to 2.8% of the labour force and be particularly prevalent in health and care, education, accommodation and food. This might translate into approximately 2,500 West Lothian residents experiencing zero-hours contracts.

Latest estimates for average gross disposable household income (after housing costs) suggests that disposable income per head in West Lothian in 2013 was approximately £15,100 per person and £36,000 per household. These figures are below the Scottish levels of £17,300 per person and £38,300 per household. These averages will obviously mask considerable variations between households and individuals.

In 2014/15, an estimated 21,000 children in West Lothian are living in low income households (Source: GRO).

Unemployment

- The headline Claimant Count based unemployment is currently 2,305 or 2.0% (April 2017).
- The International Labour Organisation based unemployment estimate is 4,000 (4.3%) (average for the year Jan 2016-Dec 2016).
- The number of working age residents claiming Key Out of Work benefits is 12,410 (10.7%) (November 2016).
- The Youth unemployment level based on 18 to 24 year-olds claiming JSA and Universal Credit is 615 (4.2%) (April 2017). However, the JSA based measure does not provide a comprehensive picture – it excludes 16-17 year olds and individuals claiming other out-of-work benefits or no benefits at all.

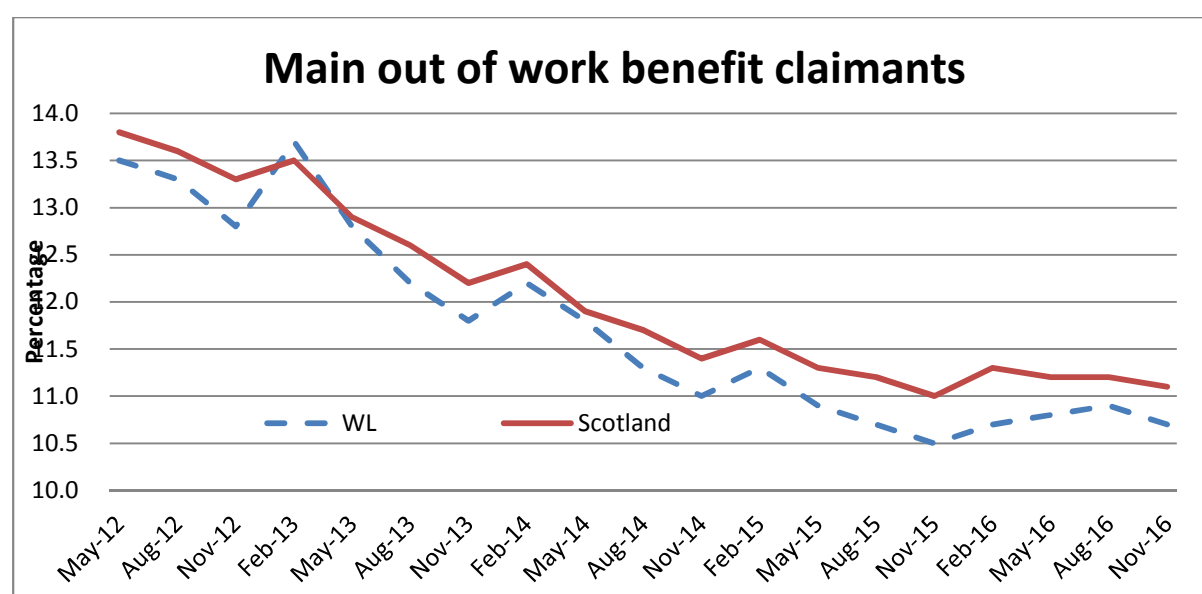
With the reduction in the Claimant count, an increasing proportion of the remaining jobless population will be more likely to experience multiple barriers and be more difficult to reach. At the same time entry-level jobs now require higher developed core skills than might have been the case previously – including, for example, enhanced customer and communication skills and computing capacity. The process of job search and submitting applications to prospective employers is now mainly IT based.

Working Age Benefits

Working-age client group - main benefit claimants (November 2016)				
	West Lothian (numbers)	West Lothian (%)	Scotland (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total claimants	15,610	13.5	13.8	11.7
By statistical group				
Job seekers plus Universal credit	1,920	1.6	2.2	2.0
ESA and incapacity benefits	9,130	7.9	7.9	6.1
Lone parents	1,150	1.0	1.0	1.0
Carers	2,030	1.8	1.8	1.7
Others income related benefits	210	0.2	0.2	0.2
Disabled	900	0.8	0.9	0.8
Bereaved	260	0.2	0.2	0.2
Key out-of-work benefits†	12,410	10.7	11.1	9.0

Source: DWP benefit claimants - working age client group
† Key out-of-work benefits includes the groups: job seekers, ESA and incapacity benefits, lone parents and others on income related benefits. Note: % is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64

The latest available figures (November 2016 – DWP) show that there are 15,610 benefit claimants of working age (16-64) in West Lothian, of whom 12,410 are in receipt of key out of work benefits. This means that 13.5% of West Lothian residents are on some form of out-of-work benefits compared with 13.8% for Scotland. Both these area rates have fallen since February 2011.



Source: DWP benefit claimants - working age client group

This reduction in Key out of work benefit claimants has mainly been as a result of a fall in the number of JSA claimants and this trend has accelerated since 2013. The picture is mixed for other benefit data. The number of lone parents on Income Support has fallen by almost 530. However, the number of ESA and Incapacity claimant has remained static at 9,130.

Children and Families - Measuring Child Poverty at a Local Level

The Campaign to End Child Poverty published an updated report in November 2016 which analysed the relative level of child poverty. Households are living in relative poverty if their household income is less than 60% of the average household income. This is one of the preferred measures of poverty employed by UK and Scottish Government, using national income survey data. This data is not available at a local authority level or for smaller geographic areas. So a modelling exercise has been undertaken using in-work and out-of-work benefits data to provide comparable local estimates.

The Campaign to End Child Poverty report provides an estimate of the number of children in poverty in each council ward, local authority and parliamentary constituency in the UK. These estimates are not accurate counts of how many children are in poverty in each area. Rather, they use local level data to give an indication of where child poverty is particularly high, and, therefore, where there need to be the strongest efforts to tackle it. Estimates of local child poverty rates show that it is the highest in large cities, particularly in London, Birmingham and Manchester. The report does not include a specific estimate for Scotland. However based on aggregating the Scottish Local Authority data in the report, the Scottish rate once housing costs are deducted is approximately 23%.

West Lothian's level is 14% before and 23% after housing costs – i.e. comparable to the Scottish level. Our ranking in Scotland puts West Lothian in a mid-table position alongside Edinburgh, Midlothian and Falkirk. Glasgow (34% after housing costs) has the highest level of child poverty. Most of the council and ward areas with higher levels of child poverty can be found in the west of Scotland. The 2014/15 estimate appears to show a slight increase for West Lothian from 2012/13 (13% BHC and 21% AHC). However, given that these figures are modelled estimates it would therefore be wrong to conclude that the overall level of child poverty has increased in West Lothian (i.e. the apparent change is within the margin of error for an estimate of this sort). There is a familiar pattern within West Lothian, with Whitburn and Blackburn and Fauldhouse and Breich Valley Multi Member Wards having the highest rates. The Whitburn figure of just over 33% after housing costs places the ward in the 10% of wards across Scotland with the highest rates of child poverty.

Percentage of children in poverty, Oct-Dec 2015	Before HC	After HC
Linlithgow	7%	11%
Broxburn, Uphall and Winchburgh	13%	21%
Livingston North	13%	21%
Livingston South	14%	22%
East Livingston and East Calder	13%	21%
Fauldhouse and the Breich Valley	18%	29%
Whitburn and Blackburn	21%	33%
Bathgate	15%	23%
Armadales and Blackridge	13%	21%
West Lothian	14%	23%

Source: Campaign to End Child Poverty

Free School Meals

With the introduction of free school meals for all pupils in P1 to P3, primary school data does not provide a particularly accurate picture of the incidence of disadvantage. However, free school meal data at secondary demonstrates a pattern of deprivation that we see in other measures of poverty such as SIMD and Benefit claimant statistics. EG Inveralmond with the highest level of FSM registrations has a catchment which includes Craigshill and Ladywell.

Free school meal entitlement 2016	
Secondary School	% registered for Free school meals
Armadale Academy	15%
Bathgate Academy	17%
Broxburn Academy	16%
Deans Community High School	18%
Inveralmond Community High School	23%
Linlithgow Academy	6%
St Kentigern's Academy	16%
St Margaret's Academy	13%
The James Young High School	12%
West Calder High School	13%
Whitburn Academy	23%
West Lothian	15%

Source: Scottish Government, School Meals Survey 2016

Foodbank vouchers distributed in West Lothian by Multi Member Ward

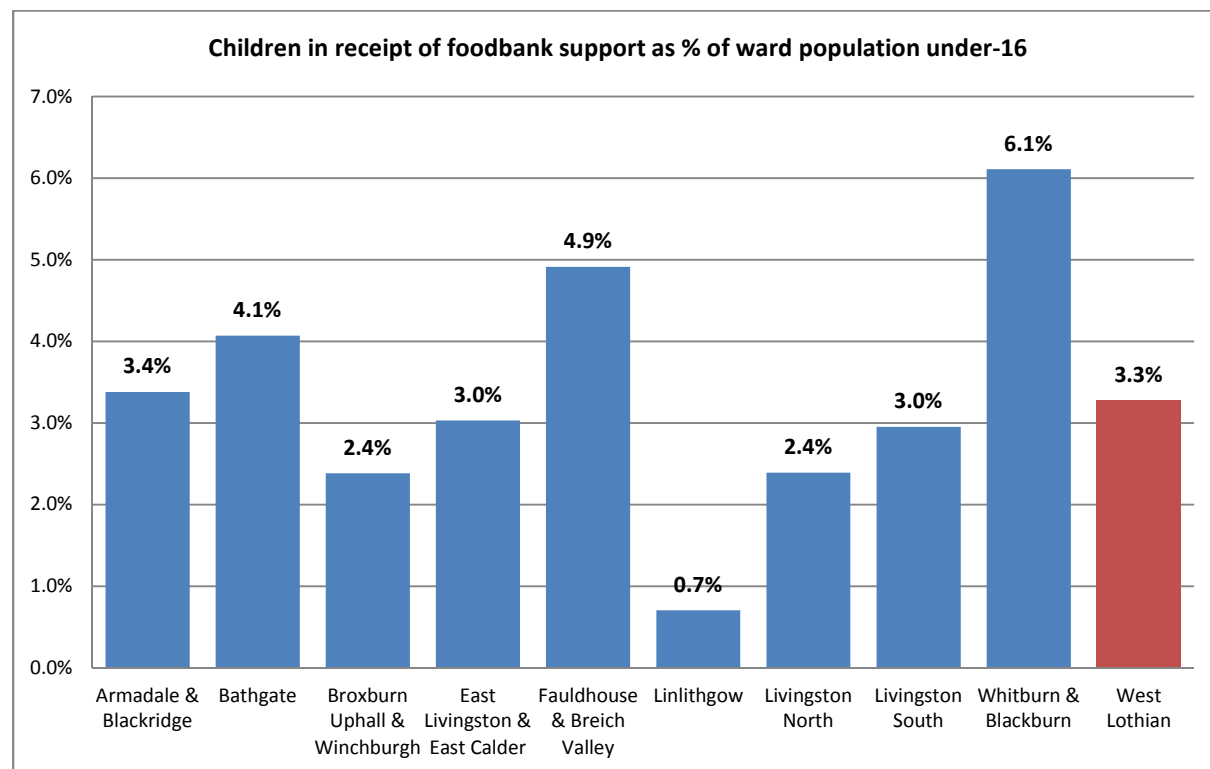
	No vouchers	Adults	Adults as % of adult popn.	Children	Children as % of child popn.	Total	Total as % of ward popn.
Armadale & Blackridge	196	233	1.7%	109	3.4%	342	2.0%
Bathgate	336	410	2.4%	176	4.1%	586	2.8%
Broxburn Uphall & Winchburgh	255	323	2.0%	101	2.4%	424	2.1%
East Livingston & East Calder	198	276	1.8%	114	3.0%	390	2.1%
Fauldhouse & Breich Valley	185	231	1.8%	150	4.9%	381	2.4%
Linlithgow	81	92	0.7%	22	0.7%	114	0.7%
Livingston North	136	178	0.9%	125	2.4%	303	1.2%
Livingston South	209	267	1.4%	135	3.0%	402	1.7%
Whitburn & Blackburn	491	602	3.7%	217	6.1%	819	4.2%
West Lothian	2,087	2,612	1.8%	1,149	3.3%	3,761	2.1%

Source: West Lothian Council, 2016

The number of foodbank vouchers distributed in West Lothian's wards in the financial year 2016/2017 totalled 2,087. Of these, almost one quarter (491) was distributed in Whitburn and Blackburn, followed by 336 in Bathgate and 255 in Broxburn, Uphall & Winchburgh.

3,761 residents (2,612 adults and 1,149 children) - about 2.1% of the West Lothian population - were the beneficiaries of the food vouchers.

Within Whitburn and Blackburn, for example, 6.1% of the child population and 3.7% of the adult population received the help in the form of a food voucher.

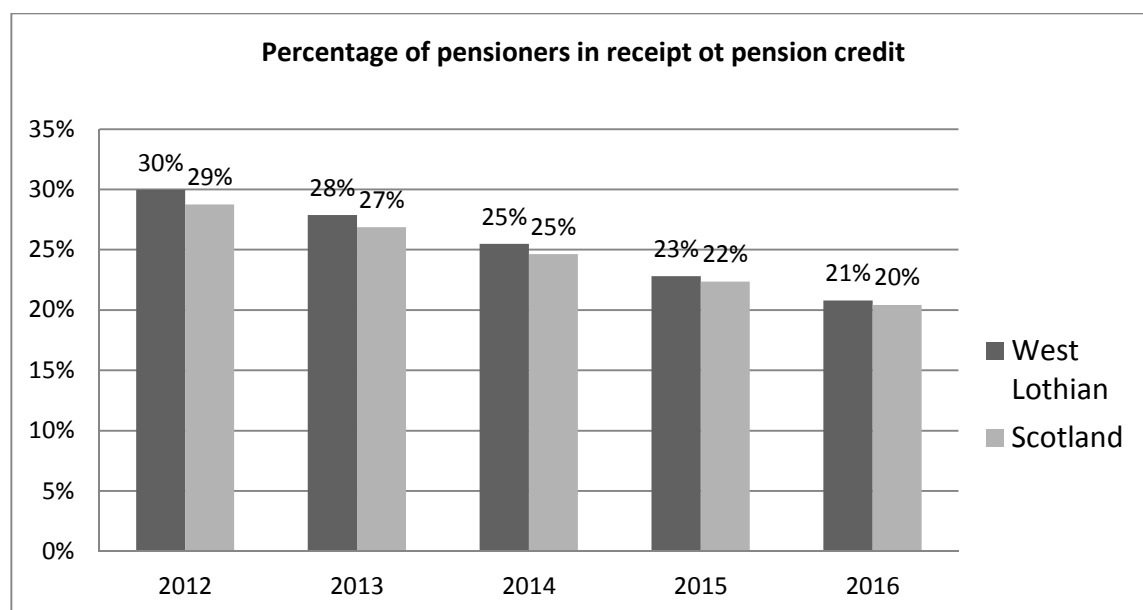


Source: West Lothian Council, 2016

Pensioners on Fixed/Low income

There are 29,430 people in West Lothian receiving the state pension. Of these, 6,120 (20%) receive Pension Credits to ensure a minimum income. This rate is a percentage point above the Scottish level. The percentage has been falling both for West Lothian and Scotland since 2012. This might be due to a number of factors including:

- Lack of awareness of pension credit entitlement
- Equalisation of state pension age, which results in the Pension Credit qualifying age increasing
- Changes to the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit
- The introduction of new State Pension and general increases in the value of the basic state pension at a higher rate than benefits.



Source: DWP benefit claimants data

Housing Tenure and Benefits

Figures from 2015 show that West Lothian has approximately 20,000 affordable social rented sector homes, of which there are 13,106 council houses.

The pattern of housing tenure in West Lothian is generally similar to that for Scotland for social rented with a slightly lower level of private rented accommodation and slightly higher level of owner occupation. Generally, private rented is highest in cities where there is a large student resident population or market for young people. Nevertheless, in West Lothian the private rented sector has increased from 4% of households in 2008. The incidence of poverty amongst private rental residents has been noted at UK and Scottish level research. Increased rental levels mean that for working households on a modest net income of £20,000 might be paying 50% of that income towards housing costs.

Housing Tenure - households		
	West Lothian	Scotland
Owner occupied	64.0%	62.0%
Social rented	25.3%	25.2%
Private rented	10.6%	12.8%

Source: Scottish House Condition Survey (2013-2015)

In considering the general pattern of poverty in West Lothian there appears to be a close relationship between housing tenure and economic status – social rented sector housing is much more likely to be occupied by people who are not in employment – unemployed, post retirement and others who are economically inactive through caring commitment or ill-health.

Housing Tenure and Economic status – adult population			
	% of adults In work	% of adults Unemployed	% adults Inactive
Owner occupied	69.8%	3.0%	27.2%
All Social rented	41.4%	10.9%	47.7%
Private rented	64.5%	8.3%	27.2%

Source: Census 2011

Housing Benefit Recipients (as % of tenancies)				
	Feb 2012		Feb 2017	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
All Social rented	12,374	64%	11,598	61%
Private rented	3,047	33%	2,697	34%
Total	15,421	54%	14,295	53%

Source: DWP 2017

The majority of social rental tenants and over one-third of private rented tenants are in receipt of housing benefit. West Lothian's has a higher proportion of households in receipt of housing benefit than Scotland as a whole where 58% of social rented and 27% of private tenancies receive this benefit.

Area based deprivation 2016 SIMD in Relation to West Lothian

The latest version of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation was published in September 2016 and is based on both updated data and revised datazone boundaries, therefore providing a much more valid picture on the current spatial dimension to deprivation.

Income, Employment, Health and Education are the main drivers of deprivation in West Lothian. Crime is a factor insofar as the higher scoring datazones tend to have town centre locations where there is more reported crime.

Appended here is the preliminary analysis of the SIMD 2016 as it relates to West Lothian. The key points covered in the analysis include the following:

- West Lothian's relative position in terms of its share of areas in the most deprived 15% and 20% categories has not changed.
- West Lothian does not have the acute and extensive pattern of area deprivation that is evident in Glasgow and other parts of the west of Scotland.
- The number of datazones in the most deprived 15% located in West Lothian is 16. However a further 23 datazones are found within the 15 to 20% range.

The picture in West Lothian is one of clusters of deprived datazones in some localities eg in Craigshill, Blackburn and Whitburn. However, elsewhere a more diffuse pattern with datazones in the most deprived 20% often sitting next to areas with low deprivation levels. There are also a number of outlier datazones – in Uphall and Bridgend.

Changes to overall number and more logical boundaries of datazone alongside changes to the methodology for the domains means that comparisons should not generally be made with previous iterations of the SIMD. A number of areas including two datazones in Carmondean for example show up as being moderately deprived due to more logical datazone boundaries being introduced.

Nevertheless, the overall pattern of area deprivation in West Lothian is similar to that evidenced in previous SIMD exercises. The 2016 map is close to that derived from the deprivation mapping exercise 25 years ago. However, there also appears to be some positive change in that some areas where regeneration activity has been focused most notably Boghall no longer feature within the most deprived group of datazones.

The following link enables the Scottish Government interactive map to be accessed:
<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/SIMD/SIMDInteractive>

Comparator data – benchmark areas

	Claimant Count 1	ILO Unemployment Rate 2	Residents below living wage 3	All WA Benefit claimants 4	Pensioner Credits 5
Clackmannanshire	3.0%	5.6%	28%	16.5%	16%
City of Edinburgh	1.6%	4.4%	17%	9.6%	14%
Falkirk	2.1%	4.5%	20%	13.8%	17%
Fife	2.7%	4.9%	22%	14.3%	14%
Midlothian	1.8%	4.0%	18%	13.0%	13%
North Lanarkshire	2.8%	4.8%	20%	17.1%	24%
South Lanarkshire	2.2%	4.7%	20%	14.9%	20%
West Lothian	2.0%	4.3%	20%	13.5%	18%
Scotland	2.4%	4.8%	22%	13.8%	18%
GB	2.0%	4.8%	23%	11.7%	16%

Sources: 1) ONS Claimant count April 2017; 2) Annual Population Survey; 3) ASHE 2016 & WLC Economic Development; 4) DWP Benefit Claimants Working Age Client Groups Nov 2016; 5) DWP Benefits Data 2016

Conclusions

The overall poverty picture outlined in this report suggests that overall West Lothian has slightly lower levels of poverty and deprivation than Scotland and Great Britain. Nevertheless a significant segment of the population experience challenging financial and material circumstances. Approximately 20% of the population overall experience some form of relative hardship with a smaller core of people and households (maybe around the 5% mark) in more extreme poverty. The picture varies across West Lothian and between demographic groups (being more extensive amongst young people and families with children than pensioners).

Whilst unemployment and economic inactivity as a result of ill health, disabilities or caring responsibilities is a key driver, the reduction in unemployment over the last five years has been accompanied by an increase in the number of “working poor” and growth in insecure jobs and underemployment.

In terms of relative levels of poverty, the pattern across West Lothian evidenced through the SIMD provides a basis for informing the targeting of interventions. Not surprisingly, the Whitburn and Blackburn area has the highest apparent levels of poverty (and the Linlithgow area having significantly lower levels than the West Lothian average). There are however local pockets of deprivation across West Lothian where higher levels of income deprivation are present.

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Contact:

David Greaves

Data Label: Public

david.greaves@westlothian.gov.uk

Tel 01506-283097

Economic Development and Regeneration

West Lothian Council



WL-EDRMSQL-02#20
289486#3

Appendix SIMD Analysis