

# poverty truth Ilfracombe

# What is poverty?

Poverty is when your resources are below your minimum needs.

Poverty means not being able to heat your home, pay your rent, or buy the essentials for your children. It means waking up every day facing insecurity, uncertainty, and impossible decisions about money. It means facing marginalisation – and even discrimination – because of your financial circumstances. The constant stress it causes can lead to problems that deprive people of the chance to play a full part in society.

## Consequences of poverty in the UK

health problems

housing problems

being a victim or perpetrator of crime

drug or alcohol problems

lower educational achievement

poverty itself – poverty in childhood increases the risk of unemployment and low pay in adulthood, and lower savings in later life

homelessness

teenage parenthood

relationship and family problems

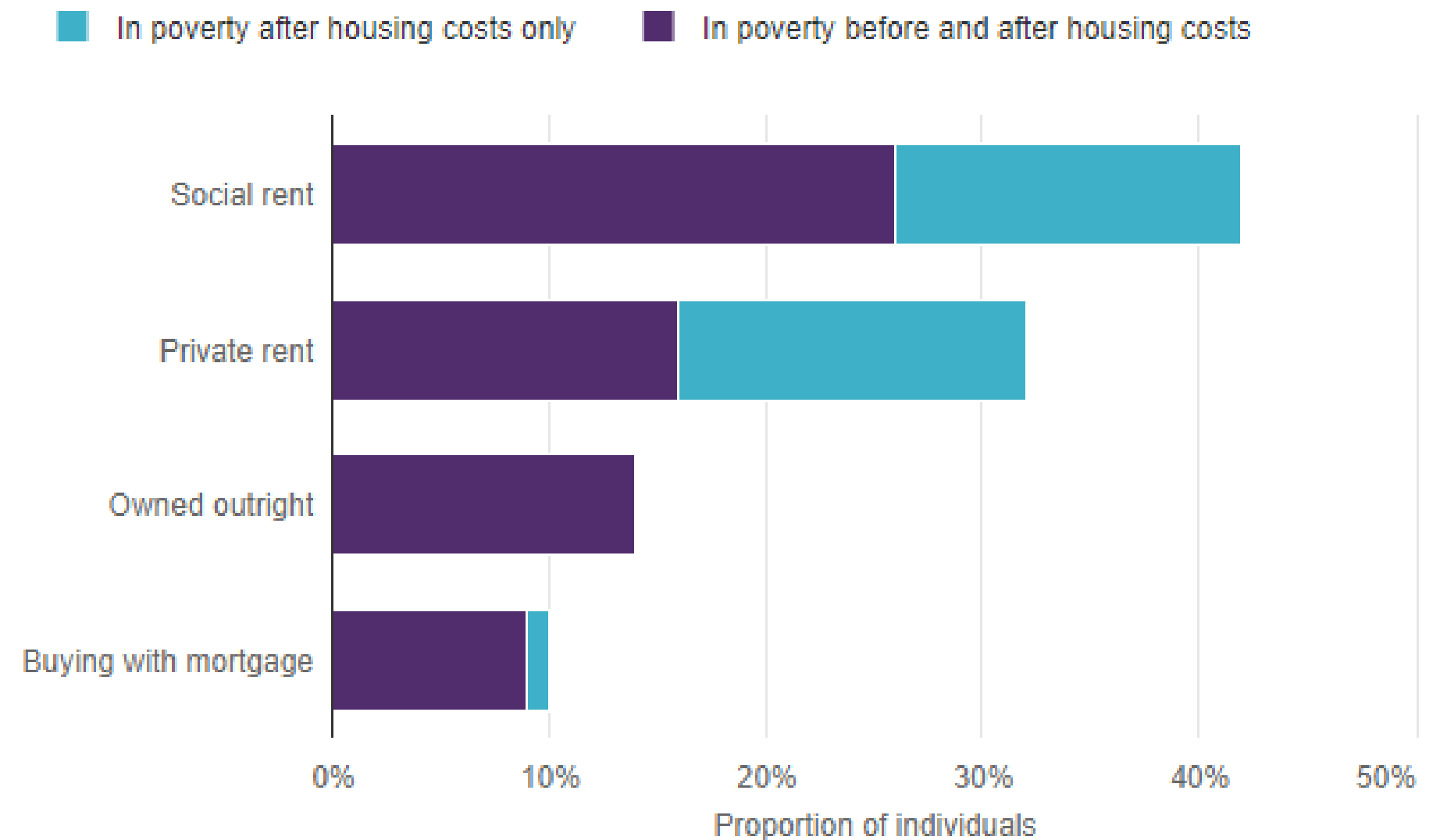
biological effects – poverty early in a child's life can have a harmful effect on their brain development

## Measures include:

*Relative and absolute poverty can be presented before and after housing costs (these include rent or mortgage interest, buildings insurance and water rates) and are presented after direct taxes and National Insurance, including Council Tax.*

- **relative income poverty**, where households have less than 60% of contemporary median income
- **absolute income poverty**, where households have less than 60% of the median income in 2010/11, uprated by inflation
- **material deprivation**, where you can't afford certain essential items and activities
- **destitution**, where you can't afford basics such as shelter, heating and clothing.

## The poverty rate is highest for social and private renters, many of whom are in poverty only after housing costs



Source: Households Below Average Income, 2020/21, DWP

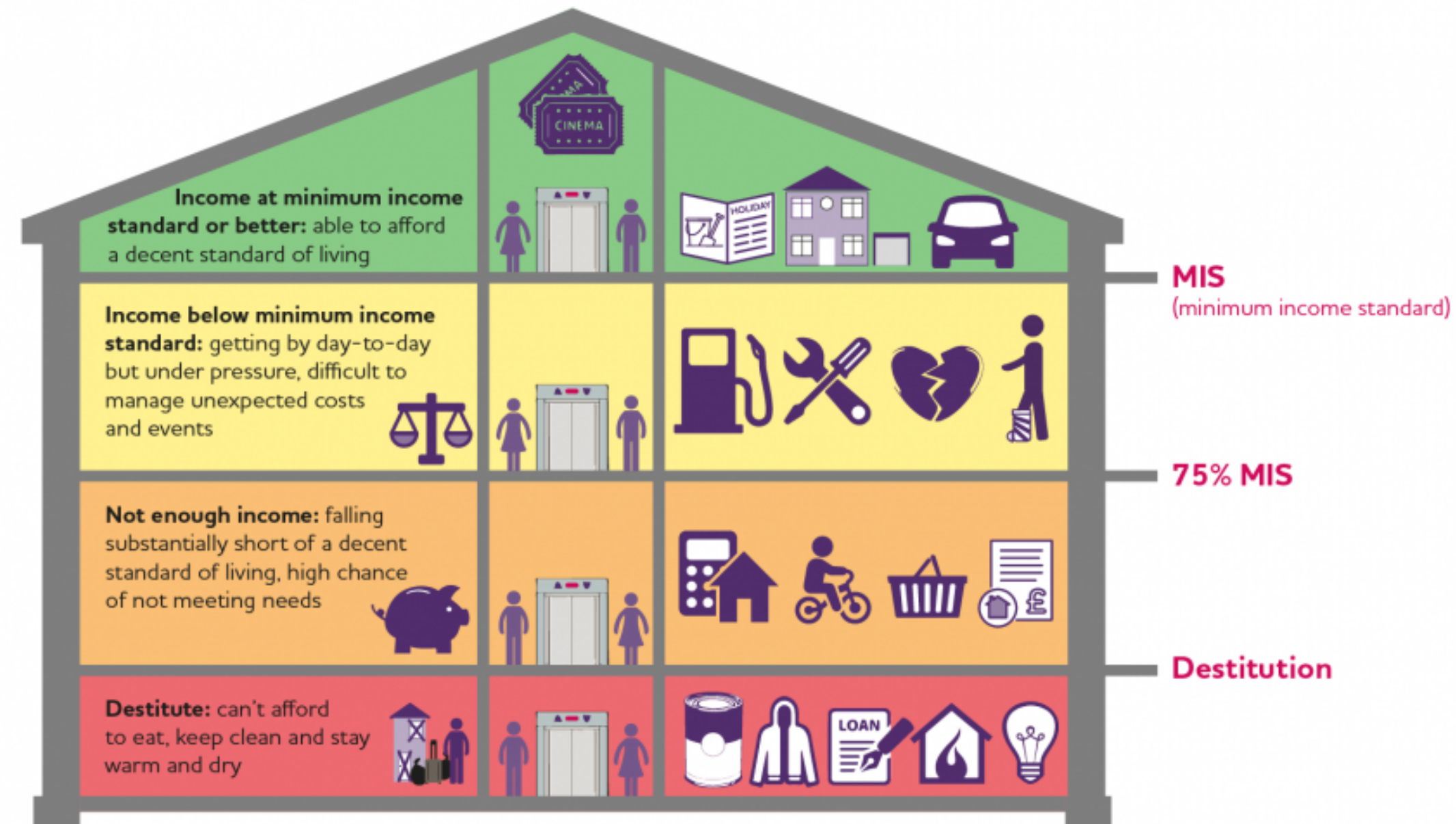
### UK Poverty Statistics

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J JRF

The Minimum Income Standard (MIS) provides a vision of the living standards that we as a society agree everyone in the UK should be able to achieve.

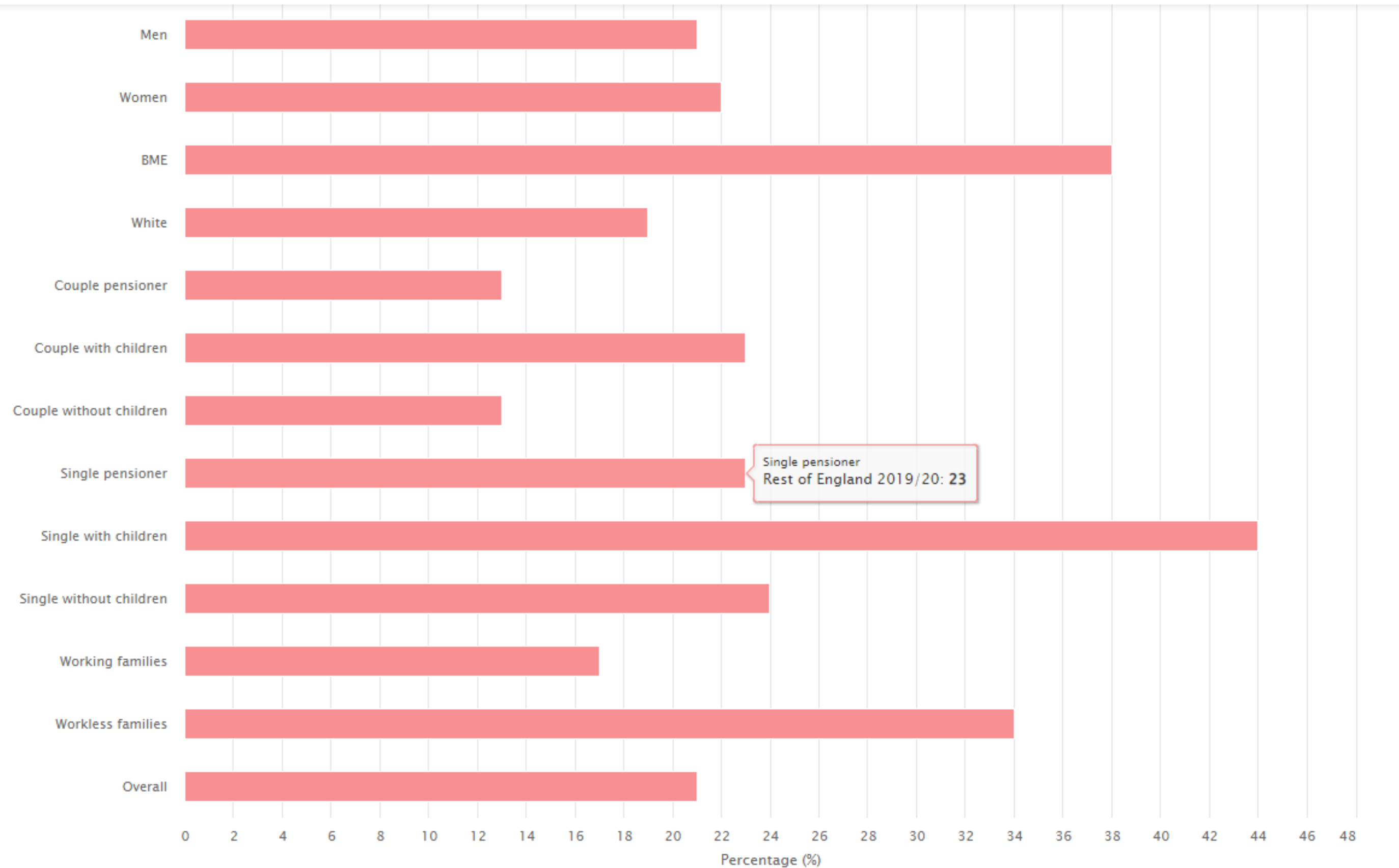
According to JRF minimum income calculator, a single person needs to earn £29,541 a year (net income of £440.58 per week) to reach a minimum acceptable standard of living in 2023. A couple with two children need to earn £48,070 between them (net income of £1177.49 per week)



JRF's Minimum Income Standard (MIS) itself is not a measure of poverty, but is what the public has told JRF what is sufficient income to afford a minimum acceptable standard of living

From year 3 onwards, children whose parents are getting Universal credit are entitled to free school meals provided they have an annual net earned income of no more than £7,400 (devon.gov.uk)

# Poverty rates by demographic characteristics 2021-22 (that can support representative sampling)



## **Areas of focus highlighted by Public Health Devon (that can support representative sampling)**

- High levels of private renting, less secure tenures, HMOs and living alone
- Housing conditions and affordability, including hazards and health impacts
- An ageing population with higher levels and earlier onset (older working age) of long-term conditions and multi-morbidity reflected in health expectancies
- Low wages and greater cost of living impacts resulting in fuel and food poverty
- Complex patterns of deprivation largely centred on High Street/private rented areas
- Higher levels of smoking, obesity and substance misuse, lower physical activity
- Higher levels of serious mental illness and self-harm
- Job insecurity and seasonal patterns of employment/unemployment
- Lower educational attainment/workforce skills and limited social mobility
- Distance for health and care services and employment opportunities

# What is a Poverty Truth Commission?



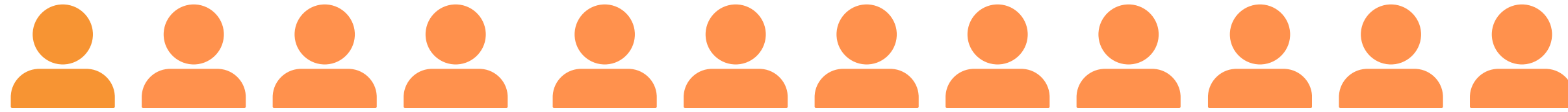
[Vimeo link](#) (4 min video)

*Nothing about us,  
without us,  
is for us*

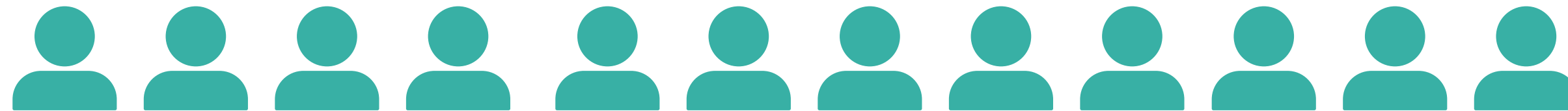
We believe that better responses to poverty will be made if they include the people who have experienced it

A poverty truth commission seeks to discover the answer to the question, *‘What if people who struggled against poverty were involved in making decisions about tackling poverty?’*

**The commissioners comprise of two groups of people:**



Around half of the commissioners are people with a lived experience of the struggle against poverty.



The other half are decision makers within the town, District and County



Collectively they come together to build relationships and create a shared understanding of the nature of poverty in Ilfracombe and the underlying issues that create it

They will then explore ways of addressing issues and improving services

# Impacts from other commissions

## Individual

- Lived experience participants opportunities have consistently spoken about how being involved has changed them: increased confidence, work, training, advocacy, new friendships, more motivation, empowered by participating and feeling heard.

Civic/business leaders report a shift in personal perceptions, fresh ways of understanding difficult problems and drive to support change within their organisations

## Organisational

The organisations most impacted are, unsurprisingly, the ones that have got most involved. Commissioners take what they have discovered back to their organisations and communities. In this work we encourage people to be the change that they want to see in their own organisations and neighbourhoods

- West Cheshire, a social housing provider has reported a 75% reduction in evictions since it changed its approach to managing tenancies. The organisation moved from a reprimand approach to offering a well-being service which focuses on early intervention and supporting people to sustain tenancies.
- West Cheshire Council setting up a Poverty Truth department to keep involving people with lived experience
- Wolverhampton, a Mental Health Community Partner said, “the service going forward will be person-centred. The expert is the person sitting in front of you...put the computer aside and have a conversation with the person sitting in front of you.”

## Services

### improved access to services

- Digital poverty - enabling offline provisions
- Council letters - envelopes colour/presentation of support offers so people don't think its 'another bill'.

### improved experience of services

- DWP staff training (e.g resulted in removal of policy for clients to hold a yellow card to identify them, that inadvertently also humiliated them)
- Training module for Doctors/Social workers reduce stigma / how to approach people / person-centred

## Policy

Changing policy often takes a long time and involves many people working together to bring it about. So the direct link between the work of a Poverty Truth Commission and a change in policy is not always easy. Some of the changes we have seen happen include:

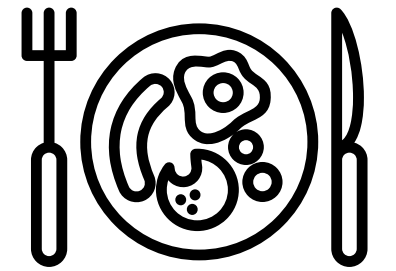
- Salford Council removed council tax for under 25's / issue birth certificate for free if homeless
- Gateshead City Council not ripping soft furnishings out of social housing by default (£1k+ bill), also improves health
- Morecambe Bay, over 100 travellers were saved from potential eviction by working through the Poverty Truth Commission to change attitudes towards loss of a site they had lived on for over 30 years.
- Scotland, the Commission instigated a mentoring programme for civil servants through which those who have direct experience of poverty coached senior policy leaders. This programme is now being developed more widely

## Wider

Poverty Truth Commissions are helping to change the public debate about poverty across the UK. The expertise of commissioners is often also drawn into other events.

- Poverty Truth Network's 'Amplify' project > amplify the voice of commissions on themes and issues that are shared across the network at a National level. Have provided evidence to UK Government (Cabinet ministers / Parliament)
- Birmingham commissioners have spoken about the Poverty Premium at the 2018 Conservative Party Conference; were interviewed by The Sun; and have been featured on BBC Panorama.
- Leeds, working with True North, commissioners produced 'Fighting Shame' a film about their experiences of poverty. This was featured on the Guardian website and premiered at the Sheffield Documentary Film Festival.

# A 'slow cooked' relational approach



Starting by enabling conversations, promoting deep listening and shared understanding before jumping to finding solutions

## If a PTC were a (satisfying and enjoyable) meal...

- Slow-cooked (long-term, healthy change)
- Recipe differs (depending on local context)
- Base ingredients: Listening & Relationships
- Vital ingredient: People who bring their whole selves and are willing to share their stories
- Equal measures of: Bravery, vulnerability, kindness, trust, commitment, tears & laughter (mix together for cooking process to begin)



[Vimeo link \(3 min video\)](#)

# Values based

## **Lived Experience**

- People with a direct experience of poverty have the missing expertise. Let their concerns set the agenda.

## **Humanising Everyone**

- Leave your title at the door. Meet as people not as professionals or service users but as human beings.
- Encourage and support one another throughout the process. Creating space for people individually and collectively to reflect on their experiences.

## **Paying Attention**

- Learn to listen with your heart as well as your head then set your hands to action.
- A safe space for honest debate that is characterised by encountering one another, deep listening and mutual reflection.

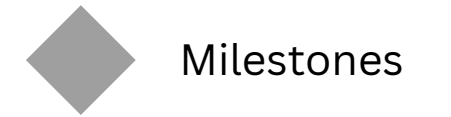
## **Powerful Relationships**

- Take time with one another, building relationships, friendships and trust not just examining problems.
- Co-produce and co-own the commission. Everyone's experience is relevant and powerful.

## **Seeing More Clearly (perception and realisation)**

- Don't get involved unless you are willing to be changed. Some of the things you will hear will be challenging and difficult. Your perceptions of people in power and people in poverty will not be the same again.
- We see more clearly by examining the local context and realising there are no quick fix solutions. The causes of poverty are systemic and it is not enough to be simply concerned with its symptoms. At the same time practical progress matters.

# PTC Phases



1

M1

## Recruit & prepare - 5 months

### Tasks

Recruit 8-12 lived experience

Individual meetings with potential commissioners

Gathering Community Commissioners

- Meeting regularly as a group to get to know each other
- explore their experiences and decide what and how they would like to communicate about poverty to their area

Preparing for Opening Event

**Attention** 1-2-1 support to group support to creative support

M2

**Opening Event** - Phase one ends with an event in which community commissioners share their lived experiences of poverty

2

## Engage - 3 months

**Tasks** Full commission meetings

1-2-1s between commissioners

**Attention** Enabling conversations; promoting deep listening; setting the culture; building relationships

3

M3

### Explore - 2 months

**Tasks** Full gatherings identifying what are the issues they would like to address  
Continuing the 1-2-1s between commissioners

**Attention** Moving from the I to the We, Sense-making

4

M4

### Experiment - 7 months

#### Tasks

Creating the task groups and experimenting with issues + Full commission gatherings

**Attention** Supporting the task groups, Beginning to think about the end

5

### Embed - Time 5 months

#### Tasks

Closing Event, Written materials

Work continues to help commissioners to to make good on promises and embed what they have learnt into their communities, organisations and institutions.

#### Attention

Preparing the closing, Supporting commissioners as they move on, Deciding what poverty truth does next in your area

M5

**Closing event** - to communicate the findings of the commission with the wider public. This will include the work done in issue groups and the effect that the process has had on commissioners



# How can you be involved?

## Become a participant

## Support recruitment of people with lived experience of poverty

- Identifying and connecting us with potential participants who may lack confidence or not identify with being in poverty, despite struggling financially
- Share leaflets / social media / display posters
- Set up a forum for a group presentation

## Being part of a local support network for participants

A named person/service to connect participants in need to

## Advisory / steering group membership

Help set the tone and language of comms to reach participants

Support the project to get off the ground

Please contact [james.lander2@nhs.net](mailto:james.lander2@nhs.net)

**End**