

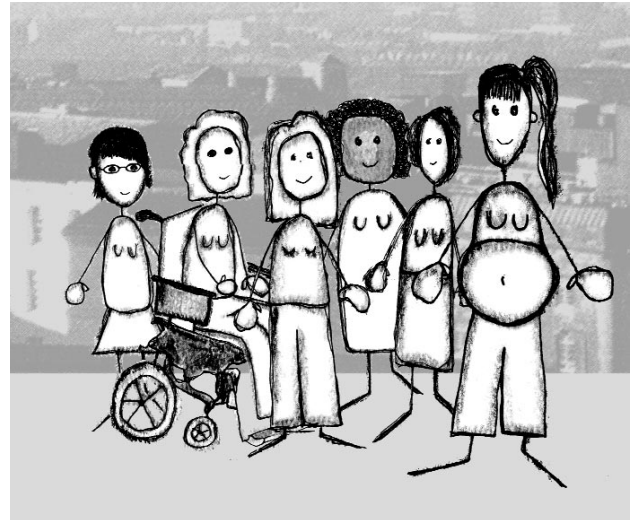
Women and Poverty in Leeds

About the research

This is a summary of the findings of research carried out for the Women in Leeds Working Group funded by Leeds Initiative.

The aim of the research was to collate available information about the lives of women in Leeds. It focuses in particular on poverty and disadvantage with a view to influencing the development of policies and strategies in the city. The report is not comprehensive as there were difficulties in obtaining information for some of the areas we were interested in.

The full report highlights the key issues facing women in Leeds and suggests action points.



Why are women and men's experiences of poverty different?

Recent research shows that the main reasons are as follows:

- women and men tend to do different kinds of jobs and the jobs that women do tend to be lower paid.
- childbirth and caring responsibilities result in interruptions in women's employment and also much higher rates of part-time working.
- many women with childcare responsibilities take relatively low status, poorly paid part-time work because of the lack of affordable childcare.
- the gap between the pay of full-time and part-time workers is widening.
- lone mothers are especially likely to experience poverty - they find it difficult to find paid work partly because of the lack of childcare but also because of the areas in which they often live.
- older women living alone are more likely than other groups to experience poverty - this is because of difficulties they faced when they were in employment; lower entitlement to the basic pension; and because they are less likely than men to have an occupational pension.

What can we do?

What can individuals and organisations across Leeds do to address the issue of poverty and disadvantage among women?

The report suggests the following five actions as a starting point:

1. Make sure that the report or this summary is circulated as widely as possible to stimulate debate and discussion of the issues.
2. Ask the question in relation to all services, strategies, plans and policies: what is the impact on women?
3. Consider how monitoring data is collected within your organisation and ask the question: do we know from our information whether women and men's experiences of our services or area of policy are different?
4. Put in place a more formal process of gender impact assessment so that all areas of activity are assessed in terms of their current or potential effect on women's lives.
5. Make sure that all new strategies and action plans that are being drawn up explicitly address the issue of gender.

Women in Leeds

KEY INDICATORS

the Leeds Initiative



What do we know?

- Leeds is a city of economic growth and prosperity for most of its citizens. However, a significant minority of people do not share in this prosperity and there is also evidence to suggest that women are more likely than men to be disadvantaged.
- National research has shown that men and women's experiences of poverty and disadvantage are different. Although both are damaged by poverty, the history of discrimination against women has meant that they are often more vulnerable.
- Furthermore, women's experiences as primary carers, low-paid and part-time workers, lone parents and key managers of the family resources mean that they may experience deeper poverty.

Households and housing

- There are more women than men in the population.
- Around one in ten households in Leeds are headed by a lone parent and, of these, nine out of ten are headed by a woman.
- 14% of women, compared to 11% of men, provide unpaid care to a relative or friend; women carers are less likely than men to be economically active and to spend more hours a week caring.
- Women are more likely than men to be accepted as homeless by Leeds City Council.
- Domestic violence is one of the main reasons why women become homeless.

Participation

- Women are more likely than men to be active in voluntary and community organisations; the only category of activity where this pattern is reversed is tenants' and residents' associations.

Health and social care

- Overall women and men are almost equally likely to say they are in good or fairly good health.
- Women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities are considerably less likely than women from other ethnic groups to report good health.
- Women from Pakistani, Bangladeshi and other Asian groups have relatively high rates of limiting long-term illness especially in the older age groups.
- Ill-health and use of social services are more common in the most disadvantaged wards in the city.
- The highest rates of conceptions among girls aged 15 to 17 are mainly concentrated in the inner city wards of the city.

What don't we know?

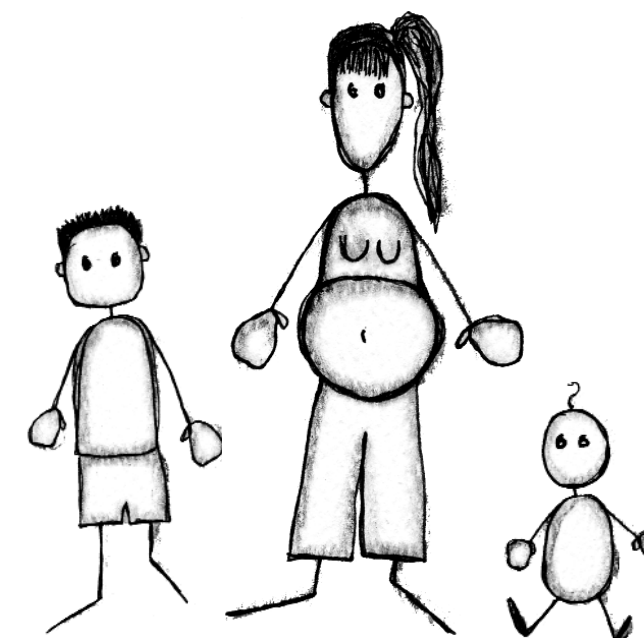
- We have little consistent information and disabled women.
- We don't know very much about women and men's incomes nor about the hidden area of how income is distributed within households.
- We know very little about the cultural factors influencing employment and economic activity, which is especially relevant to women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities.
- Very little statistical information is available on minority ethnic health.
- No data is currently available on patterns of breast-feeding among women in the city.
- We have no data on the use of primary health care services.
- There is no statistical data available on women's mental health.

Education and training

- A higher percentage of the male workforce than the female workforce is qualified to at least NVQ3 or equivalent.
- Lone parents and carers are significantly less likely than other groups to be qualified to NVQ3 or equivalent.
- Women are more likely than men to have engaged in training or learning in the last 12 months; lone parents are significantly less likely to have done so.
- Lone parents and carers are more likely than other groups to say they are interested in learning or training. However, they face the barriers of the cost of courses and lack of time.

Economic activity and employment

- Women are less likely than men to be unemployed; the reverse is true for women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities.
- Women are considerably more likely than men to be working part time.
- Economic activity rates are extremely low for women from Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities.
- Over 40% of men work in skilled occupations compared to around 30% of women.
- Many more women pensioners than men claim either housing or council tax benefit.



About the Women in Leeds Working Group

Since 2001 a small group of women, representing a range of organisations in Leeds, has been meeting regularly to share concerns about the absence of a gender perspective across the whole range of strategic planning and implementation in Leeds - including regeneration, social exclusion, transport and health.

The group has discussed a variety of ways to try and make a difference so that ultimately the lives of disadvantaged women in local communities will improve. While it is important that women living in communities should be involved both in this discussion (and in the policy and decision-making processes), it is important that agencies and organisations working across the city also take the issue of gender on board at a strategic level.

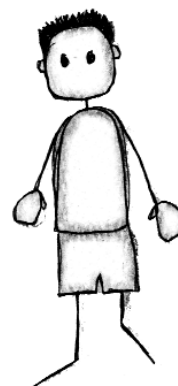
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Full versions of the Women and Poverty report can be obtained from:

Leeds Initiative
40 Great George Street
Leeds LS1 3DL
Tel: (0113) 247 8989

Or it can be downloaded from the Leeds Initiative website
www.leedsinitiative.org



the Leeds Initiative

